



BOOK REVIEWS

Law and Disorder: Sovereignty, Protest, Atmosphere

By Illan rua Wall. Routledge Taylor and Francis Group, 2021. 209pp. E-Book. ISBN: 978-0-429-33042-1.

Illan rua Wall's book *Law and Disorder: Sovereignty, Protest, Atmosphere* is timely in this age of protest. In my opinion, its significance will likely increase given the backdrop of the Arab Spring, Black Lives Matter, climate protests, and the rise of populism in Europe, the United States, and Asia. More importantly, these processes have become juxtaposed with the strengthening of far-right and dictatorial leaders all over the world in the age of "Trumpism." The book interrogates not just the evolution of protest and suppression; it affords the reader deep insight into the collective psyche of the affective crowd and the compelling need of the state architecture to suppress protest. Distinct from most literature on protest, Wall uniquely x-rays the underbelly of public order in such a manner as to allude to novel insights on the subversion of sovereignty itself.

The book is intended to pioneer the new field of the law of disorder. The author's central thematic drive is hoisted on the platform of the suppressive British colonial system and its retrogressive "boomerang effect" on the colonial metropole. Law and disorder offer a new account of sovereignty through an affective theory of public order and protest. This theory accounts for the increasing brutalization of public order methods in relation to the evolution of protests.

The book is structured into four parts with each part containing an average of five chapters. The first part, "Affective Sovereignty," deals with different methodological approaches to the question of affect. From the materiality of affective atmosphere to communication expectations, autonomy of affect and affective apparatus. The second part, "The Apparatus of Public Order" covers the genealogy of contemporary British public order. The chapters in this part interrogate sovereignty, public order, and the emergence and development of the colonial police. The third part, "The Crowd and the People," explores the affective patterning that occurs within crowds during protests. It analyzes the crowd as political technology and also the paradox of constituent power. For the moment a crowd revolts, it is identified as seditious by the constitutional structure. In the fourth part, "The Enmity of Unrest," the author takes a critical look at the ways that violence is figured and attributed within a field of discursive, social and state power. He establishes the argument that "in the state of unrest, a fundamental enmity emerges between the state and that part of the populace that seeks its change or overthrow. It is a mutual enmity" (153).

Illan adopts a unique narrative style by oscillating between explaining concepts and exploring narratives that illustrate the concepts. To achieve this, he engages profusely with the ideas of other philosophers and academics on the issue and in some instances his attempts to clarify or situate these concepts within a disciplinary niche becomes convoluted. This often mars a clear comprehension

of his position. For instance, his analysis in chapter 18 (on what violence might assemble) illustrates the need for him to simplify his narrative. It reads “it is difficult to read the Reflections on Violence without looking for the ideas that Benjamin would borrow. This often means that Sorel is only understood through Benjamin. But Sorel provides a compelling analysis of the affective structure of violence and the sharpening of a state of enmity in his own right” (164). Regardless, the strength of his arguments is always truly compelling in light of contemporary events.

These arguments form the mortar of his thematic discourse throughout the book. He engages with the concept of sovereign peace in the first part of the book by tracing the historical and ideological conceptualizations of sovereign peace in Europe, its embodiment in the figure of the monarch and subsequent integration into criminal law. He maintains that when the atmosphere of sovereignty is challenged, the state is compelled to act in order to preserve it. He thus brings to fore the concept of public order with the attendant argument that “public order” is actually an essential attribute of the sovereign order rather than an obscure and underwhelming legal subdiscipline. Ignoring it, as critical (legal) theory has often done, is an important error (6).

Between parts 2 and 3, the author analyzes affective relations of law and disorder experienced in the state of unrest. For him, it produces a theory of sovereign affects (113). He introduces protest to the discourse and underscores its importance, stating: “Protest is important because, sometimes, it radically reconfigures the affective valence of a situation, and it can change everything” (113).

In his discourse regarding protest and sovereign order, the author posits that, in the state of unrest, public sentiments are transformed into the site of a crisis (iii). However, since the primary aim of sovereign order is the construction of “lawful normality,” the need arises for public order, which is the name given to the apparatus gathered to manage

this tumult (61). Everyday threats might need emergency measures, but the state of unrest requires something far more exceptional. It requires the full suspension of law (61). Wall consequently argues that there is nothing more dangerous to sovereignty than a state of unrest (81)!

