

Futureproof



Security Aesthetics
and the Management of Life

D. Asher Ghertner
Hudson McFann
Daniel M. Goldstein
editors

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FOREWORD

Catherine Lutz

A Special Forces veteran and libertarian in Fayetteville, North Carolina, told me, years ago, that “defense is the first need of any organism.” The thinkers in this volume follow him, if in a more critical vein, in seeing security as the guiding framework and dominant force for organizing collective life in our era. They encourage us to ask: How did this man come to feel that way about the nature of being human? How did many others come to operate within the strict limits of security discourses and to be presented with political, economic, and life constraints and choices structured by this guiding principle rather than another one? How did the number of things against which defense is thought to be needed expand so radically in this era as opposed to earlier ones?

This volume uses ethnographic perspectives and broadly distributed cases to help us look for the family resemblances among a variety of institutions and practices that are based in either the fear of distinct or inchoate threats or the desire for security, as those things are variously defined. Its authors want us to see security not simply as a *good* or as a *need* provided for, but as a *mode of power*, or an authorizing and coercive regime of governance. They want us to broaden our sense of what the relevant institutions and practices are that should be considered as based on a security paradigm. Widening the object of attention beyond the military and police, traditionally seen as a society’s “security institutions,” the chapters show us that security-seeking or security-marketing involves the quest for, or selling of, protection not just from military attack but also from disease, stranger danger in the park, home invasion and theft, the sudden collapse of stock or housing prices, and climate change. The quest, most prolifically, has become protection from the very idea of an unknown future, and often in contrast to a nostalgically reimagined past that was predictable or knowable.

Many aspects of our world and its recent history are evidence for the ubiquity of a security framework (even if not always with the same biological

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or evolutionary understanding as that Fayetteville resident). The signs of its omnipresence are not simply in how people talk with each other about their present and future fears or security aspirations. The symptoms include sharply rising budgets for the public and private employment of soldiers, police, transit security agents, and mercenary, paramilitary, and private security forces. They include remarkable new types of baroque weaponry, set in vast arsenals kept in perpetual readiness for use by both states and individuals. There is also the rising status and public visibility of more militant, protectionist/nationalist, and misogynist masculinities in political leaders and popular culture figures alike. They are in the normalized infrastructure of gates and walls; of antivirus software and passwords; of the literally millions of video cameras trained inside homes and businesses, above sidewalks and at borders, standing sentry; and in the broad-scale surveillance or digital scanning of populations via on-line data collection, computer algorithms, blood tests, airport scanners, and threat prevention investments on everything from the cellular to the bodily level and from the international to the planetary scale as climate engineers anxiously discuss how to prepare to secure our future from our past greenhouse gas emissions.

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The innovation of this particular volume within the now mushrooming critical literature on security is to ask about the political aesthetics of these practices. Following Teresa Caldeira's (2000) pioneering work on the "aesthetics of security" in São Paulo, the contributors want to draw our attention to how it is that "security, as a form of power, operates through distinct aesthetic registers, including notions of beauty and taste, style and genre, form and appearance, representation and mimesis, and emotion and affect" (Ghertner, McFann, and Goldstein, this volume). They want us to see how people learn to make judgments of taste (variously in different communities) and to feel (whether anxiously or angrily or pleasurably) about the world in this register of judgment. When we go beyond seeing security as simply disciplinary, and come to see it as involving matters of distinction, per Pierre Bourdieu, we can discover more about the power and endurance and attractions, as well as the fragilities of modern militarism, for example. We are encouraged to look at the spatial or social location of aesthetic judgments which, in some communities, give elevated worth not just to the soldier but to those who know that a man in uniform is a beautiful thing, that a field of Arlington graves makes a tragically beautiful landscape, that video games involving danger and escape are more fun than others, that a refugee child in an ambulance promises to teach us about the goodness of the rescue, the truth of who the perpetrator is, and the beauty of youth that was and might yet be, or that an array of Transportation

Security Administration officers and machines is a comforting sight at best, an acceptable nuisance at worst. These modes of judgment educate many to see the publishing of a photograph of someone killed as a result of war or brutal policing as in “bad taste,” and to see those who represent no threat because of their wealth or other modes of power as eminently beautiful and viewable.

While the chapters in this volume generally draw our attention to urban infrastructures and practices, we can also examine the media productions that so powerfully tutor collective taste in a world increasingly lived on-screen. Take the *New York Times* photographs of war examined by David Shields in his book *War Is Beautiful* (2015). Every photograph, war-related or not, is a teller of tales. It suggests an often complex event, with a history and a sequel, and its colors, composition, and subject matter propose how viewers ought to feel about what is happening. But most of us continue to see photos—and especially photojournalism—as thin slices of life, as objective records of the world out there. Text is widely approached with suspicion as to its writers’ ideological bent, but images—whether because of their presumed objectivity or their aesthetic appeal—push those concerns to the side. The photos of war become that much more powerful in structuring our taste for security.

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Shields (2015) looks at the fourteen years of *New York Times* front-page photos of images related to the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq; hundreds have been published from 2001 to the present. He writes emphasizing the *Times*’ status as an American newspaper whose editors, through the years, have presumed the basic goodness of the U.S. government and its activities even when they have investigated its functionaries’ failings. Shields arranges sixty-five of them, in rich color and large format, clustered by the implicit themes that give their viewers the overwhelming sense that war is a thing of some horrible or not-so-horrible beauty. America’s longest and ongoing wars have been devastating in their human costs. By contrast, the *New York Times* photos, Shields shows, often focus on their rewards: on American power being exercised for good; on the Iraqi, Afghan, and American citizenry’s love for the dead and wounded; and on the heroics and values of those who fight (and report on) them.

These themes are seen in recurring images of the striking natural world of a conquered “wilderness” in Iraqi deserts and Afghan mountains across which U.S. soldiers move, and Shields sees Hollywood as providing the templates for the *New York Times* photographers and picture editors through hundreds of war movies that focus on the pyrotechnics of blasting weaponry. These images include the warrior presented as an imposing father figure bringing protection and order, whether cradling a toddler or helping a comrade recover in a military hospital. There is beautiful religious imagery in pietà-like tableaux

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(an Iraqi man cradling the limp, bloody body of his brother) and stunning God's-eye views of leadership scanning for bad guys and securing the landscape (President Obama and General Petraeus surveying Baghdad rooftops by helicopter). Shields points to the inordinate number of photos of sweet and tragic-faced Afghan and Iraqi "womenandchildren" whose beauty and fragility make visible the need for their protection.

The evidence of death in these photos is more likely to be trails of blood on an Afghan hospital floor than butchered flesh. And it is more likely to be mourners collapsed on a coffin than ugly hysterical grief. What we find is love, art, nature, and religious sentiment rather than the revolting destruction of these things. These photos are evidence of the *New York Times*' complicity in the warmakers' desire to make each American war a "good" war, and war marketers' knowledge of the common U.S. desire to construe the "securing of the globe" as beautiful, even when Americans regret or critique the wars that result. And they represent the epitome of high-brow, objectivist, Manhattan-based judgments of taste in security photographic style.

x Security objects with such aesthetic qualities are consumed in vast quantities, some in the form of images, some in the form of documents like constitutions or political advertisements or immigration laws whose aesthetics we should understand as well. The security aesthetic in political life is not simply a beautiful design that enhances or markets a prosaic ideology; rather, "an ideology is an aesthetic system, and this is what moves or fails to move people, attracts their loyalty or repugnance, moves them to action or to apathy" (Sartwell 2010, 1). In looking at the aesthetics, we are reminded to continue to examine security as a *good*, both in the sense of a moral claim—the specifying of who or what places are dangerous and who (almost always paternally) protects—and in the sense of a commodity—this is the product being sold and this is who profits. As the editors of this volume argue, security is contested terrain, and those studying it have often focused on parsing and locating the moral claims and counterclaims involved. The commodity good, however, has received less attention. There are three sources of threat that the contemporary United States economy is focused on: the fear that racial others will enter or attack the United States (e.g., protection from which structures large parts of the federal budget), the threat and prevention of redistribution or property theft (evident in the one in four American workers who fall in the category of "guard labor" [Bowles and Jayadev 2004]), and the threat and prevention of illness both individual and pandemic (via the many medical surveillance and prevention allocations in the federal budget). Erased, however, are the ugly truths that the true threat of violence for many is untreated disease,

the threat of arrest and incarceration, or the car crashes that killed 1.2 million globally last year and more Americans in the twentieth century than died in all the wars of that period.

