

David G. Barrie and Susan Broomhall, eds., *A History of Police and Masculinities, 1700-2010* (London and New York: Routledge, 2012), xi, 303 pp. ISBN: 978-0-415-69661-6.

This is an interesting, important and timely book because, as the editors, David G. Barrie and Susan Broomhall, note in their comprehensive introduction, 'Policing provides an excellent case study of how conceptions of masculinity have been constructed and applied over the last 300 years. Police institutions not only incorporate changing models of male authority, but also are closely intertwined with the distribution of power in society' (1). Indeed, there have been few attempts to interrogate the formation and framing of gendered identities within traditionally uniformed, disciplined and (overwhelmingly still) male professions like the military, police and fire services. Existing historical research, taking its cue from sociological studies of 'cop culture', has tended to examine police officers in a fairly generic, un-gendered manner; the long exclusion or marginalisation of women police has been seen as justification alone for the police as a gendered institution, thereby overlooking the multiple gendered identities amongst *policemen*. This book, then, is a welcome addition to this emerging field of inquiry. Moreover, the editors have drawn together an interesting blend of historians, criminologists and sociologists to examine how ideologies about masculinity have shaped – and been shaped by – police institutions, practices and performances over roughly three hundred years. In doing so, the contributors take their own, frequently overlapping, occasionally repetitive, approaches towards interrogating, labelling and accounting for masculine police policy and practice.

The book is, as most edited collections tend to be, geographically unbalanced: of the eleven case study chapters, six deal with British (five English, one Scottish) subjects. Of the other five, we have papers on eighteenth century Paris, nineteenth century Italian police culture, nineteenth and twentieth century Melbourne, turn of the twentieth century American detectives, and the mid twentieth century New York State Police (NYSP). The justification for such an Anglicised reading of police masculinity appears to lie in the cultural footprint left by the 1829 Metropolitan Police reforms, with the creation of the infamous 'Bobby on the Beat', with all that it entailed for popular understandings of police physicality, obedience, discipline and working-class manliness. Barrie and Broomhall describe the 1829 reforms as a 'landmark development' (5) in police organisation that subsequently shaped public perceptions of policing as an inherently masculine job, as well as internalised readings of police culture amongst rank-and-file officers and senior managers. Yet as they note, the conceptions of 'old' and 'new' police models are difficult to sustain anymore, not least because of the longer-term influences of patriarchal culture over police ideology and organisational change. Thus, Matthew McCormack's valuable chapter on the policing of political protest in Georgian England usefully illustrates a longer-term influence over police reform, drawing on military and civilian agendas equally. Moreover, Gerda W. Ray hones in on the "whiteness" of what she provocatively calls the 'Anglo-Saxon' police model that was appropriated by the NYSP during the early to mid twentieth-century. While both chapters go some way to emphasising the multiple masculinities at play within the police service across time and space, the book would have benefited from a broader geographical and temporal spread to better reflect its editors' worthy ambitions.

As ever with cultural history, there is a frustrating tendency amongst some contributors to sideline the lived complexities of masculine identity and practice at the expense of representations – through news reports, pamphlets, memoirs and instruction manuals – of masculine police attributes within print culture. Some contributors slip into the ‘cult of masculinity’ complex examined by Marisa Silvestri in her stimulating analysis of the failings of New Public Management influences in recent police leadership. This ‘cult’ inadvertently depicts an organisational culture that has been constructed and celebrated around hegemonic masculine stereotypes, notably aggressive competition, physicality, a propensity to commit violence, heterosexuality and misogyny. Yet it overlooks the obvious tedium of routine police work, as well as the biographies of the many men and, increasingly, women who did not fit within this stereotypical singular depiction of masculinity. Where there is a clearer link between policy, portrayal and practice – as with Francis Dodsworth’s provocative chapter on the conflicting readings of police violence, or with Ray’s exploration of the NYSP’s counter-subversive policing of black culture – we get a more satisfying sense of the real-world complexities hinted at in the selection of ‘Masculinities’ for the title. However, there needs to be a clearer move – conceptually and methodologically – away from the ideal masculine type of police officer celebrated in the manuals and memoirs towards a better understanding of how individual officers adopted, modified, resisted or challenged such normative stereotypes. Guy Reel points towards this in his interesting study of the American media’s paradoxical portrayal of the police as heroes, bunglers, hypocrites and brave men – which he posits as a reflection of its working- and middle-class readers’ own masculine imperfections – but it would be interesting to know how New York’s policemen responded to this.

By and large, however, the volume as a whole effectively illustrates a variety of masculinities operating within police services across time and space, less so between police officers and the wider (criminal and civilian) community. Thus, we get a clear sense of what distinguishes the masculinity between the plain-clothes detective, who prioritises his manly independence and brain power over his physical strength (as examined by Haia Shpayer-Makov and Guy Reel), and the rank-and-file officer (as explored in an English and Australian context by Joanne Klein and Dean Wilson respectively). We also get a picture of the varieties of ‘national’ police types popularised in the chapters by David Garrioch (on France), Simona Mori (on Italy) and McCormack (on Georgian England), ranging from the martial to civic models. More can be taken from the editors’ valuable discussion of the conceptualization and performance of masculinities in police services, and, whilst it would have helped if more of the contributors had examined police practice at the expense of cultural constructions of policing, there is much to recommend this book to a wider readership. In sum, this worthy book casts significant light on an under-explored facet of police history.

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