

Jasbir Puar, *Terrorist Assemblages: Homonationalism in Queer Times* (Raleigh, NC: Duke University Press, 2007)

We called it just another night in the desert.—Sergeant First Class Scott McKenzie, discharged for mistreatment of Iraqi prisoners at Camp Bucca, quoted in Douglas Jehl and Eric Schmitt, “The Military”

## **abu ghraib and u.s. sexual exceptionalism**

The torture of Iraqi prisoners at Abu Ghraib is neither exceptional nor singular, as many (Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld and the George W. Bush administration, the U.S. military establishment, and even good liberals) would have us believe. We need think only of the fact that so many soldiers who faced prosecution for the Iraqi prisoner situation came from prison guard backgrounds (reminding us of the incarceration practices within the U.S. prison industrial complex), let alone the treatment of Palestinian civilians by the Israeli army guards, or even the brutal sodomizing of Abner Louima by New York City police. Neither has it been possible to normalize the incidents at Abu Ghraib as “business as usual” even within the torture industry. As public and governmental rage alike made clear, a line had been crossed. Why that line is demarcated at the place of so-called sexual torture—specifically, violence that purports to mimic sexual acts closely associated with deviant sexuality or sexual excess such as sodomy and oral sex, as well as S/M practices of bondage, leashing, and hooding—and not, for example, at the slow starvation of millions due to UN sanctions against Iraq, the deaths of thousands of Iraqi civilians since the U.S. invasion in April 2003, or the plundering and carnage in Falluja, is indeed a spectacular question. The reaction of rage, while to some extent laudable, misses the point entirely, or perhaps more generously, upstages a denial of culpability. The violence performed at Abu Ghraib is not an exception to nor an extension of imperialist occupation. Rather, it works in concert with proliferating modalities of force, an indispensable part of the “shock and awe” campaign blueprinted by the Israelis upon the backs of Palestinian corpses. Bodily torture is but one element in a repertoire of techniques of

occupation and subjugation that include assassinations of top leaders; house-to-house roundups, often involving interrogations without interpreters; the use of tanks and bulldozers in densely populated residential areas; helicopter attacks; the trashing and forced closure of hospitals and other provisional sites; and other violences that frequently go against international legal standards.

The sexual humiliation and ritual torture of Iraqi prisoners enabled the Bush administration to forge a crucial distinction between the supposed depravity of Abu Ghraib and the “freedom” being built in Iraq. Days after the photographs from Abu Ghraib had circulated in the domestic and foreign press, President George W. Bush stated of the abused Iraqi prisoners, “Their treatment does not reflect the *nature* of the American people.”<sup>1</sup> Not that I imagine the American president to be so thoughtful or profound (though perhaps his speechwriters are), but his word choice is intriguing. Which one, exactly, of the acts perpetrated by American soldiers is inimical to the “natural” tendencies of Americans? Is it the behavior of the U.S. soldiers conducting the abuse? The ones clicking the digital shutter? Or is it the perverse behaviors forcibly enacted by the captured prisoners? What *exactly* is it that is “disgusting”—a word commonly used during the first few days of the prison scandal—about these photos? The U.S. soldiers grinning, stupidly waving their thumbs in the air? The depicted “sex acts” themselves, simulated oral and anal sex between men? Or the fact that the photos were taken at all? And why are these photos any more revolting than pictures of body parts blown apart by shards of missiles and explosives, or the scene of Rachel Corrie’s death by bulldozer?<sup>2</sup> Amid Bush’s claims to the contrary, the actions of the U.S. military in Saddam’s former torture chambers certainly narrows the gap between us and them—between the patriot and the terrorist; the site, the population, and nearly sequential time periods all overlies quite nicely to drive this point home.<sup>3</sup> But not without attempts to paint the United States as the victim: in response to the photos, Thomas Friedman frets, “We are in danger of losing something much more important than just the war in Iraq. We are in danger of losing America as an instrument of moral authority and inspiration in the world. I have never known a time in my life when America and its president were more hated around the world than today.”<sup>4</sup>

Bush’s efforts to refute the idea that the psychic and fantasy lives of Americans are depraved, sick, and polluted by suggesting instead that they remain naturally free from such perversions—not only would one never enjoy the infliction of such abuse, but one would never even have the

mindset or capacity to think of such acts—reinstantiates a liberal regime of multicultural heteronormativity intrinsic to U.S. patriotism. Building on the critique of national homosexual subjects in chapter 1, in this chapter I argue that homonationalism is consolidated through its unwitting collusions with nationalist sentiment regarding “sexual torture” in general and “Muslim sexuality” in specific. I also argue that this homonationalism works biopolitically to redirect the devitalizing incident of torture toward a population targeted for death into a revitalizing life-optimizing event for the American citizenry for whom it purports to securitize. Following Giorgio Agamben, state of exception discourses surrounding these events is produced on three interrelated planes. The first is the rarity of this particular form of violence: we are overtaken by the temporality of emergency, portrayed as excessive in relation to the temporality of regularity. The second is the sanctity of “the sexual” and of the body: the sexual is the ultimate site of violation, portrayed as extreme in relation to the individual rights of privacy and ownership accorded to the body within liberalism. The third is the transparency of abuse: the torture at Abu Ghraib is depicted as clear overkill in relation to other wartime violence and as defying the normative standards that guarantee the universality of the human in human rights discourses. Here is an extreme example, but indicting on all three counts nonetheless, of how these discourses of exceptionalism work in tandem. In May 2004, Rev. Troy Perry of the Metropolitan Community Church, an LGBTIQ religious organization, circulated a press release in reaction to incidents at Abu Ghraib in which he condemned “the use of sexuality as an instrument of torture, shame, and intimidation,” arguing that the fact “that prisoners were forced to perform sexual acts that violate their religious principles and personal consciences is particularly heinous.” The press release concluded by declaring, “MCC pledges to continue to work for a world in which all people are treated with dignity and equality and where sexuality is celebrated, respected and used for good.”<sup>5</sup>

Hardly exceptional, as Veena Das argues, violence is not set apart from sociality, nor is sociality resistant to it: “Violence is actually embedded in sociality and could itself be a form of sociality.”<sup>6</sup> Rita Maran, in her study of the application of torture in the French-Algerian war, demonstrates that torture is neither antithetical nor external to the project of liberation; rather, it is part and parcel of the necessary machinery of the civilizing mission. Torture is the underside, indeed the accomplice of the civilizing mission. Furthermore, Maran, citing Roger Trinquier, notes that “torture is the particular bane of the terrorist” and that the “rational equivalency”

plays out as follows: “As the terrorist resorts to extremes of violence that cause grievous individual pain, so the state replies with extremes of violence that, in turn, cause grievous individual pain.”<sup>7</sup> Any civilizing mission is marked precisely by this paradox: the civilizing apparatus of liberation is exactly that which delimits the conditions of its possibility. Thus torture is at the very least doubly embedded in sociality: it is integral to the missionary and savior discourse of liberation and civilizational uplift, and it constitutes apposite punishment for terrorists and the bodies that resemble them. Neither is the practice and propagation of torture antithetical to modernity. Noting that “all major accounts of punishment subscribe to the view that as societies modernize, torture will become superfluous to the exercise of power,” Darius M. Rejali argues that even Foucault, despite arguing that penal reform actually reflected a more efficacious mode of control (and moved punishment out of public domains), falls into this trap by assuming that torture dissipated as disciplinary regimes of society developed. Rejali counters:

Does the practice of modern torture today indicate a return to the past? One might be tempted to believe this because modern torture is so severely corporeal. But it would be a mistake to let corporal violence be the sole basis for one’s judgment. Modern torture is not mere atavism. It belongs to the present moment and arises out of the same notions of rationality, government, and conduct that characterize modernity as such.<sup>8</sup>

As Agamben demonstrates so well, state of exception discourses labor in the service of historical discontinuities between modernizing and liberalizing modalities and the regressive forces they purport to transform or overcome. As I argue in this chapter, deconstructing U.S. exceptionalism, in particular sexual exceptionalism, and contextualizing the embeddedness of torture—rather than taking refuge in state of exception pretenses—entails attending to discourses and affective manifestations of sexuality, race, gender, and nation that activate torture’s corporeal potency.

### *The Production of the Muslim Body as Object of Torture*

“Such dehumanization is unacceptable in any culture, but it is especially so in the Arab world. Homosexual acts are against Islamic law and it is humiliating for men to be naked in front of other men,” Bernard Haykel, a professor of Middle Eastern studies at New York University, explained. “Being put on top of each other and forced to

masturbate, being naked in front of each other—it's all a form of torture," Haykel said.—Seymour Hersh, "Torture at Abu Ghraib," May 10, 2004

Those questioned for their involvement, tacit and explicit, in torture at Abu Ghraib cited both the lack-of-training and the cultural-difference arguments to justify their behavior: "If we had known more about them, about their culture and their way of life," whines one soldier plaintively on the U.S. news, "we would have been better able to handle the situation." The monolith of Muslim culture constructed through this narrative (performatively reiterated by Bush's tardy apology for the Abu Ghraib atrocities, bizarrely directed at the token Muslim visiting at the time, King Abdullah of Jordan) aside, the cultural-difference line has also been used by conservative and progressive factions alike to comment on the particularly intense shame with which Muslims experience homosexual and feminizing acts. For this, the prisoners receive vast sympathy, for a split second, from the general public. The taboo of homosexuality in Islamic cultures figures heavily in the equation for why the torture has been so "effective"; this interpretation of sexual norms in the Middle East—sexuality is repressed, but perversity is just bubbling beneath the surface—forms part of a centuries-long Orientalist tradition, an Orientalist phantasm that certainly informed photographs of the torture at Abu Ghraib. In "The Gray Zone," Seymour Hersh delineates how the U.S. military made particularly effective use of anthropological texts to determine effective torture methods:

The notion that Arabs are particularly vulnerable to sexual humiliation became a talking point among pro-war Washington conservatives in the months before the March 2003 invasion of Iraq. One book that was frequently cited was *The Arab Mind*, a study of Arab culture and psychology, first published in 1973, by Raphael Patai, a cultural anthropologist who taught at, among other universities, Columbia and Princeton, and who died in 1996. The book includes a twenty-five-page chapter on Arabs and sex, depicting sex as a taboo vested with shame and repression. "The segregation of the sexes, the veiling of the women . . . and all the other minute rules that govern and restrict contact between men and women, have the effect of making sex a prime mental preoccupation in the Arab world," Patai wrote. Homosexual activity, "or any indication of homosexual leanings, as with all other expressions of sexuality, is never given any publicity. These are private affairs and remain in private." The Patai book, an academic told me, was "the bible of the neocons on Arab behavior." In their discussions, he said, two themes emerged—"one, that Arabs only understand force and, two, that the

biggest weakness of Arabs is shame and humiliation.” The government consultant said that there might have been a serious goal, in the beginning, behind the sexual humiliation and the posed photographs. It was thought that some prisoners would do anything—including spying on their associates—to avoid dissemination of the shameful photos to family and friends. The government consultant said, “I was told that *the purpose of the photographs was to create an army of informants, people you could insert back in the population.*” The idea was that they would be motivated by fear of exposure, and gather information about pending insurgency action, the consultant said. If so, it wasn’t effective; the insurgency continued to grow.<sup>9</sup>

