

Ghertner, D. Asher, Hudson McFann, Daniel M. Goldstein (eds.). 2019. *Futureproof: Security Aesthetics and the Management of Life*. Durham, London: Duke University Press. 285 pp. Pb.: \$27.95. ISBN: 9781478006909.

Book review by

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There seems to be a constant proliferation of things we need to be protected from, *Futureproof* tells us, and that protection is taking increasingly diverse shapes, senses, and intensities, adding up to what the authors label 'security aesthetics'. Security points here to a field of power, a mode of framing the experience of our lives and those of others that seeks to generate, guarantee, and perform a negation, an absence: that of from which we need to be shielded. Aesthetics, leveraged here in Rancière's sense, points to a shared intelligibility of that experience and of how different people, things, and affects inhabit and understand their and others' relative part in that experience—including having no part. This volume sets out to analyse some of the political subjectivities, the parameters of inclusion/exclusion, and the terms of contention that security aesthetics is generating.

Rancière developed his aesthetics as a political concern and as a concern with the political; this is the double edge the editors sought in his frame. Leal Martinez's chapter on the rhetorical, physical, and affective exclusion of street vendors from Mexico City captures this edge perfectly. Previously represented by elected leaders who fought and debated (and secured) a part in the urban and economic landscape, the sanitising and gentrifying élan of contemporary urbanism progressively wrote off and physically expelled these street dwellers and their organisations from an experience of city life shunning informality in the name of safety. Dinzey-Flores and Demshock's chapter found in *Future-*

proof the means for an original spin on urban gentrification, showing how real estate agencies work to frame the Brooklyn neighbourhood of Bedford-Stuyvesant as a safe place in which to live and invest. Reaching back into the years of redlining and regressive mortgage policies, their chapter argues this new frame is a continuation of the same distribution of the sensible: the same middle class, professional, white Americans that previously feared and fled the area, deeming it unsafe and ineligible for mortgage applications are the ones moving into it and reclaiming it as edgy from those whose part remained to be dangerous: African Americans.

Other chapters examine attempts to challenge these security aesthetics either by creating new political subjectivities or by finding ways to reclaim their part. Zeiderman argues that the notion of endangerment became one of the axes organising the aesthetics of life in Bogotá. Regardless of a myriad of immediate dangers to their lives, internally displaced populations do not directly fit the part of needing care that the aesthetics of endangerment recognises. Knowing that their part in these aesthetics is known by all to be that of having no part, displaced Colombians seek to mobilise civic and legal claims, fitting the aesthetics of endangerment to be recognised by those managing the general experience of endangerment—in this case, the government. Similarly, Carter's chapter shows how in Honduras, in a context in which residents fear both the police and the gangs, silences, secrecy, and elusiveness are, in themselves, often the only viable political subjectivity—the only possible part producing the safety of a retreat and a line of flight. In a reading less concerned with staying close to Rancière's framework, Jusionyte's analysis of border infrastructures and the construction of the experience of traversing them shifts the emphasis to the ethical subjectivities of rescue brigades, whose part in the experience is both non-negotiable and subject to the readings of safety and peril produced, and sought after, by others.

The aesthetics-political edge works less well in other readings hinging more on aesthetics than on the political, as intended by the editors. Examining a policy by which public schools organise shooting drills as realistic performances involving actors and fake blood, Hall takes aesthetics in the direction of performativity, on the one hand, and in the direction of the pressing policy (and partisan) question of gun ownership policies in the US. As the chapter flees towards the different moral and ethical conceptualisations that such policies invoke, the political in the sense of one's part and parcel of 'Aristotelian citizenship as a partaking in government' (p. 4) gives way to a political as a sort of argumentative-persuasive kind of action, between engaged anthropology and social justice platform. Similarly, Bernal's analysis of how three museum exhibits approach cy-

bersecurity flirts with the more interpretive, semiotic edges of the senses of aesthetics. Of course, Rancière's whole point was that art and the political are analogous orderings of sound and noise, part and no part, distribution and experience, and Bernal does attend to the logics distributing what gets said and what is silenced. However, precisely because, as the author shows, exhibits are a contrived, curated, proudly authorial distribution of senses in an as-if environment, reading them as political is inevitably a cultur-
alist-interpretive exercise: the more one acknowledges how contrived they are, the less interesting they are as political once we have left the door of the exhibit behind.

Whilst an interesting and engaging collection, the future in *Futureproof* has been mostly left behind: this is thoroughly a collection about security. The writing is uneven and, on the whole, the volume sits beyond general audiences. Some of the prose takes on a certain language—abstruse, esoteric, pun-prone, tending towards unfalsifiable, unverifiable, pedantic beauty—increasingly associated for better or worse with contemporary humanities and with this particular press. Simone's chapter is exceptionally indecipherable. Some chapters—Zeiderman's, Leal Martinez's, Semimian-Darash—would make excellent, nuanced material for courses on the political, in Rancière's sense and otherwise. Overall, the volume gestures more towards the political in the modes proper to late capitalist postmodernity mediated by academic aesthetics: as activist everything-is-political engaged citizenship. Nevertheless, our discipline is increasingly organised around the imperatives of the political in the latter sense and, in this light, this book is a futureproof bet.