People gradually become conversant in a new security language and come to “delight” in a new sense of what is beautiful about their preferred language and speakers of security speak. When Carol Cohn (1987) years ago identified the emerging security aesthetics of nuclear strategists in her classic article “Sex and Death in the Rational World of Defense Intellectuals,” she made the point that gender was implicated in the abstractions, euphemisms, and sexual metaphors used in those strategists’ technostrategic dialect. This is all the more important to understand when the Trump administration is virtually predicated on demonstrating that white men are in charge of security in every form, from rebordering the nation to securing life for the unborn.

Each of the chapters in this book explicitly or implicitly asks what an *anti*-security aesthetics would look like—how a tastefully subversive sensibility might be cultivated. The artist elin o’Hara slavick shows us one way in which representations of war can be made tastefully subversive in her remarkable series *Bomb after Bomb: A Violent Cartography*. slavick’s aesthetic intentions are clear. The colorful and complex drawings of the many places the United States has bombed in its history are, in her words: “relatively abstract—and I say relatively because there *are* some recognizable cartographic, geographic and realistic details like arrows, borders and airplanes, and as in war, civilians are rendered invisible. I employ abstraction to reach people who might otherwise turn away from realistic depictions. People approach abstraction with fewer expectations and defenses. I want to reach people who have not made up their minds, who long for more information, the people who vote and want to believe that we are living in a democracy but are filled with fear and doubt” (slavick 2007, 97). The drawings are also “beautifully aerial to seduce and trap the potentially apathetic viewer so that she will take a closer look, slow down, and contemplate the accompanying information that explains that what she is looking at may implicate her. I also chose the aerial view to align myself, as an American, with the pilots dropping the bombs, even though I would not, myself, drop them.”

slavick’s aesthetic is meant not just to draw attention to the moment of trauma or bombing, but to point as well to the long-term impact of having organized U.S. society around a view of security that makes war a self-evident good and allows it to provide the threat template for ever-widening obsessions and the products to cope with them. The contributors to this volume use a similarly subversive and accessible style and content to address an audience



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Figure F.1 elin o'Hara slavick, *Johnson Atoll, U.S., 1958–1962*. Mixed media on Arches paper. Image reproduced from slavick (2007).

that might be called into being in a world where the marketing of security goes far beyond war to the very imagination of the future as a whole.

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INTRODUCTION

Security Aesthetics of and beyond the Biopolitical

*D. Asher Ghertner, Hudson McFann,
and Daniel M. Goldstein*

All things human hang by a slender
thread; and that which seemed to stand
strong suddenly falls and sinks in ruins.

—OVID

Security, we are told, is the defining characteristic of our age, the driving force behind the management of collective political, economic, and social life. Yet security resists definition, easily roaming across scales. Security is at once about protecting something as basic as an individual life—personal safety, both yours and mine—and as abstract as “our” collective defense—homeland security, public health, world peace. But security’s aspirations are also grandiose, its justifications almost metaphysical. It seems to promise a forestalling of the inevitable death and decline of all that is “civilized” or “human,” as per Ovid, a guardian against the barbarians at the gate, or in our midst. Incorporating all that people both yearn for and fear, security offers tremendous power to whomever can convincingly promise its delivery, proofing us against uncertain future perils. Thus, as both governmental technology and anticipatory device for defining and mediating potential future threats, security may very well be whatever the powerful say it is.

But such claims invite rebuttal, making security a highly contested terrain, closely keyed to sovereignty. While the state remains the principal actor in security production, the possibility exists for other aspirants to power to assert themselves by assuming the responsibility for providing security. This

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contestation occurs at different levels or scales, from the local to the national to the global. These include areas of intense social interaction, like schools, museums, and other public spaces; the contemporary cityscape, where street gangs, paramilitaries, mafias, ethnic organizations, and others establish sovereign claims through public performances of securitizing power; and spaces of social abandonment, such as vacant properties and buffer zones in conflict territories. Borders—both the “hard” systems of defensive fortification evident at international frontiers and the “soft” forms of border inspection practiced routinely in the interiors of nation-states—similarly condense and render visible security as an infrastructural apparatus for managing circulations, or managing the *perception* of circulations.

Notably, security’s delivery is revealed through a negation: security is achieved when threats do not materialize and risks are obviated. Thus, doing security requires the constant staging of an absence, the performance of preemptive capacity, and the signaling of the potential to forestall or offset—encoded in objects (Advanced Warning Systems, inflatable life vests, razor wire), practices (airport screenings, border searches, a public “show of force”), and affects and imaginaries (collective fear, catastrophe scenarios, contingency plans). For this reason, we might consider security as much a sensibility as a calculative logic—something felt as much as thought. It is enacted through a population’s collective recognition of risk and possibility, prompted through the bodily process of being squeezed through checkpoints, the awareness of being overseen by closed-circuit television, the fear generated in watching the Doppler radar of an approaching hurricane, or the sting of teargas. This sensory rooting suggests an analysis of security’s aesthetic dimensions, observable in the menace of walls and fences, the reassuring display of an emergency landing card in a seat-back pocket, and the alarming image-figure of the “terrorist,” “criminal,” or “refugee” broadcast on the nightly news. The sensibility that such encounters provoke trucks in feelings of safety and apprehension, eliciting embodied reactions from a heterogeneous public implored to exchange its recognition of sovereign power for the sense, momentary and fleeting, of security.

This volume represents an intervention into the broad, interdisciplinary conversation about security and its societal expressions and effects, a conversation that has been ongoing since the dawn of the social sciences. The original Hobbesian and Lockean formulations of the social contract can, to an extent, be understood as agreements about security, or the willingness of a society to recognize sovereign authority in exchange for the policing of threats and the limitation of risk. More recently, during the Cold War and especially since the 9/11 attacks in the United States, the discussion about security has focused

principally on conventional, biological, nuclear, and chemical attacks and terrorism as the preeminent national security threats. These threats are joined by concerns over pandemics such as SARS and swine flu in the sphere of biosecurity and attention to ecological catastrophe in the form of climate change, extreme weather events, and species extinction within environmental security debates. This post-9/11 discussion, dominated by political science and international studies, has tended to collapse security—as a broad approach to governing risk (Foucault 2007)—into a narrower problematization of challenges to state sovereignty in an era of the global war on terror. As Joseph Masco (2014) notes of the U.S. embrace of terror as the organizing concern of security policy, emotional management and threat awareness have, since 9/11, evolved as central components of the Western social contract. Leviathan is said to be under threat from all sides, often from sources that only the state security apparatus is able or allowed to know about. Threats to Leviathan stand in for threats to collective life, and the security of the state acquires such existential significance that the everyday violences people experience in regimes of securitized control are deemed of secondary concern.

The chapters in this volume, by contrast, train attention on these violences of everyday life and the ways in which security is lived and felt. The volume thus resists transhistorical or nation-centric notions of security and, through ethnographic analysis, shows how hard-edged logics of control—such as border hardening or landslide mapping—become far less determinate as they are perceived and experienced on the ground. While engaging security as “a biopolitical problem of the protection and betterment of a population’s essential life processes in an indeterminate world” (Grove 2012, 140), the volume therefore attends to forms of securing the future that draw on nonquantifiable modes of governing. Here, we refer to both the means by which even calculable risks—assessable using biopolitical techniques like statistics, forecasting, and insurance—come to be governed by sensory processes that do not depend on techniques of risk assessment, as well as the forms of imminent threat that exceed biopolitical calculation, even when they are the central focus of security logics like preparedness and preemption (B. Anderson 2010; Collier 2008; Samimian-Darash and Rabinow 2015). Vulnerable lives are hence “futureproofed” not only by making risks measurable and therefore governable, but also by cultivating, through forms of sensory training, anticipatory subjectivities attuned to the possibility of unpredictable events.

We are concerned, then, with the question: How do we comprehend the sensory, symbolic, and affective experiences integral to the regulation of bodies and spaces, the delimitation of threats and vulnerabilities, and the securing of

sovereign command through the promise of “proofing” society against future perils? The contributors to this volume respond to this question by providing ethnographic analyses of what we call *security aesthetics*. In asking what security looks, feels, sounds, smells, and even tastes like, we treat aesthetics in its broadest sense as the domain of sense perception, which includes the range of affective and intellectual faculties that combine to transform how the material world strikes the surface of the body into subjective judgments of taste. Derived etymologically from the Greek *aisthetikos*, meaning “sensitive, or pertaining to sense perception” (which is further derived from and relationally linked to *aisthēta*, “perceptible things”), aesthetics in its original sense rejects a dualistic outlook of viewer and viewed, subject and object, reason and feeling, instead foregrounding the experience of human design and the sensory world more broadly as grounded in a material-affective encounter through which judgments of beauty and order are formed (Guyer 2005; Manovich 2017). Security, in the pages that follow, lies in this domain between affect and order, sense and judgment, and inclination and directive, building from a classical *aesthetics* that antedates Alexander Baumgarten’s eighteenth-century use of the word to develop the philosophy of artistic taste with which it is popularly associated today.

