

The American true crime magazine died quietly at the end of the year 2000, when the genre's last surviving title, *Startling Detective*, was shuttered by its publisher. *Startling Detective's* demise neatly closed out a century which had seen the true crime magazine rise quickly to popularity, then fade, over several decades, into obscurity and disrepute. Perhaps because it had lingered too long, or fallen so far, the true crime magazine's final disappearance was neither noted nor mourned. The genre had long gone unclaimed by those who study and collect 20<sup>th</sup> century American magazines. Pulp fiction, celebrity-scandal and spicy pin-up magazines have all been the focus of lavishly designed retrospective books and unending devotion. The true crime magazine, which borrowed from all of these more than it gave back, never seemed distinct enough to merit its own history.

The richness of the true crime magazine lay not in its uniqueness, but in its unrestrained absorption of countless elements from the culture around it. In the first forty years of its existence, the American true crime magazine soaked up the styles of tabloid journalism, *film noir*, New York street photography, Surrealism, American urban realist painting, revolutionary montage and innumerable other currents criss-crossing American culture between 1920 and 1960. True crime magazines reassembled these styles within dynamic juxtapositions of image and text.

Thousands of artists, writers and photographers worked on these magazines, rarely rising above them into careers of greater renown or prestige. Historians and collectors have sifted through the enormous corpus of pulp magazine or comic book illustration, reconstructing the careers of individual artists and building markets for their art. In contrast, very few of the people who worked for American true crime magazines during their 80-year history have been saved from anonymity.

This book is one contribution to what, following film scholar Tom Cohen, we might call an "archaeology of image culture." In the pages that follow, I will attempt to rescue from neglect some of those who worked on true crime magazines, but that is not my central purpose here. The production of these magazines is best understood as the workings of an efficient machinery, rather than the expression of distinct creative voices. By the most cautious of calculations, the American true crime magazine sent into the world some five million pictures, scattering these across the 200-plus different titles launched over the course of eight decades. Through this extraordinary productivity, countless ways of rendering crime in visual form were brought together and juxtaposed. Within individual stories, luridly sensational and earnestly instructional treatments of crime sat side-by-side with no obvious discomfort.

True crime magazines absorbed and recycled the wide variety of visual forms through which crime and its consequences have come to be represented: maps, mug shots, police sketches, cadaver photographs, telegrams, wanted posters, gothic landscapes, urban nocturnes and countless others.

The vast majority of images in true crime magazines were photographs, but the origins of these photographs were diverse and their status as credible documentation typically uncertain. Some of these photos were genuine images of crimes or criminals, supplied by local police forces, bought from photo-news agencies, or provided by local witnesses. Many others were staged with models to imitate official photographs, or posed in studio re-enactments of crimes – the better to highlight these crimes' most dramatic or erotic features. Large numbers of these images were paintings crafted to look like photographs, or their opposites – photos retouched to make them look painterly. In the lay-outs of true crime magazines, all the major currents of twentieth-century design mingled promiscuously, from clean, symmetrical grids through chaotic montages which twisted pictures to make words and words to form pictures.

The focus of this book is the true crime magazine of the 1950s. This is the period, I will argue, of its most interesting and radical transformations. Conventional wisdom claims the 1930s as the golden age of true crime magazines, but that reflects the prejudices of those who cherish the pulp magazines which flourished alongside them. During the 30s, true crime magazines trailed closely behind mainstream journalism, as a busy parade of celebrity gangsters and high-profile public tragedies (such as the Lindbergh baby kidnapping) moved across the broader field of American popular culture. Their topicality made the true crime magazines of the 1930s useful indexes of public attention, but did little to enhance their visual interest. Quite simply, true crime magazines were among the least visually inventive of 1930s periodicals. Their covers often seemed stodgy and lifeless, lacking the lurid dynamism of the pulp magazine or the tabloid newspaper. The interior lay-outs of 1930s true crime magazines seem dated and formulaic, untouched by the innovative design principles to be found in the new photojournalism magazines of the period, like *Life*, *Look* or *Foto*.

In the 1940s, the design of true crime magazines overcame some of this lag, if only at the high end of the field. In magazines published by Dell or Fawcett, a new glamour and fashionable simplicity made the true crime magazine chic and respectable. Having found a style, however, the magazines of the 1940s maintained it, with only minor variation, for over a decade. It was not until 1953, a key year in the genre's history, that true crime magazines completed their break with the painterly imagery and melodramatic sensationalism



of the 1930s pulp magazine. In the mid-1950s, fresh new experiments in design and theme helped to position the true crime magazine within waves of renewal moving through the postwar, New York-based magazine world. Some of these changes were formal, manifest in new ways of organizing the page or setting black-and-white photographs against color backdrops. Other innovations included a new message for representing crime – through tightly organized shots of dramatic action, for example and a new taste for grey-toned images of bleak, remote crime scenes. For the first time in their history, perhaps, true crime magazines were among the most visually interesting of American popular magazines.

#### The American True Crime Magazine

A full history of the true crime magazine is beyond the scope of this book. The genre’s roots are long and tangled, reaching back to the very beginnings of commercial printing and publishing. The “broadside,” one of the earliest forms of printed matter, had been used to circulate true stories of crime since the 17<sup>th</sup> century. Broadside were single sheets of paper, typically sold by news hawkers or posted on walls, and they had been common in the American colonies since the pre-Revolutionary period. Broadside recounted the exploits of criminals and described their punishments. Like newspapers themselves, broadside had begun as vehicles for official proclamations, then turned commercial and sensational with time, adding woodcut images and lingering on the details of horrific acts.

The commercial, popular newspaper had usurped most of the broadside’s functions by the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. In 1833, the “penny press” was born, with the launch of the New York *Sun* newspaper. Cheap and popular, the *Sun* (and the big city newspapers which came after it), chronicled the dramatic interruptions of city life occurring within each 24-hour news cycle. Crimes, the most punctual and shocking of events, were perfectly suited to the publishing rhythms and commercial strategies of the new daily newspapers. In the penny press, criminality had less and less to do with the idea of the outlaw, the individual cast out from the social world. Crime was now inextricably mixed up with the sensations of urban life, with poverty, sexual license and nighttime sociability.

