

pages of her book (210–11), “It doesn’t work. Prison *does* work to reproduce the harms that perpetuate offending: social and economic marginalisation; mental illness; homelessness and housing insecurity; exaggerated models of masculinity; substance abuse and addiction; family disruption and trauma; intergenerational violence and criminality; and punitive, retributive norms.” *Being and Becoming an Ex-Prisoner* will be an invaluable resource for scholars and students of the criminal justice system as well as for activists and policy makers committed to reforming it.

* * *

Nordic Nationalism and Penal Order: Walling the Welfare State. By Vanessa Barker. Abingdon, UK: Routledge, 2018, Abingdon, Oxon.

Reviewed by Ron Levi, Munk School of Global Affairs & Public Policy and Department of Sociology, University of Toronto

In his Collège de France lectures *On the State*, Pierre Bourdieu reflects on analyses of the state that do not attend to the often simultaneous strategies that are part of the official accumulation of power. “This is the ambiguity,” Bourdieu argues, “of all those state structures involved in the ‘welfare state,’ about which you never know whether they are institutions of control or of service; in fact, they are both at the same time, they control all the better by serving” (2015: 142).

Bourdieu’s concern is similarly reflected in the sociologies of law and crime. Here, the welfare state has generally been understood in the benevolent terms in which it presents itself. Some, of course, would periodically remind us that Keynesian state agencies could also widen the net of social control—yet, this came to be understood as an unintended consequence of benevolent policies and institutions. With the emergence of the neoliberal era, the image of the Keynesian welfare state would gain ever more purchase as the benevolent social imaginary against which the policies of the neoliberal era would be juxtaposed and assessed.

Vanessa Barker’s new book on *Nordic Nationalism and Penal Order: Walling the Welfare State* offers a brilliant rejoinder and corrective to this literature. Through a deep dive into how Swedish state agencies control migrants, mobility, and the border, Barker demonstrates that strong welfare states—of which Sweden is, of course, a paradigmatic example—do not necessarily provide a

buffer against coercive penal logics. To the contrary, Barker convincingly shows that welfare states may be premised upon homogeneity and work to exclude those who are thought not to belong. By weaving together research in political sociology, sociological criminology, migration studies, economic sociology, and the sociology of law, Barker thus provides evidence of how the left and right hands of the state are conjoined in the Swedish welfare state.

“Mobility controls,” Barker argues, “are exercised when national interests collide with ethnic difference” (65). In developing this claim, *Nordic Nationalism and Penal Order* builds an analytical framework that demonstrates that the material resources of the welfare state are tied up with a conceptual order that seeks to reaffirm national identity. As a result, penal strategies of exclusion are mobilized to preserve material resources for those who are thought to be deserving—along with the right sets of attachments (80)—so that we empirically learn how exclusionary penal practices and the welfare state become tightly coupled.

Barker also takes the literature further than this. Precisely because she shows that the exclusion of migrants is deeply grounded as a form of penal nationalism, in her book, Barker subtly develops a cultural sociology of the state. Rather than merely showing a reliance on penal practices to protect scarce financial resources, Barker brilliantly develops a cultural sociology of the categories that are mobilized in acts of the welfare state. We learn, for instance, how Swedish political and social concepts such as *trygghet* (comfort and security) or *Folkhemmet* (the People’s Home) provide repertoires through which people understand the state. These concepts are then mobilized by specific state agencies, with imagery of blond children and outdoor picnics on the cover of the statistical yearbook of Sweden, or in the assertion of cultural norms in welcome documents to the country. The Öresund bridge itself, popularized globally through the television show *The Bridge* (Rosenfeldt 2011), is identified by Barker as a deeply symbolic site for migration control and legal exclusion—in contrast to its earlier understanding as an openness to mobility (3).

Along with these categories, Barker argues, comes a symbolic and political focus on economic solvency and sustainability of this welfare state, which underwrite the capacity of state actors to provide *trygghet*. It is here that Barker shows how tools for control and exclusion—such as electronic tagging—move from penal agencies of the state to border control (130). She further demonstrates this in the launching of an operation that included the Swedish police to serve expulsion orders—an operation that was contentious, at least in part, because of the cultural repertoires it

communicated, which increased the visibility of the police in a society that had been accustomed to the low profile of policing.

By taking up the case of migration, Barker demonstrates that the exclusion and policing of migrants is not an exception to the benevolence of the Swedish welfare state. To the contrary, she argues that these penal practices are embedded within the welfare state's own claims to providing comfort and security, with both built on the same symbolic codes. Barker thus carefully shows us that the regulation of mobility—including heavy-handed approaches—is part and parcel of the imaginary and operation of the current Swedish welfare state. To borrow a page from physics, one gets the sense in reading *Nordic Nationalism and Penal Order* that the migrant crisis functions as a sort of particle accelerator that allows us to study the neutrinos of the welfare state.

Perhaps echoing Bourdieu's (1996) broad approach to the state, Barker's book is a trenchant reminder that the penal arm of the state need not be where we conventionally look for it. Although she at times treats the welfare state as if it is a coherent and unitary actor, the empirics of *Nordic Nationalism and Penal Order* also demonstrate that a range of agencies and actors within the bureaucratic field are engaged in articulating what we come to see as the welfare state. This may include some internal contestation within the bureaucratic field: for instance, although jurists make only brief appearances in this book, we learn that a registry of the Roma minority was struck down by courts (68). Yet the core point of the book remains. State actors are deploying, Barker shows, increasingly restrictive and penal practices to protect the welfare state and to keep perceived threats at bay, both physically and symbolically. And in this way, Barker shows that the perceived need to sustain the welfare state in the face of potential scarcity—and with it, the need to sustain *trygghet* as a cultural repertoire and political promise—underwrites and justifies ever greater forms of control and exclusion.

References

- Bourdieu, Pierre (1996) *The State Nobility: Elite Schools in the Field of Power*. Stanford, CA: Stanford Univ. Press.
- (2015) *On the State: Lectures at the College de France, 1989-1992*. Cambridge, MA: Polity.
- Rosenfeldt, Hans (2011) *Bron/Broen [The Bridge]*. SVTI/DR 1. Sweden: Nimbus Film and Filmlance.

* * *