I quote this passage at length to display how the intricate relations among Orientalist knowledge production, sexual and bodily shame, and espionage informed the torture at Abu Ghraib. As Yoshie Furuhashi astutely points out, Patai’s *The Arab Mind* actually surfaced in Edward Said’s *Orientalism* as an example of contemporary conduits of Orientalism, which also include the knowledge formations of foreign and public policy, terrorism studies, and area studies.<sup>10</sup> (We should add to Said’s list the interrogation and intelligence gathering industry: Titan Corporation and CACI International, two U.S.-based security firms, have been accused of “outsourcing torture” to Iraq and refining, honing, and escalating torture techniques in order to demonstrate proven results, thus winning lucrative U.S. government contracts and ultimately directing the illegal conduct at Abu Ghraib.)<sup>11</sup> Patai, who also authored *The Jewish Mind*, writes of the molestation of the male baby’s genitals by doting mothers, the routine beatings and stabbings of sons by fathers, the obsession with sex among Arab students (as compared to American students), and masturbation: “Whoever masturbates . . . evinces his inability to perform the active sex act, and thus exposes himself to contempt.” *The Arab Mind* constitutes a mainstay text in diplomatic and military circles, and the book was reissued in November 2001 with an introduction by Norvell B. De Atkine, director of Middle East studies at the JFK Special Warfare Center and School at Fort Bragg in North Carolina.<sup>12</sup> Clearly, not only is the lack of knowledge with respect to cultural difference irrelevant (would knowing have ended or altered the use of these torture tactics?), but it is precisely through this knowledge that the U.S. military has been diplomatically instructed. It is exactly this unsophisticated notion of Arab/Muslim/Islamic cultural difference—in the singular—that military intelligence capitalized on to create what it believed to be a culturally specific and thus “effective” matrix of torture techniques. Furthermore, though originally the

photographs at Abu Ghraib had a specific information-retrieval purpose (i.e., for blackmail), they clearly took on a life of their own, informed by what Slavoj Žižek recalls as the “‘unknown knowns’—the disavowed beliefs, suppositions and obscene practices we pretend not to know about, even though they form the background of our public values.”<sup>13</sup>

In another example of the transfer of information, the model of terrorism used by the State Department swerves between a pyramid structure and a network structure. The former represents a known, rational administrative format, one that is phallic and hence castratable; the latter represents chaotic and unpredictable alliances and forces. The pyramid form also appears in the *Battle of Algiers* (1967, English subtitles), viewed for brainstorming purposes by the Pentagon in September 2003; in the film the French describe the rebels by stating, “They don’t even know each other. To know them we can eliminate them.” It is not, however, important to discern if it is mere coincidence that in several of the Abu Ghraib photos, Iraqi prisoners are arranged naked in human pyramids, simulating both the feminized prone position, anus in the air, necessary to receive anal sex, and the “activo” mounting stance of anal sex. Should the sexual connotations of the pyramid be doubted, Adel L. Nakhla, an Arabic translator working for the U.S. security firm Titan Corporation, stated of the pyramid in the Taguba report:

They made them do strange exercises by sliding on their stomach, jump up and down, throw water on them and made them some wet, called them all kinds of names such as “gays” do they like to make love to guys, then they handcuffed their hands together and their legs with shackles and started to stack them on top of each other by insuring that the bottom guy’s penis will touch the guy on top’s butt.<sup>14</sup>

What is significant here, however, is not whether the meaning of the pyramid has been understood and translated from one context to another, but that the transfer of information and its mimicry does not depend on contextual meaning to have symbolic and political effect. As an assemblage of entities, the pyramid simultaneously details fusion and hierarchy, singularity and collectivity.

Such transnational and transhistorical linkages—including unrelated but no less relevant examples drawn from Israeli surveillance and occupation measures (indeed, there are reports that at least one Israeli interrogator was working at Abu Ghraib), the behavior of the French in Algeria, and even the 2002 Gujarat pogrom in India—surge together to create the Muslim body as



a particular typological object of torture.<sup>15</sup> During the Algerian war, for instance, one manner of torture of Arabs “consisted of suspending them, their hands and feet tied behind their backs . . . with their head upwards. Underneath them was placed a trestle, and they were made to swing, by fist blows, in such a fashion that their sexual parts rubbed against the very sharp pointed bar of the trestle. The only comment made by the men, turning towards the soldiers present: ‘I am ashamed to find myself stark naked in front of you.’”<sup>16</sup> This kind of torture directed at “the supposed Muslim terrorist” is subject to the normativizing knowledges of modernity that mark him (or her) both as sexually conservative, modest and fearful of nudity (and it is interesting how this conceptualization is rendered both sympathetically and as a problem), as well as queer, animalistic, barbarian, and unable to control his (or her) urges. Thus the shadow of homosexuality is never far. In *Brothers and Others in Arms: The Making of Love and War in Israeli Combat Units*, Danny Kaplan, looking at the construction of hegemonic masculinity and alternative sexual identities in the Israeli military, argues that sexualization is neither tangential nor incidental to the project of conquest but, rather, is central to it: “[The] eroticization of enemy targets . . . triggers the objectification process.” This eroticization always inhabits the realm of perversion:

An instance where the image of mehablim [literally, “saboteurs,” a general term for terrorists, guerrilla soldiers, or any Arab groups or individuals that operate against Israeli targets]—in this case, Palestinian enemy men—merges with another image of subordination, that of actual homosexual intercourse. It seems that the sexual-targeting drive of masculinarity [*sic*] soldier could not resist such a temptation. This is one way to understand Shaul’s account of one of the brutalities he experienced in the Lebanon War. During the siege on Palestinian Liberation Organization forces in Beirut, he was stationed next to a post where Israeli snipers observed PLO activity in city houses. Suddenly, something unusual appeared in the sniper’s binoculars:

“One of them said to me, ‘Come here; I want you to see something.’ I looked, and I saw two mehablim, one fucking the other in the ass; it was pretty funny. Like real animals. The sniper said to me, ‘And now look.’ He aims, and puts a bullet right into the forehead of the one that was being fucked. Holy shit, did the other one freak out! All of a sudden his partner died on him. It was nasty. We were fucking cruel. Cruelty—but this was war. Human life didn’t matter much in a case like this, because this human could pick up his gun and fire at you or your buddies at any moment.”

Kaplan concludes this vignette by remarking that despite the episode's brutal ending, the gender position of the active partner is what was ultimately protected: "It is striking that even in this encounter it is the passive partner who gets the bullet in his ass, while the active partner remains unscathed."<sup>17</sup> Violence is naturalized as the inexorable and fitting response to nonnormative sexuality.

But not only is the Muslim body constructed as pathologically sexually deviant and as potentially homosexual, and thus read as a particularized object for torture, but the torture itself is constituted on the body as such: as Brian Axel has argued, "The performative act of torture produces its object."<sup>18</sup> The object, the tortured Muslim body, spins out repetitively into folds of existence, cohering discourse, politics, aesthetics, affectivity. Thus, the body informs the torture, but the torture also forms the body. That is, the performative force of torture not only produces an object but also proliferates that which it names.<sup>19</sup> This sutures the double entrenchment of perversion into the temporal circuitry of always-becoming. I question whether it is politically astute to denote the acts of torture as simulating gay sex acts, a conundrum I discuss later in this chapter. But the veracity of this reading nonetheless indicates, in the eyes of the perpetrators and in our own, that the torture performs an initiation into or confirmation of what is already suspected of the body, or even, in moments, breaking with the double temporality at play, a telling conversion. Furthermore, the faggot Muslim as torture object is splayed across five continents, predominantly in Arab countries, through the "transnational transfer of people" in a tactic called "renditions,"<sup>20</sup> the U.S. practice of transporting terrorist suspects to third country locations, such as Uzbekistan, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Morocco, Jordan, and, most recently, Syria, where practices of torture may be routine and systemic. Thus the tortured Muslim body sustains a "world-wide constellation of detention centers," which renders these citizenship-stripped bodies, about whom the United States can deny having any knowledge, "ghost detainees."<sup>21</sup>

As the space of "illicit and dangerous sex,"<sup>22</sup> the Orient is the site of carefully suppressed animalistic, perverse, homo- and hypersexual instincts. This paradox is at the heart of Orientalist notions of sexuality that are reanimated through the transnational production of the Muslim terrorist as torture object. Underneath the veils of repression sizzles an indecency waiting to be unleashed. The most recent invocation of the perverse deranged terrorist and his naturalized proclivities is found in this testimony by one of the prisoner guards at Abu Ghraib: "I saw two naked detainees,

one masturbating to another kneeling with its mouth open. . . . I saw [Staff Sergeant] Frederick walking towards me, and he said, 'Look what these animals do when you leave them alone for two seconds.' I heard PFC England shout out, 'He's getting hard.'"<sup>23</sup> Note how the mouth of the Iraqi prisoner, the one in fact kneeling in the submissive position, is referred to not as "his" or "hers," but "its." The use of the word "animals" signals both the cause of the torture and its effect. Identity is performatively constituted by the very evidence—here, getting a hard-on—that is said to be its results. (Because you are an animal you got a hard-on; because you got a hard-on you are an animal.) Contrary to the recent public debate on torture, which foregrounds the site of detention as an exemplary holding cell that teems with aggression, this behavior is hardly relegated to prisons, as an especially unnerving moment in Michael Moore's documentary *Fahrenheit 9/11* (2004) reveals. A group of U.S. soldiers are shown loading a dead Iraqi, presumably recently killed by them, covered with a white sheet onto a stretcher. Someone yells, "Look, Ali Baba's dick is still hard!," while others follow in disharmonized chorus, "You touched it, eeewww you touched it." Even in death the muscular virility of the Muslim man cannot be laid to rest in some humane manner; not only does the Orientalist fantasy transcend death, but the corpse's sexuality does too; it rises from death, as it were. Death here becomes the scene of the ultimate unleashing of repression.