The weekly *National Police Gazette*, launched in 1845, anticipated the 20<sup>th</sup> century true crime magazine in important ways. The New York-based *Gazette* took its name from the British *Police Gazette*, which had been published since 1772 as a means by which police forces could communicate news of crimes to each other and to the public. In contrast, the American *National Police Gazette* was unashamedly commercial; its various articles set crime within broader mixtures of titillating events and settings. Despite its official-sounding title, the focus of the *Police Gazette* shifted restless-

ly over time, as it sought out virtually every sensational element in American culture. In the course of its extraordinarily long life (it lasted until the 1980s), the *Gazette’s* attention moved across the worlds of theatre, sports and celebrity scandal. Crime was almost always secondary to these other concerns.

The first modern true crime magazines came with the post-World War I growth of periodical publishing houses in the United States. The true crime magazine is commonly seen as a mutation of the detective fiction magazine, popular since the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, but its less acknowledged parent is the confession magazine, with its ostensibly true stories of sin and salvation. The first of the confession magazines, *True Story*, was introduced in 1919 by Bernard Macfadden, as he moved to expand his publishing empire beyond its core title, *Physical Culture*. While *True Story’s* primary concern was romance, it recounted crimes alongside other kinds of moral transgression. In 1922, the new Fawcett Publishing Company launched a similar magazine, *True Confessions*. This magazine, too, included stories of real crimes, bragging that these were based on actual records from official sources. Macfadden responded in 1924 by starting *True Detective Mysteries*, the first of the modern true crime magazines. Fawcett quickly turned *True Confessions* into the love-and-romance magazine it would remain for several decades, then introduced its own full-fledged true crime title, *Startling Detective*, in 1927. By the mid-1930s, Dell, Hillman and a number of established publishers had launched true crime magazines, including *Inside Detective* and *Crime Detective*, which lasted for several decades. In the much more crowded and competitive lower depths of commercial publishing, dozens of fly-by-night companies entered the true crime field in the 1930s and 1940s.

#### Truth and the Crime Magazine

From their birth to their disappearance, true crime magazines exploited the uncertainty of purpose which hung over them. They fanned the interest in real-world police procedures and scientific method which grew steadily over the course of the 20<sup>th</sup> century (and which, in present-day American television and cinema, has made the unofficial freelance detective and private eye virtually obsolete.) In their early years, magazines made much of the advisory role played by real-life sheriffs and police departments, and touted their access to official documents and images.

Throughout these magazines, one finds a fascination with the sciences of police detection and apprehension, and with standardized, authoritative ways of presenting information: mugshots, fingerprints, microscopic images, crime scene diagrams, maps and other genres of forensic imagery. These typically served well as filler images, breaking up bodies of text or filling secondary pages following an article’s

title page. Alongside these images, another visual vocabulary was mobilized, one which had taken shape more slowly and informally. Here we find things of widely varying scale and substance, all suggesting crime directly or obliquely: city streets, nighttime, fog, fedora hats, sideways glances, neon signs, railroad yards, stiletto heels, sunglasses, playing cards, and so on.

True crime magazines catered to a public fascination with police procedures even as they recognized that police themselves were of little visual interest. In their place we find enlarged fingers pointing accusingly at suspects [**page 117, bottom**], spider webs trapping villainous women [**pages 035 and 160**] and the martini bubbles in which a swindler’s victims are imagined [**page 118, bottom**]. These graphic images represent leaps into extravagant visual metaphor at odds with the standardized police imagery or plodding accounts of detective work that follow them. True crime magazines nourished the sense that crime took place in worlds more vivid and fantastic than our own, worlds of heightened expressivity and dream-like juxtaposition.

Since the emergence of cinema and the mass-circulation illustrated magazine, crime has been more than just a theme for visual images. Like religion or nature, crime has generated full-blown approaches to visibility, large-scale systems for aesthetically rendering the world as a whole. We understand crime through a broad complex of stereotypical images, aesthetic styles, moods and ways of representing life. The visual language of crime includes the familiar iconography of guns and bodies, but extends beyond. Crime is suggested, for instance, when urban structures, such as streets or parks, are shown as empty (and therefore dangerous); or when darkness is cut by beams of electric illumination. As the French cultural historian Dominique Kalifa puts it, crime is the center of a vast, collective and anonymous effort of cultural imagining, through which we perceive the margins of our world as secretive and stylized.

In the 1930s, the French novelist and critic Pierre MacOrlan captured the magnitude of crime’s aesthetic significance in his notion of the “social fantastic.” For MacOrlan, the astonishing and the fearful were no longer, by the 20<sup>th</sup> century, to be found outside our world, in natural or faraway settings. Rather, the sinister and inexplicable were now associated with the edges and obscure corners of our own, “social” world – at city waterfronts, for example, or in the murderous spaces of the nighttime passenger train. These spaces were marked, in MacOrlan’s analysis, by an undefinable sense of menace or mystery. Crime was more than the specific danger we might associate with this or that space. Crime brought with it the very possibility that hidden depths and undecipherable meanings were properties of the world in which we went about our mundane lives.

#### Facts and Photos

In their early years, true crime periodicals were more commonly known as “true fact” or “fact detective” magazines. The emphasis on facts in the telling of stories neatly sidestepped questions about the status of their accompanying images, to which the question of factuality did not seem to apply. A photograph of a highway might effectively convey a highway, whether or not it was the highway on which a crime had been committed – and if it was, would it matter that the photo had been taken several years later? If expressive, painted lines around a criminal’s face better expressed his fury than his innocent, photographed face alone, which option offered greater accuracy? These are the familiar dilemmas of visual documentation, but they were magnified for the true crime magazine. A reliance on official photographs limited a magazine to a restricted repertory of mug shots and banal pictures of the houses or streets where crimes had taken place. But these images conveyed little of the complexity or horror of particular crimes.

Genuine photographs of criminals and crime scenes, from a variety of sources, were used throughout the history of the genre. In the pages of *Writer’s Digest* or *Author and Journalist*, would-be contributors to true crime magazines were instructed to acquire photos from local newspapers or police forces and to send them along with their stories. (In the early days, this was often a condition of acceptance for writers.) In an article entitled “Crime Pays”, in the July, 1937 issue of *Writer’s Digest*, George Scullin noted that “the picture situation is one too many writers are prone to overlook.” “Photographs to illustrate fact-detective stories are of vital importance,” Scullin continued. “Acceptance frequently hinges on the merit of the art, and rejection is doubly painful when the writer realizes that it came about through no fault of his copy.” Scullin went on to prioritize the different kinds of photographs that might be sent: “First in demand comes photographs of the principals in the case. The victim, the murderer, the officer who bylines the story, and others who take a prominent part can scarcely be omitted pictorially. Then comes scene stuff. The house in which the murder took place, the field in which the body was discovered, the bridge from which the killer leaped in making his escape, the car he wrecked in his flight, the clues which led to his capture, and photographs of similar nature help dress up a lay-out immeasurably.”

