NOTA ROJA AND *JOURNAUX JAUNES*
POPULAR CRIME PERIODICALS IN QUEBEC AND MEXICO

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This article[1] is concerned with representations of crime in the popular print media in two regions of North America. It deals with two traditions that are the object of increasing attention by scholars in both places, though that scholarship is in its early stages. These traditions are the Mexican *nota roja*, a form which has reinvented itself continuously throughout the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, and the Québecois *journal jaune*, whose presence has diminished, since the 1960s, to the point where very few periodicals for which this designation is appropriate are still published. Each of these traditions will be discussed individually, though both will be set within a common framework through which the capacity of crime to generate a variety of print culture forms should become evident.

Nota roja is a Mexican term for the chronicling of violence and crime; it has come to stand more generally for the variety of ways in which crime may be narrated within popular cultural forms (e.g., Brocca, 1993; Laurini and Diez, 1988; Piccato, 2001). While the label occasionally serves to designate crime fiction, we are using it here in its more restricted sense, to refer to newspapers and magazines specializing in true (rather than fictionalized) crime. Examples of the *nota roja* from the 1930s through the present include *Detectives*, *Metropoliciaca*, *Nota Roja*, *Policía*, *Prensa Policiaca* and *Alarma*.

The Québecois term *journaux jaunes* (derived from "yellow press," a U.S. term for newspapers of low esteem) was applied to cheaply-printed newspapers or magazines which, during the 1950s and 1960s, covered crime, morality, and a wide range of sensations within Quebec. For the most part, the category consisted of magazines of varying sizes and publication frequencies, like the 1950s *Montréal Confidentiel* and the more long-lived *Allo Police*.

Neither of these periodical genres was original or distinctive in an absolute sense. Indeed, both the Mexican *nota roja* and Québecois *journaux jaune*s took shape through particular assemblages of elements from the tabloid newspaper, the judiciary gazette, the fiction magazine, and more peripheral genres such as the comic book or the moral-confession magazine. The migration of these influences from one

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Photos in this article belong to Will Straw's private collection.

periodical type to another transpired within each national culture, but it was often also transnational. (Mexican periodicals often borrowed or purloined photographs from U.S. true crime magazines, for example.) Nevertheless, the Quebec *journaux jaunes* and the Mexican *nota roja* each represent a distinctive national tradition within crime-oriented periodical publishing. That distinctiveness is evident, above all, in the particular combinations of visual materials assembled within each magazine. The magazines and newspapers of each national tradition show consistent and distinctive ratios between staged and genuine photographs, official and counterfeited documents, clean and cluttered layouts.

For each of these traditions, one may construct a genealogy consisting solely of those periodicals which made crime their overriding preoccupation, but to do so would offer a misleading account of the place played by crime in generating varieties of print culture. Since the late nineteenth century, criminality has been tied to broader questions concerning a public culture and associated controversies over morality and the limits of acceptable behavior. That loosely-defined domain of activity —the French call it *la mondaine*— took shape within coverage of newly emergent worlds of public entertainment and sites of sociability (such as variety theatres and dance halls). An invisible frontier divided such coverage from the journalistic documentation of crime, and *la mondaine* may be viewed broadly as a wide field of urban sensation crossed by historically specific practices designated as criminal. Indeed, for many decades, a section of the Parisian police devoted to public immorality and its criminal forms (such as prostitution and homosexuality) was called "La Mondaine" (Pinson, 2008). As Guy Parent suggests, in his introduction to a book covering the history of this law enforcement branch, "'La Mondaine' is, above all, the world of night time, of information and informers… it is the world of money, glitter, champagne and women" (Parent, 2009: 7; my translation).

The coverage of criminality in the proper press found its place, as well, within another loosely bounded body of discourse, similarly defined most fully within French print culture: that of the "social fantastic." Most fully elaborated by the poet, novelist, and screenwriter Pierre Mac Orlan, the notion of the "social fantastic" presumes that the genuinely marvelous and mysterious are as much a feature of the modern urban world as of the natural spaces (like moors and Transylvanian forests) with which the fantastic had long been associated in Western culture (Mac Orlan, 1928). Crime, in this sense, is part of a generalized aestheticization of cities, one that draws nourishment from shadowy spaces (like alleys or warehouses) and sites of transition (like ports or railroad stations). Here, as with *la mondaine*, the emphasis of journalistic and fictional treatments of crime is on urban night worlds, whose distinct populations and practices are heavily marked by crime but not reducible to it.

