

trial), and accepting a sentence of up to 360 days. In this high-volume court where efficiency is paramount, Lynch describes observing a defense attorney joking with his client about pointing to “si” or “no” on a piece of paper so the client would know the “correct” answer to the judge’s questions. In one of many potent anecdotes that animate the text, Lynch notes that upon hearing this quip, everyone in the room laughed.

The implications of such observations point to where the book could have offered more in the way of analysis. Although Lynch conducts 63 formal interviews and 12 shorter informal interviews, *Hard Bargains* does not offer any systematic analysis of this valuable qualitative data. As a result, an opportunity is missed to methodically bring to light the meaning state actors assign to their roles, practices, and decisionmaking. Given the paucity of scholarship on federal case processing, such analysis could be quite revelatory.

Nonetheless, *Hard Bargains* engages well with a perennial and problematic gap in the literature on decisionmaking in the criminal justice domain. Accessing prosecutorial decisionmaking is notoriously difficult as is obtaining systematic data about case processing or sentencing that includes information about the judge. Lynch’s approach tackles both problems with notable success.

Overall, what Lynch powerfully demonstrates is how, in myriad ways, there actually is no functional check on prosecutorial power. Her work therefore raises the pressing question of how to effect change. Although she concludes with some perspectives on how deeply entrenched this power is and provides some specific recommendations for change (e.g., reducing statutory maximums), Lynch has made quite clear the difficulty of disentangling the substance and process of law. About this truth, one of the most disheartening epilogues in a scholarly book you are likely to encounter leaves no doubt. It follows that the outrage will continue. But, hopefully, so will such distinguished scholarship.

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The Truth About Crime: Sovereignty, Knowledge, Social Order. By Jean Comaroff and John L. Comaroff. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2016.

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In their most recent book, anthropologists Jean and John L. Comaroff consider how crime and policing have transformed

modern societies around the world and “colonized our imaginations.” *The Truth about Crime* offers a powerful account about crime, policing, and the modern state. The book is a “criminal anthropology” that guides the reader towards understanding what precisely is *different* or *new* about crime and punishment in modern societies. Recognizing how crime and policing have become constitutive of our everyday lives, Jean and John L. Comaroff trace how crime—in particular policing as a core function of the criminal justice system—are constitutive of contemporary life. With special attention on the United States and South Africa, the book is theoretically sharp and expansive, and consolidates their previous work on law, disorder, governance, citizenship, and the postcolonial state. It is an important contribution that offers scholars across the fields of law, criminology, anthropology, political science, sociology, and human rights a clear understanding about the social production and increasing fear of lawlessness and criminality in societies.

While the book focuses on contemporary political events, the authors offer a rich “unorthodox” historical angle and classic texts of crime, policing, violence, and power to examine how human societies in the modern era became preoccupied with crime. Focusing on the nature of policing, the book traces the relation between sovereignty (read authoritative order) and criminality, and addresses how crime became an integral part of societies. Stressing the importance of connecting crime, policing, and the criminal justice system with existing social compositions of class, race, gender, and (in the case of South Africa) ethnicity, the authors offer significant insight about the shifting relations and triangulation of capital, the state, and governance.

The book is divided into two parts. Part One is titled “Crime, Capital, and the Metaphysics of Disorder: An Overview, in Three Movements” and undertakes to offer the “big picture.” Delving into the historical processes in the era of capitalism, the authors trace the shift in the foundational elements of our “social, economic, political juridical, ethical, and cultural universe” with an aim to trace the shift in the functions of crime, policing, and, governance. The three subsections 1.1–1.3 weave in the contemporary experiences of crime and policing in the United States and South Africa. Focusing on the privatization of correctional institutions that render telecommunication and financial services to generate profit and businesses for corporations, the authors argue that these developments in the era of high capitalism indicate “the rise of the penal state” (45), with a turn toward the managerial model of enforcing authority and order. Taking South Africa as an example to understand how the structures of contemporary crime and policing is a global experience, the authors explain the “public fixation on crime” (49) and how this has become the “discursive medium” (52) to speak about the “limits and excesses of government.” Eventually,

in both cases, there is a focus on public order, a theme which is deeply dictated by class, race, and state/market interest. Illustrating how crime and policing have become extremely “mainstream” and become part of popular culture (art, films, music, and fiction [74]), the authors juxtapose television programs and fiction consumed by audiences in South Africa and the United States.

The second part of the book titled “Law-Making, Law-Breaking, and Law-Enforcement: Five Uneasy Pieces” comprises five essays arranged from 2.1 to 2.5, and focuses on the “drama of disorder” (98). Is there a way to set apart law from lawlessness? Where do we look for clues to locate the truth? Through stories of detectives and detection, the authors describe the constant anxieties about the failure of the police and the state to restore order in modern societies. Looking at occult-related crimes, the boundaries of the “theologico-legal circle” (106) emerge as an important site to understand how the public perceives what constitutes the power of the sovereign—as god *and* government. In both cases (South Africa and the United States), the concept of the sovereign that invokes the spiritual world and the state agencies is applied to combat crime and to the function of policing. While this section presents excellent stories, I felt that the authors present a compelling argument about the South African experience by devoting their attention to the connections and challenges between the “customary/culture authority” and the modern state in the second part of the book, but the absence of ethnographic details fails to capture the richness of their argument.

“Customary law” continues to capture experiences of governance and moral anxieties around policing citizens and culture in many places around the world. Yet, the authors’ excellent argument about “postcolonial African populations” who are constituted as “*both* the embodiment of culture *and* as national legal persons, as subjects and citizens, as persons *both* ethnic and modern” (139) left the reader longing for a more in-depth engagement. Given the authors’ long engagement with “customary law” in the African continent including South Africa, I wanted to get a better grasp of this rich analysis. However, the authors draw from their numerous writings and vast knowledge about contemporary politics in South Africa and indicate the ongoing challenges between the customary and the state legal system. They locate these tensions in determining the constitution of authority, legality, including the technojuridical problems in numerous criminal cases. The book overall offers a disturbing yet fascinating insight about the public’s obsession with criminality and revisiting sovereign authority in the era of high capitalism.

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