

an abandoned railway yard in midtown Boston, encompassed an office tower standing at 749 feet tall, commercial arcades, a hotel and convention centre, department stores and luxury apartments, making it the city's most significant post-war redevelopment project. Prudential even succeeded in integrating the Boston turnpike extension into its vision – demonstrating how neatly the plans fitted into the prospects of the Motor Age. The insurer managed to establish itself as a quasi-public entity that was fighting urban blight and increasing accessibility, exemplified by the tax breaks it secured.

In the book's closing chapters, Rubin discusses the Center's architecture in more detail. Special attention is given to Charles Luckman, the pragmatic soap salesman turned architect who dotted American cityscapes with office architecture during the first post-war decades. For Prudential, hiring Luckman instead of one of the era's more famous architects was part of reinforcing its solid and business-like company profile. After speculating on alternative architectural outcomes and planning decisions, Rubin concludes we should understand Prudential's urban renewal agenda as a vote of confidence in the future of Boston's struggling inner city. The company genuinely thought its interests converged with those of the public at large, by providing life insurance and fiscal security as well as reshaping the cities in which its clients lived.

Rubin pays extensive attention to the wheeling and dealing between Prudential, city and turnpike officials. This might overburden the unknowledgeable reader sometimes. While most of the information is indispensable, the book does not consistently and chronologically link the city's historical, economic and social backgrounds to the emergence of 'The Pru'. Consequently, one gets a full grasp of how and when events took place, but not always why things turned out the way they did. This minor analytical shortcoming might have been tackled by spatially and topically zooming out every now and then, by which (inter)national events would have been taken into account as well. Yet, on the whole, this is an impressively detailed study of the complicated interplay between corporate, political and architectural actors, who imagined and built post-war urban America.

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Christina B. Hanhardt, *Safe Space: Gay Neighborhood History and the Politics of Violence*, ed. Lisa Lowe and Judith Halberstam. Durham: Duke University Press, 2013. 376 pp. £60.00 hbk; £15.99 pbk.
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I have always found the term 'safe space' an ambiguous concept within the urban landscape. Who is safe within this space, how does this space differ from other 'unsafe spaces' and who, in this framing, is imagined as the threat? More broadly, the idea of 'safety', when viewed in relation to urban histories of identity politics, is troublesome and one that Christina B. Hanhardt rigorously explores in her work *Safe Space: Gay Neighborhood History and the Politics of Violence*.

For Hanhardt, who is Associate Professor of American Studies at the University of Maryland, College Park, wider social changes around public safety initiatives,

taking place in the latter half of the twentieth century, have informed concepts of 'safe space'. In the process of constructing 'safe spaces', Hanhardt reports the adoption of more rigorous methods of policing, as well as the privatization of previously public spaces. This has resolved many of the issues originally identified by campaigning LGBT groups but, in the process, created a new assortment of problems. Over time and in the march towards increased safety, campaigners' methods to protect minority groups were manipulated to trample upon key aspects of community life, particularly in regards to race and class.

The focus of Hanhardt's research is the cities of New York and San Francisco. However, her style of writing and broad lens approach ensures that the issues in question never appear geographically narrow. Hanhardt's case-studies are easily transferable to other western sites where conflict over space and identity has emerged. Writing this review from my office in Central London, I was struck by similarities between the locations foregrounded by Hanhardt and the nearby area of Soho, which has witnessed its own history of clashes over safety and a subsequent lurch towards gentrification in an effort to 'clean up' its streets. For Hanhardt, to hold a valid conversation on the theme of gentrification requires an awareness of how fears over issues of race (often misplaced) have shaped redevelopment.

Hanhardt explores three intertwined narratives in her work across five chapters: the many faces of LGBT activism, urban development and policies in the US towards poverty and crime. What quickly emerges from the work's introduction is the diversity of queer organizations within Hanhardt's frame of reference, many of these groups fighting for similar causes yet pursuing their ends through different means. In this regard, I wish to commend the book on its attention to campaigning groups that force the reader to think beyond the expected narrative, devoting particular attention to organizations engaged with issues affecting people of colour, transgender and immigrant communities.

A final theme I wish to highlight is visibility, particularly the political gains and losses made through the act of 'being seen'. Hanhardt shows how the heightened presence of LGBT campaigning groups has, at different times, had the dual effect of increasing the risk of violence while also having the effect of 'mainstreaming' many of the issues being discussed. Within this drive to increase visibility, Hanhardt worryingly notes that many aspects of urban queer life have faced erasure as they fail to fit the increasingly narrow mould of 'gay life' under construction in these new spaces. This transition beyond queer and towards socially 'permissible' forms of homosexuality is a theme addressed at length by Matt Houlbrook in his groundbreaking study of *Queer London in the mid-twentieth century*.¹ Hanhardt also identifies the importance of these alternative shades of queer life in recent political developments in the US, arguing that grassroots resistance and campaigning has enabled a discourse to emerge within which recognizable LGBT political and legal gains in recent decades were able to flourish.

As one would expect in a work built upon a high level of detailed research, those reading about the history of identity politics or urban development for the first time may find certain sections, in which Hanhardt details the specifics of campaigning groups, of less interest. Yet, by painting these detailed pictures,

¹ M. Houlbrook, *Queer London: Perils and Pleasures in the Sexual Metropolis, 1918–1957* (Chicago, 2006).

Hanhardt effectively conveys the diversity and community-orientated nature of these campaigning groups.

The book's blurb promises an 'exploration of the contradictory legacies of the LGBT struggle for safety in the city' and, in this respect, Hanhardt succeeds. The multiple narratives presented in *Safe Space* and the vigour with which the author conveys the gains and losses made during this journey offer an account of America's LGBT history rarely found in other works.

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