The Mexican *nota roja*

Scholarship on the Mexican true crime periodical has been nourished by growing interest in two media whose forms and personnel overlapped considerably with those of the *nota roja*. In recent years, considerable attention has been paid to Mexican crime-oriented photojournalism, and, in particular, to the practice of photographers who worked across a range of periodical genres. The best known of these, Enrique Metinides and Nacho López, worked in venues that included both mainstream newsmagazines and the more respectable examples of *nota roja*. The work of these photographers has been the focus of international museum retrospectives and monographs over the past decade (e.g., Metinides, 2001; Mraz, 2003.)

The other medium pertinent to an understanding of the *nota roja* is the Mexican comic book. Mexican comic books of the 1950s and subsequent decades are distinctive in large part because their illustrations often offered combinations of drawn and photographic imagery (as in the highly-regarded work of José G. Cruz) (Rubenstein, 1999). The specific role of sequential photographic narrative, as a form migrating across several genres within Mexican print culture, has been the focus of detailed, theoretically-informed scholarship by photographic historians, most of them writing for the journal *Luna Córnea* (Aurrecoechea, 1999; Bartra, 1999).

1. *Detectives,*
September 14, 1936. Front Cover.

2. *Detectives*,
September 14, 1936. Back Cover.

Photos 1 and 2 show the front and back covers of the September 14, 1936 issue of *Detectives*, a weekly magazine launched in Mexico in 1932. *Detectives* offered itself as a true crime magazine; its title, and the type face in which it was set, were clearly borrowed from the famous French weekly *Détective*, launched in 1928 by the Gallimard publishing house. The content of most issues of the Mexican *Detectives* was varied in tone and degrees of journalistic actuality. The issue shown here

includes articles on the American gangster Alvin Karpis, on the poor treatment of film extras in Hollywood, on the phenomenon of sleep-walking murderers, and on Mexican gangsterdom. What unites all these is the inflection of a variety of social and political phenomena by a sense of physical or psychological violence.

The difference between the front and back covers of this issue of *Detectives* exemplifies a pattern that would mark this magazine throughout the 1930s. Front covers were typically painted, in lurid colors akin to those of the U.S. pulp magazine, while the back covers offered photographs, usually tinted in shades of blue or grey. From the 1930s through the 1950s, the front covers of true crime periodicals in Mexico would offer expressionistic imagery, drawn or painted, which suggested a fictionalization of crime, often in fantastic settings that evoked other visual genres like the theatrical poster or the comic strip. This imagery would contrast sharply with interior black and white photographs whose styles were either those of institutional documentation (mug shots and images of police work) or an increasingly morbid photojournalism.

In his authoritative study of Mexican crime photography, Jesse Lerner shows the reliance of *Detectives* on the archives of the well-established Mexico City photo agency Casasola for the dozens of interior shots that illustrated the various articles in each issue (Lerner, 2007: 7). Often, Lerner notes, these photographs were assembled in disjointed montages that obscured their journalistic character. This reliance on archives and stock shot libraries was characteristic of magazines that could not afford full-time investigative reporters or photojournalists. It was also typical of periodicals whose rhythms of publication were often irregular, or whose distribution patterns discouraged high levels of journalistic currency that might quickly make an issue seem dated. Indeed, true crime magazines in a number of countries were regularly full of articles about "classic," historical crimes, or broader crime-related phenomena (like confidence games) in large measure because such stories could be planned in advance, produced using archival materials, and reprinted over multi-year cycles.

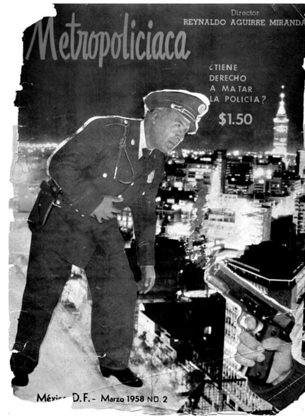
The spatial proximity of photographs to drawn or painted illustrations within these magazines, and the interweaving of these to tell ostensibly true stories of criminality, would characterize Mexican crime periodicals until the 1960s. In the 1940s and 1950s, the multiple forms of print culture falling under the rubric *nota roja* —a general term for crime-oriented magazines and newspapers— were influenced, even in their non-fictional variants, by what Armando Bartra calls "the two great canonical genres of Mexican narrative fiction: the crime-story photo-novella and photomontage" (Bartra, 1999: 192-193).

