

**Monkkonen, Eric H. *Murder in New York City*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001. Pp. xii, 238. Black and white illustrations, tables, figures, index. US\$29.95 (cloth)**

**Donald Fyson**

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## Book Reviews

oriented culture nation-wide. Ross & Macdonald's work for the T. Eaton Company included stores in Calgary and Saskatoon as well as the Toronto College St. Store (1928–30), with its opulent art deco interior, and the Montreal Store (1925–27), which, by 1931, had added Jacques Carlu's unique streamline modern restaurant. As for the hotels, the author does a masterful job chronicling the architect's impressive series of chateausque, metropolitan and skyscraper palaces for Canadian railway and American chain companies. A "city within a city," the gargantuan Royal York Hotel (1927–29) in Toronto, with the Dominion Square Building and the late Eaton's projects, substantiate the claim that block building interiors steadily appropriated earlier academic and urban planning ideals meant to create order, scale and harmony in metropolitan centres.

Although the continuity of Beaux-arts planning principles in post-war modern public architecture has already been noted by Harold Kalman, Lachapelle makes a strong case for the ongoing influence on current commercial city environments of large pre-1940s buildings. Colossal size, interior streets, segregated circulation routes, and a multi-functional autonomy that turned its back on the city resurfaced by the mid-sixties in mega-structures like Place Bonaventure in Montreal. Moreover, the idea of the interior shopping corridor has continued in the underground city, most fully realized and still growing in Montreal.

Considering its scope, it may seem detrimental that *Le Fantôme Métropolitain* is restricted to the work of one architectural firm operating in Montreal, especially when similar content has recently been covered in the 1998 Canadian Centre for Architecture (CCA) publication *Montreal Metropolis 1880–1930*. Yet the book succeeds in its focused scrutiny almost as a case study, and is held together by weaving the concepts around a taut analysis of the buildings. In summing up a predominant architectural phenomenon of the last century, the book is convincing and it would be unfortunate if it did not appear in an English-language edition.

As for its treatment of Ross & Macdonald, this slim volume is the most comprehensive study of the firm's work published to date. But it is hardly the definitive monograph since it concerns only a portion of their production. In this regard, the illustrations drawn from architectural magazines of the period are suitable. However, the contemporary color photos do not complement the text. Reproductions of drawings by Ross & Macdonald held in the CCA Archives would have indicated a more serious attempt to accurately represent this important Canadian firm.

David Rose  
Canadian Centre for Architecture, Montreal

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Monkkonen, Eric H. *Murder in New York City*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001. Pp. xii, 238. Black and white illustrations, tables, figures, index. US\$29.95 (cloth)

Eric Monkkonen's book on murder in New York is ambitious: an examination of two centuries of homicide in the largest American city, partly in order to answer the questions: "Are things get-

ting better or worse? And in either case, why?" An initial chapter outlines the general evolution of murder in New York since 1800; five chapters then discuss murder weapons and techniques, the effects of gender, age, and race/ethnicity, and the circumstances of murders, such as workplace and political violence; a concluding chapter compares New York City with Europe.

The book is actually two intertwined studies. The first, a statistical analysis of murder in New York (what he calls "the best long-run series on homicide ever constructed" (5)), concentrates largely on what can be extracted from official tabulations, such as the murder rate, the gender and race of perpetrators and the weapons used. Graphs and tables cover the entire two-century sweep, but unfortunately the analysis is largely a comparison of the nineteenth century and the last few decades of the twentieth, with scant attention paid to the intervening period. Nevertheless, Monkkonen does make some telling observations, both unsurprising and surprising. Thus, homicide rates in New York have consistently been several times higher than in European cities; however, there has been no smooth progression, with homicides peaking in the middle years of the nineteenth century and the last half of the twentieth and troughs around 1900 and 1950. Likewise, men have predominated both as aggressors and as victims; however, throughout most of its history, homicide in New York was the work of whites, not people of colour. Finally, while guns have played an increasingly central role in New York homicides, even without guns, New York would still be much more violent than European cities.

The second study is a detailed examination of murder in New York between 1800 and 1874, based on 1781 individual cases. Apart from providing examples to put human faces to the tables and graphs, the corpus allows Monkkonen to put more flesh on the statistical bones, though only for the nineteenth century. For example, inter-ethnic and inter-racial murders were uncommon; most men murdered within their own ethnic group. Murderers were overwhelmingly concentrated among men "in the prime of their lives", with very few youthful killers; since immigration and migration brought large numbers of men in their twenties and thirties to nineteenth-century New York, demographics may explain its high homicide rates as much as culture. Several cases show how contested uses of public space contributed to murderous situations. Finally, the complexity inherent in almost two thousand individual "microdramas" leads him to reject any simple explanation for homicide; as a result, he suggests that to address violence, all avenues should be explored, from gun control to "manners training". Overall, Monkkonen emphasizes American exceptionalism, which is explained by factors such as a weak and decentralized state, a lax justice system, and (somewhat tautologically) a significant cultural tolerance for violence.

From the perspective of urban history, perhaps Monkkonen's most contentious assertion (also made in *The Civilization of Crime* (1996)) is that cities in the past were less violent (and less criminalized) than the countryside. In *Murder in New York City*, this seems based largely on a comparison of American and New York City rates for the first half of the twentieth century. Apart from the problem of comparing New York City to the United States as a whole, rather than the North-East (since the

South and the West were far more violent), this runs contrary to much other evidence. To take some Canadian examples, Jim Phillips has found that homicide rates in early Halifax were many times higher than elsewhere in the colony; this urban preponderance is also confirmed by my current research into homicide in Lower Canada; and even for the early twentieth century, an impressionistic examination of homicide charges in Quebec shows half in the judicial district of Montreal, containing perhaps a fifth of the province's population. One problem is perhaps methodological, since Monkkonen excludes deaths during riots: large-scale riots being mainly an urban phenomenon, this immediately introduces a significant bias.

