Book Review/Compte rendu

Sean Hier and **Joshua Greenberg**, eds., *Surveillance: Power, Problems, and Politics*. Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2009, 296 pp. $32.95 paper (978-0-7748-1612-0), $85.00 hardcover (978-0-7748-1611-3)

Surveillance studies have emerged as a vibrant interdisciplinary field of scholarship, and Canadian scholars have made significant empirical and theoretical contributions to this field. Consistently paying more than just a casual nod to Lyon's notion of "social sorting," Haggerty and Ericson's "surveillant assemblage," and Haggerty, Ericson, Hier, and others' accounts of surveillance and "visibility," which are essential Canadian contributions to this field of research, this collection advances Canadian surveillance studies.

For Hier and Greenberg the task of this volume is: "to think about how to define and make possible a future where surveillance practices that have inequitable consequences for already marginalized individuals and groups are not simply taken for granted as normal or necessary features of contemporary society" (p. 5). Indeed, the seductiveness of surveillance practices and techniques regularly result in their uncritical embrace and acceptance as both inevitable and normal. There is perhaps no clearer example of this uncritical embrace than the oft-heard response to increasingly invasive forms of surveillance, that if one has nothing to hide, one has nothing to worry about. Surveillance scholars from A to Z have problematized this claim, including Lyon in his concept of "social sorting." Conscious of Lyon's and others contributions to this field, the rich empirical and theoretical interventions that comprise this collection rise to the editors' challenge, and through a wide range of cases critically engage the normalization of various forms of surveillance, and the power and politics therein.

Separated into four sections, ranging from questions of stigma and social control to environmental design, genetics, and resistance, the collection is comprehensive. Comparable to collections by Haggerty and Ericson (2006) and Monahan (2006), among others, this particular collection is unique in both its strong Canadian content, and the broad range of empirical cases. At almost the molecular level, Elliot's analysis of so-called "overly visible" obese children reminds the reader that surveillance is a technique of governing the body. This re-emerges in slightly

different forms in Gerlach's careful analysis of the impact of DNA identification in the criminal justice system, and Magnet's examination of how biometrics intensifies the criminalization of welfare. Amongst the strongest contributions to this collection, both play on the theme of surveillance and visibility that runs throughout the collection. Keeping in mind the importance of visibility, together with the editors' purpose of problematizing and critiquing the normalization of these technologies, Gerlach notes how the CSI effect is just one example of the unintended consequences of so-called "genetic surveillance," altering how the justice system itself operates.

Moving away from the body and the bodily *per se*, and sensitive to the Foucaultian dilemma of overemphasizing the watched rather than the watchers, Walby employs a "sociology of governance" approach to analyze police surveillance of male-male sex in Ontario, highlighting the importance of the social context in which surveillance techniques are embedded. Similarly, although using quantitative methods, Thompson examines the disciplinary actions of the Liquor Control Board of Ontario. While an interesting case, in part due to his methodological approach, Thompson's piece adheres less to the overall themes of the collection than some of its counterparts.

Also conscious of the social and political context, three contributions consider traditional questions in surveillance studies, from its role in prevention, to questions of privacy and identity. However, they tend to pursue these questions in rather novel ways. Again, responding to Hier and Greenberg's stated aim of critically assessing and problematizing what is presented as normal and inevitable, Parnaby and Reed's analysis of natural surveillance and emerging trends towards "Crime Prevention through Environmental Design" brings compelling sociological concerns regarding race, ethnicity, gender, and power to what are too often banal bureaucratic assessments that serve to cloak such serious inequalities and marginalizing practices. Scanlon considers questions of privacy and the challenges of administering the dead through a careful examination of specific cases of mass deaths, such as the Indian Ocean Tsunami in 2004, and the crash of Swissair flight 111 off the coast of Nova Scotia in 1998. Hamilton rehearses the now well-articulated concerns about identity theft, but her notion of "creditable subjects" provides a clearer conceptualization of the subject who is constituted through the relations of consumer credit as credible, while being simultaneously insecure.

The final 3 chapters of the collection take seriously the caveat that an overreliance on Foucault by surveillance scholars contributes to greater emphasis on the observed than the observers. Here, in sometimes startling and disturbing ways, the watched become complicit in their own surveil-

lance and discipline. Arguably most prescient in the post-9/11 context, these contributions take us full circle, where deviance transforms from public displays of affection by same-sex couples, to, as Larsen and Piché note, failing to be a model of vigilance and responsibility, which includes reporting suspicious and abnormal behaviour. The pervasive media barrage associated with the war on terror and allegedly ubiquitous threats make Larsen and Piché's analysis no less jarring. Almost as a caveat to the remaining chapters that tend to celebrate the possibilities of counter surveillance, resistance, and social movements, Larsen and Piché remind the reader that what appears as empowerment is often simply another expansion of sovereign power, where watching becomes the disciplinary regime. In both Kiss's and Huey's contributions, the notion of resistance and countersurveillance is central, and yet, reflecting on earlier chapters and the overall tone of the collection, one is left asking: is technology neutral, and if not, what is the impact on the user regardless of intention? Flash mobs and various mobile technologies have proven to challenge the capacity of the state in various ways, but the extent to which the technologies themselves have political ramifications ought not be ignored.

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