The best-known use of sequentially-arranged photographs to tell stories within print media came in Italy in the 1940s, with the emergence of what the French call the *photoroman* and the Italians the *fotonovela*. Evelyn Sullerot is among the many historians of the *fotonovela* who trace its origins to 1947, when two Italian publishers, Stefano Reda and Damiano Damiani, simultaneously launched magazines in which stories were told using photographs of posed actors (Sullero, 1963). The narrative genre most closely associated with the *fotonovela* or *photoroman,* particularly in its early years, was romance, and the form is stereotypically associated

with a female readership. Initially, these magazines used stills from live-action films. Indeed, a common way of understanding the Italian *fotonovela* in its early years, Armando Bartra suggests, was as a slowed-down version of a movie (1999: 196).

In his article on sequential narrative in the Mexican press, Armando Bartra sets out to counter the claim that the *fotonovela* was an Italian invention. He argues that the first *fotonovelas* were Mexican, and that they did not spring, as did the first Italian versions, from the attempt to move "backwards" from films, to slow them down into still images. Rather, the Mexican *fotonovela* moved to introduce a sense of narrative and movement to still photographs, placing them in sequence and animating them with word balloons. To bolster his case, Bartra reproduces an image from the story "La herencia maldita," which appeared in a 1936 mass circulation Mexican magazine. "La herencia maldita" consists of photographs arranged in sequence, and captions used to describe them, but there is nothing new here.[2] However, this story also contains dialogue balloons, a feature which Bartra claims makes this the first genuine use of the *fotonovela*, 10 years before the Italians claimed to have invented the form.

3. *Metropoliciaca*, August 1958.



4. *Metropoliciaca,* February 1958.

By the end of the 1940s, Bartra suggests, the typical Mexican *photo novela* (as the *fotonovela* was known in Spanish) was, in fact, a work of photomontage, through the overlaying of backdrops, characters cut-outs, and other graphic materials to tell a story. In the 1950s, with the further development of the Mexican true crime magazine, eccentric overlays of human figures and photographed backdrops on the covers of periodicals showed the migration of image-making strategies from fanciful *fotonovelas* to quasi-journalistic true crime magazines. Photos 3 and 4 show two covers from 1958 issues of the Mexican true crime magazine *Metropoliciaca*. The

[2] Historians of comic strips and other sequential narrative forms have gone far in recent years in uncovering predecessors of the *fotonovela* or *photoroman*. See, for example, the website The Visual Telling of Stories, and its section "Photographic Features Before 1939: Four Photocrimes with Answers," on its Weekly Illustrated, Photo Magazine page, http://www.fulltable.com/VTS/m/mag/w/photocrime/b.htm, accessed 20 December 2009. I am grateful to Lance Rickman for bringing this site to my attention.

conventional questions we might ask of these images —whether the photographic elements they are composed of are conventionally journalistic (taken by photojournalists working for the magazine or for photo agencies) or posed by models— is of little import. With their clashes and incongruities of color, scale, and perspective, these montages represent no conventional or possible photojournalistic vantage point.

Well into the 1960s and 1970s, a few Mexican true crime periodicals, like *Mundo Policiaco* and *Revista de policía*, persisted with lurid painted covers. Such covers seemed increasingly residual, particularly as the interiors of these magazines were more and more filled with black and white photographs employing the codes of photojournalism. (In these magazines, one finds the familiar combination of stock photographs, police mug shots, and more conventional news photos, none of them credited.) The significant development of the 1960s, however, is the consolidation of the modern tabloid weekly newspaper as the key form of specialized crime periodical. *Alarma*, launched in 1963, remains the best known of these (and, after interruptions, is still published). Other titles of the past four decades include *Opinión pública*, *Patrulla*, *Agente confidencial*, *Linterna*, *Crimen*, and *Alerta*. In formal terms, the most striking characteristic of these publications is their increased reliance on the daily newspaper as a formal model. The covers of periodicals like *Alarma* and *Alerta* mix journalistic headlines and actuality photographs in a claim to currency that was rarely part of the self-presentation of earlier magazines like *Detectives* or *Metropoliciaca*.