More specifically, we take up Jacques Rancière’s (2004, 12) elaboration of the aesthetic as the “distribution of the sensible,” by which he means “the system of self-evident facts of sense perception that simultaneously discloses the existence of something in common”—a shared aesthetic disposition, a normative arrangement of intelligibility—as well as “who can have a share in what is common to the community.” The distribution of the sensible hence shapes how differently placed parts of the community see and can be seen, as well as what they can say; what gets recognized as speech versus mere noise; and who is authorized to speak in sensible terms.

Rancière’s conceptual elaboration of aesthetic politics is rooted in the Aristotelian notion of citizenship as the act of partaking in government, a partaking that is prefigured by an “apportionment of parts and positions” determining those “who have a part in the community of citizens.” The distribution of the sensible is thus at once *inclusionary*, building a shared “community of sense” (Rancière 2009) or an agreed upon set of terms and categories of sensible action, and *exclusionary*, as it rests on a prior social distribution of subjects, some external to the sphere of citizenship—the “part with no part.” This broad framing accepts that aesthetic judgments have a necessary normative grounding, conditioned by cultures of practice, social conventions, and discourses of beauty, status, and order—what together might be called “the terms of sensi-

bility” (Ghertner 2015). It further recognizes the profound political stakes of how these terms of sensibility are codified and reconfigured—the domains of aesthetic consensus and dissensus that Rancière (2010) places at the center of his analysis of political hegemony. This capacious starting point allows us to consider how security, as a form of power, operates through distinct aesthetic registers, from notions of beauty and taste to style and genre, form and appearance, representation and mimesis, and emotion and affect.

To break this down further, we distinguish three intersecting modalities for framing and understanding security aesthetics: designing fortresses, screening threats, and calibrating vulnerabilities. By *designing fortresses*, we refer to the ways in which interventions in built form deploy visual and other sensory signals to fashion aesthetic norms about how security looks, sounds, and feels. Alongside, and often through, disciplinary techniques of defensive enclosure—such as the erection of walls or the installation of barbed wire—the cultivation of a fortress aesthetic enables the landscape to “speak,” deterring threats and simulating order by prompting the viewing public to respond to normative standards of appearance. “Fortresses,” then, refers not only to discrete residential, commercial, or governmental structures or territories designed to impose constraints through the power of the environment, but also to the broader sensory coding of security logics into the design of physical, geographical, and infrastructural milieux.

By *screening threats*, we mean the surveillant conversion of corporeal and spatial imagery into ostensibly self-evident, impartial, and predictive knowledge of dangerous aberration, as well as the material and symbolic systems developed to anticipate and respond to deviance. At the same time, we acknowledge more everyday forms of screening, from mundane acts of reading strangers as one navigates a city sidewalk to more patterned, but nevertheless ordinary, considerations of how investors and homeowners assess neighborhood safety in making locational decisions. Surveillance, though typically an apparatus of control directed by state security-making entities, here also operates as a tool of self-securitization by those located outside of, or parallel to, the state.

By *calibrating vulnerabilities*, we refer to the social regulation of how risks are recorded, imagined, and affectively experienced, often through sensory projections of a threatening Other. This includes a consideration of a range of signals, signs, codes, and sensory schemes for developing securitized ways of seeing and feeling, concentrated and honed in the practices of security experts, but more widely disseminated into a securitized public capable of sensing insecurity even when it is not rationally known.

Taken together, these modalities concern not only the ways in which security-aesthetic rhetorics and practices are instituted and normalized, but also how they are variously challenged, appropriated, and manipulated—or perceived and responded to in sometimes unexpected ways. In what follows, we provide a conceptual genealogy for understanding these three modalities in order to demonstrate that a concern with security aesthetics has long been central to security studies—although it has been, we argue, insufficiently analyzed. Attention to these modalities and their histories and various forms also provides a framing for the substantive chapters that follow, which themselves define and periodize security differently. While each chapter, like any given security apparatus, necessarily elicits different processes of aestheticization, each chapter also explicates the operation of the modalities of security aesthetics we introduce here. With an empirical focus on a range of security practices—including biosecurity, border and territorial security, cybersecurity, environmental security, neighborhood and school safety, and residential tenure security—they thus offer readings of twenty-first-century security as a sensory terrain shaped by affect, image, and form as much as rationalities, restrictions, and rules.

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DESIGNING FORTRESSES: BUILDING AND MANAGING SECURE SPACES

We have to do something about it, and we have to start by building a wall—a big, beautiful, powerful wall. It can have a gate. It can have a door. We'll let people in legally, but we have to stop what's happening to our country because we're losing our country.

—DONALD TRUMP, INTERVIEWED ON *THE O'REILLY FACTOR*,
AUGUST 18, 2015

In her landmark article in *Public Culture* in 1996, Teresa Caldeira used the phrase “aesthetics of security” to capture how visual rhetorics of status and taste shaped the segregation of urban space through a proliferation of “fortified enclaves” in São Paulo and, by extension, other cities undergoing rapid demographic and political transformation. For Caldeira (2000, 292), as she later put it in *City of Walls*, “aesthetics of security” refers to “a new code for the expression of distinction,” one which “encapsulates elements of security in a discourse of taste and transforms it into a symbol of status.” In locating this shift, in the 1980s and 1990s, toward an increasingly insular city marked by the precipitous obliteration of public space, Caldeira drew parallels between São

Paulo and Los Angeles, which Mike Davis (1990, 226) had earlier identified as a “fortress city” in which “the neo-military syntax of contemporary architecture,” exuding a palpable hostility toward the street, combined with intensified policing and surveillance to partition the urban landscape (see also Low 1997; Penglase 2014).

Echoing broader studies of disciplinary architectures (e.g., Foucault 1977), which differentiate between physical controls that prohibit “risky” forms of behavior and psychosocial controls operationalized through human sensory reactions to the environment (Habraken 1998), Davis’s and Caldeira’s early formulations of security aesthetics evoke classical treatments of aesthetics as a domain concerning judgments of taste. Articulated most forcefully by Kant (1790, 52), judgments of taste differ from more ordinary judgments by their implicit claim to a type of universal validity, requiring agreement by others: “When [a man] puts a thing on a pedestal and calls it beautiful, he demands the same delight from others. . . . He blames them if they judge differently, and denies them taste, which he still requires of them as something they ought to have.” The demand for recognition and agreement gives the aesthetic a normative power, which, as Bourdieu (1986) elaborates, can be used to train perceptions by correcting or dismissing “bad” judgments of taste.

The social function of security technologies—including gates, walls, barbed wire, and the broad design features through which spaces are seen as properly securitized—operates through similar logics of correcting aesthetic deviance and retraining improper judgment. Caldeira (2000, 295), for example, notes how residents of São Paulo initially found the securitization of houses strange but gradually became literate in “the new code of distinction,” recognizing how well-enclosed spaces became key markers of status, separating private residences from the precarious housing found in the low-income neighborhoods, or favelas (see also Fischer, McCann, and Auyero 2014). Security technologies, then, are called upon not for purely disciplinary functions (e.g., imposed order or total surveillance) but as a means of producing a shared mode of public judgment that allows observers to participate in private practices of display, arrangement, and order that invariably contrast with the practices of those outside that community—those without taste, or with bad taste (see Dinzey-Flores 2013; Ghertner 2012). Those so classified may be regarded as suspicious, with a tendency to exhibit other failures of moral judgment, including a propensity for criminality, and hence themselves come to embody security threats. In a gated community, manicured lawns and uniform design standards contrast with the “less orderly” outside, which comes to be seen as a space of risk and uncertainty (Goldstein 2012). In Trump’s United States, the

“beautiful” wall—translated in the Department of Homeland Security’s bidding process as a declaration that wall designs shall be judged, in part, based on “aesthetics” (U.S. Customs and Border Protection 2017)—operates as an idealized image of national sovereignty, despite its necessarily limited power to thwart what Wendy Brown (2014) calls “waning sovereignty.”

