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- 1 Rhodri Jeffreys-Jones, *We Know All About You: The Story of Surveillance in Britain and America*
- 2 Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2017. Pp. 290. ISBN: 9780191066542.
- 3 Joseph Michael Gratale
- 4 Reading a book on the topic of surveillance would expectantly, from the standpoint of the reader, include coverage of some key theoretical interventions from the past half-century or so. Numerous references to Michel Foucault, Gilles Deleuze, and Kevin Haggerty, among others, would appear throughout the author's narrative. In Rhodri Jeffreys-Jones's *We Know All About You*, this is not the case. Clearly the author's intent was not to delve into theoretical analyses of surveillance and engage with the writings of social theoreticians past and present. Rather, Jeffreys-Jones's volume is an historical survey of surveillance practices in the United States and the United Kingdom in both its state and private forms. Along with an introduction, Jeffreys-Jones's book includes twelve chapters, a brief conclusion, an appendix, and several illustrations that explore this interesting and highly relevant topic.
- 5 Early on Jeffreys-Jones defines surveillance as "spying on a mass scale" (8). While families and communities engaged in surveillance throughout history, the author views its modern beginnings as a post-1770s development. This, in turn, created a reaction—anti-surveillance. Interestingly enough, this beginning point was in a then newly created nation-state, the United States of America. Its constitution, itself a product of the European Enlightenment, sought to protect American liberties against unreasonable searches and seizures along with other stipulations that articulated a concern about the power of state authorities. Anglo-American colonials had just spent years fighting for independence from the British Empire, what sense would it have made to create an all-powerful state that would deprive the people of their freedoms

and rights they had fought long and hard for? Quite interestingly, Jeffreys-Jones's narrative turns to the institution of American slavery. It was in the American South where a plantation economy that was dependent on black slaves fully developed and required the use of private surveillance networks well into the nineteenth century. With the end of slavery in the late 1860s and the expansion of American capitalism, a new sector emerged in which an individual's financial information or profile was highly desirable; in a word—creditworthiness. This spawned an intensification of surveillance, which included the detective agency sector, in order to formulate credit assessments. As the author points out, in this period, there was no governmental activity that “approached the scale of credit surveillance” (17).

- 6 Moving into the twentieth century the author points out that the UK lagged behind the US in engaging in surveillance activities. The creation of the FBI in 1908 represented an important step in state surveillance capabilities. Surveillance practices in the US extended to the workplace where there existed fears of political radicalization amongst workers in labor unions. Along with anarchism a growing concern about communism had arrived following developments in Russia in 1917 in what has been termed the Red Scare of 1919-1920. Similar concerns of working class radicalization and the bureaucratization of surveillance took hold in the UK around the same period. The Special Branch was created in 1919 to contend with the former, and the latter was addressed through the Government Code and Cypher School, the precursor of GCHQ, (Government Communications Headquarters), which “retained the wartime capacity to intercept cable and wireless communications” (27). Blacklisting was a pre-World War Two phenomenon, although many tend to associate it with the postwar communist hysteria that gripped the US and to a lesser extent the UK in the 1950s. US President Harry Truman, who was at the helm during the early phase of the Cold War, pursued leftists in the federal government, playing a role in the rise of Senator Joseph McCarthy's anti-communist crusade during the early 1950s. Domestic surveillance in the following decades intensified due to the perceived exigencies of the Cold War and the West's struggle against the Soviet Union, China, and international communism. As Jeffreys-Jones points out, despite the end of the Cold War in the 1990s, new surveillance challenges were to be found with Islamist oriented terrorism both prior to and after 9/11. Alongside post-World War Two increased government surveillance in the US and the UK was growing resistance to it at a number of different levels. Demands for reform and the curbing of surveillance practices as well as the individual right to privacy became more prevalent after the 1970s and oscillated between concerns about state power and the growing technological surveillance dynamics of the private sector.
- 7 Following Jeffreys-Jones's historical survey that is included in his first chapter, the narrative focuses on key moments and developments associated with surveillance chapter by chapter. From the development of private detective agencies and blacklisting practices within liberal-democratic societies like the US and the UK, to the foundations of the security state apparatuses and private sector surveillance, *We Know All About You*, explores in detail a range of episodes and developments that have helped define the world we live in through the prism of surveillance. It is a fascinating trajectory that unfolds through Jeffreys-Jones's engaging narrative that does not overwhelm the reader with extraneous coverage and details. For example, in analyzing aspects of private espionage during the nineteenth century, the author concludes that along with the “weakness of law enforcement in the American West, scores of detective agencies—including some of the largest—offered labour spying services” that even

