

Book Reviews/Comptes rendus

ANNA PRATT, *Securing Borders: Detention and Deportation in Canada*. Vancouver: UBC Press, 2005, 290 p. + index.

In *Securing Borders*, Pratt provides a detailed analysis of the ways that the governance of immigration has shifted over the past fifty years, combining astute policy analysis with a discussion of precedent-setting cases. In her introduction, Pratt suggests that “the first task of this book is to make visible the material conditions, concrete practices, and punitive dimensions of the detention and expulsion of undesirable, undeserving noncitizens” (20). This is achieved through detailed discussion of precedent-setting cases, micro-studies (such as that on the conditions of detention at the now-closed Celebrity Inn in Toronto) and examples of the impacts of these policies and practices on refugees and immigrants in Canada.

While several chapters chart the development of a governing logic which links immigration with risk, criminality, fraud and insecurity, chapter 4 provides a particularly useful genealogical analysis of Canadian immigration policy from the 1950s onward. Conceptually influenced by Foucault’s governmentality analysis, Pratt explores immigration penalty, detention, and deportation as technologies of border control, central to the construction of citizenship in Canada. Pratt’s text also engages the issue of governmental discretion, the crime-security nexus, the impact of the shift from welfare liberalism to neoliberalism, and the conceptual meanings and material practices of border control to provide insight into contemporary practices of immigration governance. Pratt’s analysis of the ways that Canadian immigration policy has unfolded over the last decades is situated in the larger context of border control and international concerns with preserving and enforcing sovereignty. Throughout the text Pratt situates the governance of immigration within the context of a set of actors and agents, technologies, administrative and legal mechanisms, policies and practices, thereby revealing the complicated intertwining of factors that govern immigrants and refugees.

The greatest strength of Pratt’s *Securing Borders* is her assertion that “it is not a brand-new world” (1). While signaling distinctive shifts in the governance of immigration, Pratt demonstrates that contemporary trends were discernible long before the tragic events of September 11, 2001, which have been broadly seen as marking a distinctive new approach to immigration. Instead, Pratt’s text demonstrates that enforcement-oriented approaches, and indeed policies such as the heavily critiqued Safe Third Country Agreement, pre-existed these events. Thus Pratt demonstrates that

the criminalization of immigrants and refugees was well underway before this date, and that September 11 served as an additional justification for already existing punitive anti-immigrant measures.

In her analysis of the complex factors which come together in the contemporary governance of immigration, Pratt zeroes in on what she terms the crime-security nexus, or the governance of immigration through risk-management. In chapter 5, she explains the ways that prevalent preoccupations with risk and fraud (particularly welfare fraud) during the 1980s and 1990s merged with fears about “fraudulent” refugee claims to create the figure of the “bogus refugee on welfare.” Hence the shift from welfare liberalism to neoliberalism was reflected in specific ways in the governance of immigrants and refugees. In particular, Pratt provides a detailed discussion of the impact of this public discourse on the refugee Somali population in Toronto in the mid-1990s. In this micro-study, the criminalization of refugees was manifested through fears about verifying the identity of refugees, and acted upon with specific moves toward enforcement and ultimately expulsion. Here, refugees are reconstituted as risky subjects. This example is reflective of the ways that immigration enforcement and border control more broadly have been reshaped according to perceived threats of fraud and crime, re-figuring the refugee claimant as a “risky subject” rather than a “subject at risk” (160).

Another strength of Pratt’s text is her attempt to unpack contemporary conceptions of “the border.” Pratt’s analysis makes it possible to see that the border has been reconstituted and that various actors and agents have become increasingly intertwined in the detention and deportation of immigrants and refugees in recent years. In chapters 8 and 9, Pratt explores the numerous partnerships and international networks involved in the governance of immigration in the Canadian context, demonstrating that the border is indeed enforced “at a variety of locations through the operations of different modes of power, authorities and technologies” (210). Furthermore, while Pratt astutely recognizes that the governance of immigration has shifted toward risk management and the criminalization of immigrants and refugees, “border control technologies also manifest the brute and bodily coercions of sovereign power that are connected to the defence of territory” (210). In other words, while enacted by an assemblage of practices and authorities, state sovereignty is still at issue in concerns with border control.

An indispensable text, *Securing Borders* highlights some of the tensions that permeate critical citizenship studies. While Pratt makes reference to the operations of racism in the governance of immigration, both in her analysis of policy and practice and in her use of case studies, she is careful to state that “the operations of immigration penalty and the crime-security nexus cannot be reduced to racism” (149). While Pratt recognizes that racism is a central facet of the regulation of immigration, readers will not find a close race analysis in this text. Instead, Pratt focuses on the operations of a range of actors, agencies, and practices in the governance of immigration. While such complicated and wide-ranging analyses are

crucial, the centrality of racism to the governance of immigration, in both contemporary and historical contexts, seems to be under-emphasized in this study. Pratt also suggests that “a general transition can be discerned over the past fifty years from a primary preoccupation with perceived threats to national racial and moral purity to a guiding preoccupation with putative threats to national security” (73), but again fails to explore the continuities in race-based thinking that may have been sustained across some of these important policy shifts.

Of related concern is Pratt’s discussion of sovereignty. While Pratt employs a carefully nuanced analysis which is cautious about reifying or homogenizing the diverse set of actors and practices commonly referenced as “the state,” this stands in tension with her discussion of sovereignty. The linkage between contemporary preoccupations with sovereignty and the creation of an entity that can be referenced as “the state” is an effective means of creating nationalist ideology, central to the construction of citizenship as a form of belonging. Issues of racism and sovereignty become secondary to the discussion of immigration policy and practices of border control through a cursory examination of the ideologies of nationalism, particularly as they are reproduced through discourses of national security, “deserving refugees,” and “criminal immigrants.”

Although not explicitly concerned with the possibilities of resistance to anti-immigration trends, Pratt’s text remains an important resource for those concerned with social justice and the rights of immigrants and refugees. In pointing to the ways in which preoccupations with sovereignty are being called upon to police populations domestically and internationally (60), Pratt’s text signals that concerns with sovereignty remain at the basis of anti-immigration policies and practices. While not the main thrust of this text, this insight points toward the importance of researching, critiquing, and opposing practices of sovereignty at the heart of creating the assemblage of factors known as “the state,” and the policing of the line between “citizens” and “others.”

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