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Aurelia Guo - *World of Interiors* finished 15.10.22 Guo describes her approach in this book as using “collage and appropriation to destabilise the first person ‘I’”. Essays are interspersed with poems and poetic fragments, unattributed quotes mixed up together to create a polyvocal commentary on Guo’s expansive subject matter, covering race, class, gender, immigration, housing, and wealth inequality.

The first essay, “London (Poverty)”, is a perfect demonstration of the breadth of Guo’s thinking and how she maps connections between many areas to show the extent of legal frameworks for state control and the pervasiveness of discrimination according to class, race and gender under capitalism. Some of the themes listed in the intro to the essay are:

“The World of Interiors (1981-present)...Hampstead, the HIV/AIDS epidemic, gentrification, displacement, migration, the laws of homelessness, vagrancy, and lewdness, Margaret Thatcher/Ruth Ellis, Anna Nicole Smith...the vulnerability and disgustingness of the body, the Great Chinese Famine, the post-1980s generation, Sesame Street (1969-present), Piccadilly (1929)”

All of these, maybe at first sight disparate, issues are drawn together to examine the theme of “housing, hoarding and homelessness,” which sums up succinctly the obscene wealth gap that exists in the UK, particularly starkly in London. I love writing like this, I find the connections made so productive and it’s like seeing the author’s thought process laid bare.

Guo writes with a knowledge of legislation (she is a lecturer in Law) that helps to show how discrimination is encoded in our legal framework. She looks at Chinese women’s experience of immigration, segregation in the US, and legislation criminalising homelessness for example. Often the writing loops back to her own relationship to the northeastern Chinese city she was born in and her difficult relationship with often absent parents as they emigrated to several different countries during her childhood. Guo manages to pull all this together in a way that doesn’t fix meaning but stays with the difficulty. As she says “This piece of writing is my personal catalogue of loss.”

-Katie, @greenwinginmymouth, <https://www.instagram.com/p/CkNaaMdr5Dv/>