Book Reviews

Bob Overy: Gandhi the Organiser: How he shaped a nationwide rebellion: India 1915-1922

Irene Publishing, 2019

Reviewed by **Thomas Weber**, ***La Trobe University, Melbourne***

I first came across Bob Overy through a letter he had written to Peace News (of which he had been editor), published in September 1971. There he made the important point many in the peace movement tended to overlook: we are often concerned with the point of conflict rather than the source of conflict. In a debate over the value of sending nonviolent peace brigades into conflict areas, Overy proclaimed that the notion should not be taken seriously by pacifists because if the force does no more than keep the peace then in fact it is serving the interests of the status quo and therefore is not neutral. In short, Overy was telling us that it is not enough to follow our hearts, that we have to use our heads as well, that we had to think through the possible repercussions of our peace activism. He took such valuable analytical thinking further in 1982 when he published a booklet titled *How Effective are Peace Movements?* (where he noted that single action campaigns were the ones that generated mass movements but failed to "develop an adequate analysis and programme for the abolition of war itself") and completed a Ph.D. dissertation on "Gandhi as a Political Organiser", neither of which made it into the wider peace discourse in any substantial way that I could tell. And then, as far as I could determine, his contributions ceased.

Thankfully, Overy, with his keen analytical insights, is back and his dissertation has been resurrected as an extremely valuable addition to the literature on Gandhi that is not merely historical but also instructive. He informs us that when he noticed that the number of those who were willing to go to jail for peace actions was dwindling, he was encouraged to research and write this book. He went back to Gandhi to "see how his methods actually worked." He revised his Ph.D. dissertation and gave us

this important addition to the literature on Gandhi and potentially how lessons he gained could be incorporated into current peace activism.

He made it his task to look at Gandhi's early campaigns after the Mahatma had returned to India following his twenty-year residence in South Africa in order to examine "how he was able to do what he did." How, through seven campaigns between 1917 and 1922, Gandhi managed to go from being a local organiser to controlling nationwide movements. He points out that he was not interested in looking at Gandhi's philosophy, but "how he applied his philosophy", how he used nonviolence not merely as a technique of action but "as a tool for transforming social, economic and political conditions" through his constructive program, something he sees as important but generally neglected in the western nonviolence literature. Further, Overy examines the seeming division between nonviolence as a philosophy of life and as a useful conflict technique by analysing the activities of Gandhi as an organiser of social as well as political movements – and how they were linked.

Gandhi was involved in several interlinked and overlapping campaigns of various sizes in his early years back in India and Overy does an excellent job of teasing them out and explaining how they fitted in with Gandhi's developing political knowledge, in explaining the lessons of each that carried over into the next. The simplified accounts of these political campaigns that are presented in most Gandhi biographies do not reveal the complexity of the movements Gandhi was leading in those early years before his imprisonment in 1922. Overy shows just how many balls Gandhi was trying to keep in the air at the one time and how the dynamics of noncooperation evolved.

Overy's account of the Ahmedabad mill workers strike of 1918 demonstrates how far beyond the narrow political outcome various campaigns Gandhi led went: Gandhi was not only trying to win a victory for them but was attempting to "develop the character of the mill-hands by helping them discover depths of courage and self-sufficiency of which they did not know themselves capable" (p.77). In other words, "Gandhi's methods had more to do with changing consciousness than with winning specific material concessions from opponents" (p.81). While this approach may have activated the masses it may also explain

why many important nationalist figures went on to work with Gandhi "even though they never fully accepted that they were 'revolutionising' politics by introducing into it the religious spirit. But this is what Gandhi intended and what he thought he was doing" (p.106).

A large part of Overy's discussion concerns what Gandhi called his Constructive Program and how this was integral to the more assertive satyagraha movements and could give even the poor a means of playing a part in the national struggle. And it was a way of training people in self-confidence and self-reliance. This, notes Overy, has generally not been included in Western peace movements to their detriment.

For Gandhi the constructive program put future leaders in contact with the masses (working not just *for* the people, but *with* them) helping to bring about the society Gandhi envisaged in a future free India and, indeed, a future just world. In fact, Gandhi claimed that the wholesale fulfilment of the program would amount to independence because if the nation was involved in the very process of rebuilding itself in the image of its dreams, from the bottom upwards, it would by definition be free. Originally the program dealt with the problems of communal unity and the uplifting of the rural masses by providing them with the kind of work which enabled them to self-respectingly help themselves.

