

Formal Strategies in the True Crime Photograph

Will Straw



Electronic version

URL: <http://journals.openedition.org/etudesphotographiques/3454>
ISSN: 1777-5302

Publisher

Société française de photographie

Printed version

Date of publication: 30 November 2010
ISBN: 9782911961267
ISSN: 1270-9050

Electronic reference

Will Straw, « Formal Strategies in the True Crime Photograph », *Études photographiques* [Online], 26 | novembre 2010, Online since 28 May 2014, connection on 04 May 2019. URL : <http://journals.openedition.org/etudesphotographiques/3454>

This text was automatically generated on 4 May 2019.

Propriété intellectuelle

Formal Strategies in the True Crime Photograph

Will Straw

- ¹ This article is concerned with a distinctive genre of U.S. popular periodical, the so-called ‘true crime’ magazine, and with its use of photographic images during a richly creative period in the genre’s history.¹ While the American true crime magazine endured from the 1920s to the early 2000s, the focus of this article is its development in the 1950s. During this decade, true crime magazines broke decisively with the visual conventions of the so-called pulp magazine, whose painted cover designs and lurid collages had been emblematic of American popular magazine illustration since the 1920s. From the early 1950s onwards, true crime magazines manifest a new interest in stylized, monochrome photographs, and in novel strategies for rendering crime photography varied and dynamic. These shifts in the status of the photograph within the true crime magazine are the central focus of this article.
- ² This article also deals more broadly with the challenges faced by print media forms that claimed to cover criminal events in journalistic fashion. As a widely acknowledged ingredient of journalistic sensationalism, crime is assumed to be richly imagistic, to offer an abundance of visual options for art directors and illustrators. As we shall see, however, the range of options is usually limited; criminal acts rarely transpire in front of the photographer’s camera. The visual accompaniments to crime reporting are often images showing isolated, partial features of the criminal event, such as the faces of suspects or the houses in which crimes occurred. The stereotypical and static quality of such images has been a longstanding problem for the publishers of crime-oriented periodicals, who have had to devise ways of animating such imagery, of enhancing its narrative or sensational qualities. My analysis of art direction practices within the true crime magazine will focus on some of the key techniques employed to augment the visual interest of photographs and other illustrations.

The American True Crime Magazine

- 3 While its roots are varied, reaching back to the police gazettes, 'dime novels,' 'penny dreadfuls,' and other periodical forms of the nineteenth century,² the American 'true crime' magazine emerged with the launch, in 1924, of the magazine *True Detective Mysteries*, published by the MacFadden company. By the 1930s, more than a dozen publishers offered versions of the true crime (or 'fact detective') magazine, under such titles as *Best True Fact Detective*, *Authentic Detective*, *Actual Detective*, *Detective World*, and *Dynamic Detective*.³ With a few exceptions, all true crime magazines measured 21.5 x 27 cm, and featured color only on their front and back covers. Most were published monthly, each issue offering several article-length treatments of individual crimes. Typically, an article was accompanied by a half dozen or more monochrome images, the vast majority of which were photographs.
- 4 The formal consistency of the American true crime magazine over its eighty-year history is one of its most striking features. Versions of the true crime periodical produced in other countries, like the Mexican *nota roja* or Québécois *journal jaune*, have been marked by changes of format and purpose, as these have modeled themselves at different points in their history on the celebrity scandal tabloid, the fiction magazine, or the general interest news periodical.⁴ In contrast, changes to the American true crime magazine were almost exclusively stylistic and visual in character. These changes, as we shall see, involved shifts in the balance of color to monochrome imagery, or of photographic to painted illustrations. The magazine form itself, with its standard dimensions and typical categories of content, remained unchanged and unchallenged throughout the history of the genre.
- 5 The 'coverage' of crime by the U.S. true crime magazine was of highly variable journalistic value. The cases recounted in these magazines ranged from the very recent through 'classic' crimes of the past, and magazines were often deliberately vague about the precise dates of criminal events on which they claimed to be reporting. Throughout much of the genre's history, the editors of these magazines, both in their own pages and in announcements published in writer's trade magazines, actively solicited articles and photographs from local law-enforcement officials or from journalists working in locales in which crimes had taken place. These public solicitations of material supported a magazine's claims to journalistic credibility, even as, increasingly, true crime magazines used professional writers to refurbish old stories or to recycle materials published in more mainstream journalistic venues.
- 6 Throughout the history of the true crime magazine, publishers devised novel ways of resolving a difficulty that has faced most media forms in their treatment of crime, that of obtaining photographic images of actual criminal acts. Criminal events usually unfold in secret, carried out by people with an understandable resistance to being photographed. David Company has suggested that criminal activity possesses 'an obviously photographic potential,'⁵ but this potential has been most fully realized in fictionalized, filmic treatments of crime. Real criminal acts, unlike many other events of journalistic significance, are rarely announced in advance or enacted in front of a witnessing camera.
- 7 The obviousness of this fact should not prevent us from noting its effect on the forms and conventions of true crime photography. While the criminal event itself brings together people, places, objects, and actions within elaborate assemblages, the photographer's