The author’s most compelling arguments regarding the management of public order are embedded in his critique of the evolution of Britain’s colonial enterprise that included Ireland, America, India, Hong Kong, and others. He argues that “colonial public order required a constant police operation precisely because the affective structure of the colonial society (its violence, racial dynamics, hierarchical organization and overseas subjection) was unsustainable without it” (92). Consequently, the police force developed new forms of public order training, all aimed at the object-target of the affective life of the colonized populace as it expressed its dissent (97). To this end, even the laws were restructured to accommodate this. For instance, British Guiana’s Riot Manual (1944) and Drill Manual (1945) stated: “Every member of the Forces may be assured that whatever is honestly done by him in the execution of his duty to suppress a riot will be supported and justified by the Common Law” (93). In my opinion, this creates a moral dilemma that has persisted in contemporary issues of state violence. The rights of the police to intervene “for security reasons” has always remained an ill-defined zone of activity that has less and less correlation with the laws underpinning social order. This sheds more light on the willingness of Derek Chauvin to stretch the boundaries of what is legally permitted within the confines of police violence in the recent case of George Floyd.

Instead of the efficient and disciplined application of force on the bodies of the colonized, public order intervention would become about psycho-affective techniques of popular management; the states’ monopoly of violence being one such technique (93). In this regard, the state dissimulates violence

as legal coercion, reserving the right to escalate or de-escalate regardless of the discipline of legal restrictions. The author deepens his analysis of this “blank cheque” by quoting Jenny Marx who wrote in 1870 against William Gladstone’s redeployment of the Peace Preservation (Ireland) Act, she explained: “Theoretical fiction has it that constitutional liberty is the rule and its suspension an exception, but the whole history of English rule in Ireland shows that a state of emergency is the rule while the application of the constitution is the exception” (91).

This violence of subjugation, the author argues, could not be isolated in the colonial peripheries. He thus adopts Hannah Arendt’s and Aimé Césaire’s characterization: the “boomerang effect” of colonial violence. Colonization for the author dehumanizes even the most civilized man. The colonizer, to ease his conscience, gets into the habit of seeing other people as animals and becomes accustomed to treating them like animals. The colonizer then tends to objectively transform into an animal as well. The “boomerang effect” took the specific techniques developed against populaces that never consented to the colonial state and returned them to the metropole (10).

Finally, in re-imagining the crowd and its relations to public order in the twenty-first century the author illustrates the full circle of the “boomerang effect” by positing that public order that renders certain bodies “suspect” is all too prevalent. Radicalized discipline, police power, are modes of asphyxia, especially for suspect populations. The author concludes here that public order is a “tilted and affective field” and “these suspect populations cannot afford to take the benignness of public order for granted.” When disorder breaks out, suspicion begins to spread. The state of enmity that existed for the suspect populations is extended to those who now enact their dissent (109).

Consequent to the above, calls for police reform have dominated the conversation on public order in recent times. However, reform-

ing the triangulation between sovereignty, legal theory, and public order is more pressing in my imagination. The colonial experiment that birthed the monstrosity embodied in current police violence, branded “legal coercion,” can only continue to mutate given the largesse provided by the conniving connection between these three. What Jenny Marx referred to as “theoretical fiction” above has continued to characterize the legal fabric of police violence because this type of reform is wanting. This book is crucial in understanding the states monopoly of force and how this impacts peace studies.

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Secrecy and Responsibility in the Era of an Epidemic: Letters from Uganda

By Hanne Mogensen. London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2020. 246 pp. ISBN 978-3-030-47522-2. ISBN 978-3-030-47523-9 (e-Book).

Secrecy and Responsibility in the Era of an Epidemic by Hanne O. Mogensen is a riveting, narrative ethnographic piece that captures everyday experiences and questions about kinship, belonging, relatedness, marriage, motherhood, hope, despair, and tragedy in the context of HIV/AIDS in Uganda. Using letters exchanged between the author and her main character, Kate, Mogensen constructs a narrative about people’s experiences of HIV/AIDS from the 1990s and early 2000s that still has relevance today. She argues that it is in that space between availability and accessibility to Anti-Retroviral Treatments (ART) that life and death choices are negotiated and existential dilemmas experienced. A very compelling argument.