Gandhi linked constructive work to civil disobedience, sometimes saying that it was an aid to it and at other times that it was necessary for it. In fact, he went so far as to say that national campaigns could not be fully nonviolent if they were not accompanied by a constructive program. Gandhi had at times claimed that he was born for the constructive program whereas politics without it was a botheration to him and that he was wrong when he placed civil disobedience before constructive work. Overy avoids the limited view taken in many Gandhi biographies that focus on the more exciting and spectacular political campaigns and leave aside the social and moral aspects of Gandhi's activism. He notes that between 1915 and 1919 Gandhi did not move into the national arena as he was "content to wait precisely because his ambitions were different from those of other political leaders and therefore the ground had to be thoroughly prepared in advance" (p.165). In this manner, the importance of Gandhi's heavy involvement in the seemingly Muslim concerning Khilafat campaign, which appeared to be something either of

a mystery or blatant expediency to many, becomes clear. Further, when Gandhi had moved onto the national arena, he "still retained his instinct for moving one step at a time, that is, not mobilising the people to fight for something beyond their capacity (nor beyond the capacity of the opponent to yield)" (p.232), and going to great lengths to ensure (not always successfully it must be admitted) that the campaigns remained nonviolent. In short, Overy has given us a brilliant review of Gandhi's rise as a national leader and as to how he used lessons of previous campaigns to inform future ones.

There is, however, one quibble that can be noted with regard to this book. Most of the references in *Gandhi the Organiser* are old, dating back to before the finishing of Overy's dissertation. While he has attempted to include later references, often as add-ons in footnotes, his work may have had a larger impact if it had been published in the early 1980s. As it stands, as superb as this work is, he has not been able to incorporate much of the more recent literature (for example more recent work on the Constructive Program, Gandhi's approach to conflict through human needs theory, or some of the more important writing on the analysis of nonviolence as principled or pragmatic) or has done so in a less than comprehensive way.

The penultimate chapter of the book that details Gandhi's methods in the West comes as something of a surprise. The previous 360 pages give no indication that the history of Gandhi's early campaigns in India was to be used as lessons for western peace movements. And given that the campaigns that Overy details were dependent on Gandhi's personal leadership, it is at times difficult to see how these lessons, other than the importance of a constructive program, can be applied in the more frequent cases that lack such leadership. While he is right when he informs his readers that "by studying Gandhi as an organiser ... we can gain fresh insights into his methods and a deeper understanding of them" (p.401), this is perhaps not enough to provide guidance for contemporary nonviolent campaigners.

When Overy examines some of the key texts on nonviolence, and enters the debate on whether more is gained or lost when a pragmatic approach is championed in preference to a more principled Gandhian one, along with Stellan Vinthagen (*A Theory of Nonviolent Action: How*

Civil Resistance Works), he is attempting to resurrect Gandhian approaches in the nonviolence literature which have largely been excised in favour of a "technique approach" to nonviolent activism. Overy makes the point that:

> It helps us to understand Gandhi's technique if we see it as a method of social struggle informed by strongly held positive values, with rules about how we approach people and present ourselves and with a vision of how life could be better, virtually all of which may have some relevance for us. It appears to me that the attempt to separate the technique of action from the background of beliefs and social initiatives which supported it, has diminished our understanding of the technique. (p.372)

By way of conclusion, Overy points out that it is neither enough to see Gandhi as a nonviolent general or warrior or as a philosopher of right-living with a vision of a rural craft-based decentralised economy. For him, Gandhi stands "as a consummate political activist and organiser, who had an original perspective on how to build and direct a movement for nonviolent social and political change" (p.403). How much this is lesson-rich for current nonviolent campaigners remains to be seen, but there is no doubt as to the contribution Overy has finally publicly made to the understanding of Gandhi's rise from a local activist to the leader of an empire-challenging noncooperation movement.

Todd May: Nonviolent Resistance: A Philosophical Introduction

Polity Press, 2015

Reviewed by **Anthony Huaqui**, ***University of Massachusetts***

Todd May's Nonviolent Resistance: A Philosophical Introduction (2015) is a welcomed theoretical analysis of nonviolent action from a philosophical perspective, as well as a worthy inclusion to the resistance studies literature. May's book shines an important philosophical light on nonviolence, its central dynamics, values of nonviolence, and even its historical lineage. In doing so, May consistently provides references to key vignettes of nonviolent action to help situation their multidimensional

argument. These include: the "Singing Revolution" of Soviet-occupied Estonia, the overthrow of Ferdinand Marcos' dictatorship in the Philippines, the occupation of Tahrir Square in Egypt, and Occupy Wall Street in the U.S., just to name a few. The book pushes philosophers and resistance scholars to think critically about the dynamics and values that define nonviolent action.