absence at the moment of the crime means that the constituent features of this assemblage are rarely captured together by the camera. Journalistic crime photography has been forced to develop a repertory of image types that show the key elements of a criminal event detached from each other, often in images taken at very different times. These elements include (a) locales, typically photographed subsequent to the criminal event; (b) a variety of human actors implicated in the criminal event as victims, suspects, witnesses, or law-enforcement officials; and (c) material forms that have functioned as accessories or evidence in relation to a given crime, such as weapons, vehicles, and fingerprints. Separated from the criminal action that unites them and renders them dynamic, these constituent features of a crime often lose their visual interest and belie the journalistic framing of crimes as sensational or dynamic events.

- 8 The range of image types available to the photojournalist covering crime mirrors, in many ways, the categories of photograph taken by legal authorities in their documentation of criminality. Here, too, we find a fragmentation of the criminal event, its dispersion across the specialized, highly codified forms of the mug shot, the carefully measured and ordered crime scene, the fingerprint, and so on.⁶ Like the true crime magazine article, the discourse of the criminal trial must work to reunite these disparate elements within a coherent and credible narrative form.
- 9 Since the emergence of the American true crime magazine, art editors and illustrators have developed a variety of remedies for the static, conventional quality of so much crime photography. In the analysis that follows, I will examine two strategies by which, during the 1950s, U.S. true crime magazines labored to animate photographic images, to render them dynamic and varied. The most common of these strategies involved the recreation of crimes by models in studios, a practice which allowed for the representation, albeit 'fictionalized,' of the criminal act itself. A second strategy, which flourished during the 1950s, set crime within more general contexts of vice and urban decay, often in elaborate photographic spreads that documented the allegedly immoral character of individual cities. These contexts justified a photographic treatment designed to convey the restless dynamism of what American journalists during this period regularly diagnosed as 'sinful cities.'
- 10 Limited versions of both of these strategies may be found in true crime magazines published prior to the 1950s. During the 1930s and 1940s, it was more common for art directors to counter the static character of crime photography through the use of non-photographic illustrations, such as sketches of criminal events and painted covers. These visual forms overlapped considerably with those of the pulp fiction magazine, from which photographs of any kind were usually (and understandably, given the fictional content of these magazines) absent. In the 1950s this changed, as art directors of true crime magazines came to employ strategies that embraced specific qualities of the photographic image, in particular its capacity to convey the sense of a precise moment frozen in time.

The Acquisition and Layout of Photographs

- 11 True crime magazines had always solicited genuine photographs from contributors, expecting they would be supplied (and, in most cases, taken) by the writers of stories. In 1949, Joseph Corona, managing editor of Macfadden, publisher of both *True Detective* and *Master Detectives*, outlined the rates his company paid for freelance contributions in a statement appearing in *Writer's Digest*, a magazine read by aspiring freelance writers:

'Payment for material is approximately \$150 to \$200 for a 5,000 word story; \$180 to \$240 for 6,000 words, and \$210 to \$280 for 7,000 words. Photo prices are \$2 to \$7 each.'

