



Surveillance & Society



Book Review

Marquis, Greg. 2016. *The Vigilant Eye: Policing Canada from 1867 to 9/11*. Winnipeg, MB: Fernwood Publishing.

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Historian Greg Marquis's *The Vigilant Eye: Policing Canada from 1867 to 9/11* provides one of the first comprehensive overviews of police operational history in Canada. There is arguably no better scholar than Marquis to write such a book, a historian with over three decades experience researching Canada's unique history of policing. *The Vigilant Eye* is about the complex, variegated history of operational policing in this country, but it is also a book about surveillance. Synthesizing nearly 150 years of police history, Marquis uses the metaphor of the "vigilant eye" to highlight longstanding trends in the history of Canadian policing away from more explicitly violent, aggressive tactics toward subtler, intrusive means of surveillance embodied in anti-terror laws and the growing adoption of intelligence-led policing tactics.

Marquis's project is ambitious, motivated by the "lack of a basic overview of the development of Canadian law enforcement" in the literature (pg. 3), but his accessible writing style and narrative approach keeps the reader from getting lost or feeling overwhelmed by the breadth of data. Marquis focuses specifically on the operational history of *public* police, though he does acknowledge the importance of the ballooning private security industry at several points in the book. Although Marquis does not take an explicit theoretical stance in the introduction, where he briefly compares what he calls "Whig" and "Marxist-inspired" theoretical explanations of policing (pgs. 4-5), by Chapter 1 it becomes clear that Marquis sides with more critical schools of thought. Throughout the book, Marquis remains skeptical of the official rationales championed by police and is not one for sugar-coating the numerous issues of police racism, colonization, criminalization of dissent, sexism and homophobia, and civil liberties abuse that continue to plague police relations in Canada today. That each of these issues is "rooted in past practices and attitudes" (pg. 3) makes Marquis's book all the more timely and compelling.

The Vigilant Eye consists of six chapters, an epilogue, and an index. Each chapter and its narratives are ordered chronologically, starting with early 19th century British North America and the emergence of a semi-professionalized police force in Chapters 1 and 2. Marquis argues that a semi-professionalized police force in 19th century British North America emerged between the War of 1812 and the 1850s. Even at this early point, Marquis argues, one can find evidence of the larger justice system "becoming both less cruel in terms of punishment and more intrusive in terms of state surveillance of the populace" (pg. 38). British and Irish models strongly influenced the formation of the police in pre- and post-confederation Canada, but what would make Canada's brand of policing truly unique was its "decentralized, haphazard and contingent" (pg. 18) development throughout its many provinces, territories, and urban and rural settings. Marquis returns to this disjointed and fragmentary character of policing throughout the book, and is careful to avoid reifying

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“the police” in Canada as a coherent system. In Chapter 2, Marquis examines more closely the development of policing in large urban centres like Toronto and critically documents the role of the North-West Mounted Police (known today as the Royal Canadian Mounted Police or RCMP) in colonizing the North-West.

Chapter 3 explores the theme of police professionalization from 1900 to the end of WWII, a formative period which involved the establishment of the Chief Constables Association of Canada (CCAC; now the Canadian Association of Chiefs of Police), early efforts to unionize the rank and file, and the increasing adaptation of dactyloscopy, radio, automobile and other “crime-fighting” and surveillance technologies in policing. Against the wishes of the CCAC, which was deeply anti-union, Marquis tells the story of how many police forces at this time began to unionize or form “police associations” (pg. 70). Marquis argues that the CCAC also became central in advancing a “narrowed and misleading” ethos of policing as “crime-fighting” beginning in the 1920s (pg. 94). This crime-fighting ethos, Marquis contends, which continues to be both a core tenet of Canadian police imagery and rhetoric in the 21st century and barrier to reform, has never been an accurate depiction of what police actually do. In the 1920s, for example, police were mostly enforcing petty crimes of drunkenness, disturbing the peace, and traffic violations, despite much talk of “taking down” professional and career criminals.

Next, Marquis turns to the history of policing class conflict and the criminalization of dissent from confederation to the end of the 1960s (Chapter 4) and from 1970-2000 (Chapter 5). Surveillance scholars will find these chapters especially stimulating given the focus on covert policing strategies, social movement monitoring and suppression, and security intelligence. In Chapter 4, Marquis examines the history of policing labour disputes in Canada, and argues that on average municipal agencies were more likely to sympathize with workers than federal (e.g. RCMP) and provincial (e.g. Ontario Provincial Police) ones. Marquis also presents evidence of other instances of policing political dissent prior to the 1960s, including protests against Hitler’s rise to power in 1933 in Toronto and solidarity movements supporting the freeing of Ireland and India from British rule. In Chapter 5, Marquis discusses more contemporary instances of policing dissent, including the infamous October Crisis of 1970, the Squamish Five, Operation Sidewinder, and numerous Aboriginal rights protests. The controversial reform of the RCMP’s Security Service in the 1970s, leading to the creation of Canada’s first civilian spy agency in 1984, is also heavily discussed in the chapter. Marquis argues that by the 1990s, protest policing had shifted from a more liaison driven to a more “militarized approach that stressed intelligence gathering and the use of paramilitary units” (pg. 160).

In the final chapter of the book, which reads more like a standalone section than a conclusion, Marquis comments broadly on several major developments in the Canadian policing field from the end of WWII to present. Marquis reflects on numerous large-scale issues, including police responses to the abolishment of the 1908 *Juvenile Delinquents Act* and capital punishment laws, the bolstered power of police associations by the 1970s, and police racism and racialization of minority ethnic groups. Marquis also uses this chapter to discuss the increasing prominence (and criticism) of “community policing” rhetoric in the 21st century, which today operates alongside developments in policing’s increasing “securitization.” As Marquis observes in the epilogue, today’s police leadership is torn in two directions: on the one hand, there is a growing dialogue on community policing and a focus on partnerships; on the other hand, there is mounting interest in the potential of crime mapping, big data, and predictive policing technologies. What is the future of policing in Canada? One possibility is what Marquis calls “Community Policing 2.0,” in which community policing rhetoric is used to “mask” and obfuscate paramilitaristic efforts by police to “further embed the vigilant eye within communities” (pg. 237). Still, only “[t]ime will tell” (pg. 237), but in the meantime Marquis argues we must do our best to hold police and their governing bodies accountable, turning our “own ‘vigilant eye’ against the police” (pg. 211).

For the reader that is new to Canadian policing and surveillance, *The Vigilant Eye* will serve as an excellent introduction and overview of the history of operational policing in Canada. Theoretically-inclined readers will find the book conceptually undernourished, but what it lacks in theory it makes up for in detailed

narratives based on a near century and a half of historical records. More advanced students of policing and surveillance could spend countless hours mining this book for leads on future case studies and evidence of trends that predate the often myopic and sensationalist claims of state officials. The book also lacks any discussion of method and the central argument is unclear at times, but if readers can look passed these limitations there is still much to be learned from it. Overall, *The Vigilant Eye* is a useful intervention in Surveillance Studies and will be of value to both new and established scholars of policing and surveillance in Canada. Given *The Vigilant Eye's* accessible writing style, critical approach, and coverage of a broad array of themes and issues, the book is also well suited for undergraduate courses on the subject.