May's argument begins by establishing some parameters for understanding the concept of nonviolence. In defining what nonviolence is, one must also define what is "violent" since the former is in opposition to the latter. This is a strength of May's overall analysis, as it places the concepts of "violence" and "nonviolence" in a dynamic relationship with each other; something that can be overlooked or taken for granted in other attempts to define nonviolence. With this in mind, May argues that nonviolence avoids three categories of violence: physical, psychological, and structural violence, each with its own unique dimensions. The definition arrived at is that nonviolence is "…political, economic, or social activity that challenges or resists a current political, economic, or social arrangement while respecting the dignity… of its participants, adversaries, and others" (59).

Crucial to May's argument is the inclusion of the term dignity when discussing nonviolence and its relation to how the idea of equality is instrumental in nonviolent action. Dignity here is thought of as the ability to lead one's life in the way that one chooses; a sense of self-determination. It is physical, psychological and structural violence that violate the dignity of those who are subjected to violence and its effects. This is integral to the understanding of nonviolence in that nonviolence seeks to ultimately avoid violating the dignity of the oppressor or the subject of oppression. The concept of equality intersects with dignity, as May makes a claim that all rational beings have equal dignity; in other words, all are equally capable of constructing meaningful lives. Through nonviolent action, the dignity of the adversary is respected on the grounds that they have equal ability to live a life by their own choosing. These two terms coexist in nonviolence as its foundational values, which separate it from strictly violent acts of resistance (though May is quick to emphasize that this relationship is not so dichotomous).

Additionally, May breaks down the dynamics of nonviolence by using Gandhi's concept of satyagraha as an analytical template. Gandhi's satyagraha is anchored by two principles: Truth and ahimsa, which is the refusal to do harm. The former is thought of as the ultimate reality, which differs by person or groups of people who have different lived realities. These two are intertwined and relevant to May's discussion of nonviolence. "Those who engage in violence are not simply trying to get others to recognize the Truth. They are instead seeking to eliminate those who refuse to ratify what they take to be the Truth" (73). As nonviolence is a form of struggle that seeks to respect the dignity of the adversary, different dynamics are used to enable the adversary to recognize the Truth of the oppressed (i.e. their oppression) without the use of violence. These dynamics include: persuasion, suffering, conversion, accommodation, and nonviolent coercion.

While May presents a rich and complex philosophical introduction to nonviolent action, this remains an important reading for any scholar of resistance studies. Included in May's larger arguments surrounding the dynamics and values embedded within nonviolence are discussions on questions of resistance that resistance scholars would appreciate. These include questions on whether nonviolent resistance needs to be intentional, the distinction between practical and principled nonviolent resistance, the relationship between resistance and power, and more. While not the central focus of May's analysis, these dives into additional dimensions of nonviolent resistance provide insights into larger debates within the resistance studies literature.

Ultimately, Todd May's Nonviolent Resistance: A Philosophical Introduction (2015) is a compelling read for those interested in a philosophical approach to defining nonviolent resistance. This book was written with other philosophers as the target audience, as stated by May in the beginning of the book. However, this should not discourage resistance scholars in other disciplines from engaging with the material presented here. May succeeds at making this book an introductory and accessible read, fulfilling the interdisciplinary initiative that is resistance studies. This book is recommended to readers interested in resistance studies, nonviolent movements, and philosophy.

Todd May: Nonviolent Resistance: A Philosophical Introduction[1]

Polity Press, 2015.

Reviewed by **Nalanda Roy**, ***Georgia Southern University***, and **Stephanie Mae Pedron**, ***Georgia Southern University***.

Political philosopher Todd May in the book, *Nonviolent Resistance: A Philosophical Introduction,* writes a thoughtful and engaging philosophical reflection on the concept of nonviolence, its ethical significance, and its presuppositions of equality and dignity for all parties involved. Like other forms of protest, nonviolent resistance has, at its base, the goal of rearranging an unjust social structure. But through careful analysis and meticulous incorporation of existing literature throughout his discussions, the author successfully distinguishes nonviolent resistance by emphasizing two key differences: the values associated with it and how those values affect the methods employed by individuals to achieve change.