- 12 The rates offered for photographs here were strikingly low relative to those paid for stories, but these remained basically unchanged from the 1930s to the 1950s.⁸ Generally, the photographs supplied to these magazines by freelance contributors were regarded as ephemeral, little more than raw material for practices of art direction that would render them dynamic. In a 1941 issue of *Writers' Journal*, the editor of *Feature Detective Cases* listed the range of subjects for which photographs were sought: 'principals, scenes of crimes, bodies as found, important clues, implements and other items that will allow the creation of striking pictorial layouts.'
- 13 The opening pages of the story 'Death Ends a One-Man Crime Wave,' in the April 1947 issue of *Uncensored Detective*, exemplify the ways in which ostensibly genuine photographs from a case were often arranged. The layout of these pages strains to produce a sense of dynamism through variations of scale and by the juxtaposition of images with lively blocks of text. But neither the low-resolution images of buildings connected to the original crime nor the conventional shot of the chief of police at work possess any notable visual interest. The much larger profile of the 'wild-eyed gunman,' possibly magnified from an original mug shot, is meant to center the reader's attention and enhance the psychological dimensions of the case being recounted.
- 14 In the 1940s, the use of posed photographs of criminal action became increasingly common in the American true crime magazine. In magazines with inferior production values, published by companies of low prestige (such as *Revealing Detective*, published by the New York-based 'Close-Up, Inc.'), posed studio shots featuring models counted for the vast majority of photographic images. Given the probable costs of such shots (fees for models, studios, photographers, etc.) relative to the low prices paid for genuine crime-scene photographs, financial considerations do not explain the shift towards an increased use of posed studio photographs in the true crime magazine. Other imperatives were clearly at work. The photographs submitted by freelance contributors usually lacked the lurid or erotic inflections which the more sensationalist publishers of true crime magazines (such as *Astro*, *Magazine House*, and the aforementioned *Close-Up, Inc.*) sought to exploit. Quite simply, while the conventional imagery of suspects, victims, and law-enforcement officials was dominated by pictures of men, true crime magazines had long based their appeal on the visual display of women in sexualized situations. These situations were more easily represented through the use of posed studio photographs featuring models.
- 15 In true crime magazines with higher production values, such as those published by Dell or Fawcett, posed studio photographs were much less common than images acquired from official and journalistic sources. Magazines such as *Inside Detective* (Dell) or *True Police Cases* (Fawcett) used studio photographs only on their covers and on two or three interior pages per issue (out of almost one hundred pages.) Nevertheless, these posed photographs played a key role in the emergence of a new, highly stylized look for the true crime magazine in the 1950s. This look was based on the use of the photographic studio as the site of production for scenes of tightly compressed action in which key characters in a criminal situation were represented together. This condensation of a crime's multiple elements within a single image countered the tendency, noted earlier, towards the dispersion of those elements across isolated, fragmentary images.

