

demography, and social life during the first five decades of the republic. Without sacrificing complex details, Houston demonstrates how the intersections of Turkish nationalism, global economic movements, and the impetus for capitalist growth and expansion have produced the conditions of possibility for *gecekondu* (shanty towns), factory, and municipality to become political sites for urban activists.

The second is Houston's treatment of conflict and violence in this period. As Houston relates, the period just before and after the 1980 coup d'état is often reduced to violence. Houston moves beyond this narrative, and identifies the different forms of violence that has marked this period, and the complex meanings the political actors give to the violence they have expressed and experienced. He provides us ethnographic details of different forms of violence (such as punishment, revolutionary justice, dispossession, resistance, or heroism), and the complicated meanings activists assign to these different forms. Houston also corrects a faulty, yet persistent narrative that puts the blame of violence on activists and legitimizes the junta regime as the entity that restored social order. In contrast, Houston treats violence as multidimensional, and accurately describes the many destructive forms of violence the government and military deployed against political dissidents. This period haunts the lives of not only those who experienced it, but also the lives of their children who carry the weight of the generational trauma and wounds. As a scholar, and as a child born right at the end of the junta regime to parents who closely witnessed the cruelty of the regime, I appreciate Houston's careful and critical treatment of violence as an act and as a concept. Houston's analysis demonstrates, also, how significant a well-crafted ethnographic inquiry is to a holistic understanding of political life in periods of intense social and spatial struggle.

This book's weakness is not unique to Houston's work, but a common shortcoming of academic publishing. The narrative of *Istanbul, City of the Fearless* remains theory heavy and it relies on academic discourse and disciplinary jargon in a way that distances large segments of the public from its rich and very valuable discussion. I think Houston missed a unique opportunity here to connect to diverse groups of readers beyond academia, especially considering his collection of interesting and lively stories.

Overall, Houston's book provides significant and detailed insights into the unique political history of Istanbul, and an innovative approach to oral history and ethnography. Not only does it illuminate the complexity of experiences and the trauma of the late 1970s and early 1980s in Turkey, but also it gives clues as to how one might approach the social traumas of the contemporary moment. This book leads us on an intellectual path of thinking critically about memory, production of space, sensory relationships to urban environments, and violence. As an ethnographer of contemporary political life in Istanbul, and a person born and raised in Istanbul, living with immense love and longing for the city in the diaspora, I appreciate the new avenues of thinking *Istanbul, City of the Fearless* provides to the reader. *Istanbul, City of the Fearless* is a book that transcends disciplinary boundaries, and is useful as an exemplary framework to study political life and affect in contemporary Istanbul, as well as in other similarly complex geographies.

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## **Insurgent Aesthetics: Security and the Queer Life of the Forever War. Ronak K. Kapadia (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2019) Pp. 352. \$28.95 paper. ISBN 9781478004011**

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As the world currently witnesses a massive halt to *normalcy* due to two public health pandemics—COVID-19 and racism, we must not only survive but find ways to thrive under these precarious conditions. Ronak K. Kapadia's *Insurgent Aesthetics* offers another way of knowing and feeling the world beyond structural violence plagued by the emergence of global fascism, neoliberal regimes, carceral

governance, and endless warfare. *Insurgent Aesthetics* disrupts the bleak dominant discourses of the *dystopian here and now* to provide a glimmer of joy, beauty, and hope through the work of Arab, Muslim, and South Asian diasporic multimedia artists. As people across the globe seek alternative ways to “thrive,” Kapadia reminds us to (re)imagine abundance beyond the capitalistic norms that continue to profit from the disparities and deaths of marginalized people. Particularly, Kapadia proposes *queer calculus* as an alternative logic or system of reasoning beyond the dominant knowledge apparatuses of the US security state to forefront the “affects, emotions, and affiliations of diasporic subjects living and laboring in the heart of empire” (p. 10). Through the queer utopic possibilities of arts, his poignant intervention offers new ways to connect, organize, and resist the imperial world order which he calls *insurgent aesthetics*. I conjured the proverbial “we” above not only to signify the connection between the readers, the writers, and the onlookers, but also those within the periphery and beyond the imperial imaginary boundaries who continue to thrive within the everydayness. Overall, *Insurgent Aesthetics* provides a critical tool to not only survive present-day global austerities—forces of empire, gendered racism, and capitalism—but to thrive by engaging in alternative and sensuous worldmaking practices grounded in art.

*Insurgent Aesthetics* is an interdisciplinary book that draws on critical ethnic and Arab/Asian/American studies, queer and feminist studies, art and visual culture, and affect studies with particular attention to “minoritarian” politics to critique the US empire. The book is divided into four chapters and an epilogue: a historical genealogy of US global war-making regimes from an aerial view, a formal reading of body and its sensorial regimes, an analysis of aesthetics of “warm data,” and an exploration of queer sensorial approaches to add to the transnationalization of American studies. While colonial and imperial violence has been the foundation of the US nation-building project, Kapadia focuses on how 9/11 commenced a new era within the US empire that enabled the “forever war” in the Greater Middle East (Iraq, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Palestine). Engaging with scholars of race, war, and empire, Kapadia examines how the neoliberal state of exceptionalism enables the post-9/11 War on Terror and furthers the US national security regime. Particularly, Kapadia builds on transnational feminist Inderpal Grewal’s argument that US neoliberal and imperial policies employ the rhetoric of state security to justify the militarized cultures of surveillance and protection domestically and globally. *Insurgent Aesthetics* reads against the grain of much popular and scholarly criticism of US militarism that unintentionally reproduce the US nation state as a monolithic and omniscient force by foregrounding forms of fugitivity, refusal, and rebellion as a counternarrative to the dominant discourse.