With these changes, one also witnesses the professionalization of photojournalism as a practice within a periodical's production process. Two recent full-length audiovisual treatments of Mexican photojournalists specializing in crime —the documentary film *El Diablo y la Nota Roja* (2008) and web-based series "Alarma"— demonstrate the competition among press photographers to be the first at a crime scene, or the pressures of deadlines and demanding editors that drive their practice.[3] These means of dramatizing and romanticizing the work of the photojournalist have a long pedigree, of course, reaching back at least as far as the Hollywood cycle of tabloid newspaper films of the early 1930s. For our purposes, the interest of these documentaries is as evidence of processes of image acquisition distinct from the logics of assembly of older, crime-oriented periodicals. It is clear from the most cursory examination of these earlier titles, like *Detectives* or *Metropoliciaca*, that they employed few, if any, photographers and that responsibility for their image content rested with personnel who combined archival photos or police mug shots in twisted collages to liven them up. In contrast, the claim of post-1960s Mexican crime newspapers on reader attention now depends on the fresh images of dead bodies or crime scenes from events of the previous day or week. Such images, issue after issue, dominate the covers of magazines like *Alarma* and daily Mexican newspapers like *El Gráfico* and *La Prensa*. The dramatic intensity of these images compensates, at least in part, for the high level of standardization that has come with their daily or weekly repetition.

[3] *El Diablo y la Nota Roja*, directed by John Dickie, UK/Mexico, 2008; Vice Magazine, VBS.TV, "Alarma," Parts 1-3, http://www.vbs.tv/watch/vbs-news/alarma-1-of-3, accessed January 10, 2010.

Throughout much of the history of crime-oriented print culture in Mexico, crime sat within a complex of thematic, stylistic, and moral motifs that criss-crossed formats and genres of discourse, from the gossip column to the observational *feuilleton*. Until the 1980s or 1990s, as well, treatments of crime in newspapers and magazines had at least occasional recourse to versions of *la mondaine* or the social fantastic, which set crime in titillating nighttime worlds of moral transgression and experimentation. The domination of crime coverage in recent years by photographs of dead bodies, typically on daytime streets or fields, has closed off these lines of association. The effect of the traumatic death photograph, Barthes noted, is punctual, evacuating connotation even as one seeks, in a subsequent interpretive move, to situate it within a general diagnosis of social condition (1961). Crime coverage in Mexico, Lara Klahr and Barata suggest, now elicits new vocabularies of analysis born in a rupture between such coverage and popular traditions of press-based entertainments. This new vocabulary has, at its core, such terms as "security," "public security," "police," "justice," and "public insecurity" (Lara Klahr and Barata, 2009: 49).

The Quebec *journaux jaunes*

Our account of the Quebec *journal jaune* begins in the 1940s, when crime-oriented print culture in that Canadian province manifested itself across several genres and formats. In particular, a number of magazines published at the beginning of the decade bore a close resemblance to the American pulp magazine. One of the leading titles in this group was *Mon Magazine Policier*, printed on cheap paper and containing fiction with very few other sorts of content. For the most part, *Mon Magazine Policier* consisted of fictional stories translated into French from U.S. sources or reprinted from French publications. It was one of a range of Québecois pulps specializing in popular fictional genres whose variety mirrored that of U.S. periodicals; throughout the 1940s, it was sold alongside magazines specializing in Western stories and romance fiction.

Popular Québecois print culture of the 1940s is interesting in terms of the degree of its isochrony with U.S. and French periodicals operating within similar genres. It would appear, for example, that the Quebec pulp fiction magazine endured slightly longer than its equivalents in the United States. In the U.S., the market for pulps evaporated quickly in the 1940s, their readership dividing among a youthful audience for comic books and an older readership for the paperback novels which came to occupy an ever increasing cultural and commercial space. In Quebec, both the comic book and paperback novel would take significantly longer to establish themselves, leaving pulp-like magazines to occupy a cultural space that endured at least until the end of the 1940s.

One of the most important and distinctive of Québecois print genres in the 1940s and 1950s was the so-called *roman en fascicule* (literally, a novel in booklet form). The history of nineteenth- and twentieth-century publishing in several countries is full of examples of literature sold in booklet form, either as inexpensive

single titles or by subscription. While the Québecois *roman en fascicule* based its format on predecessors published in France, there was an important delay in the popularization of this French model by Quebec publishers. The golden age of the French *roman en fascicule* was the 1920s and 1930s, while their Québecois equivalents began publication in the 1940s and would continue until the 1960s.