- 16 A sequence late in the documentary film *Mondo Cane 2* (directed by Franco E. Prosperi and Gualtiero Jacopetti, 1963) takes us inside an elaborate photographic studio, presumably in New York City, where pictures are being shot for the covers of sensational books and magazines. Models pose with plastic weapons while assistants spread a blood-like substance over them; other figures posed as dead bodies lie inert on pieces of furniture. The sequence is shot in fast-motion to convey the variety of ghoulish situations recreated for photographers. In accordance with the overall project of the *Mondo Cane* films, we are invited to see this studio as another curiosity of the modern world.
- 17 If nothing else, this sequence reminds us how little is known by scholars and historians of the role of such photographic studios in shaping the visuality of popular print culture in an era in which digital technologies had not yet rendered artificial backdrops and mechanical scenic effects unnecessary.¹⁰ More than just support facilities for photographers, these studios, with their casting directors, set designers, lighting specialists, and other professionals, were significant influences on visual design across several sectors of cultural activity. While the typical background of the writers for true crime magazines included journalism and fiction writing, the studio photographers who produced these magazines' posed images normally moved between the worlds of advertising, pin-up photography, and fashion. Photographic agencies like Topix and large studios like Pagano – both of them New York based – were key sites of interconnection between these worlds.
- 18 Two examples of the interaction between true crime magazine publishers and companies specializing in commercial photography may help to clarify processes of image acquisition that were regularized during the 1950s. Figure 5 shows the cover for the October 1956 issue of *Crime Confessions*, issued by Skye Publishing. The key photograph on the cover is by Peter Gowland (1916–2010), an important figure in the development of so-called 'glamour' photography in periodicals after World War II.¹¹ The relationship of this photograph to any of the crime stories announced on this cover is obviously weak, one result of Skye's procedures for acquiring pictures. Like many of the studio shots that appeared in true crime magazines during this decade, Gowland's cover image was produced within a complex set of relationships between photographic studios, agents, models, photographers, and magazine art directors. Gowland worked for Topix, a stock photo agency that supplied images to a variety of magazines. (Topix was a regular client of Skye.) In Gowland's words:
- 19 'Topix was the name of the Stock Photo Agency that handled much of my work in the early years of my career. Sometimes I did assignments the agency worked out with various publishers ... The agent I worked with usually gave me some points on what the various magazines required and I photographed each model with that theme for some of the photos taken in one day ... Bill Rabin was the representative who represented us at Topix. He would say, when you're photographing a model on spec, take some with expressions that are more serious. In that way they could sell the smiling pictures to the Glamour markets and keep the serious ones for the [Crime] Confessions.'¹²
- 20 Bill Rabin, the agent referred to here, was an important intermediary between photographers and publishers during this period. The models employed in Gowland's photographic sessions for the Topix agency were often well-known figures within the pin-up industry of the 1950s, like Mara Corday who pursued a parallel career as a television and film actor. An online history of sensational publishing in the 1950s suggests that Skye commissioned pin-up photographs, even for its true crime magazines, because

it pursued a lucrative parallel business selling bundles of such photographs through the mails.¹³ One way to look at these different magazine types of the mid-1950s – from true crime titles like *Crime Confessions* through sensationalistic, pocket-sized pin-up magazines like *Dare* – is as vehicles by which intermediaries packaged and marketed the photographic images produced in large quantities by a system that brought models and photographers together with agencies and distributors.