The aesthetics of security within a disciplinary mode thus imposes a spatialized sense of order, a normativizing knowledge, and a visual grid of what does and does not belong, such that “the aesthetics of the proper” (Mirzoeff 2011, 3) establishes a feeling of what is right, even in the absence of the total surveillance upon which discipline is based. As George Kelling and James Wilson (1982) put it in their “broken windows” theory—which begins from the criminological idea that unrepaired windows in a neighborhood signal neglect and encourage further criminality—the landscape communicates, informing onlookers of acceptable behavior. Broken windows, here, are taken to indicate a visual coding of the street in a manner akin to Jane Jacobs’s (1961, 32) classic account of sidewalk safety. For Jacobs, having “eyes on the street,” untrained except in a shared sense of civility, became an informal means of social regulation maintained through “an intricate, almost unconscious, network of voluntary controls and standards among people.” Oscar Newman’s (1973, 4) theory of “defensible space” built upon this in seeking to incorporate what he called “corrective prevention” into the design of public housing projects. Falling under what is now known as “crime prevention through environmental design” (see Jeffrey 1971), space is securitized to the extent that one can “design-out” crime (Coaffee 2009). This technical end is achievable, in Newman’s model, through designs attentive to four characteristics of defensible space: territoriality, natural surveillance, image, and milieu. Territoriality involves the deployment of real and symbolic barriers to establish “zones of influence,” enhancing residents’ “proprietary attitudes”—their feelings of territorial control and responsibility for maintaining security—while conveying a sense of dominion to would-be intruders (Newman 1973, 53). Figure I.1 shows this at work, introducing to a New York City public housing project a propriety security aesthetic based on white picket fencing, microspatial differentiation, and a linear geometry that clearly distinguishes inside from outside. This figure, taken from Newman’s *Creating Defensible Space* handbook—published in 1996 by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development—shows how the introduction of leading lines divides open space, building in natural surveillance that allows an onlooking subject to quickly identify spatial transgression. The third characteristic, image, employs design techniques, such as white picket fencing, to reduce the stigma attached to public housing projects,



BEFORE



AFTER

Figure I.1 A site redesign carried out by Oscar Newman (1996, 76) in a New York City Housing Authority project in the South Bronx. Newman describes the redesign as delivering “territoriality” by allowing residents to assert “control of the space and activities *outside* their dwellings,” while improving “image” by cultivating a residential environment “that enhances their self-image and evokes pride.” The “bottom line,” according to Newman: “By subdividing and assigning all the previous public grounds to individual families, we have removed it from the gangs and drug dealers.”

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as well as the sense of isolation and vulnerability felt by residents and signaled to outsiders. Finally, the fourth characteristic, milieu, involves “geographical juxtaposition” with adjacent areas deemed to be safe, such as the positioning of building entrances so they face public streets.

While Jacobs and Newman, for different reasons and toward different ends, celebrated public civility and community-based policing as resources of collective problem solving and inclusive city making, others have emphasized how civility and beauty can become tools of control used to banish those reliant on public space (e.g., Harms 2013; Sorkin 2008). Ghertner’s (2015) formulation of “aesthetic governmentality,” for example, shows how bourgeois codes of civility were translated into a governing aesthetic used to evaluate the legality of urban spaces in Delhi, India. Amidst a crisis of calculative governmentality—which allowed slum dwellers to tamper with or expose the false premises of governmental records and thereby perpetually block demolition orders against them—the Indian judiciary shifted the epistemological basis of government to allow settlements to be declared illegal because, quite simply, they *looked* illegal. This was possible due to a reintroduction of colonial-era logics of nuisance law, which read not just objects or actions but whole population groups as potential nuisance categories. As a necessary defense of what Ghertner calls the “propriety of property” and bourgeois civility, slums were increasingly cast as insecure objects, nuisances to be managed rather than citizens entitled to governmental programs of improvement. In line with broader writing on (post)colonial urbanism, Ghertner thus shows how contemporary urban improvement programs continue to rely on colonial strategies of municipal control that use hygiene, order, and beauty as techniques of exclusion (cf. W. Anderson 1995; Kooy and Bakker 2008).

The proliferation of a type of “securitarian visibility” (Ivasiuc 2019), in which Jacobs’s “eyes on the street” get weaponized into instruments of surveillance and fortress defense, can be tied more directly to what Neil Smith (1996) famously diagnosed as the revanchist city, oriented toward punishing those deemed obstacles to sanitized images of the bourgeois city. This is part of a global surge in efforts to produce the city anew through “vigilant visualities,” or a watchful politics traceable to “the ‘behind the blinds’ surveillance of 1950s suburban neighbourhood watch” (Amoore 2007, 216). Whether through municipal efforts to create visibly vendor-free zones in historically informal market spaces of Cochabamba, Bolivia (Goldstein 2016), or “zero tolerance” policing that vilified key figures of disorder (the squeegee man, the turnstile jumper, the panhandler) in 1990s New York City, urban revanchism promising a new, more beautiful, and safe city is underpinned by a security aesthetic of fortress design.

The projection of security through fortress design and spatial management, though, can generate symbolic meanings and lived sentiments that conflict with the very logics driving securitization, challenging the terms of sensibility not only among those outside of them (the informal vendor, slum dweller, or migrant), but also within. Lisa Benton-Short (2007), for example, explores the increased presence of “hypersecurity” measures at the National Mall in Washington, DC. Although laden with symbolism evoking ideals of democracy and freedom, the mall has become increasingly partitioned by Jersey barriers (dividers made of plastic or concrete and used to separate lanes of traffic), bollards, and fencing. Here, “the aesthetics of security,” Benton-Short (2007, 442) argues, was “at odds with the iconography of the Mall” and raised questions about its future as a public, democratic space. Trevor Boddy (2008) has described this highly visible temporary fortification, exemplified by the Jersey barrier, as a kind of “fear theming” or “architecture of dis-assurance.” He suggests that after 2005, when the National Capital Planning Commission issued new design standards for construction on the mall, urban antiterrorism measures began shifting to an “architecture of reassurance” (cf. Marling 1997) as they became more permanent and less visible.

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To account for this mutable relationship between security architecture’s visibility and the feelings it may induce, Jon Coaffee, Paul O’Hare, and Marian Hawkesworth (2009) have devised a “spectrum of visible security” that ranges from conspicuous techniques of fortressing (e.g., walls and fences) to features that are visible but whose security purpose may not be immediately apparent (e.g., bollards, ornamental barriers) to deliberately concealed features (e.g., collapsible pavement). In so doing, they call attention to a series of “aesthetic paradoxes,” that is, possible disjunctions between the messages transmitted through security features and the differentiated ways in which they are interpreted and responded to in everyday life. The management of public life, then, increasingly rests on the ability of security regimes to mediate these aesthetic paradoxes via effective threat screening and identification, balancing architectural and other experiential projections of control with the management of risky bodies, spaces, and behaviors.

SCREENING THREATS: RECOGNIZING RISK IN BODIES, SPACES, AND BEHAVIORS

It is not incidental that Michel Foucault (2007) introduces his framing of security through a discussion of the unique challenges associated with urban density and the complex social economy that emerged in the eighteenth-century city. The explosion in trade between city and country, the collapse of the old “walled city” wherein internal and external elements could be clearly ordered

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and separated, and the intricate conjugation of bodies, diseases, and resources circulating in and through urban markets made the functional differentiation of spaces imagined by, and required of, sovereign and disciplinary power impossible to maintain. This more polyfunctional urban milieu, an admixture of elements that made life itself contingent upon a range of aleatory mechanisms, was inherently unpredictable. So, instead of planning or controlling a *space*, security mechanisms would need to work upon and through the *milieu*, aiming to modify not discrete territorial units so much as the regulating logics of how people and things moved and interacted with each other—to manage what Foucault (2007, 20) called “an indefinite series of mobile elements.”