Cover illustrations had always been posed by models. By the 1940s, however, the use of staged photographs throughout magazines (on title pages, covers and interior spreads) had become much more common. Amidst these staged photos, genuine images from the original case were usually used as small inserts, or set within lurid montages which used visual effects (a knife stuck through a string of photos, or accusatory fingers

pointing at faces) to sharpen their impact. “All photos used in this story were specially posed by professional models.” Hidden near the bottom of title pages, some version of this confession was common in most true crime magazines by the 1950s.

The advantages of studio photographs were clear. By staging their crime scenes, magazines could show crimes as they were happening, rather than settling for images of the bodies, crowds and clues at real crime sites, after crimes had happened. The true crime magazine’s staged shots were sharply different from the photographs used in even the most sensational newspapers. In newspaper crime coverage, the photographer was one more observer at the public spectacle of crime’s aftermath, as bodies lay on streets or were carried out of buildings. These clichéd shots offered little of the special character of each crime. By staging their photos, true crime magazines could show readers the gestures and detailed settings specific to each case. Most importantly, they could reconstruct (or imagine) the private or remote spaces in which a crime had happened. True crime photographs resemble movie stills more than newspaper crime photos because they were often staged in bedrooms or drawing rooms typically inaccessible to the genuine photojournalist.

The production of photographs in-house (or by studios employed for this purpose) gave true crime magazines greater control over their look and lay-out, an important consideration as the quality of printing and paper improved in the years following WW II. Posed photos also made possible the true crime magazine’s most notorious feature – its preoccupation with female victims and criminals. By the late 1930s, when most covers were painted, they had already come to be dominated by images of murderous or victimized women. Posed covers removed the need to find images of photogenic, real-life criminal figures, and so made it possible to place women on the cover of each issue. The turn to glamorous cover photographs in the 1940s solidified this tendency, allowing magazines to buy pictures from suppliers of stock photography or to shoot images in single sessions for use across several categories of magazine.

Tabloid newspaper crime photography – centered on public, gangland violence and its victims – showed crime unfolding in a world of men. True crime magazines, on the other hand, offered up a distorted universe of criminality dominated by female criminals or youthful, sexualized female victims. Organized crime – the mafia, or the crime syndicates of the post-war years – was less prominent within true crime magazines than the degree of public anxiety surrounding it might have suggested. As a world in which, for the most part, men killed other men, organized crime contributed little to the visual imagery of the true crime magazine.

The 1940s

The true crime magazine entered the 1940s in a rapidly shifting competitive environment. The pulp magazines which had been their closest competitor began their decline, losing ground to comic books at the younger end of their readership and to paperback books among adults. Most of the spicy sex magazines born in the 1930s died, as their publishers moved into comic books and as morality campaigns removed them from newsstands. Paper shortages during wartime favored established publishers, virtually all of whom were now operating out of New York City, after leaving such birthplaces as Minnesota (Fawcett) and Chicago (Sensation). This centralization brought a certain standardization to the production of true crime imagery. Stock photo agencies could more easily serve several publishers and creative personnel could move between companies with less disruption.

In the 1940s, men vanished from the covers of most true crime magazines. They had figured there in the 30s, as villains, victims or law enforcement agents – sometimes alone, sometimes alongside the endangered women who became a staple of magazine cover illustration during that decade. The most lurid of 1930s covers had offered dramatic tableaux filled with the elements of grand guignol melodrama: curtains parting, messages handed surreptitiously, a threatened woman recoiling as a man advanced. As the 30s ended, the details of action and situation began to fall away from most covers. So, too, did men, who withdrew in almost literal fashion by moving to the edges of covers. At first, they were reduced to the hands which reached into frames towards frightened women, or the menacing shadows visible at the edges of cover illustrations. Eventually, men were gone completely.

There were exceptions to this pattern, particularly at the low-end of the business. Magazines like *Spotlight Detective* [page 020] still worked with pulpy action shots of murders in progress well into the 1940s, but these became rarer.

By 1942, the majority of true crime magazine covers showed a solitary woman, in portrait or head-and-shoulders shot. These new covers might include the most minimal of props – a gun, a medicine bottle, a telephone. Crime was suggested by these tiny props, but conveyed more fully in the suspicious sideways glance of the cover model. The cover model’s look to the side remained constant across dozens of magazines until the end of the 1940s, but its meaning seemed to shift.

For most of the decade, the cover model appeared to be looking out of the frame, at events which the cover could only signal obliquely. On the March, 1945 issue of Dell’s *Front Page Detective* [page 022], the woman watches her victim, we presume, while she cuts the

line of the telephone by which help might be sought. With time, this sideways glance would be reworked as the seductive diffidence of the glamorous model, as on the cover of the April, 1947 issue of *Master Detective* [page 032, bottom]. Here, any sense of specific events unfolding in dramatic time is gone, and crime is signaled only minimally in the brief title which appears on the cover. By 1953, just before a broader switch to dramatic, black and white photography, many covers showed nothing of crime, capturing it only with wordy titles like “Honeymoon Death of the Strip-Tease Dancer” [page 120].

These changes might seem trivial, but they signal the changing status of the true crime magazine during the 1940s. Across the broader field of popular U.S. magazines in the 1940s, the isolated close-up or head-and-shoulders shot of women defined a new kind of chic elegance. True crime titles became less concerned with conveying a sense of chilling menace than with signaling their commitment to this glamour. The detailed staging of crimes on covers, during wartime and its aftermath, may have come to seem frivolous or ineffective. More likely, these magazines used glamour covers to promise entry into worlds of passion and luxury. The true crime magazines of the 1940s set countless stories in hotel rooms and boudoirs, the familiar settings of playboy-detective movies and romance magazines.

The use of portrait covers is one of the most striking features of American magazines in the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. In the late 1800s, as American magazines stopped using identical covers (often covered with advertising) from issue to issue, many began running paintings of women’s heads and faces as ways of building a title’s identity. In the 1920s and 30s, true crime and celebrity fan magazines typically alternated between covers of solitary women and others which posed two or more people together in single images. By the 1940s, magazine racks offered the unusual spectacle of dozens of faces staring back at potential buyers, many of them (given the 8” x 11” standard for magazines) of a size that approximated real heads. The “quality” true crime magazines of the decade – from publishers like Dell, Fawcett, and Hillman – featured covers that differed only in minor ways from their other magazines, such as *Screen Romances* or *Modern Romances*.