The book is split into six chapters. Each segment builds upon the previous by steadily incorporating new themes into the overarching discussion of nonviolence. Owing to the introductory nature of the book, any philosophical themes mentioned are followed by clarification. This makes it an excellent resource for those looking to establish preliminary knowledge in the field. Rather than delving straight into the philosophical analysis, the author decides to open his book with examples of nonviolent resistance around the world. For academics with a grounded interest in the subject, the chapters that follow the first are more likely to be points of interest. In the second chapter, he seeks to define what nonviolence is and, perhaps more importantly, what it is not by assessing several definitions of violence by philosophers. The third features an investigation

[1] Book editor's note: Two book reviews for May's text, *Nonviolent Resistance: A Philosophical Introduction* were received for this issue. Given that May's book makes an important contribution to understanding the philosophy of nonviolent resistance, and the two reviews provide different perspectives on the text, it was decided that both should be included.

of the various dynamics of nonviolent resistance. The fourth and fifth chapters should be taken together since they discuss two values that—the author argues—are embraced by nonviolence. By drawing upon the philosophies of several thinkers, May constructs a fascinating discussion about how nonviolence recognizes the intrinsic value of an individual and how, in some instances, it can even be considered immoral. He uses the anti-abortion movement as an example (p. 160). In the final chapter, May steers from past nonviolent struggles to future ones by linking the subject to neoliberalism.

Although *Nonviolent Resistance* was inspired by the author's personal participation in nonviolent resistance campaigns during the mid-1980s, May primarily uses large-scale incidents from around the globe as evidence for his arguments. But instead of integrating these historical and contemporary examples into different segments as needed, May dedicates the first chapter to overviews of each for ease of reference in later pages. He cites international affairs like the Edsa Revolution to overthrow Dictator Marcos in the Philippines and the uprisings that eventually came to be known as the Arab Spring. For domestic protests, he goes over Occupy Wall Street and its fight against economic inequality in the United States. The summaries are succinct and packed with relevant information that would be useful to students seeking examples of nonviolent resistance in action. While fact-by-fact recounts of history might not be the most exciting topic for scholars, this chapter does serve as a good refresher of the times when slight protests managed to transform into nationwide civil movements.

The author pivots away from examples in his second chapter, where he argues that there are many types of violence, and thus a single, all-encompassing definition might be a challenge. There is, therefore, a need to dig deeper into the subject because nonviolence cannot be understood without first understanding its boundaries—that is, the kind of violence it rejects. May provokes an interesting line of thought: if nonviolence is the rejection of only specific types of violence, is pure non-aggression simply an idealistic way of thinking? Indeed, by May's definition, absolute nonviolence (in terms of campaigning) isn't viable. Instead, it is an elucidation for a particular form of dissent. May goes on to examine several dynamics of nonviolent resistance in chapter three, but perhaps

the most significant takeaway is that "not all nonviolence is a matter of conversion" (p. 83). When persuasion fails, coercion through civil means may be necessary in order to bring about change. While this might still result in conversion, more often, it results in the use of force from the opposing side. This is important to note when studying the history of social movements around the globe.

Following this section of the book, May returns to a more philosophical discussion regarding the values that nonviolence expresses: dignity and equality. What differentiates nonviolent resistance—and what makes it morally superior—is its respect for the dignity of the other person and its belief that everyone is equal. In an earlier chapter, May states that "Violence is not confrontation; it is suppression" (p. 73). While violence obstructs the individual, nonviolence considers the fact that people on both sides are capable of self-reflection, and are thus capable of amiable behavior towards each other. In other words, those parts of the opposition have an inherent significance that nonviolence doesn't trample on. This is a compelling thought because it is a subtle recognition that both sides are human. Acknowledging an individual's capacity to make their own choices and respecting their final decision is part of what makes nonviolence the most suitable, moral response to a situation. Towards the end, May touches upon future resistance against neoliberalism. Owing to the late introduction of this topic, a good deal of time was spent discussing the concept of neoliberalism, as well as related themes like deregulation, which I feel could have been related to the value of equality during the initial discussion of its role in political theory in the previous chapter. Nevertheless, May's dialogue regarding civil undermining—as opposed to aggressive overthrowing—of neoliberal institutions is both logical and appealing, considering that the leaders of these institutions have the military at their disposal.

Nevertheless, *Nonviolent Resistance: A Philosophical Introduction* was an enjoyable read from start to finish. It contains excellent analyses of the dynamics of nonviolence and its moral differences with its counterpart, as well as wholly original connections that relate nonviolence to dignity and equality—two values typically associated with different fields; ethics and politics, respectively. This book is a must-read for both fledglings in the field and scholars that want to build a more rounded foundation on

the subject. Social science students, in particular, might find this book to be a vital resource. It could also be used as an early guide for future peace studies research. In the final segment of his book, May prompts readers to think about the structural injustices within today's society, so they might transform history's lessons into relevant action for the world's collective future. This call to activism provides a delightful twist that makes the book read as far more than a simple introductory piece.