- 21 While Peter Gowland's cover shots for *Skye* mimicked the photographs common in men's magazines of the period, the images produced for Dell by the Pagano Studio aspired to the documentary look of the mainstream journalistic crime photograph. Dell had begun in 1921 as a publisher of pulp and movie fan magazines, then profited from the wartime and post-war expansion of markets for comic books and paperback novels to become one of the dominant publishers of popular books and periodicals in the United States. Dell's leading true crime magazines were the titles *Inside Detective* and *Front Page Detective*. The stature and resources of Dell's true crime magazines of the 1950s were evident in the number and variety of genuinely journalistic photographs that accompanied each article. These were acquired through an elaborate network of correspondents, bureau chiefs, and regular freelance contributors that approximated the resources of a genuine news magazine.
- 22 Despite its commitment to using original photographs from criminal cases, Dell went further than any other publisher in the inventive use of dramatic cover photographs posed in studios with professional models. In the 1940s and 1950s, Pagano Studios was one of the largest photographic facilities in New York City. Active throughout the image industries, it provided photographers, models, and studio space to retail chains, advertising agencies, broadcasting networks, and a variety of publishers. Pagano had been a regular source of cover imagery for Dell magazines during the 1940s, supplying retouched head-and-shoulder shots of solitary, glamorous women that were similar to those used by publishers of lesser stature in the field.
- 23 In 1953, under the art direction of Fernando Texidor, Dell changed the visual style of its true crime magazine covers dramatically. The covers of *Inside Detective* were now designed so that high-resolution black and white photographs were set against red borders and white typography. The magazine's new visual identity could not help but recall that of the mainstream photojournalism magazine *Life*. Shortly thereafter, a redesign of the cover of *Front Page Detective*, Dell's other main true crime title, set three monochrome photographs within boxes separated by brightly colored borders and text.
- 24 The most distinctive feature of this new look was a foregrounding of the professional photographic qualities of the images published on the covers. In the 1930s and 1940s, in a practice shared with pulp fiction and confession magazines, true crime magazines had used coloring and retouching practices that blurred the distinction between photographs and drawn or painted illustrations. By the mid-1950s, true crime magazines looked to establish their place within a popular print culture newly dominated by crisp monochrome photographs. The use of studio photographs, however sparing, was one means of conveying these magazines' new investment in a professional, contemporary look centered on the photographic image.
- 25 Two covers credited to Pagano exemplify the new look of *Inside Detective*. Though posed by models in studios, each invokes the conventions of the candid photojournalistic shot, an effect reinforced by the unglamorous use of gray tones. While the credit line 'Cover photo by Pagano' turned up intermittently in issues of *Inside Detective* through the late

1950s, two photographers identified by name, Bill Stone and Burt Owen, were responsible for the majority of monochrome covers that expressed Dell's new look. Owen, in particular, was a prolific commercial photographer of the 1950s and played a major role in the shift towards crisp black and white imagery in *Inside Detective*.¹⁴ He typically shot his covers across several planes of action, with human movement approaching the foreground so as to suggest a spatial depth and heighten the sense of a dynamic event captured as it was occurring.

- 26 Until 1959, when the look of *Inside Detective* was redesigned once again, most of the magazine's covers employed images of this sort, freezing a criminal situation at the moment of its greatest intensity. The precise role played in this stylistic shift by the Pagano Studios, Dell art director Fernando Texidor, or Owens and Stone themselves is difficult to ascertain. By the mid-1950s, in any event, the use of staged photographs that mimicked the textures and compositional conventions of photojournalism had become common across several magazines, including those from other publishers, such as Fawcett and Hillman.
- 27 Only the most expanded definition of photojournalism would include photographs such as these, of course, given their staged action and use of models. Nevertheless, these monochrome images conveyed a candid, observational character that was missing from the posed shots common in the true crime magazines of earlier decades. In the 1940s, studio shots typically labored to display a range of characters in static tableaux that were often spread across two adjacent pages. In contrast, the posed cover photographs of mid-1950s Dell magazines, however contrived, suggested the actual dramatic moment caught in a flash. Designed to introduce and accompany genuine photographs from a criminal case, these staged photographs compressed the key tensions of the accompanying story, animating them in a way that official imagery could not.

America's Sin Cities

- 28 The visual field in which the true crime magazine circulated during the 1950s, included a variety of new magazine types in which black and white photography was the most common illustrative form. These magazine types included newly popular celebrity exposé titles (like *Confidential* and its dozens of imitators), pocket-sized periodicals (like *Photo*) specializing in photographic treatments of moral transgression, and a new class of men's adventure magazines (such as *For Men Only* or *Fury*) filled with photographic spreads claiming to show the prevalence of vice and sexual traffic in a wide range of settings. The popular print culture of this period included, as well, an ongoing series of one-shot publications, such as *Vice over America*, that offered up dozens of monochrome photographs documenting the immorality and criminality deemed to be omnipresent throughout American society.
- 29 I have traced the broader political background of this moral panic elsewhere, linking it to a widely publicized U.S. Senate investigation (that of the so-called Kefauver Commission) into racketeering and municipal corruption.¹⁵ These political events are less significant for my purposes here than the enormous production of photographic imagery that followed in their wake. Across the various periodical types just mentioned, the vice exposé article, typically focused on a single city and inevitably offering images of nighttime 'sin' districts, becomes a standard feature of most issues all through the 1950s. The provenance of the images accompanying such articles was rarely clear; many of them

were evidently recycled and repurposed from earlier true crime stories and magazine features, or credited to stock photo agencies. Only rarely, it appeared, were they produced by professional photographers assigned by the magazines themselves.