The portrait has always served to unify a magazine’s cover, drawing the viewer’s attention to the subject’s eyes and countering the disorientation which comes when attention fragments across several images or bits of text. Just as their covers sought unity, however, the interior image spreads of the 1940s true crime magazine showed an audacious commitment to wild and unbalanced montage lay-outs. Few of these are as chaotic as the title spread for “Rent Me a Grave!” [page 027, bottom], which sets out to tell a story in

legible *photo-roman*-like sequence, then obscures it with the clutter of paste-over photographs and angular blocks of text. The range of typefaces, graphic forms and speaking voices filling a layout like “The Story of a She-Wolf!” [page 019, bottom] is typical of 1940s true crime magazine design. It sends the reader’s attention scurrying across double-page spreads, to find everything that requires reading and determine a proper sequence.

Montage lay-outs, photographic historian Sally Stein argues, are usually popular in times of national crisis. In such times, the interconnections which montage builds express the need to unify disparate populations in a collective effort. The symmetrical grid, in contrast, flourishes during the “normal” times of peace or conservatism, when distinct social groups, like pieces of magazine lay-out, retreat to their separate spheres. In the history of the true crime magazine, montage flourished during and after World War II. Cool, grid-like layouts became fashionable in the mid-1950s. Stein’s analysis works so perfectly here that one’s first impulse is to mistrust it. Nevertheless, something in the jumbled juxtapositions of 1940s image lay-outs seems to express a sense of crisis, of a fractured world in which events are exploding on several fronts. Most true crime magazines of the 1940s hid this chaos behind their covers. The quiet continuity of these covers, from one issue to another, across titles and publishing houses, is all the more striking for having occurred during the war and its immediate aftermath.

The 1950s

In 1953, the look of the American true crime magazine changed dramatically. Across dozens of titles and a half-dozen publishers, the colorful portrait covers of the 1940s gave way to unglamorous black-and-white photographs of crime and criminals. True crime magazines now borrowed their cover styles from newspaper crime photography, or from the look of low-budget crime films exploiting a public fascination with vice and corruption. Gone, from most covers, was the enigmatic allure of the 1940s female cover model. While faces still populated their covers, these portraits expressed a killer’s defiance or a victim’s self-absorbed despair. The most inventive magazines of the decade, like *Inside Detective* or *Crime Confessions*, played skillfully with the cool chic of black and white photography.

The design of true crime magazines was now shaped by two conflicting impulses. One of these led to a new emphasis on simple, clean layouts, as magazine design moved to embrace the generous use of empty space and the treatment of pages as symmetrical grids. In the 1940s, designers still presumed that diagonal lines and unbalanced compositions were effective tools for conveying a sense of menace and dynamism. Interior layouts during that decade had relished the clash of circles, diagonals and squares. By the mid-1950s, the

more stylish true crime magazines had given in to the modernist orthodoxy of uncluttered columns and straight, perpendicular lines.

Straight lines and rigid boxes gave these magazines a contemporary sophistication, and also strengthened their credibility. The straightness of form somehow stood as proof of a new honesty, if only because it seemed a retreat from the more blatantly manipulative use of angles and chaotic juxtapositions. The new, grid-like arrangement of images, on covers and inside pages, seemed to bolster a magazine's claims to believability. Photographs enclosed within small boxes and arranged in symmetrical layouts passed more easily as official mug shots or genuine newspaper photos – images acquired from official sources rather than produced in studios. Even when scenes were posed by models, or recycled from one story to another, their presentation became more coldly matter-of-fact and official-looking as the 1950s unfolded.

Another impulse shaping true crime magazine design in the 50s scattered more and more words across covers. On *Front Page Detective*, for example, the number of words on covers tripled and quadrupled between 1949 and 1959. A major reason for this wordiness was the increased use of journalistic “date-lines,” brief identifications of place that resembled the headings to police bulletins or newspaper wire stories. In the 1940s, true crime covers promised only the vaguest of subject matter (as in “A Bitter Drink for a Bride” or “Love Me or Die”). By the mid-50's, covers were criss-crossed by headlines, place names, datelines, short summaries, and quotes from criminals or their victims (“Alabama's Teenage Man-Killer – ‘Sure, I poisoned my husband.’”) Like memos and checklists, datelines were quick, modern ways of transmitting information. True crime magazine covers became more tabloid-like during this period, with text and inventive typography draped across starkly unglamorous black and white photographs. In some of the period's most inventive cover designs, images and words were stretched along narrow strips that set black and white against bright primary colors (see the covers for *Crime Confessions*, *Police Dragnet* and *Detective News*).

These two directions in design – clean simplicity and a frenetic criss-crossing of text and color – might have seemed contradictory. They reinforced each other, however, producing a new sense of speed and topicality, as if true crime magazines were well-oiled news-gathering machines offering up-to-the-minute reports on crime wherever it happened. With this new look, the true crime magazine was responding to several pressures and influences. One of these was the competitive threat posed by other magazine genres which were born or found new popularity in the early 1950s. Celebrity scandal magazines (especially *Confidential*, launched in 1952), men's adventure titles (*Fury*, *Men's Conquest*), and a host of digest or pocket-sized mag-

azines (*Quick*, *Photo*, *Dare*) combined telegraphic date-lines with photographic spreads; they offered themselves as documentary reports on sin, crime and depravity. The covers of all of these magazines promised “round-ups” of vice across the United States or around the world.

#### True Crime and Exposé

Like other magazines, true crime titles pandered to the taste for exposé journalism which flourished in the 1950s. A joint committee of the U.S. Senate, chaired by Senator Estes Kefauver, traveled around the United States in 1950-51, investigating claims of racketeering and municipal corruption in over a dozen American cities. The sensational revelations produced by these Committee hearings were repackaged in newspapers, television programs, films, paperback vice exposés and a wide range of magazine genres. The Kefauver hearings (and the media which exploited them) left, in their wake, a broad swath of visual culture whose key ingredients (images of gambling dens along the seedy streets of American cities, for example) defined 1950s sleaze for later generations. Across the 50s American print media, countless black and white photographs claimed to reveal the vice and corruption now believed to be rampant in even the most seemingly bucolic of towns and cities. True crime magazines, still fixated on solitary killers and exceptional crimes, were slower to embrace the new belief that vice and violence were systemic, deeply-ingrained features of American life.