Gaurav J. Pathania: The University as a Site of Resistance: Identity and Student Politics.

Oxford University Press, 2018

Reviewed by **Arvind Kumar,** ***University of London***

This book is an ethnographic study of the movement for the formation of Telangana state in India. This movement began right at the dawn of India's independence in 1947 but went through a series of ups and down before becoming the 29th state of India in 2014. With the objective of testing theories of new social movements in the context of South Asia, the author chose this movement and conducted his field work when the movement was in the last stage. In this movement, students, professors and alumni of Osmania University played a pivotal role in terms of creating consciousness and organising protests for the said cause, which is reflected in the title of the book.

The choice of the site of study compels the author to minutely document the everyday activism of the students and the professors of Osmania University, which sometimes leads us to believe that the book is simply about student activism at a single Indian university. However, despite the possible confusion, as the title suggests this book indeed not only comments upon the student activism of the Osmania University but also provides a thick description of student activism of other universities, both Indian and foreign. This compels us to explore the reason behind universities becoming sites of resistance. The author argues that it is the autonomous environment of universities which turns them into a

habitat for protecting dissenting voices resisting against various kinds of dominations. Osmania University has played similar role in India.

The initial half of the book provides a thick description of contemporary student activism in Indian universities as well as abroad and opens up many new vistas, but the second half of the book which contains explanatory chapters guides readers in the direction of the formation of the post-colonial Indian nation-state and the problems which it has been facing in this endeavour. The relentless resistance from tribes, ethnic and religious minorities in the form of Maoism/Naxalism, secessionism and separatism respectively have created a continuous problem for the post-colonial Indian nation-state. The issue of language has been one of the principle concerns of all these struggles. Therefore, the Indian state has used language as an instrumental tool to govern the subcontinent, and that has been done through superimposition of Hindu language and reorganisation of states on linguistic basis.

As explained in detail in the second half of the book, post-colonial India has been constituted off two set of states—transferring the power of colonial provinces and annexing the princely states. This made the Government of India remain conscious of possible emergence of separatist tendencies especially among those princely states, the rulers of which were not ready to join India. Hyderabad was one of those states. To arrest the possible emergence of separatist tendencies among those states, the Government of India merged such states with the provinces that it has acquired from the colonial empire. The Telangana region was part of the Hyderabad princely state, and hence it was merged with Andhra Pradesh, the first state formed on the linguistic basis. This policy of the Government of India is referred as 'internal colonisation', a term which was coined by the State Reorganisation Commission (SRC) of India. The internal colonisation created problem of domination which resulted in the creation of discrimination and backwardness. The author argues that in the combined Andhra Pradesh, elites of Telangana region faced discrimination and humiliation since their dialect was mocked in the state machinery and the masses of the region faced backwardness due to exclusionary policies of the state. Andhra Pradesh was the first state to be formed on a linguistic basis, but it mostly promoted a kind of Telegu dialect that was different from Telangana people. On the issue

of language, the people of Telangana had supported the *Telugu language-based organisations such as the Andhra Jana Sangam Andhra Maha Sabha* (1930), and *Vishalandhra Mahasabha* (1949) and resisted during the colonial era when the Nizam of Hyderabad tried to impose Urdu. In fact, the Osmania University was established by the Nizam under the same policy, and thus the linguistic policy of the Nizam had already excluded ordinary people of Telangana. In the post-colonial period, the Government of India continued English as an official language, so when the Telangana region was merged with the erstwhile British administered coastal Andhra, the residents of the coastal region Andhra region automatically captured public offices and opportunities because they were already trained in English language. The people of Telangana region could not enter into public office because they were trained in Telegu and Urdu language. To resist with the exclusion, the Telangana people especially students of Osmania University started demanding separate statehood in 1969 and for that they formed Telangana Praja Samiti (TPS). The TPS contested elections in 1971 and won 11 parliamentary constituencies out of 14, but somehow got merged with the Indian National Congress. However, the TPS created awareness about the issue through pamphlet, posters and public meetings.