### *Whither Feminism?*

Despite the recurring display of revulsion for attributes associated with the feminine, the United States apparently still regards itself as the arbiter of feminist civilizational standards. For example, Kelly Cogswell worries about homophobic and misogynist backlash, as if the United States had not already demonstrated its capacity to perpetuate their most extreme forms. Writing in *The Gully*, an LGBTQ political news forum, she states:

Images of men forced to wear women's underwear over their faces and engage in homosexual activity will also inflame misogyny and homophobia. Forget about Bush's anti-gay marriage stand in the United States. By tolerating this behavior in Iraq and elsewhere, his administration has made homosexuality abhorrent worldwide. The image of an American woman holding a prisoner's leash will be used as a potent argument against modernization and the emancipation of women.<sup>24</sup>

Barbara Ehrenreich expresses comparable concerns:

It was England we saw with a naked Iraqi man on a leash. If you were doing PR for Al Qaeda, you couldn't have staged a better picture to galvanize misogynist Islamic fundamentalists around the world. Here, in these photos from Abu Ghraib, you have everything that the Islamic fundamentalists believe characterizes Western culture, all nicely arranged in one hideous image—imperial arrogance, sexual depravity, and gender equality.<sup>25</sup>

It is surely wishful thinking to assume that U.S. guards, female or not, having forced prisoners to wear women's underwear, among other derogatory "feminizing" acts, would then be perceived by the non-west as a product of the west's gender equality. In fact, misogyny is perhaps the one concept most easily understood by both captor and captive. Former prisoner Dhia al-Shweiri notes, "We are men. It's OK if they beat me. Beatings don't hurt us; it's just a blow. But no one would want [his] manhood to be shattered. They wanted us to feel as though we were women, the way women feel, and this is the worst insult, to feel like a woman."<sup>26</sup>

The picture of Lynndie England, dubbed "Lynndie the Leasher," leading a naked Iraqi on a leash (also referred to as "pussy whipping") has now become a surface on which fundamentalism and modernization, apparently dialectically opposed, can wage war. The image is about both the victories of liberal feminism, which argues that women should have equal opportunities within the military, and its failures to adequately theorize power and gender beyond male-female dichotomies that situate women as less prone to violence and as morally superior to men. Writes Zillah Eisenstein, "When I first saw the pictures of the torture at Abu Ghraib I felt destroyed. Simply heart-broken. I thought 'we' are the fanatics, the extremists; not them. By the next day as I continued to think about Abu Ghraib I wondered how there could be so many women involved in the atrocities?"<sup>27</sup> Why is this kind of affective response to the failures of Euro-American feminisms, feminisms neither able to theorize gender and violence nor able to account for racism within its ranks, appropriate to vent at this particular moment—especially when it works to center the (white) Euro-American feminist as victim, her feminism having fallen apart? Another example: brimming with disappointment, Ehrenreich pontificates, "Secretly, I hoped that the presence of women would over time change the military, making it more respectful of other people and cultures, more capable of genuine peacekeeping. . . . A certain kind of feminism, or perhaps I should say a certain kind of feminist naiveté, died in Abu Ghraib."<sup>28</sup> Patrick Moore articulates the death

of a parallel yearning, as if gay male sexuality had never chanced upon its own misogyny: “The idea that female soldiers are as capable as men of such atrocities is disorienting for gay men who tend to think of women as natural allies.”<sup>29</sup> Nostalgically mourning the loss of the liberal feminist subject, this emotive convergence of white liberal feminists and white gay men unwittingly reorganizes the Abu Ghraib tragedy around their desires.

But the sight of England with her leash also hints at the sexual perversions associated with S/M, something not mentioned at all in the popular press. The comparisons proffered between the depraved, cigarette-toting, dark-haired, pregnant and unmarried, racialized England (now implicated in making a pornographic film with another guard), and the heroic girl-next-door Jessica Lynch, informed by their working-class similarities but little else, speak also of the need to explain away the presence of female Abu Ghraib torturers as an aberration.<sup>30</sup> While the presence of women torturers may at least initially give us pause, it is a mistake to exceptionalize these women; the pleasure and power derived from these positions and actions cannot be written off as some kind of false consciousness or duping by the military, nor as the work of what Eisenstein refers to as “white female decoys.”<sup>31</sup> If, as Veena Das argues, violence is a form of sociality, then women are not only the recipients of violence, but are actually connected to and benefit from forms of violence in myriad ways, regardless of whether or not they are the perpetrators of violence themselves.<sup>32</sup> That is to say, the economy of violence produces a circulatory system whereby no woman is strictly an insider or outsider. Women can be subjects of violence but also agents of it, whether it is produced on their behalf or perpetuated directly by them.<sup>33</sup> In this regard three points are at stake: How do we begin to understand the literal presence of women, and possibly of gay men and lesbians, in both the tortured and the torturer populations? How should one explore the analytic of gender positionings and sexual differentiation beyond masculine and feminine? And finally, what do we make of the participation of U.S. guards in the photos, behind the cameras, and in front of computer screens, and ourselves, as curious and disturbed onlookers?

### *Gay Sex?*

Male homosexuality is deeply shameful in Arab culture; to force naked Arab prisoners to simulate gay sex, taking pictures you could threaten to show, would be far worse than beating them.—Gregg Easterbrook, “Whatever It Takes”

Deploying a parallel homophobic logic, conservative and progressive pundits have both claimed that the illegal status of homosexual acts in Islamic law demarcates sexual torture in relation to the violence at Abu Ghraib as especially humiliating. Republican senator Susan Collins of Maine, for example, was skeptical that the U.S. guards elected to inflict “bizarre sexual humiliations that were specifically designed to be particularly offensive to Muslim men,” while others remarked that sexual humiliation is constituted as “a particular outrage in Arab culture.”<sup>34</sup> But from a purely military security perspective, the torture was very effective and therefore completely justified.<sup>35</sup> The Bush administration claims that the torture was particularly necessary and efficacious for interrogation because of the ban against homosexuality in Islam. That “nakedness, homosexuality and control by a woman might be particularly humiliating in Arab culture” has been a sentiment echoed by many.<sup>36</sup>

Madhi Bray, the executive director of the Muslim American Society, a nonprofit Islamic organization located in Virginia, says that Islam calls for “modesty in dress,” “being seen naked is a tremendous taboo and a tremendous humiliation in Muslim culture,” and that homosexuality, considered a sin, “only becomes a problem when it is flaunted, affecting the entire society.” Faisal Alam, founder and former director of the international Muslim LGBTIQ organization Al-Fatiha, issued a press release stating, “Sexual humiliation is perhaps the worst form of torture for any Muslim.” The press release continues, “Islam places a high emphasis on modesty and sexual privacy. Iraq, much like the rest of the Arab world, places great importance on notions of masculinity. Forcing men to masturbate in front of each other and to mock same-sex acts or homosexual sex, is perverse and sadistic, in the eyes of many Muslims.” In another interview Alam reiterates that the torture of the prisoners is an “affront to their masculinity.”<sup>37</sup>

I want to underscore the complex dance of positionality that Muslim and Arab groups such as the Muslim American Society and especially Al-Fatiha must perform in these times, during which a defense of “Muslim sexuality” through the lens of culture easily becomes co-opted into racist agendas. The gay conservative Andrew Sullivan, for example, capitalizes on the cultural difference discourse, nearly claiming that the repressive culture of Muslim extremism is responsible for the potency of the torture, in effect blaming the victims. Islamophobia has become central to the subconscious of homonormativity.<sup>38</sup> I do take issue with Al-Fatiha’s statements, as they, along with many others’, relied on an Orientalist notion of Muslim sexuality that foregrounded sexual repression and upheld versions of normative mas-

culinity; that is, being in the feminized “passivo” positioning is naturalized as humiliating, producing a muscular nationalism of sorts. In displays of solidarity, Al-Fatiha’s comments were uncritically embraced by various queer sectors: the Center for Lesbian and Gay Studies newsletter used them to authenticate its perspective through that of the native informant, while the U.S. gay press endlessly reproduced the appropriate masculinity and sexual conservatism lines. However, given their place at the crossroads of queerness and Arabness, Al-Fatiha was, and still is, under the most duress to authenticate Orientalist paradigms of Muslim sexuality, thus reproducing narratives of U.S. sexual exceptionalism. Reinforcing a homogeneous notion of Muslim sexual repression vis-à-vis homosexuality and the notion of modesty works to resituate the United States, in contrast, as a place free of such sexual constraints, thus confirming the now-liberated status of the formerly repressed diasporic Muslim. This captive/liberated transition is reflected in what Rey Chow terms “coercive mimeticism—a process (identitarian, existential, cultural, or textual) in which those who are marginal to mainstream Western culture are expected . . . to resemble and replicate the very banal preconceptions that have been appended to them, a process in which they are expected to objectify themselves in accordance with the already seen and thus to authenticate the familiar imaginings.” Unlike a (Bhabhaian) version of mimesis that accentuates the failed attempts of the Other to imitate the Self, Chow’s account claims that “the original that is supposed to be replicated is no longer the white man or his culture but rather an image, a stereotyped view of the ethnic.” The ethnic as a regulatory device sustains the fictive ideals of multicultural pluralism.<sup>39</sup> For Al-Fatiha to have elaborated on the issues of Islam and sexuality more complexly would have not only missed the Orientalist resonance so eagerly awaited by the mass media; that is, there is almost no way to get media attention unless this mimetic resonance is met. It would have also considerably endangered a population already navigating the pernicious racist effects of the USA PATRIOT Act: surveillance, deportations, detentions, registrations, preemptive migrations and departures. Thus Al-Fatiha’s performance of a particular allegiance with American sexual exceptionalism is the result of a demand, not a suggestion. The proliferation of diverse U.S. subjects, such as the Muslim American and even the queer Muslim American, and their epistemological conditions of existence are mandates of homeland security, ones that produce and regulate homonationalism.

In a very different context, Patrick Moore, author of *Beyond Shame: Reclaiming the Abandoned History of Radical Gay Sex*, opines:

Because “gay” implies an identity and a culture, in addition to describing a sexual act, it is difficult for a gay man in the West to completely understand the level of disgrace endured by the Iraqi prisoners. But in the Arab world, the humiliating techniques now on display are particularly effective because of Islam’s troubled relationship with homosexuality. This is not to say that sex between men does not occur in Islamic society—the shame lies in the gay identity rather than the act itself. As long as a man does not accept the supposedly female (passive) role in sex with another man, there is no shame in the behavior. Reports indicate that the prisoners were not only physically abused but also accused of actually being homosexuals, which is a far greater degradation to them.<sup>40</sup>

The Foucauldian “act to identity” telos spun out by Moore delineates the west as the space of identity (disregarding the confusion of act-identity relations at the heart of U.S. homosexualities), while the Arab world is relegated, apparently because of “Islam’s troubled relationship to homosexuality,” to the backward realm of acts. The fiction of identity, one based on the concept of progressive coherence, effaces, for example, men who have sex with men, or those on the down low, so that the presence of gay- and lesbian-identified Muslims in the “Arab world” becomes inconceivable. Dare one mention Christianity’s troubled relationship with homosexuality? But let us follow Moore’s logic to its conclusion: since the acts are allegedly far more morally neutral for Muslims than they are for men in the west, being forced to do them in the obvious absence of an avowed identity should actually prove not so humiliating. Given the lack of any evidence that being called a homosexual is much more degrading than being tortured, Moore’s rationalization reads as an Orientalist projection that conveys much more about the constraints and imaginaries of identity in the west than anything else.