The city exposé was one of the most flexible feature story genres of the 50s. “Sex Capitals of the World” [page 141, bottom], in the October, 1956 issue of *Police Dragnet Cases*, was typical of the mid-1950s vice round-up, a staple of the men's adventure magazines and news digests which rose and fell during the decade. City exposés drew legitimacy from the current tide of municipal crime investigations, and were easily adapted to the specialized appeal of different types of magazine, from pin-up books to mainstream photojournalism periodicals like *Life*. The more dignified traditions of 1930s street photography, the post-war semi-documentary police procedural and the 1940s *film noir* now served as quick visual shorthands with which to evoke the racy, night-time city.

The moody nocturnal images that introduced true crime stories such as “They're Waiting for Me” [page 087, top] and “Vengeful Suitor” [page 148, bottom] confirmed the rich variety of the visual traditions on which true crime photography continued to draw. Modernist abstraction, documentary realism, German expressionism – all the ingredients of what cinema scholar Paula Rabinowitz has called “pulp modernism” – live out some of their final moments here, in the thousands of images scattered throughout the true crime magazines of the 1950s.

#### Inside Detective

After 1953, black and white photographs became the most striking feature of true crime magazine covers, used by leading companies in the industry as the sign of innovation and quality. Black and white pictures were rare on the 40s covers, where they conveyed an image of cheapness. They were to be found, during that decade, sloppily pasted against colored backdrops; or on the covers of magazines from the lower rungs of the industry such as *Spotlight Detective*, *Smash Detective* or *Scoop Detective Cases*. In the mid-1950s, black and white came to stand simultaneously for the gritty integrity of photojournalism and the stylish cool of mid-1950s New York magazine design. Dell and Hillman, the companies at the center of this change, published titles that were spread across many different fields, from fashion to current affairs. Contemporary ideas about smart, fashionable design rippled across each firm's range of magazines.

In 1956, *Front Page Detective* began organizing most of its covers around multiple photographs laid out in diptych or triptych arrangements. (For examples, see the issues from March and July, 1958 [pages 078 and 163]). These black and white pictures, of criminals or their victims, were carefully placed between blocks of text and color. The clash of bright, primary colors and candid-looking photographs (whether staged or not) made these covers appear, somehow, both luridly sensational and grimly documentary-like. Black-and-white photos seemed to be set back from the colorful blocks of text which described them, producing an uncommon sense of depth. *True Homicide* and *Confidential Detective*, titles published by Sterling House, would create similar layouts by 1957. And the cover designs for *Crime Confessions* and *Men in Danger* (both from Hillman Publications) took this use of multiple photographs to fanciful extremes.

After 1953, photographs were stretched to the edges of *Inside Detective's* covers (in what printers call “full bleeds”) rather than set against backgrounds of solid color, as they had been in the previous decade. The grey tones of this new cover imagery contrasted sharply with the bright red rectangle in which *Inside Detective's* title was set. The new covers seemed pervasively imitative of the much more respectable *Life* magazine, whose own full-bleed covers, in the 1930s, had caused a stir. *Inside Detective* used full-cover photographs until 1959, when a redesign shrunk the space allotted to images in order to accommodate increased amounts of text.

True Crime's turn to black-and-white covers went beyond the contribution of any single photographer. One of the earliest of these covers for *Inside Detective* was credited to “Pagano,” one of New York's all-purpose image providers and a major source of Dell magazine covers throughout the 1940s and early 50s.

Nevertheless, two photographers with distinctive styles were responsible for the vast majority of *Inside Detective's* cover photographs during this period. One was **Bill Stone**, who had produced conventional painterly portrait covers for Dell true crime magazines at the beginning of the 1950s. Stone's singular black and white cover for the December, 1953 issue of *Inside Detective* [page 042] signaled the new direction in crime magazine cover design. On this cover, a man and woman embrace through jail bars, in a tightly-framed composition that breaks with the convention of a model looking directly back at the reader. Stone's characteristic covers over the next year showed two figures, male and female, in scenes of compressed dramatic action. By placing both figures at the centre, intertwined in acts of affection or violence, Stone avoided the flat tableau look that marked the 1930s pulp magazine and which true crime cover designers of the 1940s had rejected. Stone's compositions would loosen up after 1954, pulling back from his subjects to reveal more details of setting and situation. As time went on, Stone more and more exploited images of treacherous or murdered women, placing them in full-body shots at the center of his photographs, usually framing them within groups of men. The sprawling female body, a 30s pulp cliché, returned in the 50s, on covers modeled after film stills or genuine crime scene photography.

#### The Covers of Burt Owen

The largest number of *Inside Detective's* covers from 1957 to 1961 were photographed by **Burt Owen**. Owen's true crime cover work from this period stands out for its inventiveness and clear challenge to the clichés of the genre. Owen refrained from what German scholar Maria Tatar calls the “morbid carnality” common in images of the aestheticized female victim or murderous female temptress. (The few *Inside Detective* covers of this period that revert to such exploitative imagery are, almost without exception, by Bill Stone.) Owen was no stranger to the commercial exploitation of erotic imagery; he sold covers to men's magazines like *Gent* and photo spreads to the “figure photography” magazines popular at the time. Nevertheless, his covers for *Inside Detective* show men and women as equally anguished participants in rough-edged, unglamorous moments of frozen drama. Other cover photographers during this period used the trend against 40s glamour as a pretext for posing women in ways that highlighted their degradation or vulnerability. Owen emphasized instead the banality of his settings and ordinariness of his subjects. His photographs were exceptional for their unusual composition and their quietly stated humanity.

Bill Stone had been the first *Inside Detective* cover photographer to stage tight dramatic scenes in depth, with action unfolding in foreground and background. Burt Owen's trademark was even more bold and specific – the arrangement of human figures across three

planes. “Birmingham, Alabama’s Mad Dogs” [page 060], Owen’s cover for the June, 1958 issue of *Inside Detective*, shows off this compositional style at its most richly dynamic. Killer, victim and mourning witness are all captured in a composition that goes beyond the simple arrangement of the different players expected in a murderous tableau. Like many of Owen’s photographs, this one conveys a sense of narrative sequence, as if we pass from the murder to its aftermath as our attention moves across the three characters. His cover for the February, 1957 issue (“Kill Me and Get it Over!”) [page 054] builds another sequence, this time from foreground to background, as teller and female clerk are caught within a bank robber’s gaze.