From her ethnographic journey in Uganda, which begins in the mid-1990s, the author delicately weaves together a book that is both humorous and serious, painting a “picture of life on the margins of—yet at the heart of—a clan and of Ugandan society” (30), through

the figure of Kate, a mother of two in her mid-twenties, with big dreams and desires, and whose personal agency is reflected throughout her life and letters to Mogensen.

The first five chapters of the book are structured chronologically to tell a story about Kate, her sisters Nelly, Suzy, and Jane, their mother Alexine, Kate's father, and the extended family of uncles, aunts, grandmothers, and in-laws. We quickly learn about these important kinship relations and how they play critical roles in the lives of both Kate and Mogensen over time. We meet a father who loves and provides for Kate and her sisters until he is unable to and ultimately exits from their lives for several years; a mother, Alexine, who does not raise her daughters but pursues a career as a businesswoman, has many challenges, and continues having babies with different men even as her older daughters are having their own; uncles who take care of Kate, her sisters, and Alexine, maintaining links and connections between kith and kin through mobility between the village in Saya, Tororo Town, and the capital, Kampala.

Kate and her sisters Nelly and Suzy struggle from childhood into young adulthood when they become mothers themselves and end up living with Alexine in Kakira, a small community in Eastern Uganda. Even though most Ugandan societies are patrilineal and patrilocal, Mogensen shows how matrilineal households—mothers, grandmothers, great-grandmothers, and several small children living in one household, develop (17). She tells a story of young women getting into relationships and having children with no support from the children's fathers and no promise of marriage, which they hope for, hence moving back to their natal homes.

For Alexine, the sister who leaves her husband and returns to her natal home, her brothers do their best to look after her and her daughters. One brother buys Alexine a plot of land and builds her a house, an act that is of such importance when the HIV/AIDS pandemic begins to take its toll on her family.

Culturally in Uganda, mothers' brothers are respected and often take on responsibilities for their sisters who are widowed, divorced, or separated. In Mogensen's book, we learn of two uncles—Peter and his older brother—whom the extended family often depend on for school fees or simply a place to stay.

The vital critical role of uncles in families and clans is therefore clear from the way the book is written. But what the author does not tell us a lot about is the role of aunts (fathers' sisters or mothers' sisters) in the lives of young women. Upon attaining her new status as "aunt" in Saya, Mogensen points out that "a father's sister holds some of the father's authority" (75). On conversations around and preparation for marriage, relationships, sex, and intimacy, however, aunts are often more important relations than mothers or fathers, a role that Mogensen could have described in greater detail, especially since she herself ends up taking up this role with Kate. Kate confides a lot in Mogensen rather than her own mother, Alexine, something that would be expected when a relationship between a young woman and her aunt is well nurtured.

The next ten chapters provide the crux of the story. Mogensen and Kate's relationship develops further, and in 1997, when Mogensen returns to Denmark after one year of fieldwork, Kate's letters start to arrive and she realizes that "the story had only just begun" (79).

In chapter 6, we read about the importance of marriage. By the example of Kate and her sisters, we see how some women fail to marry. Some women opt out of marriage and partnerships, choosing careers and independence (94), and are often pushed into the labor market and into the margins of society, to survive on the bare minimum, with instability of jobs and few opportunities, sometimes successfully and sometimes not. Motherhood, however, remains important (74) and married or not, mothers are respected among their kin and other relations. But while important, we see how in the era of the AIDS epidemic,

motherhood is also questioned. Alexine shares her regrets with Mogensen, believing that she “had failed as a mother” (42) because her daughters were having children without being married.

Then Nelly dies in 2001. She dies “poor” after a long illness and poor care—“as if she did not have relatives” (154)—and is buried on her mother’s land. Recounting the conditions of Nelly’s death, the author gives AIDS a human face. She demonstrates the difficulties that relatives as caregivers must go through, especially when they have no resources to deal with it. The home, economy, and a run-down state that cannot cope with the burden of caring for the sick is exposed. Choices over life and death, argues Mogensen, were (and are) made in the everyday, between the household, market, and the state and she pays attention to how global dynamics and inequality can impact the life of a single individual in a distant village in eastern Uganda.