The figures of the crowd, the street, the slum, and the market/bazaar, in both metropole and colony, litter nineteenth-century reports prepared by public health experts, police, architects, and planners, appearing as dense, shadowy webs only partially intelligible to a technologically advancing surveillance apparatus (see Dubber and Valverde 2008; Joyce 2003; Osborne 1996). The challenge for security mechanisms was to take the crowd, that indefinite series of mobile elements, and transform it into a population, an aggregate body abstracted from the “indefinite series.” Security, as a mode of power necessary for the emergence of modern governmentality, thus begins with an explicitly calculative *techne* premised on statistical and actuarial logics that use a synoptic gaze to capture not every detail, but rather aggregate patterns concerning, *inter alia*, health, reproduction, criminality, and hygiene. This synoptic gaze makes action possible through a probabilistic rationality capable of governing through powers of normalization, a form of visibility used to track and improve the overall conditions of the population’s welfare—to, for example, target the likelihood of criminal recidivism among victims of child abuse or bring the high rate of mortality from smallpox among infants into line with the rate found in the general population (Foucault 1977, 2007). For Foucault (2007, 63), the ability to treat the statistical normal—in the sense of a numerical distribution of the characteristics of a population—as a social norm or target of population governance means that the probabilistic gaze, focused on the likelihood of a particular individual or group having a certain social trait, can easily reduce to the normative gaze, dispensing with or forgetting the statistical construction of group attributes and naturalizing them as sociological or ecological truths. Ecological, economic, or epidemiological mechanisms of risk are then socially mapped as biological attributes of risky social groups, or people who live or work in proximity to risks—from slum dwellers to waste pickers to residents of ethnic enclaves and townships (see Baviskar 2003; Jaffe

2016). The “criminal type” and “potential terrorist” thus sit between probabilistic risk assessment and normative judgment of risky characters.

The projection of social deviance and the reenactment of a normative classificatory aesthetics is evident in what Allen Feldman (2005) calls the “actuarial gaze,” a set of visual arrangements mobilized to sense and anticipate danger, and thereby exact optical command over everyday life. Building on Ulrich Beck’s (1992) observation that the sphere of risk transcends the human sensorium due to the inherent imperceptibility of numerous threat potentials (e.g., radiation or air pollution), Feldman (2005, 2006) theorizes the actuarial gaze as “the prosthetic extension of the human sensorium.” This point is illustrated by U.S. Air Force drone targeting and surveillance in Afghanistan, which deploys a particularly potent form of mechanized threat screening (Gregory 2011; Gusterson 2016). Ethnographic research shows that the highly mediated “drone stare” participates in “an actuarial form of surveillance,” mobilizing “categorical suspicion” to anticipate and manage risk (Wall and Monahan 2011, 240). Trained to mistrust their own perceptions, drone operators rely on the technologically mediated surveillance that drones offer as a means to detect threats “on the ground.” Mere sight is no guarantee, then, for “objects become rifles, praying a Taliban signifier, civilians ‘military-aged males,’ and children ‘adolescents’” (Gregory 2011, 203).

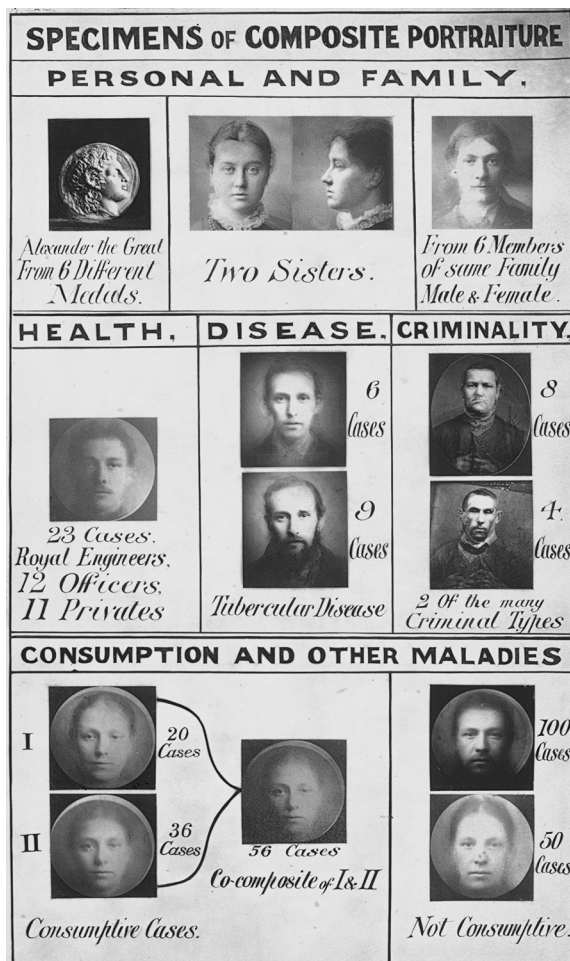
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An earlier instance of “social sorting,” to use David Lyon’s (2007) phrase, is detailed by Allan Sekula (1986) in his illuminating essay on the advent of criminal portraiture in the nineteenth century, when photography intersected with numerical methodologies, incorporating techniques of physiognomy and phrenology, to regulate social life. Sekula focuses on two figures, Alphonse Bertillon, a Paris police clerk, and Francis Galton, the founder of eugenics and a key figure in the formalization of modern statistics. Whereas for Bertillon the photograph was indexical, of use for identifying individual criminals and potential recidivists, for Galton photographic images could be symbolic and typological, offering a means to generalize about heredity and race.

Thus, Bertillon’s “signaletic notice,” or “Bertillonage,” combined anthropometric measurement and what are now known as “mug shots” to amass elaborate archives of individual criminal bodies that, before the criminological use of the fingerprint, could be used to confirm an association between a criminal suspect and a criminal record. Galton, by contrast, folded images of multiple bodies into composite portraits, which yielded average types, he claimed, through a kind of “pictorial statistics” (see Figure I.2). Rapists, in other words, had a particular look that, through pictorial rendering, would allow the police to profile

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Figure 1.2
Francis Galton's
demonstration of
composite portraiture,
suggesting how
"criminal types" and
others prone to set
pathologies and
maladies could be
visually derived from
photographic case
records. Metropolitan
Museum of Art.



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other potential offenders. Despite their differences, both approaches, Sekula (1986, 11) shows, ultimately derived from "the belief that the surface of the body, and especially the face and the head, bore the outward signs of inner character."

Despite the discrediting of phrenology, anthropometry, and racial forensics, the racialized schema of perception that they helped build remains embedded in contemporary criminal forensics' presumption that identity is unequivocally indexed to a biological self. The normative physiognomy of the social body hence continues to underlie the perceived objectivity of fingerprinting and other biometric techniques of "reading" the body's form. As

Frantz Fanon (1952, III) puts it in his account of epidermalization, or the reduction of the human subject to her skin color: “Below the corporeal schema I had sketched [there is] a historico-racial schema. The elements I had used had been provided for me . . . by the other, the white man, who had woven me out of a thousand details, anecdotes, stories. I thought that what I had in hand was to construct a physiological self, to balance space, to localize sensations, and here I was called on for more.” Fanon’s confirmation of the characterological secrets that lie hidden beneath the surface of the body, of the semiotics of Blackness produced out of “a thousand details, anecdotes, stories,” mirrors biometric technology’s continual reliance on the statistical knowledge of anthropometry. Building on Lewis Gordon’s (2006) notion of “white prototypicality,” Simone Browne (2015) notes how “the racially saturated field of visibility” (Butler 1993) associated with social schemas of perception gets mapped into biometric technologies, producing what she calls digital epidermalization, that is, “the exercise of power cast by the disembodied gaze of certain surveillance technologies that can be employed to do the work of alienating the subject by producing a truth about the racial body and one’s identity despite the subject’s claims” (Browne 2015, 110). What Browne’s concept of “digital epidermalization”—and the broader concept of “racializing surveillance” within which it is embedded—provides is a recognition that the actuarial gaze often reduces to the racializing gaze. Or, as John Fiske (1998) puts it, “Today’s seeing eye is white.” The same could be said of the biometric eye.

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Epidermalization applies not just to visual technologies but to the whole forensic practice of reading the body, including fingerprinting, that most scientific of technologies (Breckenridge 2014). Describing the “cold hit” linking Brandon Mayfield to a partial fingerprint pulled from a bag of detonators recovered near the 2004 Madrid train bombings, Simon Cole (2006), for example, notes how a biometric match of this sort can actually generate the very suspiciousness of facts that might otherwise seem innocuous. Even in the face of strong exculpatory evidence, Mayfield was deemed suspicious and imprisoned for nineteen days based upon a potential fingerprint match and a post hoc profile: he had converted to Islam, had an Egyptian wife, and had ballistics expertise through his prior service in the U.S. Army. Despite the perceived “mechanical objectivity” of information technology and presumed infallibility of fingerprinting—reflected in the FBI’s declaring Mayfield a “100% identification” with the Madrid partial print—the Spanish National Police eventually found the true source of the print, a Moroccan national living in Spain. The wrongful detention of Mayfield leads Cole to conclude that the only reasonable basis for the mismatched fingerprint was that the “suspicious

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information”—the “dark matter” of racialized optics that Browne (2015) argues underpins the entire surveillance apparatus—about Mayfield’s profile leaked into the laboratory. If in Western philosophy Descartes’s “malicious demon” (Ewald 2002) represents the ever-present threat that the rational subject’s senses will fall victim to perceptual illusion, here the demon takes the form of the rational security apparatus itself. The “leak” of the racialized gaze into actuarial and forensic modes of securitization is most starkly evident in policies of racial profiling, where white prototypicality leads to the “illicit appearance” of Blackness (Gordon 2012)—which, much like the figures of the immigrant and refugee, produces Blackness as prototypically criminal.