The story of the Telangana movement suggests that it was a struggle against discrimination and backwardness of a region but actually it was also resistance against India's nation building project, where one India (erstwhile princely ruled India) fought against another India (erstwhile British empire ruled India). The book provides a good historical account of the Telangana movement when it reached its peak, but does not provides reasons for why, after a certain period, it fell into a dormant situation, especially after 1971 and during the 1980s. The 'federalisation of Indian polity' which began after 1967 and the 'regionalisation of India polity' which began after 1980s seems to have played very important roles in pushing the movement to the back seat, since both processes provided regional elites and sub-regional elites with an opportunity to be incorporated into the power structure. However, the author seems to suggest that the Maoist turn in the social movements of India in the mid-1970s further soaked the elites of the Telangana movement, and pushed it to the backseat. The disillusionment of those activists with

Maoism rejuvenated the movement in the first decade of the twenty-first century, culminating with the formation of the state in 2014. Besides, the formation of Uttarakhand, Jharkhand, and Chhattisgarh in 2000 also gave new lean to the Telangana activists for relaunching the struggle for statehood.

The author finds marginalisation of the people from Telangana region as the principal reason behind the movements and demonstrates how language acted as a reason behind the marginalisation. He sees the continuity of the colonial policy and tactics in post-colonial India resulting in the marginalisation of people from a particular region, and to escape from that the people laid resistance by forming political and civil society organisations such as Telangana Praja Samiti (TPS) and Telangana Rashtra Samiti (TRS). In the formation of organisations, students of Osmania University played pivotal role. They did this by suspending old identities temporarily and forming new ones.

The book provides good insight into the role of space in the making of social movements and keeping the spirit of struggle alive. In the case of the Telangana movement, it is Osmania University which kept the spirit of the movement alive. Otherwise, the post-colonial Indian state with the use of its 'coercive apparatus' has left no stone unturned in killing such movements. Osmania University could nurture such space since it enjoyed some degree of autonomy because it was founded by none other but the Nizam of Hyderabad. The Indian state could not penetrate very easily into this university. The author argues that having such a space of the university resulted in the institutionalisation of student politics that made the Telangana movement successful. But how does this movement adversely affect the academic life of the first-generation university entrant students who came from the underprivileged background through the policy of affirmative action and protective discrimination, as claimed by the author? The book is silent about this question.

Nevertheless, the book can be a good starting point for the readers who are interested in resistance, student movements, identity formation, marginalisation, linguistic politics, elite-mass politics and formation of the post-colonial Indian state. Additionally, the book is very useful and insightful for readers of sociology, education and political science

disciplines who assess the process of backwardness and marginalisation through ethnographic studies.

Chandra Russo: Solidarity in Practice: Moral Protest and the US Security State

Cambridge University Press, 2018.

Reviewed by **Anthony Huaqui**, ***University of Massachusetts***

Solidarity in Practice: Moral Protest and the US Security State by Chandra Russo (2018) examines the practice of "bearing witness" as an act of resistance to state violence and forging solidarity with the targets of state violence. Russo coins the term solidarity witness to refer to this resistance mode of making visible the unseen violence of the U.S. security state through ritual protest and embodied activism. By U.S. security state, Russo refers to the "amalgamation of domestic and foreign military, carceral and policing priorities that coincide with the global transition to neoliberalism" (p. 14). Using the ethnographic method of observer participation, Russo studies how three movement groups engage in solidarity witness, the latter's historical influences, how activist participants make sense of the practice, and ultimately, some of the issues that arise from this mode of resistance.

Resistance within the contexts of Russo's study expands traditional notions of political activity. Ritual protest and embodied activism are two key features in the practice of solidarity witness that challenge the dominant epistemologies which reinforce the U.S. security state. The use of public mourning, naming, religious symbolism and culturally significant space within ritual protest is used to evoke emotions that challenge social norms and contest the injustices of the security state. As an embodied form of resistance, solidarity witness allows activist participants to divest from their privilege, create a sense of closeness to targets of state violence, amplify the resistance of the aggrieved, and earn political credibility with a host of audiences.

Each of the movement groups that Russo examines in this study come from a lineage of radical pacifism whose origins are rooted with Historical Peace Churches. School of the Americas Watch (SOA Watch), Migrant Trail Walk, and Witness Against Torture (WAT) all come from this lineage which is "characterized by the pursuit of nonviolence at all levels of society; a cynicism toward the state […] an emphasis on direct action and disobedience; and a commitment to moral right" (p. 17). Their religious roots provide the symbols and traditions that are used as repertoires of dissent against the invisible injustices of the U.S. security state. It is through these movement groups' religiosity that dimensions of solidarity witness, such as ritual protest and embodied resistance, take up religious meaning to these activists:

> "For Jessie, the physicality of walking 'requires' her to think of all the migrants who are forced to walk; it is an embodied and emotion-infused orientation to a political cause. The language of 'incarnation' suggests that Jessie interprets the embodiment of this walk in part through a Christian framework, which makes sense given that Jessie's work with the Mennonite Church is what first brought her to the Migrant Trail" (p. 105).