These accounts by LGBTIQ progressives are perhaps an unintended side effect of the focus on homosexuality, which, in the effort to disrupt homophobia, tends to reproduce misogyny, the erasure of women, and the de-meaning of femininity. Any singular-axis identity analysis will reiterate the most normative versions of that identity, in this case, those that center privileged (white) gay men. Furthermore, we see the trenchant replay of what Foucault termed the “repressive hypothesis”: the notion that a lack of discussion or openness regarding sexuality reflects a repressive, censorship-driven apparatus of deflated sexual desire. In the face of the centrality of Foucault’s *The History of Sexuality* to the field of queer studies, it is somewhat baffling that some queer theorists have accepted at face value the



discourse of Muslim sexual repression. That is not to imply that Foucault's work should be transparently applied to other cultural and historical contexts, especially as he himself perpetuates a pernicious form of Orientalism in his formulation of the *ars erotica*. Rather, Foucault's insights deserve evaluation as a methodological hypothesis about discourse. Thus the point to be argued is not how to qualify the status of homosexuality across the broad historical and geographical, not to mention religious, regional, class, national, and political variances of the Middle East. We must consider instead how the production of homosexuality as taboo is situated within the history of encounters with the western gaze. While in Said's *Orientalism* the illicit sex found in the Orient was sought out in order to liberate the Occident from its own performance of the repressive hypothesis, in the case of Abu Ghraib, conversely, it is the (perverse) repression of the Arab prisoners that is highlighted in order to efface the rampant hypersexual excesses of the U.S. prison guards. The Orient, once conceived in Foucault's *ars erotica* and Said's deconstructive work as the place of original release, unfettered sin, and acts with no attendant identities or consequences, now symbolizes the space of repression *and* perversion, and the site of freedom has been relocated to western identity.

Given the unbridled homophobia (among other phobias) demonstrated by the U.S. guards, it is indeed ironic, yet predictable, that the United States nonetheless emerges as sexually exceptional: less homophobic and more tolerant of homosexuality (and less tainted by misogyny and fundamentalism) than the repressed, modest, nudity-shy Middle East. Through feminist, queer, and even conservative reactions to the violence at Abu Ghraib, we have a clear view of the performative privileges of Foucault's "speaker's benefit": an exemplar of sexual exceptionalism whereby those who are able to articulate sexual knowledge (especially of themselves) then appear to be freed, through the act of speech, from the space of repression. Foucault describes it thus: "There may be another reason that makes it so gratifying for us to define the relationship between sex and power in terms of repression: something that one might call the speaker's benefit. If sex is repressed, that is, condemned to prohibition, nonexistence, and silence, then the mere fact that one is speaking about it has the appearance of a deliberate transgression."<sup>41</sup> As Sara Ahmed notes, this hierarchy between open (liberal democracy) and closed (fundamentalist) systems obscures "how the constitution of open cultures involves the projection of what is closed onto others, and hence the concealment of what is closed and contained 'at home.'"<sup>42</sup> Thus

those who appear to have the speaker's benefit not only reproduce, through a geopolitical mapping of homophobia and where it is most virulent (a mapping that mirrors open/closed, tolerant/repressed dichotomies), the hegemonic ideals of U.S. exceptionalism; the projection of homophobia onto other spaces enacts a clear disavowal of homophobia at "home."

What, then, is closed and what is contained at home? In the American gay press, the Abu Ghraib photos are continuously hailed as "evidence of rampant homophobia in the armed forces;" Aaron Belkin decries "the most base, paranoid, or extreme elements of military homophobia;" Paula Ettelbrick, the executive director of the International Gay and Lesbian Human Rights Commission, maintains that "this sort of humiliation" becomes sanctioned through the operation of Don't Ask, Don't Tell, as if therein lies the brunt of the military establishment's cruelty, and not in the murders of thousands of civilian Iraqis.<sup>43</sup> Humiliation becomes sanctioned because the military functions as a reserve for what is otherwise seen as socially unacceptable violence, sanitizing all aggression in its wake under the guise of national security. In these accounts, the homophobia of the U.S. military is pounced upon, with scarce mention of the linked processes of racism and sexism. Patrick Moore, who himself says the photos "evoked in me a deep sense of shame as a gay man," in particular sets up the (white) gay male subject as the paradigmatic victim of the assaulting images, stating that "for closeted gay men and lesbians serving in the military, it must evoke deep shame."<sup>44</sup> Is it really prudent to unequivocally foreclose the chance that there might be a gay man or lesbian among the perpetrators of the torture at Abu Ghraib? To foreground homophobia over other vectors of shame—this foregrounding functioning as a key symptom of homonormativity—is to miss that these photos are not merely representative of the homophobia of the military; they are also racist, misogynist, and imperialist. To favor the gay male spectator—here, presumably white—is to negate the multiple and intersectional viewers implicated by these images, and oddly, is also to privilege as victim the identity (as fictional progressive coherence) of white gay male sexuality in the west (and those closeted in the military) over the signification of acts, not to mention the bodies of the tortured Iraqi prisoners themselves. In another interview Moore complicates this audience vectorship: "I felt the government had found a way to use sexuality as a tool of humiliation both for Arab men and for gay men here." The drawing together of (presumably straight) Arab men and (presumably white) gay men is yet another moment where the sexuality of Arab men is qualified

as repressed and oriented toward premodern acts, the precursor to the identity-solidified space of “here,” thus effacing the apparently unfathomable presence of queer Arabs (particularly those in the United States).<sup>45</sup>

Mubarak Dahir, writing for the *New York Blade*, intervenes in a long-standing debate among LGBTIQ communities about whether the war on terrorism is a gay issue by underscoring gay sex as central to the images: “The claim by some members of the gay and lesbian community that the invasion and occupation of Iraq is not a ‘gay’ issue crumbled last week when photos emerged of hooded, naked Iraqi captives at the Abu Ghraib prison near Baghdad being forced to simulate gay sex acts as a form of abuse and humiliation.” And later: “As a gay man and as a person of Arab descent, I felt a double sting from those pictures. Looking at the blurred-out photos of hooded Iraqi prisoners being forced to perform simulations of gay oral sex on one another, I had to wonder what it was that my fellow Americans in uniform who were directing the scene found the most despicable: the fact that the men were performing gay sex, or that they were Arabs.”<sup>46</sup> If we return to the construction of the faggot Muslim body as object of torture and the performative force of torture, the answer to Dahir’s query would be both. Of course, the attention that Dahir draws to the intersectional vectors of Arab and gay is also an important intervention in the face of widespread tendencies to construct homosexuality and Muslim sexuality as mutually exclusive. Given the resounding silence of national and mainstream LGBTIQ organizations, currently obsessed by the gay marriage agenda, the political import of Dahir’s response on the war on terror in general and on Abu Ghraib in particular should not be dismissed. In fact, on May 28, 2004, in the midst of furious debate regarding sexual torture, the Human Rights Campaign, the Servicemembers Legal Defense Network, and the American Veterans for Equal Rights jointly released “Fighting for Freedom,” a press statement highlighting brave and patriotic “LGBT” soldiers in the military and announcing the release of *Documenting Courage*, a book on LGBT veterans. Driven by “stories [that] go unmentioned,” both the statement and the book privilege the testimonial voice of authenticity. In the absence of any commentary about or position on Abu Ghraib, this might be read as a defensive move to restore honor to U.S. soldiers while reminding the public of the struggles LGBT soldiers face in the military, thus shifting the focus of victimhood away from Iraqi prisoners.<sup>47</sup>

Declaring that the acts are simulations of gay sex, however, invites other consequences, such as the response from Egyptian protestors in Cairo calling for the removal of the “homosexual American executioners,”<sup>48</sup> which

reaffirmed that homosexuality is an unwanted import from the west. Such an accusation feeds nicely into Bush's antigay marriage agenda and reflects a curious tryst between the gay marriage debate and the discussion about homosexuality and the Abu Ghraib photos, both of which send a very clear message about the desires of the Bush administration to sanction and disseminate homophobia. Right-wing organizations such as Concerned Women for America have similarly condemned the torture as a direct result of homosexual cultural depravity. But are the acts specifically and only referential of gay sex (and here, "gay" means "sex between men")? And is it the case that, as Patrick Moore argues, homosexuality has been employed as the "ultimate tool of degradation" and as a "military tactic [that] reaches new levels of perversity"?<sup>49</sup> Certainly this rendition evades a conversation about what exactly constitutes the distinction between gay sex and straight sex and also presumes some static normativity about gender roles. Saying that the simulated and actual sex scenes replicate gay sex is an easy way for all—mass media, Orientalist anthropologists, the military establishment, LGBTIQ groups and organizations—to disavow the supposedly perverse proclivities inherent in heterosexual sex and the gender normativity immanent in some kinds of gay sex. It should be noted that Amnesty International is among the few that did not mention homosexuality, homosexual acts, or same-sex sexuality in its press release condemning the torture.<sup>50</sup>

These readings reproduce what Gayle Rubin calls the "erotophobic fallacy of misplaced scale." "Sexual acts," Rubin argues, "are burdened with an excess of significance";<sup>51</sup> this excess produces a misreading and perhaps even an exaggeration of the scale by which the significance of sex is measured, one that continually privileges humiliation (mental, psychic, cultural, social) over physical pain. In fact, it may well be that these responses by westerners reveal what we might deem the worst form of torture—that is, sexual torture and humiliation rather than extreme pain—more than any comprehension of the experiences of those tortured. The simulated sex acts must be thought of in terms of gendered roles rather than through a universalizing notion of sexual orientation. But why talk about sex at all? Was anyone having sex in these photos? One could argue that in the photos, the torturers were turned on, erotically charged, and looked as one does when having sex. As Trishala Deb and Rafael Mutis point out:

Women's rights advocates in the U.S. have made the distinction between sex and rape for a long time. By defining rape and sexual assault as an act of violence and not sex, we are placing the validity in the voice of the assaulted, and accepting

their experience as central to the truth of what happened. . . . What we understand by centering the perspective of the assaulted people is that there was no sex happening regardless of the act.<sup>52</sup>

The focus on gay sex also preempts a serious dialogue about rape, both the rape of Iraqi male prisoners but also, more significantly, the rape of female Iraqi prisoners, the occurrence of which appears neither news- nor photograph-worthy. Indeed, there has been a complete underreporting of the rapes of Afghani and Iraqi women both inside and outside of detention centers. Major General Anthony Taguba's report notes that among the eighteen hundred digital photos there are unreleased pictures of females being raped and women forced at gunpoint to bare their breasts, as well as videotape of female detainees forced to strip and rumors of impregnated rape victims.<sup>53</sup> Why are there comparatively few photos of women, and why have they not been released? Is it because the administration found the photos of women even more appalling? Or has the wartime rape of women become so unspectacular, so endemic to military occupation as to render its impact moot? Or could these photos finally demolish the line of reasoning that the United States is liberating Muslim women, a fantasy so crucial to the tenets of American sexual exceptionalism? How, ultimately, do we begin to theorize the connections and disjunctures between male and female tortured bodies, and between masculinities and femininities?