The question of prototypicality—raised to a pseudo-science in Galton’s forensic photography and still “leaking” into biometric technology today—confirms the continual blurring of superficially aesthetic readings of the body when prototype is reduced to phenotype, as well as the actuarial logic of security. The probabilistic interpretation that it was likely a Muslim who triggered a bomb in Madrid allowed an actuarial-security logic to appear to underpin assumptions about the character of a Muslim convert. The schematic racism implicit in prototypicality, though, in the Mayfield case and more generally, allows the racial-aesthetic logic to transcend the actuarial-security one, an exaggerated version of which appeared in President Trump’s executive orders banning refugees and immigrants from Muslim-majority countries, even though zero terrorist attacks had been perpetrated on U.S. soil by citizens of the listed countries. A further example of the racial-aesthetic logic of profiling is provided through the statistical fact that the Transportation Security Administration (TSA) stops and frisks black women at airports nine times more frequently than it does white women, even though the former are found carrying contraband less than half as often as the latter (Browne 2015, 132). While travelers “with ‘risky’ surnames and meal preferences” tend to experience more intensive surveillance than others during air travel, the risk of “travelling while black” is registered here in the material-aesthetic surface of hair, or what R&B singer Solange Knowles called out in a clever play on words, “Discrim-FRO-nation,” which she tweeted in 2012 after the TSA searched her for having her hair combed out (see Bennett 2005, 129–133). In Knowles’s case, epidermalization was anatomized to a single body extension, deemed risky, as the TSA put it, due to its “puffiness.” This marks a visual transposition of the security question “Does this person show signs of distress and agitation?”—which underpins the practice of remotely screening airline passengers’ emotional states to detect “abnormal behavior” before it materializes as security breach (Maguire 2014; see also Maguire and Fussey 2016)—to “Did this person comb her hair like a criminal?”

Didier Fassin and Estelle d'Halluin (2005), writing on applications for asylum in France, see the body's surface emerging as another kind of evidence in security theater. They detail how more restrictive immigration controls since the 1980s, combined with growing suspicion toward asylum seekers and their biographies, have heightened the evidentiary value of medical certificates in asylum seekers' applications. Specifically, Fassin and d'Halluin see the rise of a new form of bodily governmentality, as asylum seekers are increasingly expected to display wounds to medical experts in order to verify their persecution—and thus demonstrate their eligibility for refugee status (see also Ticktin 2011). The display of the body to screening is also at issue in Rachel Hall's (2015) work on the "aesthetics of transparency," a rationality of government that seeks to produce docile citizens, willfully visible to biometric screening at airports, while projecting an image of the war on terror's enemies, in contradistinction, as "irredeemably opaque" (76).

Threat screening, though, is not only about how sovereign powers manage threat propensities. It is also an everyday navigational tactic by which those living in infrastructure-scarce environments outmaneuver (often state-induced) precarity by constantly experimenting with styles of communication, movement, and exchange to bypass or minimize risk and open up opportunity. While new forms of self-presentation, collaboration, and display are constantly necessary in the informal economies he studies, AbdouMaliq Simone (2004, 2010) offers a range of generative concepts for tracing how seemingly discrete styles of managing rhetorical situations—for example, how to make an illegal operation appear legitimate—add up to a genre of sorts, a mode of speaking or acting that people learn to mimic, weave together, and manipulate (see Bakhtin 1983). Under the rubric of "people as infrastructure," Simone shows the endless variation, evolution, and recombination of codes of practice required to read and navigate sources of collaboration or threat. To the extent that these styles of practice—seemingly parochial and unpredictable on their own—reference socially inferred conventions, they become cultural genres facilitating rich networks of economy and allowing a strong sense of security to be maintained outside of state-sovereign command (Simone 2010, 192).

CALIBRATING VULNERABILITIES: FASHIONING AN AURA OF (IN)SECURITY

In his writings on security, Foucault (2007) identifies two general conditions to which security mechanisms must necessarily respond, one juridical-moral and one cosmological-political. The first is evil human nature, implying that certain actors within the population will inevitably do things antagonistic to the goals of overall social welfare, and the second is "bad fortune," a concept

requiring acceptance of inevitably undesirable outcomes (e.g., that the weather will sometimes be bad or that terrorists might someday pick your city). Security seeks to isolate evil and forestall misfortune, an important means of which is the calibration of vulnerabilities and the modification of sensory schemas of perception. For our purposes, this marks a point of departure for exploring the forms of aesthetic training central to the production of securitized publics, “communities of sense” (Rancière 2009) perceptually and affectively disposed to share in governmental schemes of sensing threat, but also prone to exceeding or reworking those schemes (Masco 2014; Pedersen and Holbraad 2015).

In contrast to juridical and disciplinary power, which focus on a possible event and seek to prevent that event from ever occurring, security, Foucault (2007, 37) writes in relation to food scarcity, tries to arrive at an apparatus (*dispositif*) for transforming scarcity into a nonevent. In this case, the apparatus was the “liberal” repeal of market restrictions (price ceilings, restrictions on hoarding or exports) and a system of *laissez-aller*, letting things take their course—quite the opposite of how we understand security mechanisms to operate with reference to the types of crises more prominent in security discourse today. And yet the central feature of how the event is transformed into a nonevent remains located in a process of displacing danger onto the biopolitical outside, the part of society *not* to be defended, the evil. As Foucault (2007, 42) puts it, the security event is split: the specific “scarcity-scurge disappears, but scarcity that causes the death of individuals not only does not disappear, it must not disappear.” By allowing certain people to die of hunger, the scarcity event, a wider scourge, is avoided. In this manner, what would normally pass as an event is rendered nonevental through a partitioning of the pertinent from the nonpertinent, the human from the nonhuman (Mbembe 2003). The section of society reduced to bare life must be aesthetically rendered grotesque—the not-quite-human object of revulsion or unease (Agamben 1998; see also McFann 2014). Produced through a distortion or exaggeration of a human form, the grotesque is what one sees and tries to, but cannot quite, turn away from, arousing feelings of both fear and amusement in the observer (Kristeva 1982; Ruskin 1851).

Didier Bigo (2002), writing on the “governmentality of unease,” details how the “transversal” figure of the immigrant, rooted in the myth of the state-as-body, allows politicians and a transnational field of security professionals to frame political problems in terms of threatening “penetrations,” foreign breaches of bodily integrity. This pliant framing, Bigo argues, structures political thinking and discourse in a way that allows for endless adaptation and coordination across contexts, for the word “immigrant” may incorporate a seem-

ingly limitless range of threats under the same sign. And yet, while migration flows can never be completely controlled, politicians and security professionals act on the basis that territorial control is possible, so that a sense of unease may be continually reproduced and cited to justify new security measures. Indeed, because fear gathers in proportion to the indeterminacy of the threat, the very amorphousness of the immigrant figure facilitates its instrumental mobilization, both as a scapegoat for policy failures and as the constitutive outside that reaffirms the body politic.

The slippage of signs and the nebulousness of risk may combine to propagate fear. Sara Ahmed (2004, 119) argues that emotions like hate and fear do not reside within individual subjects but rather circulate through “affective economies” and therefore “work by sticking figures together,” such as the asylum seeker and the terrorist (see also Puar 2008), “a sticking that creates the very effect of the collective.” In a commensurate vein, Brian Massumi (2005, 32, 40) has written on the color-coded Homeland Security Advisory System, created in the aftermath of 9/11, arguing that it was designed “to calibrate the public’s anxiety” through a form of affective training. Without form or content, the alerts depended on fear in a solely anticipatory register, detached from any specific threat or experience of danger, such that fear could now “self-cause.” In this sense, as a form of what Cindi Katz (2007) calls “banal terrorism,” vulnerabilities are calibrated through the production of an atmosphere of fear, using visual and other sensory means to call into existence a generalized anxiety and simultaneously demanding the opening up of bodies to an array of forms of sensory training, or subtler sensory attunements to the security atmosphere (Stewart 2011; Turner and Peters 2015). At the level of national security practice, this is what Joseph Masco (2014) calls “national security affect.” Masco specifically shows how the U.S. security apparatus mobilized 9/11 as an “ongoing existential danger,” inserting Cold War-era nuclear fear into the twenty-first-century U.S. regime of counterterror. Echoing Foucault, Masco argues that the global war on terror rests upon “the promise of a world without events”—a war carried out on and through negative affects, in which the perpetual experience of insecurity is managed through a vague promise that that experience can be eliminated.