Large numbers of *romans en fascicules* devoted to romance fiction were published in the 1940s and 1950s, but the format is best remembered for its crime and thriller fiction. Those who have written on the *roman en fascicule* as a historical phenomenon include Vincent Nadeau, author of a highly informative 1983 article, and Norbert Spehner, whose book *Le roman policier en Amérique française* summarizes the factors that made the *roman en fascicule* popular. In Spehner's analysis, these include Quebec's industrialization and urbanization, its opening up to U.S. popular cultural themes, and the rarity of European or French publications because of World War II (2000). Like the English-Canadian true crime magazine (Straw, 2004), the Québecois *roman en fascicules* was one response to measures taken by Canada's wartime government in 1940 to limit the importation of foreign goods and thus protect currency. With popular periodicals from the United States and France now on the restricted list, Canadian publishers in both languages moved to produce national equivalents to fill the gap.

5. *Montréal Détective Enrg.: Une nuit d'Epouvante*. Date unknown.

Photo 5 shows one of the more luridly illustrated of the crime-oriented *roman en fascicule* titles, *Éditions Montréal Détective*, featuring the recurrent hero Domino Noir. Like romance novels and other forms of popular fiction, *Éditions Montréal Détective* was published by the company Police-Journal Enrg., operating at 1130 rue Lagauchetière est in Montreal. In one of his important studies of the *roman en fascicule*, Vincent Nadeau suggests that the Police-Journal Enrg. published some 8,000 titles in the "little novel" format (Nadeau, 1983: 251).

Nevertheless, the success of the *roman en fascicule*, through the late 1950s and early 1960s, should not obscure an important tendency within the field of crime-oriented popular publishing in Quebec: the slow displacement of fictionalized versions of crime in favor of sensationalist narratives and images embodying (and sometimes mimicking) the forms of journalism. Photos 6 and 7 show two issues of *Police Journal*, the flagship title of the publishing house that was responsible, as noted, for thousands of *romans en fascicules* and other publications. In the early 1940s, issues of *Police Journal* dressed themselves up in the rhetorical and visual codes of journalistic actuality but were, in fact, devoted almost entirely to crime-oriented fiction.

POLICE 7c JOURNAL

VIII No 28 — EN VENTE PARTOUT — MONTREAL, 28 AOUT 1948

ENCORE LE 3e DEGRÉ

(A LIRE EN PAGE

6. *Police Journal*, August 28, 1948.

POLICE 7c JOURNAL

VIII No 23 — EN VENTE PARTOUT — MONTREAL, 4 SEPTEMBRE 1948

LES VACHES S'EN VONT

(A LIRE EN PAGE 2)

7. *Police Journal*, September 4, 1948.

By 1948, however, the content of *Police Journal* had changed remarkably; fictional content lingered, but was increasingly displaced by short reports on criminal activity written in journalistic style. One probable reason for the decline in fictional content was the lifting of wartime restrictions on foreign publications, and subsequent return to the market of fiction magazines from France. Just as plausibly, however, the changed political context of Montreal (and of Quebec more broadly) resulted in a heightened public interest in criminality and the legal-judicial response to it. In historical developments I have described elsewhere (Straw, 1992 and 2010), the political context in Quebec had come to be more and more dominated by crime, particularly in Montreal, where the push for a crime commission and municipal reform to eliminate vice and corruption was of significant public interest. By the early 1950s, these themes would resonate with those of a U.S. popular culture that responded to federal investigations into urban vice with an explosion of films, books, newspaper articles, and magazine features.

In these late 1940s issues of *Police Journal*, one finds many things: stories of famous criminals, editorials against vice and police corruption, true crime stories purloined from U.S. magazines, lists of laws, and innumerable other forms of mis-

cellany whose only common feature is the invocation of criminality. Some of the most elaborate features in *Police Journal* during this period were the lists of brothels and of prostitutes, offered in considerable detail. They named people and alleged crimes but they served, as well, to map the corridors of perceived criminality in the city. This emphasis on lists, itineraries, and detailed mappings across time and space is specific to this historical period. In earlier periods, it was common for magazines to focus on the concentrated crime spree, as a dramatic, specific event. Likewise, by the 1960s, true crime magazines would focus on singular, horrific crimes disconnected from broader problems of urban moral health. Only in the late 1940s and 1950s would the treatment of crime in popular Québecois periodicals organize itself regularly around lists and inventories, as if the reports of law enforcement agencies and popular journalistic treatments of crime drew from a shared repertory of formats and styles.