- 30 This wave of urban exposé articles had two demonstrable effects upon the cultural position and identity of true crime magazines during the 1950s. The first, and most significant, is that it offered such magazines a pretext for publishing forms of content that went beyond the documentation of a single, isolated crime. In particular, the vice exposé feature expanded the range of visual materials available to the true crime magazine. Figure 14 shows two-page spreads of the sort that became common in these magazines by the mid-1950s. While image sources are not credited, one can discern some combination of the stock photograph, the posed studio shot, and the genuinely documentary image supplied by a magazine's contributors. The discrepancies of journalistic status between these different classes of image were less troublesome in articles that claimed to be documenting a generalized moral condition rather than a specific, circumscribed crime. The juxtaposed images of the vice exposé appeared to be surveying a loosely defined context of vice rather than documenting any single criminal act. As no specific event was referenced or implied, the genuine character of any one of these images was of little concern.
- 31 As noted, true crime magazines had labored throughout their history to counteract the fragmentation of the criminal event into discrete visual elements, like weapons and buildings, whose photogenic character was usually weak. The vice exposé posed no such challenge. Almost invariably, the typical scenes of the urban exposé article were organized as spaces of visual seduction. Exposé articles were able to mobilize longstanding photographic traditions whose interest had already been confirmed – those involving the representation of such phenomena as the nighttime city, neon signage, and the half-concealed sexual encounter. While insinuations of criminality ran through all of these articles, crime itself was absorbed within a loose construction of half-public worlds of illicit nighttime activity.¹⁶
- 32 In the sensational print culture of the 1950s, lines of stylistic and thematic continuity joined the exposure of vice in mid-American cities to the uncovering of scandals involving the rich and celebrated, or to misogynistic articles that feigned alarm over standards of sexual propriety among women. In this respect, the second effect of the exposé wave upon the true crime magazine was a narrowing of its intertextual distance from other magazine genres. While the true crime magazine once labored to distinguish itself from the pulp fiction or true confession magazines that sat alongside it on newsstands, in the 1950s its greatest affinities were to the celebrity scandal magazine and the male-oriented adventure magazine.
- 33 The urban exposé genre became a key point of intersection between these various genres, migrating across them and, in the process, contributing to a stylistic consistency among different magazine types. The city exposé layout, with its montage of photos showing nocturnal streetscapes and nightclub revelers, endured until the early 1960s as a visual feature shared by a wide variety of magazines (including mainstream news magazines such as *Life* or the Canadian *Maclean's*). Likewise, on the covers of true crime magazines and those of other genres that flourished alongside them, the gray-tone photograph, set against luridly colorful backdrops, became a predictable design element. In their combination, the gray photograph and brightly colored frame were able to convey both a sense of candid journalistic veracity and the promise of sensationalistic excess.