Barbara Sutton (2013), writing about perceptions of street violence in Colombia, describes a further attunement to a threatening environment through what she calls a “fashion of fear,” represented by the downscaling of security design from the gated community to the bulletproof car and all the way down to the body through a different type of banal security object: fashionable armored clothing. As the pervasive logic of borders and fences becomes attached

to the problem of moving and being present in threatening public spaces, how one dresses and self-presents becomes a domain of status that simultaneously reworks security into a question of individual choice and personal responsibility, rather than state violence or structural inequality. Security, then, is available for purchase, and ballistic apparel tells parents to either live in fear or take charge of their own lives, outfitting their children in shielded backpacks and polka-dotted bulletproof vests as a way to live securely and attractively.

A likewise illuminating perspective on vulnerability calibration is offered by Brent Steele (2010) in his writing on the “aesthetics of insecurity,” a sensory domain he distinguishes to account for how collective bodies, including but not limited to the nation-state, fashion self-images through “aesthetic power.” David Murakami Wood and Abe Kioyshi (2011) provide a similar articulation of what they call an “aesthetic of control” in Japan, whereby nostalgia for a mythologized past—a pre-1964 “Beautiful Japan” imagined to be clean and free of crime—serves to displace present anxieties about the future. Thus, just as visibility is produced via technocratic surveillance or public service announcements enjoining residents to see and anticipate danger, disappearance is enforced through intensified policing involving the displacement of homeless encampments whose presence sullies the idealized urban order (see also Jusio-nyte and Goldstein 2016).

In another context, but echoing Steele’s broader claim, Katya Mandoki (1999, 78) explores how the Nazis used techniques of visibility to feign an aura of collective security. The regime engaged the aesthetic, she writes, through a series of substitutions—religion by art, art by propaganda, propaganda by indoctrination, culture by monumentalism, politics by aesthetics, and, finally, aesthetics by terror—“to frame the shapelessness of the masses and fabricate their fictitious image as an ordered, steady and invulnerable organisation.” Yet, as Hudson McFann and Alexander Hinton (2018) argue, the pursuit of a pure, utopian order by genocidal regimes is always haunted by an “impassability,” as their revolutionary visions are inevitably undermined by the threats they must continually produce. In the case of the Cambodian genocide, the focus of their analysis, just as the Khmer Rouge sought to create a pure, uniform society, the regime was undone by the threatening excess—various forms of “detritus,” including physical garbage of the prior regime and its polluting traditions and incorrigibles—that it had to manifest in order to legitimize its violent transformation of Cambodia.

The challenge of instituting durable forms of aesthetic consensus is more evident with threats of long or unknown duration. For example, the field of nuclear semiotics arose in 1981 when the Human Interference Task Force



Figure I.3 “Landscape of Thorns,” concept by Michael Brill and art by Safdar Abidi. This image depicts a hypothetical landscape rendered as unnatural and evil, with jagged and unwelcoming features that its designers thought would deter future human entrance, even in the absence of shared cultural conventions or criteria for assessing evil. Image reproduced from Trauth, Hora, and Guzowski (1993, F-61).

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(HITF) was established by the U.S. Department of Energy to search for ways to reduce the chances of future humans unintentionally entering radioactive waste isolation zones. The project was continued in 1991 when a group of linguists, astrophysicists, architects, and artists were invited to the New Mexico desert to visit the Waste Isolation Pilot Plant, the only permanent repository for nuclear waste in the United States. The panel was assigned the task of devising a system to communicate to people, ten thousand years in the future, that entry into the waste zone was dangerous. Given this long time horizon, the existence of a shared language, standardized criteria of aesthetic judgment, or even cultural translatability could not be assumed, leading the panel to conclude that visual storytelling was the most viable solution. One proposal was to design a “landscape of thorns”—fifty-foot-high concrete spires with sharp points jutting out at different angles—aimed at scaring people away from a dangerous place, but worries crept in that this engineered landscape itself would become an attraction (see Figure I.3).

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Earlier, philosophers Françoise Bastide and Paolo Fabbri (1984) had proposed a solution under the HITF that a breed of cat be genetically engineered to change color when exposed to radiation. Released into the wild, this new “radiation cat” would serve as a living Geiger counter, visually symbolizing risk when it turned an “unnatural” color. Proliferating songs, legends, and folklore about these “evil” creatures would create, they suggested, a durable culture of avoidance toward the distorted felines, passing the fear they elicited onto the spaces they occupied. Here, then, the juridical-moral concept of evil was deployed to avert the cosmological-political appearance of misfortune.

Sensory warning systems often rely on environmental signals rather than human modifications of species form. The growth of water lilies, which are drawn to warming waters, and the increased pollen production from common ragweed, caused by warming soil and higher atmospheric carbon dioxide concentrations, are two examples of aesthetic harbingers of climate change (Ziska et al. 2003). The earlier seasonal appearance of bright white and purple water lily blooms or their discovery in more northern locations tells the trained eye that temperatures are rising. The more intense irritation in the eyes and the more aggressive sneezes an allergic body experiences to higher pollen counts tell the body of environmental change. Scientific usage of satellite imagery of glacier retreat further functions as a “fingerprint” of global warming—as distinct from, yet often complementary to, calculative assessments of atmospheric temperature or snow mass.

SECURITY AESTHETICS AND THE MANAGEMENT OF LIFE

Each of the chapters that follow shows how the three modalities of security aesthetics charted above intermix in the making of differently imagined futures, illuminating the complex interplay of sense perception and articulated reason in how security apparatuses operate. They provide ethnographic illustrations of security aesthetics at work in diverse geographic and social situations, deepening and extending our framing conceptions through their context-specific interventions.

Victoria Bernal’s chapter begins with a close reading of three recent museum exhibits unique in the U.S. context for focusing on cybersecurity. Responding to what she calls “digital opacity,” Bernal shows how each exhibit uses distinct aesthetic techniques to make visible “the elusive digital.” The first exhibit, *Weapons of Mass Disruption*, is aligned with the U.S. national security apparatus and develops a “masculine, futuristic geek” tech aesthetic. This exhibit trains audience members to fear future cyberattacks as the digital equivalent of nuclear warfare, while encouraging faith in government agencies

to protect society from them. The Cyber Detectives exhibit, by contrast, uses low-tech analogs—including wooden keys as passwords and rotating dials to simulate cryptography—to depict the internet as a mechanical system that individual citizens can and should game and secure through routine practice. The third exhibit, Covert Operations, features internationally renowned artists and deploys a revelatory and dystopian aesthetics characterized by a pedagogical overtone meant to shock viewers into questioning the overreach of surveillance technology. As is typical of the curatorial space of the museum, the aesthetic orientation of the three displays is transparent and easily intelligible, supplemented by voiceovers, instructional text, or artists' statements. And yet, as Bernal argues, the ability of audiences to step into any of these orientations and seamlessly partake in their narratives suggests that the content of cybersecurity—including normative questions of what it is and should be—is as malleable as its form, making security aesthetics perhaps the key terrain for contesting how our digital lives are managed.

Shifting from elusive digital security threats to immediately recognizable environmental dangers, from landslides and floods to household accidents, Austin Zeiderman's chapter shows how vulnerabilities calibrated through decades of exposure have produced what he calls an endangered city. Contrasted with "danger," which indicates the presence of a specific, identifiable threat, "endangerment" refers to "the more general condition of being threatened," even after the concrete dangers that may have once placed lives at risk have subsided. Building on Bogotá's housing agency's own practice of sensory training—what it calls *sensibilización*—Zeiderman describes how a securitized urban citizenry is made through its response to public service announcements and environmental security programs. As an effort to raise awareness, make the public conscious of risk, and train perceptions, *sensibilización*, Zeiderman shows, shapes the political terrain on which poor *bogotanos* occupying flood- and landslide-prone hillsides pursue state care, having to identify and perform their endangerment to secure benefits. In Bogotá, systems of social inclusion and exclusion are hence increasingly conditioned upon "individual and collective abilities to perceive and respond to signs of danger."