expanded into the domestic realm pertaining to divorce work (55). A turning point arrives in the 1930s with the arrival of the national security state under the Roosevelt administration. Many assume that in the American context such a development was a product of the Second World War; Jeffreys-Jones explains otherwise. With the gradual approach of war during the 1930s Roosevelt was eager to see the US more involved in international affairs and steer the country away from a position of neutrality. The FBI, for example, kept under surveillance those that were against US intervention in the war. Even after the events of Pearl Harbor and US military involvement on two fronts, political surveillance continued unabated. Concerns about political dissent intensified under the Truman and Eisenhower administrations during the Second Red Scare and McCarthyism of the 1950s. By that time, the Central Intelligence Agency was created, later to be followed by the National Security Agency in 1952 to assist the US in its Cold War with the Soviet Union. What is interesting to see in this volume is a section on “McCarthyism” in the UK. Jeffreys-Jones reminds his readers that such a phenomenon had its counterpart across the Atlantic, albeit less in its intensity when juxtaposed to the situation in the US. On March 29, 1950 Robert Vansittart spoke in the House of Lords and declared that sixteen communists held jobs in the Department of Inland Revenue. Did the UK experience anti-communist hysteria as experienced in the US? According to the author there is no comparison. By the mid-fifties “4 million civil servants had been screened in the United States...[whereas] in the same period, 10,000 had been screened and 124 removed from their posts” in the UK (120).

- 8 During the sixties and the seventies domestic concerns about socialism and communism on the part of state authorities in both countries continued through various surveillance operations and even through the application of psychological warfare against the New Left. However, in the US these activities momentarily came under governmental scrutiny and public disclosure during the mid-seventies in the form of commissions and inquiries that ultimately revealed an array of intelligence and espionage excesses that had been carried out by both FBI and CIA surveillance activities. These developments in turn, led to greater regulation and reform not just in the US, but also in the UK and other Western democracies. This period of transparency, however, was short-lived. As the world moved beyond the dynamics of Cold War bipolarity during the 1990s, a new challenge gradually began to emerge in the form of international Islamist terrorism. After the events of 9/11, the US declared a “War on Terror” that required limiting the freedoms and rights of American citizens at home in order to obstruct further acts of terrorism against the US. “Non-US citizens,” Jeffreys-Jones points out, “could be detained for a week without warrant and incarcerated indefinitely if deemed a threat to national security” (174). Further bureaucratization of national security continued in the formation of the Department of Homeland Security in 2003, and increased budgets for other agencies like the NSA. Additionally, private sector security, or outsourcing, became more vital to US state surveillance needs after 9/11. At this point in his volume, Jeffreys-Jones brings in the figure of Edward J. Snowden and his whistle-blowing while employed for an NSA subcontractor. It is a revealing chapter that takes on a central issue associated with contemporary concerns about surveillance: how can a democratic society conduct a global war on terrorism, provide ample security for its population, and manage to simultaneously protect the civil liberties and privacy of its citizenry?
- 9 The book concludes with a chapter on the surveillance policies and practices of President Obama and Prime Minister Cameron bringing the story of surveillance in the

modern age up to the present. A thread that connects past to present and the narrative of the volume in general is that while state surveillance poses a concern for many relative to the issues of freedom and privacy, Jeffreys-Jones warns us that the role of private surveillance in our society should not be overlooked. In both cases vigilance is needed in order to safeguard our values, freedoms, and rights. It is along these lines that *We Know All About You* makes a valuable contribution to reading public, and anyone for that matter, that is interested in the intricacies of public and private surveillance practices as carried out by the US and the UK over the past two hundred years. Rhodri Jeffreys-Jones's volume is a highly readable and important contribution to surveillance history as well as a timely analysis of contemporary surveillance practices.