- 34 Scholarly interest in the visual culture of crime has expanded noticeably over the last decade, evident in the publication of books collecting police ‘mug shots’ from different national contexts¹⁷ and in retrospectives of the crime photography published in mainstream newspapers and periodicals. What distinguishes the canonical figures of crime-oriented photojournalism from the suppliers of photographs to the true crime magazines discussed here is the focus of the former on the conclusive, settled consequences of criminal acts. The American Arthur H. Fellig (pseudonym Weegee) or Mexican photographers Nacho López and Enrique Metinides compensated for their absence from the criminal act itself by producing photographs marked by the inescapable metaphorization that quickly settles onto the standard compositional forms of the newspaper crime photo.¹⁸ Photographs of dead bodies, innocent bystanders, or incarcerated criminals almost immediately come to stand for reflections on the futility of life, the indifference of crowds, or the destiny which leaves criminal ‘big shots’ cut down to size by their own misdeeds. On the front page of the daily newspaper, photographs such as these could serve as effective condensations of a crime’s broader import, even when the compositional conventions of such photographs were repeated from one day to the next. For the true crime magazine, however, with its multiple stories and need for dozens of illustrations per issue, the images of finality offered by Weegee and other consecrated photojournalists would not offer sufficient variety.
- 35 A more socially expansive understanding of crime has marked large-scale exhibitions like the 2010 *Crime et châtime*nt show at the Musée d’Orsay in Paris or book-length studies of crime imagery in Mexico.¹⁹ Here, crime is understood in the way that Dominique Kalifa has theorized it; more than a simple theme, crime is the basis of a ‘vast, anonymous intertext’²⁰ in which collective anxieties and aesthetic styles interact across multiple cultural forms to produce a generalized sense of aestheticized menace and sensation. Kalifa is writing of the French Belle Epoque, in which a preoccupation with urban disorder expressed itself most forcefully in the chromatic engravings of the popular illustrated periodical.²¹
- 36 The ‘vast, anonymous intertext’ in which the American true crime magazine of the 1950s flourished pulled together anxieties over urban decay, Cold War concerns about national moral weakness, newly intrusive coverage of the private lives of celebrities, and shifts in the social acceptability of certain classes of sexual imagery and behavior. The intense circulation of images during this period, from photographic studio sessions to different varieties of sensation-oriented print culture, helped to solidify this intertext and endow it with historical distinctiveness. So, too, did the striking, if uncoordinated, standardization of layout practices and design principles across a range of magazines specializing in different combinations of crime, vice, and exposure. The black and white magazine photograph, usually of uncertain provenance and dubious journalistic value, was the pre-eminent cultural form in all of these processes.

NOTES

1. The larger research project on which this article is based, entitled 'Crime, Visuality and Print Media,' is supported by a Standard Research Grant from the Social Science and Humanities Research Council of Canada. I gratefully acknowledge the research assistance of Susana Vargas-Cervantes and Robert Read on this project. A very special thank you, as well, to Vanessa Schwartz, Thierry Gervais, and Catherine Clark.
2. For a useful overview of these periodical forms, see the online archive Dime Novels and Penny Dreadfuls, <http://www-sul.stanford.edu/depts/dp/pennies/home.html>, accessed May 5, 2010.
3. For a fuller account of the true crime magazine and its decline from the 1960s onwards, see Will STRAW, *Cyanide and Sin: Visualizing Crime in Fifties America* (New York: PPP/Andrew Roth Gallery, 2006).
4. For a more detailed discussion of these other forms, see Will STRAW, 'Nota roja et journaux jaunes : Popular crime periodicals in Quebec and Mexico,' forthcoming *Aprehendiendo al criminal: medios y crimen en América del Norte*, ed. Graciela MARTINEZ-ZALCE, Susana VARGAS-CERVANTES, and Will STRAW (Mexico City, Mexico, UNAM: Centro de estudios sobre America del norte, 2010).
5. David CAMPANY, *Photography and Cinema* (London, Reaktion, 2008).
6. See, for detailed histories of these image types, the following, among many others: Allan SEKULA, 'The Body and the Archive,' *October*, no. 39 (Winter 1986): 3–64; Jonathan FINN, *Capturing the Criminal Image: From Mug Shot to Surveillance Society* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2009).
7. 'Meet the Magazine Editor: Joseph Corona, Managing Editor, "True Detective" and "Master Detective",' *Writers' Journal* 20, no. 1 (September 1949): 4.
8. For reports on the rates paid by U.S. true crime magazines for photographs see, for example, the untitled market report on *True Detective Mysteries* and *Master Detective*, in *Author and Journalist*, March 1933, p. 28; 'Two New Periodicals Are Added to Hillman Magazine Group,' *Writer's Journal* 1, no. 3 (May 1940): 5; 'Forum,' *The Writer's Digest* 26, no. 3 (February 1946).
9. 'Feature Detective Cases Is Set,' *Writers' Journal* 2, no. 5 (January 1941): 3.
10. One partial exception to this lack of historical work, though it deals with France rather than the United States, is Françoise DENOYELLE, *La lumière de Paris: Les usages de la photographie 1919-1939*, vol. 1–2 (Paris, L'Harmattan, 1997).
11. Gowland died as this article was being written. See 'Peter Gowland, a Photographer Whose Women Graced 1,000 Walls, Dies at 93,' *New York Times*, April 4, 2010, <http://www.nytimes.com/2010/04/05/arts/design/05gowland.html>, accessed May 10, 2010.
12. Peter GOWLAND, email correspondence with the author, April 8 and 19, 2006.
13. This is suggested on the website Modern Thrills Pulp Magazine History, <http://www.hilgle.com/realnazi4.html>, accessed May 12, 2010.
14. For a longer discussion of Burt Owen and his work, see Will STRAW, *Cyanide and Sin* (note 3), 11–12.
15. Will STRAW, 'Urban Confidential: The Lurid City of the 1950s,' in *The Cinematic City*, ed. David B. CLARKE, 110–28 (London: Routledge, 1997).
16. See, for an interesting treatment of the regulation of nighttime morality in Paris, Guy PARENT, 'Preface,' in *La Moudaine: Histoire et archives de la Police des Mœurs*, ed. Véronique WILLEMEN, 7–11 (Paris: Editions Hoebeke, 2009).