Although feminist postcolonial studies have typically theorized women as the bearers of cultural continuity, tradition, and national lineage, in the case of terrorism, the line of transmission seems always to revert to the male body. The locus of reproductive capacity is, momentarily, expanded from the female body to include the male body. This expansion does not mark a shift away from women as the victims of rape and pawns between men during wartime. But the principal and overriding emphasis on rape of women as a weapon of war can displace the importance of castrating the reproductive capacities of men; furthermore, this line of inquiry almost always returns us to an uninterrogated heteronormative frame of penetration and conduction. In this particular case, it is precisely masculinity, the masculinity of the terrorist, that threatens to reproduce itself. Writing about the genital and anal torture of Sikh men in Punjab, Brian Keith Axel argues that torture produces sexual differentiation not as male and female, but rather what he calls national-normative sexuality and antinational sexuality:

I propose that torture in Punjab is a practice of repeated and violent circumscription that produces not only sexed bodies, but also a form of sexual differentia-

tion. This is not a differentiation between categories of male and female, but between what may be called national-normative sexuality and antinational sexuality. . . . National-normative sexuality provides the sanctioned heterosexual means for reproducing the nation's community, whereas antinational sexuality interrupts and threatens that community. Torture casts national-normative sexuality as a fundamental modality of citizen production in relation to an antinational sexuality that postulates sex as a "cause" of not only sexual experience but also of subversive behavior and extraterritorial desire ("now you can't be married, you can't produce any more terrorists"). The form of punishment corresponds to the putative source of transgression: sexual reproduction, identified as a property of masculine agency within the male body.<sup>54</sup>

It is important to emphasize, of course, that there exist multiple national-normative sexualities and likewise, multiple antinational sexualities, as well as entities that make such distinctions fuzzy. It is equally important to recognize that, for all of its insights, Axel's formulation cannot be entirely and neatly transposed onto the Abu Ghraib situation, as Punjabi Sikh detainees form part of the Indian nation and are also branded as the religious fundamentalist terrorists that threaten to undo that nation. In other words, for Punjabi detainees, torture works to finalize expulsion from the nation-state. What I find most compelling is Axel's formulation of national differentiation as sexual differentiation. However, I argue that it is precisely feminizing (and thus not the categories of male and female, as Axel notes), and the consequent insistence on mutually exclusive positions of masculine and feminine, that strips the tortured male body of its national-normative sexuality. This feminizing divests the male body of its virility and thus compromises its power not only to penetrate and reproduce its own nation (our women), but to contaminate the other's nation (their women) as well. Furthermore, the perverted sex of the terrorist is a priori cast outside the domain of normative national sexualities: "the form of punishment," that is, meddling with penis and anus, "corresponds to the putative source of transgression" not only because of the desire to truncate the terrorist's capacity to sexually reproduce, but also because of the (homo)sexual deviancy always already attached to the terrorist body. These two attributes, the fertility of the terrorist (in the case of Muslim men, interpreted through polygamy) and the (homo)sexual perversions of the terrorist, are rendered with extra potency given that the terrorist is also a priori constituted as stateless, lacking national legitimization and national boundaries. In the political imagination, the terrorist serves as the monstrous excess of the nation-state.

Torture, to compound Axel's formulation, works not merely to disaggregate national from antinational sexualities—for those distinctions (the stateless monster-terrorist-fag) are already in play—but also, in accordance with nationalist fantasies, to reorder gender and, in the process, to corroborate implicit racial hierarchies. The force of feminizing lies not only in the stripping away of masculinity, the faggotizing of the male body, or in the robbing of the feminine of its symbolic and reproductive centrality to national-normative sexualities; it is the fortification of the unenforceable boundaries between masculine and feminine, the rescripting of multiple and fluid gender performatives into petrified sites of masculine and feminine, the regendering of multiple genders into the oppressive binary scripts of masculine and feminine, and the interplay of it all within and through racial, imperial, and economic matrices of power. This is the real force of the torture.

Axel writes, "Torture casts national-normative sexuality as a fundamental modality of citizen production." But we can also flip these terms around: *national-normative sexuality casts torture as a fundamental modality of citizen production*. One could scramble this line further still: citizen production casts national-normative sexuality as a fundamental modality of torture—and so on. The point is that in the metonymic chain linking torture, citizen production, and national-normative sexualities, torture surfaces as an integral part of a patriotic mandate to separate the normative-national genders and sexualities from the antinational ones. Joanna Bourke elaborates:

It is hard to avoid the conclusion that, for some of these Americans, creating a spectacle of suffering was part of a bonding ritual. Group identity as victors in an increasingly brutalised Iraq is being cemented: this is an enactment of comradeship between men and women who are set apart from civilian society back home by acts of violence. Their cruel, often carnivalesque rites constituted what Mikhail Bakhtin called "authorised transgression."<sup>55</sup>

The bonding ritual, culminating in an authorized transgression, is authorized not from above but between actors seeking to redirect animosity toward each other. In this sense the bonding ritual of the carnival of torture—discussing it, producing it, getting turned on by it, recording it, disseminating the proof of it, gossiping about it—is the ultimate performance of patriotism. As Sara Ahmed so incisively expounds, (torture-as-) patriotism is driven not merely by hatred of the Other, but also by love: "Hate is renamed as love, a renaming that 'conceals' the ambivalence that it exercises (we love *rather than* hate)." As a nascent arena of multicultural

nationalist normativity, the military is a prime site of this love for the nation, a love that, for those who fail to meet the standards of the ideal citizen (i.e., working classes, people of color, immigrants), remains unrequited. Ahmed theorizes this “national love as a form of waiting,” whereby the “*failure of return extends one’s investment*.”<sup>56</sup> One can only imagine what this failure of return entails for those being prosecuted for these crimes.

It is likewise horrifically telling that Lynndie England and Charles A. Graner became romantically involved while in Iraq; sharing torture functions to instigate and heighten sexual chemistries or release them or both. What is the relationship between the kinds of sex they were having with each other and the kind of corporeal experiences of sexual domination they were jointly having with the prisoners? While torture elevates the erotic charge and intensity for those already ready to fuck each other, it externalizes the hatred between those ready to kill each other. Here all internal tensions and hostilities (the working-class, “white trash” Lynndie, the African American sergeant Ivan Frederick, and so forth) are defused outward, toward the hapless bodies in detention, so that a united front of American multicultural heteronormativity can be not only performed, but, more important, affectively felt. Within the interstices of what is seen and what is felt, how it looks and how it feels, the photos emanate most powerfully the patriotic ties that bind.

### *Technologies of Simulacrum*

As voyeur, conductor, dictator, dominatrix, those orchestrating these acts, several of whom appear erotically riled in the photos, are part of, not external to, the torture scenes themselves, sometimes even explicitly so. For example, Specialist Jeremy Sivits in his testimony states, “Staff Sergeant Frederick would take the hand of the detainee and put it on the detainee’s penis, and make the detainee’s hand go back and forth, as if masturbating. He did this to about three of the detainees before one of them did it right.”<sup>57</sup> This is hardly indicative of a detached, objective, distanced observer behind the camera, positioned only to capture the events via the click of the shutter. Reports of sodomizing with chemical light sticks and broomsticks and of Americans inserting fingers into prisoners’ anuses also fully implicate the U.S. guards and raise specters of interracial and intercultural sex. Al Jazeera has reported the American journalist Seymour Hersh’s claim that there are videotapes of American soldiers sodomizing, that is, raping Iraqi “boys.”<sup>58</sup> Less overtly, the separation of participant from voyeur becomes infinitely



complicated by the pleasures of taking, posing for, and looking at pictures, especially as the use of cameras and videos inform varied practices (watching porn, nudie pics, to name a few) between partners of all genders in all kinds of sex.

Many of the photos, originally cropped for damaged-controlled consumption, are now revealing multiple spectators, bystanders, and participants; in the case of the widely disseminated and discussed photo of a hooded man made to stand on a box with wires attached like appendages to his arms, legs, and penis—a classic torture pose known predominantly to interrogation experts as “the Vietnam”—a U.S. guard is on the periphery, nonchalantly examining his digital camera. The Vietnam, explains Darius Rejali, derives from an amalgamation of the forced standing technique used by torturers in the British army (where it was known as “the crucifixion”), the French army (where it was known as “the Silo”), armies in the early twentieth century, U.S. police, Stalin’s People’s Commissariat for Internal Affairs (NKVD), the Gestapo in the 1930s, and South African and Brazilian police (who added the electrical supplement) in the 1970s.<sup>59</sup> In fact, it is this image, deemed by many to be the least sexually explicit and therefore less horrifying to view, that has been most reproduced around the world, its simulacra taking shape on billboards and murals and parodied in antiwar protest attire worn on the streets of Tehran, London, and New York and in fake iPod adverts done in hot pink, lime green, electric blue, and neon yellow. Performance artists, such as the New York City-based Hieronymus Bang, use the American flag as a substitute for the black cloak.<sup>60</sup> In Salah Edine Sallat’s mural in Baghdad, the hooded prisoner on the box is paired with a shrouded Statue of Liberty holding up an electric gadget connected to the circuit breaker that threatens to electrocute them both. A brilliant painting by Richard Serra uses the silhouette of the covered prisoner to demand “Stop Bush.” The Berkeley artist Guy Colwell’s painting, titled *Abuse*, depicts hooded prisoners with wires sprouting from their bodies as American soldiers stand by with lightsticks (see figures 6–8b).<sup>61</sup>

To what can we attribute the now iconic status of this image? For starters, it is the only released photo to date that exposes almost no skin; only the legs and shins of the victim can be seen, preserving an anonymity of body that simultaneously incriminates the viewer less than some of the more pornographic images. It also radiates a distressing mystique; the hood harks back to the white hoods of the Ku Klux Klan but also resembles a veil. Indeed, the cloaking of nearly the entire body references another iconic image, that of the oppressed Muslim woman in her burqa, covered head



FIGURE 6. Iraqi artist Salah Edine Sallat finishes a mural in Baghdad, May 23, 2004. Photograph by Razmi Haidar. Reprinted with permission from Razmi Haidar/AFP/Getty Images.