This bridge between religiosity and resistance is referred to throughout the book as Russo explores how members of these movement groups understand and practice solidarity witness.

One of this book's major contributions to the field of resistance studies is the analytical focus on individuals who are not the direct targets of injustice. The movement groups examined in this study are predominantly comprised of those who are in privileged positions to the U.S. security state, i.e. white, middle-class men and women. This challenges traditional approaches to resistance studies which assume that social change is rooted in the self-interest of the directly aggrieved. Activists here take a stand against the privilege afforded to them under dominant social and political systems by relinquishing material comforts and "paying attention" to injustices. The latter becomes especially important as their social positions provide them the opportunity and privilege to ignore state violence. As an ascetic political practice, solidarity witness allows activists to engage in subject work which "aims to craft a form

of collective subjectivity that starkly contrasts with what the dominant system demands" (p. 126). It is the subject work of solidarity witness that offers these privileged activists the ability to create resistant modes of being.

Alternatively, Russo also devotes a chapter in her book to addressing some of the complications with solidarity witness within each of the respective movement groups. It is here that the author could have spent more time analyzing these contradictions; especially considering the author is uncovering how activists in privileged positions do solidarity work across differences. Four modes of contention within the groups explored include: 1) the alienating effect to some of using ritual as direct action; 2) issues of exclusion; 3) concerns about the subject work of solidarity witness, and 4) how solidarity witness may not lead to institutional changes. When discussing issues of exclusion, Russo highlights how race and class-based issues arise internally for each movement group. For example, the privilege connected to the availability of taking time off to engage in political acts, such as walking the Migrant Trail, is not equally afforded to everyone. It is a privilege that mostly white, middle class people can afford, and this contributes to the movement groups remaining mostly white. Even discussions around privilege from inside the group are rarely brought up; only more macro-level privilege in relation to social structures is discussed.

This provides some great insights into the contradictions within these groups, as they aim to confront and deny their privilege but ultimately reproduce privilege dynamics internally along class and racial lines. However, this led me to want more analysis from Russo into these contradictions that many movements, past and present, often navigate. Only a few pages are devoted to each form of contention and it seems like a missed opportunity to contribute to larger dialogues surrounding how power operates within movements whose goal is to try and suppress it. Applying more analysis of these contradictions would not serve as a critique of these movement groups but instead offer a richer look into the complexities and difficulties of solidarity building and the denial of one's privilege afforded from social structures.

In the end, Russo's Solidarity in Practice: Moral Protest and the U.S. Security State (2018) provides a compelling look into the embodied

and ritual dimensions of solidarity witness. SOA Watch, Migrant Trail Walk, and WAT all make visible the often-invisible injustices of this neoliberal social and political structure. The subject work involved with this political practice offers insights into how other movements can create resistant modes of being that counter dominant epistemologies. This book is recommended to all readers interested in resistance studies, social movements, and solidarity formation.

Bloc by Bloc: The Insurrection Game

Out of Order Games. 2016.*

Reviewed by **Craig S. Brown**, ***Journal of Resistance Studies***

As a boardgame for up to 4 players focusing on the tactics of urban resistance, Bloc by Bloc: The Insurrection Game is a rather novel offering. 'Insurrection' has some specific definitional use in Marxist and Bolshevik theory, broadly as a mass-based proletariat uprising organised and directed by the party of the proletariat (Lenin, 1972, p.22), while it has been used in relation to resistance against global neoliberal capitalism (Danaher & Mark, 2003) and nonviolent resistance (see Zunes, 1994). However, TL, game designer and artist of Bloc by Bloc, defined a more non-ideological underpinning to the game: "Social insurrection is a defining feature of our time. It is a crucial form of resistance and joy in a diverse array of cities […] Insurrections sustain social movements and they have reshaped the political map", as a bottom-up fight by 'social antagonists' against "capitalism, white supremacy, patriarchy, and the state" (CrimethInc., 2018). It is these social antagonists that the game's creators Rocket Lee and Tim Simons have attempted to situate within "a specific ethical framework", which does not situate "the conquerors or the powerful at the center of the narrative" (CrimethInc., 2018). The four playing factions are 'workers', 'students', 'prisoners' and 'neighbours', with the latter an interesting addition in particular, invoking questions of how communities have incubated protests and occupations in urban

* Currently available, downloadable for free from *Out of Order Games. www.outofordergames.com*

areas during recent uprisings. The original concept of a game such as this, its very existence, makes a significant step in challenging these common narratives, promoting resistance in a field where games concerning regular and irregular violent conflict has tended to dominate.