17. See, for example, Peter DOYLE, *City of Shadows: Sydney Police Photographs, 1912–1948* (Sydney: Historic Houses Trust of New South Wales), 200.

18. See, for example, Enrique METINIDES, *El Teatro de los hechos* (Mexico, D.F.: Instituto de Cultura de la Ciudad de México/Ortega y Ortiz, 2001); John MRAZ, *Nacho López, Mexican Photographer* (Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press, 2003); Anthony LEE and Richard MEYER, *Weegee and Naked City* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2008). It should be noted that, while crime is a relatively minor focus of Nacho López's photography, it is one of the most discussed aspects of that work.

19. See, for example, Jesse LERNER, *El impacto de la modernidad: Fotografía criminalística en la ciudad de México* (Mexico, D.F.: Turner, 2007).

20. Dominique KALIFA, *L'encre et le sang. Récits de crime et société à la Belle Époque* (Paris: Fayard, 1995), 107.

21. In the French context, the best-known periodical form specializing in true crime subsequent to *La Belle Époque* was the crime-oriented weekly newspaper, of which *Détective* or *Police Magazine* are important examples. In the late 1940s, articles and illustrations from the American magazines *Master Detective* and *True Detective*, both belonging to the Macfadden company, were translated and repackaged in the French language magazine *Super Détective*, published by Editions de la Renaissance, 59-61 rue de la Fayette, Paris.

ABSTRACTS

This article deals with a genre of American periodical, the so-called 'true crime magazine,' during the period of its greatest popularity, in the 1940s and 1950s. While claiming to treat crime in a photojournalistic fashion, these magazines employed a variety of strategies in order to render their images dynamic and sensational. These included the use of studio photographs featuring models, the organization of pictures within inventive layouts, and the use of non-photographic illustrations.

AUTHOR

WILL STRAW

Will Straw is a professor within the Department of Art History and Communications Studies at McGill University. He is the author of *Cyanide and Sin: Visualizing Crime in 50s America* (PPP Editions, 2006) and of over a hundred articles on popular music, cinema, and urban culture. He is co-editor of the book *Circulation and the City: Essays on Urban Culture* (McGill-Queens University Press, 2010) and currently directs a research project on media and urban culture in Montreal.