FIGURE 7. Richard Serra, *Stop Bush*, 2004. Lithocrayon on mylar, 59¼ in. x 48 in. Reprinted with permission from Trina McKeever.

to toe in black and in need of rescue. It is plausible that this image of the Vietnam resonates as yet another missionary project in the making. It is the male counterpart to the Muslim-woman-in-burqa that liberal feminist organizations (like the National Organization for Women and the Feminist Majority Fund), the Bush administration (especially Laura Bush), and the conservative right-wingers who tout rhetorics of democracy and freedom love so well.

There is another, more sinister reason why the photo echoes so acutely. Called “stealth torture that leaves no marks,” the Vietnam is traceless, leaving the bodies of its victims undifferentiated from unscathed ones. As happens with cloaking, the body remains both untroubled and unseen, and “if it were not for the photographs, no one would know that [torture] had been practiced.”<sup>62</sup> The only evidence of the Vietnam comes in the form of the photograph. Its mass multiplication and mutations may speak to the need to document and inscribe into history and our optic memories that which otherwise leaves no visual proof. As Susan Sontag proclaimed, “The pictures will not go away.”<sup>63</sup> Noting that “soldiers trained in stealth torture take these techniques back into civilian life as policemen and private security personnel,” Rejali claims that the Vietnam is found throughout U.S. policing and imprisonment tactics, another likely rationale for the intense reverberations of this photo.<sup>64</sup>

Claiming that “theatricality leads us to the crux of the matter,” Slavoj Žižek argues that the pictures “suggest a theatrical staging, a kind of tableau vivant, which brings to mind American performance art, [Antonin Artaud’s] ‘theatre of cruelty,’ the photos of [Robert] Mapplethorpe or the unnerving scenes in David Lynch’s films.”<sup>65</sup> The facile comparison of the evidence of brutal wartime violence to spaces of artistic production might put the reader on edge. Indeed, the right wing is concocting similar conjectures: in *The American Spectator* George Neumayr writes, “Had Robert Mapplethorpe snapped the photos at Abu Ghraib, the Senate might have given him a government grant.”<sup>66</sup> But the point, as I understand it, is not so much that these photos resemble works of art, but that the pictures look indeed as if the U.S. guards felt like they were on stage, hamming it up for the proud parents nervously biting their lips in the audience. The affect pouring from these photos is one of exaggerated theatricality; jovial and void of any somberness, they repulsively invite the viewer to come and jump on stage as well. As Richard Goldstein points out, “One reason why these photos are such a sensation is that they are stimulating.”<sup>67</sup> The word “stimulating” pinpoints affect as the limit of representation; these photos matter beyond



FIGURE 8A. Forkscrew Graphics, image from *iRaq* series, yellow version, 2004. Courtesy of Forkscrew Graphics.



FIGURE 8B. Forkscrew Graphics, image from *iRaq* series, blue version, 2004. Courtesy of Forkscrew Graphics.

what one can see in them, suggestive of haptic space: a way of seeing that is distinct from optical space, which renegotiates the tactile through the optical—"the eye itself may fulfill this non-optical function," such that one can feel touch through vision.<sup>68</sup> This is the collapsing of production and consumption, image and viewer onto the same vectors, the same planes. There is no inside or outside here; there are only movement, circulation, contingent temporalities, momentary associations and disassociations.

These photos not only depict the techniques of the torture; they also depict how both process (the photographing) and product (the pictures) are shaming technologies and function as a vital part of the humiliating, dehumanizing violence itself: the giddy process of documentation, the visual evidence of corporeal shame, the keen ecstatic eye of the voyeur, the haunting of surveillance, the dissemination of the images, like pornography on the Internet, the speed of transmission an aphrodisiac in itself, "swapped from computer to computer throughout the 320th Battalion,"<sup>69</sup> perpetuating humiliation ad nauseam. Taken between 2 A.M. and 4 A.M., the digital photos project their anticipated audience not as a representational demographic but through the affective economies of speed, time, pace, circulation, transit, distribution, flows, and, of course, exchange. It is difficult to fathom that the thought of the photos being leaked—what does that mean in our digital age when viruses can surreptitiously send e-mails and hackers can break into web servers, not to mention the sheer speed at which multifarious transmission occurs—had not occurred to someone somewhere at some moment.

One could argue that what is exceptional is not the actual violence itself, but the interplay of technologies, circuits, and networks that enable the digital capture and circulation of these acts, the photographic qualities of which are reminiscent of vacation snapshots, mementos of a good time, victory at last, or even the trophy won at summer camp. Unlike images of the collateral, purportedly unavoidable deaths of war, these photos divulge an irrefutable intentionality. We have inescapable proof of what we know to be true not only in Iraq, Afghanistan, and Guantánamo Bay, but in U.S. detention centers and prisons (although visual evidence of U.S. prison abuse has hardly been absent either).<sup>70</sup> Thus these images not only represent these acts, and allude to the procedural vectors of ever expansive audiences, but also reproduce and multiply the power dynamics that made these acts possible in the first place. In a now infamous article, Susan Sontag argues, "The photographs are us." Comparing the images to the photographs of black lynching victims taken between 1880 and 1930 that depict "Americans grinning beneath the naked mutilated body of a black man or

woman hanging behind them from a tree,” Sontag argues that a shift has occurred in the utility of photos. Once collectable items for albums and display in frames at home, photos are now “less objects to be saved than messages to be disseminated, circulated.”<sup>71</sup> In Hazel Carby’s response to Sontag, pointedly titled “A Strange and Bitter Crop: The Spectacle of Torture,” she charges Sontag with minimizing the role of the collective spectator violence of lynching and objects to Sontag’s implied characterization of private viewing: “The photographs of these bodies were not designed merely for storage, but rather functioned as public documents,” such as postcards and adverts. Disturbed by Sontag’s recourse to a narrative of exceptionalism, one that hinges on the historical severing of slavery from contemporary modes of violence, Carby forcefully contends, “The importance of spectacles of abuse, the taking of photographs and videos, the preservation and the *circulation* of the visual image of the tortured/lynched body, the erotic sexual exploitation which produced pleasure in the torturers—all these practices are *continuities* in the history of American racism.”<sup>72</sup>

Obviously, technology is one difference that has been a major catalyst in this debatable transition from trophy to propaganda: the digital camera, sexy and absorbing software to assist in manipulating and perfecting images, and Internet sites that serve as virtual photo albums seem ubiquitous. It is a transition from stillness to proliferation, from singularity to fertility, like ejecting dandelion spores into the wind. But more important, motility, speed, and performance function as primary erotic and addictive charges of modernity: clicking the “send” button marks the ultimate release of productivity and consumption; dissemination is the ultimate form of territorial coverage and conquest, yet one more layering of the sexual matrix. While the visages and corpses of American casualties in Iraq remain protected material—even the faces of deceased soldiers were considered unseemly in a television program commemorating them—Iraqi bodies are accessible to all, available for comment, ridicule, shaming, scrutiny. If we were to honor Žižek’s invocation of the theatricality of Abu Ghraib, they would indeed qualify as what Cynthia Keppley Mahmood, writing about the display of tortured Sikh bodies in Sikh living rooms and *gurdwaras* (temples), calls “massacre art”: “In their very gruesomeness, [they] assert themselves in a room; they are impossible to ignore, and intrude in conversation, meditation, and everyday activities. Their potency derives only in part from their blood; it also derives from their unwillingness to be masked, covered, or distorted.”<sup>73</sup>

Abu Ghraib’s massacre art disrupts the placid, Pleasantville-like aura of

the American family room, the streaming images from the television set mesmerizing us into silence. They are so potent not only for their naked honesty, but also because they are the evidence of how much power we can actually, and stunningly, command over others. Since July 2003 reports compiled by Amnesty International, the Red Cross, and other humanitarian organizations, as well as the testimonies of hundreds of detainees and released prisoners, have been easily ignored by the Bush administration and the general public.<sup>74</sup> But these kinds of “facts,” note theorists of “postmodern warfare” such as Patrick Deer, matter little, or certainly less, in an era dominated by virtual realities.<sup>75</sup> The photos and their circulatory modalities double as meaning and information, as the representation of information, and the only information taken seriously and validated by corporate media sources. In *Regarding the Pain of Others*, Sontag somewhat mechanically states, “Something becomes real—to those who are elsewhere, following it as ‘news’—by being photographed,” and adds that “all photographs wait to be explained or falsified by their captions.”<sup>76</sup> But as information, these photos defy any need for the elucidation of captions. The force of comprehension occurs not via what these photographs *mean*, in their contextual and symbolic specificity, but through what these images *do*—do to us, to the Iraqi prisoners, to the U.S. guards, to our sentimentalizing and hopeful notions of humanity, justice, peace. In other words, their productive force of affect renders language impotent: by looking we experience all that we need to know.