An important theme that runs from chapter 8 onward is about “secrecy and responsibility.” Who is responsible for the care and treatment of an HIV/AIDS patient? Even though the most logical answer would be the family, Mogensen’s book shows us that it is not always the case that family members even want to “know” (180). Nelly’s relatives had known that she was “sick” but preferred denial to facing the truth about a loved one having HIV/AIDS. This was a time when there was stigma and shame surrounding the disease and people preferred “not to know” even if they knew.

Ethical dilemmas confront the anthropologist as she tries to understand local worlds through the perspectives of informants who would prefer that she solve their problems rather than continuously ask questions. She also reflects on some of the dramas that take place in the extended family, some of them channeling through her, where there is tension as questions about belonging are raised—who does and who does not belong. With her own adoption into the family, however, comes responsibilities—providing financial

support for many of the endless needs such as food, medicine, transportation, school fees, and so on.

When Kate begins to show signs of serious ill health, she and the author discuss it after which Kate gets tested. Mogensen wants to help Kate as much as she can. But wanting to help is not that simple. She transparently and reflexively writes about how she helped Kate to get access to health professionals, sometimes battling her conscience to use her own status and privilege as a *muzungu*—a white person—for whom many doors can be opened in Uganda. As much as she would like to continue to be the researcher, to observe at a “distance,” the situation is too complex. Anthropologists are not always prepared for the ethical dilemmas they are confronted with in the field. So, she “stopped being an anthropologist” (148). She helps Kate to navigate the healthcare system, which is often difficult for women with little or no education or confidence to do so. Kate is HIV positive and begins planning for the future—planning for her death. She tells Mogensen that she is better off knowing “what is hiding in her body” (164) and dealing with it. Mogensen’s involvement leads to Kate’s getting tested. Being a friend, a member of the family, and knowledgeable about research ethics, Mogensen could not leave Kate to die without trying to help her (183).

Over the years, and as the book progresses, we see that ART becomes more affordable and increasingly accessible. Like Nelly, Kate’s relatives “knew” or suspected that she was HIV positive, but no one ever talked to her about it. This book helps us understand the importance of secrecy for the continuity of social relationships. With Kate’s permission, Mogensen, however, tells Peter, the resourceful uncle, about Kate’s illness. Peter’s reaction is very telling. He does not want to take on the responsibility for Kate’s care. Even though he has access to resources, and could use money sent by Mogensen to help Kate, he does not want to be put in a position where he has to make choices between “life and death” (230)

for his many HIV positive relatives. Who gets support and who does not? Mogensen realizes that she had broken the boundaries of secrecy because Kate now knew that Peter knew about her HIV status. It would have been unkind to give Kate hope of a longer life when the resources were limited.

Responsibility goes beyond ART, involving the provision of food, transportation, rent, and many other things. Even though she continuously sends money to Kate through Peter, it does not reach her, and Mogensen never gets a straight answer as to why. This creates tension in her relationship with Peter, but Mogensen begins to understand why he did not want the responsibility to begin with. Several letters between Kate and Mogensen are returned, and Kate eventually dies in 2004. According to her sister Jane, she died angry and bitter (230).

The author returns to Uganda in 2014 and tries to get a sense of how things have changed. She interviews a man who confirms that people know that medicine is available but “sometimes they just don’t have enough money for transport to the health center. Or

for food” (238). What we do not know is how secrecy and responsibility are shaped in a time when ART has been available and free since 2005, where healthcare systems have made some improvements; HIV-infected people have learned how to manage their treatment; when HIV is no longer a disease of shame and stigma; and when people no longer die of AIDS. How do young women, on the margins of society and clans manage the disease? Who takes responsibility? Are kinship relations still important in the context of HIV/AIDS? What is the content of secrecy today?

Overall, this is a captivating book that joins anthropological conversations about kinship relations in Uganda with important insights about social and cultural links to disease burdens like HIV/AIDS. We learn about how kinship relations are managed in the everyday through the delicate balance between closeness and distance and the role that secrecy and responsibility plays in achieving this in the context of precarity and death.

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