Other aspects of the book might also give pause to violence scholars. Frequently, Monkkonen extrapolates from murder to violence (and sometimes even crime) as a whole, which is debatable at best, especially since he explicitly excludes state-sponsored violence. Though he attributes many murders to male culture, there is but passing discussion of masculinity itself, and even less of male notions of honour. Finally, the discussion of the effects of medical advances on murder rates is limited to a brief footnote. Overall, though, Monkkonen's book is well worthwhile: it provides both a good comparative overview of homicide rates in New York City over two centuries, and a solid analysis of murders in New York between 1800 and 1874.

Donald Fyson  
Département d'histoire  
Université Laval

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Benoît Gaumer, Georges Desrosiers et Othmar Keel, *Histoire du Service de santé de la ville de Montréal, 1865-1975*, Québec, Presses de l'Université Laval, Les Éditions de l'QRCC, 2002, Pp. 277.

L'histoire institutionnelle n'a pas tellement la cote chez les historiens professionnels. C'est dommage. Plusieurs institutions mériteraient qu'on s'y attarde et leur histoire nous en apprendrait sûrement un peu plus sur l'évolution de nos sociétés. L'histoire du Service de santé de la ville de Montréal en est un bel exemple. Cet ouvrage, signé par trois historiens dont les travaux sur la santé publique sont assez bien connus, trouve son origine dans la thèse de doctorat de Benoît Gaumer sur le Service de santé de l'ancienne métropole canadienne.

D'entrée de jeu, les auteurs replacent l'émergence et le développement de cet organisme de santé publique dans l'histoire générale des services municipaux de santé des grandes villes industrielles. Un premier chapitre, d'ailleurs, campe le contexte international dans lequel voient le jour, non seulement le Service de santé de la ville de Montréal, mais également ceux de Toronto ou de New York. Les chapitres subséquents dévoilent la périodisation privilégiée par les auteurs. Elle est basée sur les règnes des quatre premiers directeurs du service. On a donc droit à un chapitre sur la période d'Alphonse-Barnabé Larocque, qui s'étale de 1865, année de la création d'un premier bureau permanent de santé, à la grande épidémie de variole de 1885. Cette période est celle de la consolidation d'une structure

qui va se stabiliser dans les années 1880. Barnabé ne commence d'ailleurs à s'imposer comme véritable directeur du département de santé publique que vers le milieu des années 1870. Les auteurs mettent donc l'accent sur la réglementation qui, en bout ligne, débouchera sur la constitution d'un véritable département municipal de santé. L'apport de Larocque à l'établissement de ce département est également mis en valeur. L'amélioration du système des statistiques est de loin la contribution la plus importante de ce premier directeur du département de santé.

Vient ensuite un chapitre qui porte sur le directorat de Louis Laberge. Cette période, qui s'échelonne de 1885 à 1913, en est une d'expansion. C'est au cours de ces années que s'impose également une nouvelle science : la bactériologie. Du point de vue de la santé publique, l'ère de Laberge a plutôt été jugée sévèrement par les acteurs de l'époque de même que par les historiens. Les auteurs sont cependant moins sévères pour celui qui a dirigé le Bureau d'hygiène et de statistiques au cours de ces années. L'inspection des écoles, la prévention dans les écoles, la vaccination et l'inspection sanitaire sont des mesures nouvelles ou renforcées durant le règne de Laberge nous rappellent les auteurs. Le mouvement de professionnalisation de l'action de santé publique est, selon eux, ce qui marque le plus cette période.

Le troisième directeur du Service de santé de la ville de Montréal est Séraphin Boucher. Il a tenu les rênes de ce service de 1913 à 1937. Au cours de cette période, le Service de santé devient une véritable bureaucratie de santé publique. Plusieurs divisions sont mises en place dont celles de la salubrité et de l'inspection des aliments. La lutte antituberculeuse prend de l'ampleur et l'épidémie de fièvre typhoïde de 1928 va donner une impulsion nouvelle au Service de santé, en suscitant notamment la création d'une commission d'hygiène formée d'experts.

C'est le triomphe de l'hygiène et de la médecine préventive qui, selon les auteurs, marque la période s'étalant de 1937 à 1964. Ces années voient Adélar Groulx occuper la direction du Service de santé. Ce dernier poursuit la lancée de son prédécesseur, se distinguant peut-être par l'importance qu'il accorde à l'éducation populaire en matière d'hygiène et de prévention. La lutte contre les maladies contagieuses s'avère toujours une priorité, mais de nouvelles maladies, comme le cancer, préoccupent désormais les responsables du service municipal de santé de Montréal.

Un dernier chapitre relate le démantèlement du Service de santé au milieu des années 1970 et dresse un portrait comparatif de l'évolution des services de Santé de la ville de Montréal et de Toronto.

On peut s'étonner, avec raison, que les auteurs aient choisi de présenter l'histoire de cet important organisme de santé publique "selon une chronologie qui tient compte des changements de direction à la tête du service". On se demande d'ailleurs si ce découpage ne les amène pas à occulter quelque peu des faits marquants de l'évolution de la santé publique à Montréal. Le passage de la théorie des miasmes à la bactériologie a probablement eu des répercussions plus importantes que ne le suggèrent nos trois auteurs. Ces derniers mentionnent bien l'importance de ce changement de paradigme en sciences de