These images are more cinematic than journalistic in the way their energies animate the space within the frame. The photojournalism of Weegee and others would capture the aftermath of crimes, the point at which they had already congealed into metaphors of life’s futility or human indifference. By staging crimes in the moments of their unfolding, Owen’s photographs accomplish something quite different. A range of emotions is kept active across the space of the image, rather than settling to elicit a unitary interpretation of the event. Owen’s covers offer no lessons about the meaning of violence or terror. His images are remarkable for the purely technical skill with which he stages precise moments of criminal action as fields of subtle and varied reaction.

Burt Owen’s career offers a useful case study in the movement of professionals through the overlapping sectors of the New York photography world in the 1950s and early 60s. Owen was one of the busiest of photographers during this period, with an active commercial career and obvious artistic ambitions. The variety of venues in which his work appeared makes his career and oeuvre difficult to reconstruct. Owen contributed articles and images to handbooks for amateur photographers, showed his more artistic work in Greenwich Village galleries and contributed photographs to art-photography yearbooks like the *American Annual of Photography*. As a commercial photographer, he shot pin-ups, theatre scenes for *The New York Times*, fashion poses, true crime covers and books on golf technique. By the time of his death in an automobile accident, in 1964, Owen was working near the upper levels of New York magazine photography, with covers for *Woman’s Day* and photo spreads in *Sport* magazine. Owen’s artistic photography is polished but undistinguished, marked by stylistic eclecticism and a weakness for oddly-framed children and animals. His boldest and most original work was the series of *Inside Detective* covers discussed here.

#### Artists and Art Directors

In the post-war years the New York School of design developed a cool, updated look for fashion or lifestyle

periodicals, in magazines like *McCall’s* or *Harper’s*. True crime magazines were nowhere near the centre of this revolution, but they employed art directors and photographers who moved between creative worlds and absorbed the fashionable ideas of the time. Dell, in particular, employed a succession of art directors who were prominent within the New York-based profession and brought a contemporary sensibility to the firm’s true crime division.

The art directors, graphic designers, illustrators and photographers who left their mark on popular crime imagery in the 1950s did so within careers of widely varying trajectories and ambitions. The Cuban-born cartoonist, designer and art director **Abril Lamarque** served as art director at Dell from 1927 until 1941, when he went on to redesign *The New York Times Sunday Magazine* and establish a prominent post-war design form. His most noted achievement at Dell was the design of the news-and-picture magazine *Foto*, launched in 1937 to challenge *Life*, but considerably more adventurous than that famous magazine in its cover and interior lay-outs. Something of *Foto*’s sensibility could be glimpsed in Dell’s *Inside Detective*, in the late 1930s, as it broke with the ghoulish menace that often marked Depression-era true crime.

Lamarque was replaced by **Otto Storch**, who worked as Dell’s art director until 1947, overseeing the look of *Inside Detective*, among other titles. He left Dell in 1947 bored with his assignments, but the true crime titles under his supervision had already, by the mid-40s, assumed a look of restrained quality when set against those of Dell’s competitors. Storch would become one of the most important figures in post-war magazine art direction, lauded internationally for his redesign of *McCall’s* and his influence on others in the field.

Storch’s successor at Dell, **Fernando Texidor**, is less well-known to design historians, but presided over *Inside Detective* and *Front Page Detective* during the major redesign of these magazines in the 50s. (Texidor is best known for his design of the Delacorte clock in Central Park).

**Leo Manso**, a central figure in the designing of crime paperbacks in the 40s, had begun his career a decade earlier, as art director for Joseph Burten, a publisher of racy joke-and-pin-up magazines like *Hollywood Squawkies*. By the 1950s, Manso was a respected colleague, abstract expressionist painter and art teacher, building a solid wall between his ongoing cover work for publishers and his fine-art career. His detailed obituary in *The New York Times* makes no mention of his commercial work, though he was among the most influential of post-war book designers.

**Harry Taskey** moved across the world of true crime magazines in the 1940s and 50s, as art director for the Timely and Brookside houses, among others.

He supervised the design of *Detective Cases* and *Police Dragnet Cases* during their major overhaul in the mid-50s. Like many who worked in post-war commercial art and design, Taskey had produced work under the auspices of New Deal government during the depression of the 1930s. His etchings and wood -engravings are featured regularly in retrospectives of work sponsored by the Public Works of Art (PWAP) project in 1933-1934.

Painter and sculptor **Arthur Moskovitz** began his career at the age of 13, working on comic books. He studied art, then, in the late 50s worked as art editor for Hillman Publications under the direction of Conrad Wienke, who oversaw the publisher’s full line of magazines. Hillman’s true crime titles, *Real Detective* and *Headquarters Detective*, went further than most during this period in approaching the crisp black and white look of mainstream news magazines. Moskovitz left the lay-out job after 1957 for more highly-paid work in pattern-making and teaching. Fifty years after his tenure at Hillman, and in retirement from the Brooklyn school system, he is active as a painter and sculptor, exhibiting his work through an on-line gallery.

**Peter Gowland**, one of the best-known post-war commercial glamour photographers, shot sessions with models for the Topix stock photo agency in the mid-50s. He describes a system by which he photographed models in a variety of poses that lent themselves to different genres. The stock agencies then sold these images to different categories of magazine. From a given session, photographs of smiling models were used for the glamour magazines, those with more serious expressions for true crime and so on. Gowland’s 1956 cover photo for *True Mystery* [page 142] was produced in one of these sessions.

The most notorious of careers that passed through the world of post-war true crime magazines was that of **Milton Luros**. Circa 1950, Luros was art director for *Confidential Detective Cases*, published by Close-Up, Inc., under the editorship of Clifford McGuinness. (Earlier, McGuinness had been the editor of *Broadway Brevities* and *Broadway Tattler*, two sex-and-innuendo tabloids of the early 1930s.) Luros moved through science fiction illustration and true crime magazine art direction on his way to pin-up publishing and a career as one of the founders of the modern pornography industry. By 1965, before he was imprisoned on obscenity charges, Luros’ various pornography firms had annual profits of \$25,000,000, amidst rumors of mafia connections and the trafficking of child pornography.