In the post-war Montreal print culture of criminality, as in North America more generally, the displacement of fictional narratives by ostensibly factual documentation also involved a displacement of the private eye or detective by the police professional. The bilingual *Montreal Police Reporter* was published over several years in the early 1950s with the aid of the police, and was full of articles on police procedure and guides to good, honest citizenship. This was part of a broader move toward the localization of crime and a documentation of crime that linked it explicitly to questions of municipal governance. In this transformation, crime became further detached from the more fantastic forms of crime-oriented textuality, such as pulpy stories of masked super villains or detectives. In the 1950s, the crime-oriented print culture of Quebec pulled its readers deeper into an urban fabric marked by highly specific and local traditions of vice and patterns of corruption. The 1950s was the Golden Age of the Québecois *journal jaune*, the small-sized newspaper that took the emphasis on crime noted in *Police Journal* and embedded it within a broader constellation of themes involving public morality, changing values, and muckraking exposé. In their heightened attention to a nighttime culture marked by real or alleged transgressions of moral standards, these publications participated in a distinct construction of a new Québecois *mondaine*. Scholarship on these papers has come exclusively, to date, from gay/lesbian historians, who have traced the dual role of the *journaux jaunes* in fuelling morality campaigns against homosexuality and in offering clues as to the spatial organization of gay/lesbian communities during the 1950s and 1960s (e.g., Chamberland, 1996; Higgins and Chamberland, 1992). The emergence of the *journaux jaunes* in a process of differentiation from other periodical forms and the visual styles that made them distinct have received no scholarly attention. In particular, no analysis has discussed the *journaux jaunes* in relation to patterns of periodical publishing unfolding in other countries during this period.

The *journaux jaunes* born —and, in most cases, discontinued— during the 1950s include *Poubelle et Potins*, *Allo Police*, *Montréal-Confidential*, *Can-Can*, *Tabou*, *Ici Montréal*, and *Crime et sensation*. (For the covers of dozens of these, see my website, "Print Culture and Urban Visuality," at http://strawresearch.mcgill.ca/streetprint/.) What might one say about these publications? The first observation,

perhaps, is that crime persists within them, but it is less and less attached to the crisis of municipal morality that marked the immediate postwar period. It is now interwoven with stories of individual morality, of human oddities, of show business gossip and so on. This dispersion of themes is marked by the breaking up of covers and pages into assemblages of pictures, captions, isolated squares, and so on. Richard Terdiman offers the common way of viewing this break-up of the page, suggesting that the newspaper's juxtaposing of unrelated elements is an operation of trivialization. By emptying out any logic of connection between disparate items, Terdiman suggests, the newspaper works to block any sense of conflict, tension, or causality among them (1985: 122-126.) As such, the newspaper's typical layout contributes to a weakening of social understanding in any integrated sense.

By the end of the 1950s, the increasingly fragmented visual presentation of the Québecois *journal jaune* might, indeed, be seen to express a field of socio-political anxiety broken into the disconnected parcels of punctual sensation. Conversely, we might see this fragmentation as evidence of the multiplicity of social sites where social transformation then manifested itself, as Quebec underwent a process of rapid modernization. Indeed, there are those who find in the scandalous Quebec tabloids of the 1950s and 1960s the working out of a new Québecois morality in the embryonic moments of Quebec' Quiet Revolution, its transformation into a modern, liberal, secular state. As Line Chamberland and Ross Higgins have suggested, we might see these periodicals as gesturing coherently toward a recalibration of that morality, testing it through incident after incident of impropriety or illegality (Chamberland, 1996; Higgins and Chamberland, 1992).