As with the weaving of the pyramid into simulacra, it is clear that mimicry, and not contextual meaning or deep knowledge of cultural difference, is the guiding interpretative paradigm. Calling the torture an initiation of those subjected into the “obscene underside” of “American culture,” Žižek avers, “Similar photos appear at regular intervals in the U.S. press after some scandal explodes at an Army base or high school campus, when such rituals went overboard.”<sup>77</sup> Again, Žižek’s limp analogizing effectively evacuates the political context of forced occupation and imperial expansion within which specificity and singularity must be retained. While the comparison to fraternity house hazing (I assume Žižek means college campus rather than high school) and army pranks is not without merit—for certainly proliferating modalities of violence need and feed off one another—there is an easy disregard of the forced, nonconsensual, systemic, repetitive, and intentional order of violence hardly attributable to “rituals” that have gone “overboard.” We might also ask, in another essay perhaps, whether these acts of torture really reveal anything intrinsic or particular to “Ameri-



can culture” or whether they can instead be linked more broadly to war cultures, rape cultures, and states of occupation at large. Again, this slippery analysis is fodder for the conservative right: Rush Limbaugh sanctioned a similar statement by a caller on his radio show by responding:

Exactly my point. This is no different than what happens at [Yale University’s secret fraternity] the Skull and Bones initiation, and we’re going to ruin people’s lives over it, and we’re going to hamper our military effort, and then we are going to really hammer them because they had a good time. . . . You know, these people are being fired at every day. I’m talking about people having a good time, these people. You ever heard of emotional release?<sup>78</sup>

Later he said, “This is something you can see onstage at Lincoln Center from an N.E.A. grant, maybe on ‘Sex and the City.’”<sup>79</sup> The references to theatricality and staging draw together liberal and right-wing commentators, efface the power dynamics of occupation, war, and empire, and ultimately leave a distasteful sense of smugness, from Limbaugh in particular, at having neatly trivialized something into next to nothing.<sup>80</sup>

### *The Photographs Went Away*

We now know more about Lindsey [*sic*] England and Charles Grainer [*sic*] (two of the accused military police) than we do about any of the people who were the prisoners in those pictures. We know very little of their own narratives, identities, or their perspective on the U.S. occupation. Given that, we have to remember that their own histories, genders, and sexualities are as complex as our own. The U.S. media has managed to once again make them subjects of a war that are marginal in their own story. And the question remains: for which culture would these acts of sexual assault, rape, and murder be less appalling?—Trishala Deb and Rafael Mutis, “Smoke and Mirrors”

Trishala Deb and Rafael Mutis accurately point out that the majority of what has been reconstructed about the events at Abu Ghraib has been through the voices of the perpetrators and not the victims.<sup>81</sup> Sontag was mistaken: the photographs did indeed “go away,” evaporating into the ether along with Ronald Reagan’s horrific presidential record, as if any self-reflexive recursive loop that might offer time for reflection disappears with exhausting speed. It is devastating, but hardly surprising, that the U.S. public’s obsessive consumption of this story nevertheless did not result in any deep-seated or longer-term demand to know who the victims are, what

they experienced and felt, and how their lives are today. The problems with the testimonial genre notwithstanding, fourteen victims' testimonies that were interpreted and transcribed in January 2004 are available in full in their original text versions on the *Washington Post* website in downloadable PDF files.<sup>82</sup>

These testimonials obviously deserve deeper scrutiny and analysis beyond the scope of this chapter, especially as more stories are revealed from the survivors of Abu Ghraib. For now, what emerges from most popular, institutional, feminist, and even variants of gay and queer discourses on homosexuality and its intersections with the violence at Abu Ghraib is the following, a list that schematizes either the suppositions or the inferences of U.S. hetero- and homosexual exceptionalism:

1. The sexual acts simulated are all specifically and only gay or homosexual sex acts.
2. Homosexuality is taboo in Islamic cultures, making such acts the worst forms of humiliation for Muslims to endure. This insinuates that these forms of torture would be easier for other, supposedly less homophobic populations to tolerate (a rationale that appears preferable to a more expansive notion of bodily torture as violating for all); this explanation works to completely discount the presence of gay-identified Muslims in Arab societies, what Joseph Massad terms the "Gay International," but also obscures those engaging in same-sex erotics even if not within the rubric of identity.<sup>83</sup>
3. American tolerance for homosexuality, an imperative fantasy for homonationalism, is elevated in relation to Islamic societies, as symptomatized by the unspecific, ahistorical, and generalized commentary on the taboo of homosexuality for Muslims.
4. The enactment of gay sex (consolidated around the act of sodomy) constitutes the worst form of torture, sexual or otherwise.
5. Iraqi prisoners, having endured the humiliation of gay sex, are subjects worthy of sympathy and pity, an affective, temporally confined, emotive response more readily available than a sustained political critique of the U.S. occupation in Afghanistan and Iraq.
6. The question of race and how it plays out in these scenarios is effaced via the fixation on sexual torture; gender likewise becomes effaced when the acts are said to originate from a homophobic military culture instead of a misogynist one.

7. Sexuality is isolated within the purview of the individual (and through specific parts and zones constructed as erogenous, erotic, and sexual within heteronormative cartographies of the body),<sup>84</sup> as opposed to situated as an integrated diagrammatic vector of power.

8. The language favoring gay sex acts over torture once again casts the shadows of perversity outside, onto sexual and racial others, rather than contextualizing the processes of normalizing bodily torture.

9. Technologies of representation work to occlude the lines of connectivity (affective and bodily, in terms of proximity and positionality) between captors and prisoners.

Despite the absence of public debate about sexuality and the war on terrorism, the “Abu Ghraib prisoner sexual torture/abuse scandal,” as it is now termed, vividly reveals that sexuality constitutes a central and crucial component of the machinic assemblage that is American patriotism. The use of sexuality—in this case, to physically punish and humiliate—is not tangential, unusual, or reflective of an extreme case, especially given continuities between representational, legislative, and consumerist practices. But not all of the torture was labeled or understood as sexual, and thus the odd acts—threatening dogs, for example—need to retain their idiosyncrasy. Imposing nudity itself is not automatically and innately sexual; it must be made to signify erotics, to signify sex. The legal scholar Kathleen M. Franke cautions against “over-eroticizing” assaults that involve sexual or intimate body parts, noting the danger of then “under-eroticizing” other bodily subjugation tactics. Calling for “desexualization of sodomy, rape, and other assaults labeled sex crimes” in her interpretation of the Abner Louima case, Franke avers, “Is it the sexual/erotic nature of these practices that make them wrong? For the most part, I think not. . . . These incidents should be analyzed to uncover the way the sexual/erotic operates as a particularly efficient and dangerous conduit with which to exercise power. Thus, to say that the Louima assault was sexual is at once to say too much and not enough about it.”<sup>85</sup> Thus, the terms “scandal,” “sexual,” and “abuse” need to be semiotically discharged. This does not mean that this treatment is not sexual, but following Foucault (as Franke does), technologies of sex create and regulate, rather than reflect, the sexual bodies they name. If we then amend Foucault’s biopolitical frame of the “management of life” with Achille Mbembe’s “necropolitics,” in which systems of domination are more “anatomical, tactile, and sensorial,”<sup>86</sup> we can say that sexualized as-

sault is a normalized facet of prisoner life, and “the sexual” is always already inscribed in necropolitical power grids implicating corporeal conquest, colonial domination, and death.

State of exception discourses doubly foster claims to exceptionalism: the violence of the United States is an exceptional event, antithetical to Americanness, and thus by extension, U.S. subjects emerge as morally, culturally, and politically exceptional through the production of the victims as repressed, barbaric, closed, uncouth, even homophobic, grounding claims of sexual exceptionalism that hinge on the normativization of certain U.S. feminist and homosexual subjects. The Abu Ghraib scandal, rather than being cast as exceptional, needs to be contextualized within a range of practices and discourses (particularly those less damning than prisoner abuse) that lasso sexuality in the deployment of U.S. nationalism, patriotism, and, increasingly, empire. Despite the actions of those in charge of Abu Ghraib, perversity is still withheld for the body of the queer Muslim terrorist, insistently deferred to the outside. This outside is rapidly, with precision and intensity, congealing into a population of what Giorgio Agamben has called *homo sacer*, those who “may be killed without the commission of a homicide,” as their lives do not register within the realm of legal status.<sup>87</sup> Žižek considers this space “between the two deaths”—dead in the eyes of history but still alive for the countdown—as the fate of the prisoners at Abu Ghraib, the ghost detainees.<sup>88</sup> As with the systemic failure of U.S. military operations at the prison, which was not the fault of a handful of individuals but rather due to the entire assemblage of necropolitics, sexuality is not the barometer of exception, a situation out of control, or an unimaginable reality. Rather, it constitutes a systemic, intrinsic, and pivotal module of power relations.

94. Foucault, *The History of Sexuality*, 57–58.
95. Ibid., 58.
96. Afary and Anderson, *Foucault and the Iranian Revolution*, 141–42. In their study of Foucault’s thinking on Muslim sexualities, the authors trace his travels to Tunisia (as a visiting professor of philosophy in 1966–68) and his participation in “French tourist culture [that] shared similar assumptions about the openness of Arab and Middle Eastern culture on homosexuality” (141), as well as his 1978 visits to Iran, noting that many who came into contact with him thought him “naïve” (141) and were “baffled by [his] ignorance” (143). “In his admiration for the Mediterranean/Muslim world, Foucault avoided addressing the sexism and homophobia of these cultures” (141). The authors also argue that “Foucault’s Orientalism extended itself” (139) to the ancient Greco-Roman world; the last two volumes of *The History of Sexuality* detailing ancient Greek homosexuality are also evidence, state the authors, that “Foucault may have been looking for parallels to contemporary sexual practices in the Middle East and North Africa” (139). In tandem with his “scattered remarks on gender and male sexuality in the Muslim world . . . he saw a continuity between ancient Greek homosexuality and male homosexuality in contemporary North African and Middle Eastern societies” (139).
97. Said, *Orientalism*, 167.
98. Ibid., 190, 167, 58.
99. Mbembe, “Necropolitics,” 39.
100. Agamben, *State of Exception*.
101. Scheer, “Homophobia and Apple Pie.”

## 2. abu ghraib

Previous versions of this chapter have been published elsewhere: “On Torture: Abu Ghraib,” *Radical History Review*, no. 93 (fall 2005): 13–38; and “Abu Ghraib: Arguing against Exceptionalism,” *Feminist Studies* 30.2 (summer 2004): 522–34.

1. Shanker and Steinberg, “Bush Voices ‘Disgust.’”
2. Rachel Corrie was killed on March 16, 2003, when she was run over by an Israeli bulldozer that was razing homes in the Gaza Strip.
3. Bush administration memoranda photocopies are available at “Primary Sources: The Torture Debate.” See also Danner, *Torture and Truth*. Danner’s book collects a range of documents on U.S. torture practices, from Bush administration memoranda on the treatment of detainees and torture/“interrogation practices” to prisoner depositions and the Red Cross report. It concludes with the Taguba report, which was submitted in early March 2004 and was the basis of Seymour Hersh’s breaking the Abu Ghraib story; the Schlesinger report, an “investigation of the investigations”; and the Fay/Jones report, which included an interview “notably with Lieutenant General Ricardo Sanchez, the commander of Iraq” (277–78). The Taguba report acknowledged that there were credible reports of

breaking chemical lights and pouring the phosphoric liquid on detainees . . . threatening detainees with a charged 9mm pistol . . . pouring cold water on naked detainees . . . beating detainees with a broom handle and a chair . . . threatening male detainees

with rape . . . allowing a military police guard to stitch the wound of a detainee who was injured after being slammed against the wall in his cell . . . sodomizing a detainee with a chemical light and perhaps a broom stick . . . using military working dogs to frighten and intimidate detainees with threats of attack, and in one instance actually biting the detainee. (293)

The Schlessinger report states, “Abuses of varying severity occurred at differing locations under differing circumstances and context. They were widespread and, though inflicted on only a small percentage of those detained, they were both serious in number and in effect” (331). This statement is followed by a disavowal of any promulgation of abuse on the part of “senior officials or military authorities,” but does argue that “there is both institutional and personal responsibility at higher levels” (331). The report also includes tables on the interrogation policies in Guantánamo, Afghanistan, and Iraq as well as techniques used in Guantánamo (392–93). The Fay/Jones report includes charts of “Allegations of Abuse Incidents, the Nature of Reported Abuse, and Associated Personnel” (532–44). The charts list the categories “Nudity/Humiliation, Assault, Sexual Assault, Use of Dogs, The ‘Hole,’ and Other.”