Unsatisfied with the dominant mode of seeing and understanding data logics of the US security state, Kapadia exposes the cracks and instabilities of the US empire as “already fleeting, fragile, and always failing” (p. 9) by focusing on the queer calculus of dissident arts. This book adds to the expansive contemporary critiques in American Studies that unravel the insecurities of the US empire rather than reify its state of exceptionalism. While Kapadia’s comparative and relational project contained a robust citation of critical race scholars, feminists, and other critical thinkers grounded in or connected to the US, the readers might be left hungry for a deeper engagement with Middle Eastern visual culturists and theoreticians. This gap creates opportunities for future scholars in visual culture, affect, warfare, and other areas to think beyond the dominant US racial formation that centers a heterogeneity of peoples and polities in the Middle East (including the Fertile Crescent, the Mediterranean world, the Indian Ocean world, the Arab world, and the Muslim world). Alternatively asking, what would a project on the forever war or imperial insecurities look like beyond US racial formation? How will our understanding of the US empire shifted if we center the complex historical and political experiences, religious and cultural practices, and/or socialities of the Middle East? As an extension of the queer calculus, Kapadia provided a lens to reposition the gaze inward onto the imperial landscape that will allow for a different method of sensing the forever war.

A thoroughgoing critique of US global state violence and its forever war, *Insurgent Aesthetics* turns to Arab, Muslim, and South Asian diasporic artists (Mahwish Chishty, Wafaa Bilal, Naeem Mohaiemen/Visible Collective, Rajkamal Kahlon, Index of the Disappeared, Mariam Ghani, and Larissa Sansour) in the US and Europe to see how they have created new ways to think, feel, sense, and map the world. Through the realm of art and culture (visual and sound installation, performance, painting, photography, new media, and video), Kapadia examines how these diasporic artists, who live and labor in the heart of empire, challenge violent histories of US militarism, gendered racism, neoliberal capitalism, heteropatriarchy, and Islamophobia. Key to the text, Kapadia argues that “If the forever war is an assault on

the human sensorium for citizens, subjects, survivors, and refugees of US empire, I have chosen to center a queer feminist analysis of the performative body of the racialized and dispossessed to reveal a complex insurgency against empire's built sensorium" (p. 190). He pivots our gaze toward the disqualified knowledges, histories, geographies, and memories of the Others as a queer calculus to see, feel, understand how the gendered and racialized minorities resist against imperial centric sensorium.

This work of critical theory is fitting for upper-level undergraduate or graduate-level students who are particularly interested in aesthetics and insurgencies. Additionally, practicing artists, activists, cultural attaché will find this arresting visual analysis book to be fundamental as it centers cultural producers at the heart of the conversation. This aesthetically engaging volume contains 93 illustrations, 26 of which are color, allowing the readers and viewers to have an intimate sensuous experience with the work and the artists. Particularly in the center of the book, the adjacent plates (Plate 7 and 8) of Wafaa Bilal's *And Counting* agonizingly drew my eyes onto the typography of his flesh. Bilal is a political refugee from Saddam-era Iraq who is best known for his 30-day-long project called *Domestic Tension* (2007). In this performance, he took a month residency in FlatFile Galleries, located in Chicago, that allowed internet users to watch and shoot foul-smelling yellow paintballs at him through a webcam. In 2010, Bilal underwent a 24-hour performance (*And Counting*) to be tattooed with finite dots representing the dead American soldiers and Iraqi casualties contained in a borderless map of Iraq. Uniquely, Bilal's performance prioritized the sonic and touch experiences of being tattooed over the visual that allowed the audience members to grapple with the notion of "touch the past." Witnessing the cartographic representation from a "view from above" mapped onto Bilal's flesh is a stark reminder that the queer calculus of the forever war is not just an abstract theory (p. 95), but actual visceral pain experienced every day from the artists (p. 95). Kapadia asserts that "tactical and haptic knowledge can elicit an alternative, sometimes contradictory, conceptualization of social relations to that offered by visually based epistemologies" (p. 93). This book aims to reach a broader audience with a particular focus on cultural producers and theoreticians to think through the importance of proximity and intimacy.

Kapadia concludes the book with an epilogue reflecting on the grainy aerial images of Congolese American Therese Patricia Okoumou scaling the Statue of Liberty on July 4, 2018. Okoumou protested Trump's policies to separate families and zero-tolerance prosecution of migration along US border while wearing a black t-shirt that read "White Supremacy Is Terrorism". This moment is the capstone of *queer calculus* that "signals an entirely new mode of inhabiting and feeling the world collectively and relationally in times of neoliberal security and war" (p. 22). While this radical gesture seems isolating and fleeting, 2020—the year of the failing empire(s)—has given us the chance to answer Kapadia's calls for a response with our collective energies. Collective care and mutual aids are no longer veiled behind imperial clemency or capitalist philanthropy that will only save the privileged few, but it is an act of radical resistance by the many. *Insurgent Aesthetics* provide us with a sensory glimpse—alternative modes of knowing, sensing, living, escaping, and feeling—into the collective queer future that focus on abundance of the everydayness aesthetic.

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**Coming of Age in Iran: Poverty and the Struggle for Dignity. Manata Hashemi (New York, NY: New York University Press, 2020). Pp. 256. \$30.00 paper. ISBN: 9781479881949**

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A young woman from a low-income family in urban Sari can't afford the cosmetic rhinoplasty she desires to achieve the reputation befitting of her much wealthier friends. When her mother takes a loan to build a house in their village, she refuses her share of the property and asks for cash to cover the plastic surgery