In the mid-1950s, the reformist *Comité sur la moralité publique* (Committee on Public Morality), which had successfully pushed for a Crime Commission to investigate corruption in Montreal, turned its attention to these new tabloids, to the examples of what was widely known as *la presse jaune*. This turn itself mirrored developments in the United States, where Senator Estes Kefauver, having chaired the commission to investigate municipal corruption, then turned his attention to comic books and juvenile delinquency. The *Comité*'s condemnation of Montreal's new tabloids clearly signaled that any sense of an alliance between municipal reformers and the yellow press, on the basis that they were both seeking to uncover the same forms of vice and corruption, had now ended. In 1957, in a long article in the mainstream publication *Vrai*, a reporter wrote, "In Montreal at least 11 trashy newspapers are now being published, with circulation conservatively estimated to be in the neighborhood of 413 000" (*Vrai*, 1957). The article then listed the estimated circulation of different titles. *Allo Police*, launched in 1954, led with a circulation of 145 000. *Nouvelles et potins* and *Montréal Confidential* both had circulations over 100 000. What particularly outraged the *Vrai* reporter was the conviction that behind these publications stood hypocritical men who claimed social respectability, that, in fact, the lawyers and publishers of mainstream newspapers were also behind the new tabloids. In 1955, Montreal's reformist Mayor Jean Drapeau ordered raids against tabloid publishers, seeking to close the most explicit, *Nouvelles et Potins*, which had launched attacks against Drapeau's ally, anti-corruption fighter Pax Plante.

In 1957, a publisher named Gordon Pope transformed a failing New York daily newspaper, the *New York Enquirer*, into a nationally-distributed weekly, the *National Enquirer*. By the early 1960s, as Jeannette Walls recounts, some 40 imitations of the *National Enquirer* began publication (2000: 45). Pope eventually determined that, with migration to the suburbs, and with the decline of the urban newsstand, new venues for selling news periodicals were required. In the late 1960s, Pope decided to reorient his weekly paper toward supermarket sales and a predominantly female readership. The context of the supermarket required that the *National Enquirer*, and its dozens of imitators, play down violent crime and lurid vice in favor of the range of themes we still expect in the *Enquirer* and its competitors: biological oddities, celebrity tragedies, and innumerable forms of popular folklore. More generally, by the late 1960s, the term "tabloid" would come to be associated with coverage of scandals unfolding in the lives of entertainment celebrities rather than with the explicit treatment of violent crime.

In Montreal, this transition was less clear cut. Most titles representative of the *presse jaune* of the 1950s would die out during the 1960s, victims principally of the rise of daily tabloid newspapers like the *Journal de Montréal*. Only very few examples of the *journal jaune*, like *Echo Vedettes* would survive into the 1960s and beyond through an almost exclusive focus on show business and celebrities. *Allo Police*, the dominant crime-oriented weekly paper throughout the 1960s, endured until 2004, but had long faced the main problem confronting such periodicals: their failure to attract advertisers and a resulting dependence on newsstand sales alone.

In his study of French crime-oriented print culture, Dominique Kalifa sees such culture as a popular reaction to official projects of modernization. After Baron Haussmann's destruction of medieval Paris, Kalifa suggests, popular crime fiction reimagined Paris as once more medieval, full of hidden sewers, trap doors, and fantastic plots (Kalifa, 2004: 179-181). Against the modernist dream of a transparent architecture reaching into the sky and directing the citizen's gaze upwards, crime stories cast the city as a space of innumerable hidden corners and underworlds. In Montreal, a point came in the 1960s, amidst the tearing down of popular Montreal neighborhoods and the closing of cabarets and nightclubs, when tabloid stories of neighborhood crime could seem like gestures of preservation, reminding us of Montreal's secret social labyrinths even as they were being bulldozed away.

This destruction of those spaces associated with post-war criminality continues in the present, as construction of Montreal's *Quarter des spectacles* removes the last vestiges of a red-light district situated just to the east of the city's central business area. Of Quebec's *journaux jaunes*, only the marginal titles *Photo Police* and *Hebdo-Police* continue to be published. Unknowingly, in their combination of crime news, advertisements for sexual services, articles on astrology, and other forms of the occult, and coverage of working class entertainment forms (like regional Québecois country music), *Photo Police* and *Hebdo-Police* are not unlike the current incarnation of the Mexican periodical *Alarma*! or the center pages of Mexico City tabloids like *El Gráfico*. What *Photo Police* lacks, unsurprisingly, is the preoccupa-

tion with everyday death and violence that has become the hallmark of the Mexican crime periodical.

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