#### The Return of Men

The aesthetics of 1950s true crime magazine photography owe something to the style of the post-war Hollywood semi-documentary film. Semi-documentaries, like *The House on 92nd Street* (1945), or *Boomerang*

(1947), were lightly fictionalized treatments of real-life crime or espionage cases, typically shot on “real locations” and often using non-actors (genuine inhabitants of a film’s settings) alongside well-known actors. Well into the mid-50s, semi-documentary films and true crime still photography influenced each other, leaving in their wake an enormous corpus of imagery in which studios and real locations, staged photographs and documentary images were woven or jumbled together. The high-water mark in this relationship was Jules Dassin’s 1948 *Naked City*, a semi-documentary film loosely based on the book of urban crime photographs by Weegee. A decade later, as the semi-documentary cycle wound down, cheaply made films like *Portland Exposé* and *New Orleans After Dark* (both from 1957) captured something of the look of the vice round-ups published in true crime and other magazines of the time.

In the late 1940s, Harry Cohn, president of Columbia Pictures, was asked to explain the difference between the semi-documentary and the documentary genre from which it appeared to be derived. “A documentary is a picture without women,” Cohn famously (and perhaps apocryphally) said. “If there’s one woman in it, it’s a semi-documentary.” The opening up of the documentary to include women was seen as somehow inescapably fictionalizing. Women brought with them the seductive lure of sexual complications and secondary, romantic plotlines, distracting a film from its primary purpose: to instruct and document.

In a reverse move, the true crime magazine covers of the 50s widened their scope to include men. The addition of men brought out a documentary dimension absent from cover illustration of the 1940s, with its glamorous headshots of solitary women. Women appeared on virtually all the covers of the 50s, as well, but more and more of these images would situate women amidst groups of men. The addition of men transformed these covers in several ways. In purely formal terms, the move to two or more characters made each cover image the representation of a specific event. The timelessness of the 40s cover model’s pose gave way to the punctual moment of a dramatic encounter between multiple characters. Men invaded the covers of the 50s as lovers, murderers or law enforcement agents, turning these photographs into documents (whether posed or not) of recognizable situations and familiar roles.

#### Back Roads of Crime

Beginning in the mid-1950s, the geographical focus of true crime magazines seemed to shift, slowly but perceptibly, away from big city pavements and apartments and towards regional cities and dusty small towns. The cover of the April, 1960 issue of *Front Page Detective* announced an inside story entitled “Garden City, Kan. – Massacre of the Clutter Family”

[page 168]. The Clutter murders would serve as the basis for Truman Capote's 1966 book *In Cold Blood*. In 1960, however, the Garden City killings were just one more horrific crime in rural America. Like small-town film noir or the crime novels of Jim Thompson, magazines of the 1950s signaled a growing interest in the violence which simmered or exploded far from the well-entrenched capitals of crime, like New York or Chicago.

This move to peripheral locations was part of a larger decentering of the reader's attention. Covers on which a single face stared back at readers gave way to layouts featuring multiple images with no obvious centre. The covers of Burt Owen, as we have seen, invited readers to look back and forth, across the space of dramatic action, rather than fixing on a cover model's eyes. The geography of crime, as well, fanned outwards, as covers announced stories in "Ipswich, Mass." and "Winter Haven, Fla." [page 079], or in Louisiana, Michigan, Montana, Illinois, Texas, and Ohio [page 144, bottom].

Among the most common images in the crime magazine of the 1950s were those of a man holding – or standing over – a body within a grassy field [pages 51, 52, 79 and 156]. These fields, along with country jails and cars parked on empty roads, were central to the visual language of the true crime magazine as it moved from the 1950s into the 1960s.

In the 1930s, the banditry or violence in small towns and rural communities could still stand as evidence that the lawless frontier had not yet been fully eradicated, that it lingered on the edges of American life. By the late 50s, stories set in Pueblo, Colorado or Waco, Texas suggested an America with no such frontier, a nation thoroughly criss-crossed by roaming killers and webs of corruption. Even as they became more and more fixated on remote, rural locations, true crime magazines now portrayed the violence of these locations as unmistakably modern.

While there were exceptions – stories of urban violence set in New York or Chicago – true crime magazines were part of the broader move, within U.S. popular culture, to attach a sense of menace to peripheral settings: small towns and suburbs. Alfred Hitchcock's *Psycho* (1960) was perhaps the fullest expression of this move, but it ran through numerous films of the period, from *Night of the Hunter* (1955) to the low-budget, regional thrillers of the next ten years, like *Five Minutes to Live* (1961). The shadowy, expressionistic shadings of film noir gave way slowly to a greytone aesthetic which lent itself well to images of crime unfolding under sunny daylight in wide-open spaces. We are close, here, to the light grey, daytime look of early 1960s documentary footage, like the familiar images of Dallas streets taken just after the assassination of JFK. This look flourished on true crime magazine covers until the mid-

60s, when a return to color cover photography was made [page 064].

The true crime magazine's flight from urban glamour, towards the backroads and hinterlands, produced a vision of crime located within the world of small-town white people. The late 1950s covers of photographers like Burt Owen offered a coherent stylization of rural white criminality. Their low-contrast images produced a general sense of bleakness appropriate to the run-down settings of 1960s crimes. The greyness of pictures expressed a prejudice which saw crime as a matter for poor whites, photographed to make their faces seem pale and under-nourished.

In 1938, *Writer's Digest* offered this advice to freelancers looking to submit stories to true crime magazines: "Picking your crime is restricted by a few rigid editorial taboos. Most fact detective editors will not consider the story of any crime perpetrated by a colored person." The precise reason for this taboo is unclear, but the firm consistency with which it was reinforced becomes evident from a search through hundreds and hundreds of these magazines. From the 1930s through to the 1970s, when things changed only slightly, African-Americans were absent, with the most minor of exceptions, from the true crime magazine. Asians and Hispanics, staple villains of the 1930s pulp magazine, were only slightly more common in true crime titles, and rare indeed by the 1950s. The world of the true crime magazine was consistently, and strikingly, inhabited by whites.

Other magazines of the 50s made questions of race central to their lurid sensationalism. By mid-decade, the covers of celebrity-scandal titles (like *Hush-Hush*) and men's adventure magazines (like *Sir!*) were full of words and images which hinted at interracial romance or mobilized fantasies about interracial violence. The brazen directness with which other magazines marshaled anxieties about race makes the absolute whiteness of true crime magazines all the more noticeable. With very few exceptions, these magazines never engaged with the hot button issues of race, urban decline and poverty which ran through popular arguments about crime. Racially-based acts of violence, perhaps the most horrific American crimes of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, were nowhere to be found in the true crime magazine. Well into the 60s, these magazines remained fixated on bandit couples, rural fugitives and, increasingly, serial killers. These are all, statistically and stereotypically, the stock figures of white criminality.