In my 2nd edition copy of Bloc by Bloc there was no introduction to the real uprisings that inspired the game, although this was apparently present in the 1st edition (Lefebvre, 2016). In terms of initiating discussion, understanding and knowledge of resistance this would be very useful, particularly in terms of highlighting perhaps lesser-known instances in popular memory cited by the developers (Oaxaca, 2006; Athens, 2008), alongside Oakland 2009, Cairo 2011, Istanbul 2013 and Ferguson 2014 (Out of Order Games, 2016). The game's emphasis on clashing with police, the need to occupy and defend physical space, is especially interesting to me in relation to the creators' referencing the Egyptian Revolution 2011. This is because of the need to explore the relationship between violent and nonviolent dynamics in Egypt and during the broader 2010/11 West Asia North Africa (WANA) Revolutions, as 'hybrid' resistance or rioting (see Brown, 2018; 2019; Case, 2018). In the Tunisian context, such hybrid resistance I found to be justified by many different participants in those particular circumstances (Brown, 2019). Rioting has often been suggested in the media as not having a political purpose, leading to periods of rioting being dismissed as nothing more than criminal—the 2011 UK riots, Gilet Jaunes and recent Iraq and Lebanon protests (Shafaaq, 2019). However, this speaks to issues of whether rioting has a practical utility, for example whether it risks alienating broader popular support. Bloc by Bloc would be a novel way of initiating discussion of such issues with a group.

In this regard, the game's advantage is that although engaging the police is a significant aspect, the violent aspects of such resistance are not glorified or promoted in the game. Riot vans are 'destroyed', police are 'defeated' or can be 'kicked out'; there is no physical injury to people implied. In this sense players can ultimately project their imagination or sense of this on to the game. Indeed, TL explained that, "it's also important not to fetishize the violence involved in these uprisings", which are "necessary parts of sustained insurrection. But the success of these uprisings is not determined by their ability to destroy or kill". Rather, TL

suggests that it is the transformation of social relationships, of insurrection as "expression of everyday resistance and organising" (CrimethInc., 2018). The gameplay shows the creators were effective in this regard, as engaging in the constructive resistance elements of occupation and liberation as early as possible seemed to be crucial to 'win', as well as keeping up momentum against the police. Such constructive aspects, such as liberating a public district, are best attained through cooperation and worthwhile pursuing, giving players a 1-turn reprieve from the 10-night countdown (when the military arrives!). Variables relating to physical occupations presented in the game, such as their constructive or defensive nature, as well as their vulnerability to security force action, could be raised as discussion points among players. In contrast, I found the loot actions largely a distraction (unless part of one's agenda card)—perhaps reflecting the violent distraction they can prove to be in real life, and their perceived apolitical nature.

The final aspect of Bloc by Bloc that may be particularly notable regarding resistance is the assigning of 'agenda' cards for each faction. One may consider the game as missing the nuances of intra-group power dynamics and conflict that have been perceived as clear weaknesses of, say, the Occupy movement and indeed the WANA revolutions. The agenda cards largely assign social or cooperative goals—introducing another quite unusual dynamic for boardgames—which can seem quite formidable, however effective cooperation applying each faction's unique ability simplifies matters. Nevertheless, there is a 'vanguardist' and 'nihilist' card as hidden agendas, which can lead to a faction subverting the cooperative approach. Interestingly, Rocket Lee explained the intention of these cards as being a way of avoiding the replication of "power dynamics at the table […] You know, like when a white guy tells everyone what to do" (Lefebvre, 2016). They further suggested that, "Ironically, by introducing an element of uncertainty and suspicion among players, you protect their individual agency" (CrimethInc, 2018). Thus, power dynamics are not so much abstracted in-game, as they are actually being played out through the players' discussions and negotiations, tensions and resolutions. This is obviously on a minor scale and without the serious implications of a practical context, but this potentially makes such learning and the

opportunity to discuss these aspects afforded by the game all the more important.

In concluding—and mindful of the brutal turn that Hong Kong's 'urban insurrection' has taken this year—I should point out TL's own emphasis that Bloc by Bloc is intended to be "fun and educational", and to assign any more significance would be "misleading and disrespectful to everyone who has been out there in the streets in real struggles that have real consequences". Yet, "games can be powerful tools for exploring complex ideas" (CrimethInc., 2018). Concerning education, learning and discussion of resistance and specifically nonviolent resistance, Bloc by Bloc provides a base from which violent and nonviolent resistance tactics could be explored, as well as constructive resistance elements and indeed everyday resistance.

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