Ieva Jusonyte considers security aesthetics less as a system of state provisioning than as a tool of violent exclusion, studying how border enforcement maims immigrant bodies while concealing its very techniques of violence through facade embellishments, architectural design, and the weaponization of topography. The border fence in Nogales, Arizona, along the U.S.-Mexico border is thus depicted by the U.S. Department of Homeland Security as an "aesthetically pleasing" infrastructural deterrent to potential border crossers,

a means both of screening threats and building a national fortress. However, its actual effect, Jusionyte shows, drawing from ethnographic research with emergency responders, is to push would-be border crossers either into the deep desert, where they are more likely to suffer from dehydration or other environmentally induced illnesses, or over the top of the wall, where they suffer a range of injuries delivered by the tactical infrastructure that the wall and surrounding terrain jointly constitute. Security aesthetics here naturalizes injury as a feature of border life, concealing state-enforced environmental violence and rendering broken ankles and amputated fingers signs of illegal entry—a civil offense less than a humanitarian disaster.

Whereas Jusionyte's chapter focuses on futureproofing the U.S. border from the perceived threat of Central American and Mexican immigrants, Jon Carter's chapter turns to the everyday violence of Honduran neighborhoods, where the competing sovereignties of gangs and the militarized police compel youth to lie, hide, and sometimes flee north toward the United States. Tracing the shifting security aesthetics of more than fifteen years of anti-gang policing, Carter describes futureproofing as an art of survival premised on different, sometimes competing, forms of aesthetic labor and display. Ranging from the retelling of public secrets to the construction of personal security archives and the utilization of scannable police uniforms, Carter notes how the ability to read who is or is not police, gang, or both underpins an entire theater of security practice. Semiotic ambiguity was not always the norm, though, as prior to the adoption of tough-on-crime *Mano Dura* policing policies in 2003, youth transformed their bodies into a semiotic surface for expressions of counter-state security aesthetics, tattooing their faces with gang insignia as an act of refusal. Dissimulation and concealment—and when that is not enough, flight out of the country—are the new techniques through which ordinary residents stage security, leading Carter to turn ethnographic attention away from resistance and toward resilience and deferred surveillance as the means by which communities pursue safety.

Rivke Jaffe's chapter focuses on the sensorial politics of difference within don-controlled inner-city "garrisons" in Kingston, Jamaica. Examining how "Downtown" and "Uptown" Kingstonians—the former typically lower-income and darker in complexion than the latter—experience safety within these spaces, Jaffe shows how differentiated uses of security aesthetics relate to the formation of distinct but overlapping political communities. Political and gang graffiti, party anthems, arrangements of bodies, manners of speaking and greeting, hand signals, preferred reggae or dancehall sounds, and (non)uses of street signage thus weave together styles of garrison aesthetics, a set of material-affective re-

lations not entirely dissimilar to those of the military base to which the term originally referred. However, rather than associating these aesthetic regimes only with feelings of fear, she emphasizes their function in generating positive sensations of safety, comfort, and familiarity for those within shared communities of sense, and further considers how modifications in the environmental intensities of sound and heat can shift the atmosphere of security to welcome Uptowners into the more culturally “authentic” Downtown. An analysis of security aesthetics, Jaffe thus suggests, helps move beyond rigid categories of race or neighborhood hierarchy, while also highlighting the built environment as a more-than-material domain of security practice.

Remaining alert to the aesthetic order of the street, Zaire Z. Dinzey-Flores and Alexandra Demshock ask what security looks, sounds, and feels like in gentrifying Brooklyn, New York. They do so by examining how real estate property listings depict and rebrand historically black neighborhoods as “safe” for affluent, mostly nonblack families. Focusing on the narrative and pictorial staging of interior residential spaces, but refusing to separate these more obvious strategies of interior design from the staging of neighborhoods, the authors consider how neighborhoods and their residents are arranged, organized, and pictured as part of what they call “the furnishings of safety.” Just as a skilled stager might emphasize the original woodwork or iconic stone of an historic home, the reputation of “Do or Die Bed-Stuy”—the infamous name given to the once-gunfire-ridden-but-now-gentrifying neighborhood of Bedford-Stuyvesant—is not completely elided in neighborhood staging. Rather, real estate agents incorporate the neighborhood’s history into a process of “narrative renovation” that invites would-be buyers to participate in neighborhood improvement while gaining the cultural cache of becoming an owner in a not-yet-discovered area. Through this and other aesthetic techniques, such as “picturing quietness” and “creating pre-fab escape hatches,” real estate practice rests on racialized logics of public appearance and street order, but it spins them into lifestyle amenities perfectly suited to you, the self-conscious “American Gentrifier.”

Turning to a radically different staged space, Rachel Hall explores the realist aesthetics of active-shooter drills executed in grade schools in the United States. Using the theatrical techniques of scripting, *mise-en-scène*, blocking, prop work, makeup, and improvisation, school boards willingly subject young children to worst-case scenarios—replete with fake blood, live ammunition, and unknown “intruders”—as a means to prepare them for the real thing. Noting how school drills have shifted from an older logistics paradigm, characteristic of the venerable fire drill, to an aesthetic one wherein students and teachers enter

the mimetic world of scenario play, Hall argues that active-shooter drills function in a performative space that is variably “world-reflecting” and “world-simulating.” That is, while they draw on references to an external reality of gun violence, which justifies the need for the drills, they also operate by forcing students to “submit to experiential training in which they play the potential victims of future acts of gun violence.” Calling into question the security logic that has led more than two-thirds of U.S. schools to subject their children to an immersively traumatic experience, Hall challenges the aesthetics of the current security ethos of preemption, noting how efforts to “harden” children’s psyches in anticipation of the “real event” ignore the very real violence of the performance itself and instill a tragic sensibility in one of our most important civic spaces.

Limor Samimian-Darash remains focused on the aesthetics of preemption in her chapter on the establishment of rules for Dual Use Research of Concern following a scientific lab’s successful transformation of H₅N₁ avian influenza virus into an aerosol possibly transmissible among human beings. Tracing the ways in which the National Science Advisory Board for Biosecurity under the U.S. National Institutes of Health responded to the realization that biosecurity threats could emerge within the scientific community, rather than from the outside, she describes a shift in the aesthetics of biosecurity from danger, premised on a list of known possible threats, to risk—and, in parallel, from designing fortresses to screening threats. Yet because potential uncertainties, in which threats are not typically predictable, had to be rendered perceptible in order to establish rules of regulatory oversight, uncertain threat potential was reduced to a list of possible pathogenic outcomes. This produced an inherent mismatch between the uncertain form of the threat and its tangible conceptualization/visualization. Thus, while biosecurity protocols were meant to capture the uncertain terrain of emergent scientific practice, they remained locked in a framework of danger premised on predictability and concrete form.

The absence of predictability serves as the starting point for AbdouMaliq Simone’s study of everyday life in Jakarta. Exploring a variety of experiential and experimental modes of living that he terms “standby,” Simone shows how rampant financialization and real estate speculation—along with competing systems of property inheritance and subdivision—have led to everything from the search for means of daily waste disposal to the possession of something as seemingly permanent as land title to be governed by an array of shifting associations. Dominated by a pervasive sense of provisionality and an absence of clear logics of regulatory oversight, living in standby becomes an improvisational practice out of which “a sense of security is anchored in a certain insecurity.”

When lease agreements and infrastructures become open and temporally non-durable, and where symbolic and aesthetic markers of the urban have ever-shifting spatial and political coordinates, standby marks a way of anticipating opportunities to align oneself with “architectures of possibilities,” or specific lines of association that make aggregated outcomes possible but not predictable. Judgments of taste, Simone thus concludes of the conditions of “the urban majority,” are not about moral validity or aesthetic purity, but rather become a sorting mechanism for knowing when to follow a line or wait for another one.

Alejandra Leal Martínez, finally, explores the experiences of displacement among informal street vendors and parking attendants in a rapidly gentrifying area of Mexico City, where aesthetic consensus is both more consolidated and founded on sharper moral coordinates than in Simone’s Jakarta. Leal Martínez finds that a dominant middle-class security aesthetic premised on an absence of social mixing and orderly sightlines has masked longer-standing economic security concerns behind the sheen of urban renewal projects—a transportation hub and mechanized parking meters. Asking how the disappearance of this older sense of security as a collective, common horizon has articulated with new urban securitization initiatives, she shows how a sanitized public plaza and sterile digital parking meters come to operate as signs of the city’s global publicness. But the reimagining of the city as a securitized fortress along these lines also generates a new aesthetic paradox: the invisibilization of informal workers’ status as urban citizens means that compensation and support that might facilitate their transition into less “disorderly” professions can be read only as a wasted handout. Aesthetic purification, Leal Martínez notes, therefore cannot be articulated as anything but spatial cleansing, despite the public discourses of democratization and sustainable development driving it.

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