The new grey-tones of true crime magazine photography were, I would argue, a powerful way to aestheticize white, rural criminality. This new imagery broke with the shadowy iconography of *film noir* and New York street photography. The ever more peripheral locations of true crime stories took these magazines away from urban centers, places where crime had become inseparable from polemics over race and ethnicity.

The 1960s and Beyond

The disappearance of the American crime magazine unfolded slowly over four decades after 1960. This period of decline represents more than half of the genre's lifetime, but during these forty years the true crime magazine was scarcely noticed, let alone condemned, parodied or treasured. It had moved to the tawdry margins of American popular culture. Like the risqué joke books directed at servicemen, the true crime magazine came to be associated with small-town barber-shops and bus terminals, places somehow cut off from the main lines of cultural traffic.

The stylized black and white cover photography of the 50s gave way, by the mid-60s, to lurid colors and regular attempts at modish or psychedelic effects. The use of low angles, to sharpen the sense of menace, became a common feature of cover photography. The melodramatic tone had returned, as cover models cowered and screamed, or criminal acts (staged, as always) were captured mid-gesture. Moments of violence had been rare on covers from the 50s, as if they jeopardized the quiet cool of the era. From the mid-60s on, however, covers would stage violent acts to underscore their most horrific aspects.

True crime magazine covers after 1965, then, had less and less to do with conventions of police photography or photo-journalism. The increased use of color cover photographs weakened any lingering association between the true crime magazine and the newspaper or documentary film. With time, in fact, true crime magazines came to resemble the pornography or biker titles which often sat alongside them on the newsstands of the 1970s and 80s. In the 1986 Report of the Meese Commission on Pornography, true crime magazines entered the public record for what was certainly the last time. In his contribution to the report, forensic psychiatrist Park Dietz spent several pages outlining his argument that "detective magazines," as he called the true crime periodical, were "pornography for the sexual sadist." Dietz noted the contrast between the lurid covers of true crime magazines, with their regular staging of sexual violence, and their more innocuous interiors, which recounted the more mundane details of criminal investigation.

From the 1970s onwards, the remaining true crime magazines passed between publishers in an ongoing series of buy-outs and mergers. This movement between publishers added to an uncertainty about the true crime magazine's continued existence.

In a 1994 interview, Rose Mandelsberg, editor of *Inside Detective* and other lingering titles, bemoaned the fact that true detective magazines had come to emphasize gore rather than police detection, but this had been true of the genre for many years. Mandelsberg's employer, Reese Communications, was then the pub-

lisher of *Inside Detective*, *True Detective*, *Master Detective*, *Front Page Detective* and *Official Detective*, all of them titles whose histories reached back to the 1930s and earlier. Mandelsberg noted that the combined circulation of Reese's true crime magazines in 1994 was around 500,000 and that 54% of her magazines' readers were women. She proudly described having eliminated their most offensive longstanding feature, the "staged cover photos showing scantily clad women under attack by men."

In 1997, a columnist for the on-line magazine *Salon* wondered where all the true crime magazines had gone. In cities like New York, they had vanished from even the largest newsstands, James Surowiecki observed, but had they ceased to exist? With a few phone calls, Surowiecki learned that a few titles still carried on, their distribution now confined to small-town confectionary stores or rural supermarkets. Like the majority of supermarket tabloid newspapers, those true detective magazines that remained now belonged to the Florida-based Globe Communications company. In 1995, Globe had closed down *True Detective*, by most accounts the very first true crime magazine (launched by Bernard Macfadden in 1924). By 1997, Globe published six true crime magazines, including such venerable titles as *Headquarters Detective*, *Detective Dragnet* and *Startling Detective*.

For the final death of the true crime magazine, we may blame the withering of both supply and demand. The magazine publishing boom of the 1990s made display space scarce, pushing true crime titles off urban racks and hastening their disappearance from public consciousness. Their gory covers made those who managed airport or supermarket magazine stands wary of displaying them, and as their markets shrunk the magazines became ever more extreme in their promise of violent sensationalism.

In 1999, a company named American Media bought Globe Communications, in a move that brought further consolidation at the low end of U.S. periodical publishing. American Media had been set up in 1952 by Generoso Pope, later the publisher of the *National Enquirer*. American Media continued to publish *Globe's* true crime magazines for a few months, then discontinued them all in 2000. The September, 2000 issue of *Startling Detective* was the last for any American true crime magazine. *Startling Detective* had been launched in the 20s by W. H. Fawcett, as he built a powerful publishing house on the success of *Captain Billy's Whiz Bang*, his folksy humor magazine. By the late 1990s, *Startling Detective* had become a sleazy, quasi-pornographic title preoccupied with sex crimes and bloody murders. A brief attempt at redesigning *Startling Detective*, repositioning it as "the X generation's crime magazine" (with articles on gangsta rap and television true crime programs) could not save the title from extinction.

In the 1930s, true crime magazines had offered themselves as more respectable, “official” alternatives to the pulp fiction magazines with which they competed. In 2000, they seemed more tawdry and disreputable than the supermarket tabloids or true crime paperbacks that had eaten into their readership. If their history was one of decline, we may see that history, nevertheless, as one of enormous productivity. A minor theme in the history of Western oil painting, crime would come to play a key role in organizing the visual culture of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Crime lent itself readily to some of the most powerful impulses within modern image-making. It gave photographers drawn to social marginality subjects with which to avoid the sentimentality that too easily clings to images of the poor or downtrodden. Crime photography has served as the basis for transgressive violations of good taste, and for romantic glorifications of the doomed life. The images assembled in true crime magazines over their 80 year history have moved ceaselessly between what photographic historian Allan Sekula calls the honorific and repressive functions of photography. Images celebrating an extravagant individuality, for instance, have sat alongside others calling for citizen complicity in the enforcement of state power.

Crime has been a key point of intersection in the traffic between avant-garde and commercial imagery, between popular and fine art traditions. We can see this traffic in the back-and-forth movement between Surrealism and the tabloid press, or between versions of Expressionism and popular ways of rendering the criminal mind. Newly-conceived labels like “pulp modernism” (writer Paula Rabinowitz) or “abstract sensationalism” (film critic Jan Hoberman) capture a 20<sup>th</sup>-century sensibility born in the traffic between venerated and shamelessly commercial forms of cultural expression. The millions of images which filled the true crime magazine are an important – if forgotten and unexamined – part of this traffic.