A much larger collection of documents is Greenberg and Dratel, *The Torture Papers*. The authors introduce the text by stating, “The memos and reports in this volume document the systematic attempt of the U.S. government to authorize the way for torture techniques and coercive interrogation practices, forbidden under international law, with the concurrent express intent of evading liability in the aftermath of any discovery of these practices and policies.” It includes major sections of memoranda and reports, as well as appendixes on torture-related laws and conventions and legal cases relevant to the incidences of torture. Both books have stylized cover art of the hooded detainees: *Torture and Truth* has the person in the infamous “Vietnam,” and *The Torture Papers* has a person draped over what appears to be a fence.

4. Friedman, “Restoring Our Honor.” OpenDemocracy.net offers a series of articles on the Arab response to the Abu Ghraib tortures, including: Khouri, “Abu Ghraib in the Arab Mirror”; Kazmi, “Shame”; and Ghoussoub, “Abu Ghraib: I Do Not Know Where to Look for Hope.” The articles offer perspectives on the meaning of these acts, the U.S. war on terror, and the publicity, all of which are effaced in analyses such as Friedman’s. Khouri’s article discusses “how the events appear to ordinary Arab citizens. For them, the horrors inflicted in the prison are not primarily about the abuse of Iraqi prisoners by American soldiers. They are, rather, about autocratic power structures that have controlled, humiliated, and ultimately dehumanised Arab citizens for most of the past century of modern statehood—whether those powers were European colonial administrations, indigenous Arab elites, occupying Israeli forces, or the current Anglo-American managers of Iraq.” The Pakistani American Kazmi comments, “Last week I read a letter from a mother who felt sorry for the young soldiers who were thrown into a war they didn’t understand and were inadequately trained to handle the situation surrounding them. I would like to ask this mother: exactly how much training does a 21-year old require before he or she realizes that it is not alright to tie a leash around a man’s neck and drag him like a

dog, or strip men naked and pile them on top of each other like animals then pose for photographs mocking them?” Ghousseb, a European Arab, states, “The family of a woman soldier shown abusing prisoners have released a picture of her holding tenderly a young Iraqi child. It is meant to show that she is a loving person who cares for the Iraqis. She was told to obey orders, declare her family. Another familiar story! You may love children, be sweet and caring but the rules of war are special and they turn you into something particularly ugly. The secrecy of occupying armies turns soldiers into little gods shaping and coercing peoples’ bodies.” Clearly, none of these authors read the Abu Ghraib tortures as any less than part of a larger story about how Arabs have experienced colonialism and war, and how these acts demonstrate a disregard for the humanity of those held in Abu Ghraib that cannot be isolated to just those who carried out these specific acts.

5. Perry, “A Pastoral Statement.”
6. Cushman, “A Conversation with Veena Das.”
7. Maran, *Torture*, 82, citing Trinquier, *Modern Warfare*, xv.
8. Rejali, *Torture and Modernity*, 15.
9. Hersh, “The Gray Zone,” 42, emphasis mine. Hersh’s reporting on Abu Ghraib is notably tied to his earlier work. According to Frank Rich, “It was in November 1969 that a little-known reporter, Seymour Hersh, broke the story of the 1968 massacre at My Lai, the horrific scoop that has now found its match 35 years later in Mr. Hersh’s *New Yorker* revelation”; “The War’s Lost Weekend.”
10. See Said, *Orientalism*, 308–9, 311, 312, 349; Furuhashi, “Orientalist Torture.”
11. The Center for Constitutional Rights has filed a lawsuit against private firms participating in the “torture conspiracy.” See Center for Constitutional Rights, “CCR Files Lawsuit.” Trishala Deb and Rafael Mutis elaborate on the implications of outsourcing torture:

CACI is a corporation that generates over \$930 million in profit a year, 65% of its budget coming from government contracts. The question remains how these private contractors are accountable to U.S. and international laws, not to mention the international public. Given the restrictions on access to information about the functioning of the war machine since the establishment of the Patriot Act and Department of Homeland Security, we have even less access to information and accountability regarding some of the most important and dangerous aspects of this permanent war. The relevance of this information is that it exposes one of the most insidious sides to this story—the cycle of government expenditures on private contractors as enforcement agents in this war, and profits made by U.S. corporations which are awarded those contracts. In this way the prison industrial complex is at once exposed and expanded, not only were severe crimes against humanity committed but at least one corporation has profited from those crimes. For those corporations who are being paid to provide interrogators and intelligence, war crimes are not a consideration, just a consequence. (“Smoke and Mirrors,” 5)

According to the *Financial Times* correspondent Peter Spiegel, no private contractors have been prosecuted for Abu Ghraib prisoner abuse despite evidence that they were involved; “No Contractors Facing Abu Ghraib Abuse Charges.”

12. Emram Qureshi, "Misreading *The Arab Mind*."
13. Žižek points out that it is not the known knowns, the known unknowns, nor the unknown knowns that matter most here, but the unconscious, the knowledge that doesn't know itself; "What Rumsfeld Doesn't Know."
14. The full text of the Taguba report can be found on numerous websites, for instance, NBC News, "U.S. Army Report."
15. Al Jazeera, "Israeli Interrogator." During February and March 2002, over two thousand Muslims were killed and tens of thousands more were displaced from their homes in rioting by Hindus; the police were complicit with this violence, and the Hindu nationalist Bharat Janata Party (BJP) is accused of premeditated orchestration of the pogroms. In regard to Muslim masculinity, the International Initiative for Justice writes in *Threatened Existence*:

Muslim men, in the Hindu Right discourse, are not seen as "men" at all: they are either "oversexed" to the extent of being bestial (they can satisfy four wives!) or they are effeminate and not masculine enough to satisfy their women. . . . [The Muslim man is] a symbol of the "sexual superiority" the emasculated Hindu man must recover by raping and defiling Muslim women. . . . There have been calls to Hindu men to join gyms and develop muscular bodies to counter the "animal" attraction of the oversexualized Muslim man. Of course, when Hindu men commit rape and assault their actions are not seen as bestial or animal-like but are considered signs of valour. Simultaneously, there is an attempt to show that Muslim men are not real men, but rather homosexuals or *hijras* (eunuchs)—considered synonymous and undesirable and are therefore unable to satisfy their women. As a VHP [Vishva Hindu Parishad] leaflet called *Jihad* (holy war) boasts:

We have untied the penises which were tied till now  
 Without castor oil in the arse we have made them cry  
 Those who call religious war, violence, are all fuckers  
 We have widened the tight vaginas of the bibis (women) . . .  
 Wake up Hindus there are still Miyas (Muslims men) left alive around you  
 Learn from Panvad village where their mother was fucked  
 She was fucked standing while she kept shouting  
 She enjoyed the uncircumcised penis. (29–30)

16. Horne, *A Savage War*, 197–98.
17. Danny Kaplan, *Brothers and Others*, 193, 193–94, 194.
18. Axel, "The Diasporic Imaginary," 420.
19. Judith Butler notes this process in the viewing of the Rodney King videotapes, where the "racist episteme of seeing" produces the object being beaten—the subjugated black male body—as imminently dangerous and threatening. See "Endangered/Endangering."
20. Mayer, "Q&A."
21. Priest and Stephens, "Secret World of U.S. Interrogation." See also Brody, "What about the Other Secret U.S. Prisons?"
22. Said, *Orientalism*, 167.
23. Hersh, "Torture at Abu Ghraib," May 10, 2004, 44.



24. Cogswell, "Torture and America."
25. Ehrenreich, "Prison Abuse."
26. Crea, "Gay Sex."
27. Eisenstein, "Sexual Humiliation."
28. Ehrenreich, "Prison Abuse."
29. Moore, "Gay Sexuality."
30. "Most Americans believe the abuses were isolated instances, not common occurrences. They believe the perpetrators were acting on their own, not following orders. And by an overwhelming margin, the public sees the abuses as a violation of military policy, rogue crimes, not a policy. As a result, most Americans blame the soldiers who carried out the abuses and the officers supervising them, not Secretary Rumsfeld or President Bush"; Schneider, reporting for *Insight*. Interestingly, media coverage such as Dao et al., "Abuse Charges," centralized the heterosexual families of the Abu Ghraib perpetrators. For example, the images on page 20 of the article include the following captions: "Staff Sgt. Ivan Frederick, one of the American soldiers who are expected to face courts-martial in the abuse of prisoners at Abu Ghraib, is shown with Iraqi police officers in a photograph that he sent his family"; "Sergeant Fredericks, Martha, joined by her daughters, spoke to television journalist by phone Tuesday"; "Pfc. Lynndie R. England, who flashed a thumbs-up sign for the Abu Ghraib photos, relaxing at her parents' home last year." The heterosexual family is idealized: England comfortably smiling in her parents' kitchen, families receiving photos of their loved ones in Iraq. Abu Ghraib is a tragedy for these families, as Martha Fredericks seems distraught as she stands, arms crossed, on the phone, while her one daughter slouches on the couch with her hand supporting her head, and her other daughter leans over to the couch, perched on a chair, resting her head in her hands. All three women have blank or saddened expressions, contrasting sharply with the smiles of Ivan Frederick and England in the photos above and below them.
31. Eisenstein, "Sexual Humiliation."
32. Cushman, "A Conversation with Veena Das."
33. In her interview, Das says:

A very good example of this is the idea that a woman gets higher status in society by being the hero's mother; or there are other examples in which a woman's honor may depend on the son's or husband's valiant performance in the world. There is a very subtle exchange of maleness and femaleness in these kinds of formations. So that, yes, you can get forms of sociality where violence is an exclusively male form of sociality from which women might be excluded or other forms of sociality in which she is incorporated within male forms of violence. (Ibid.)
34. Shrader and Shogren, "Officials Clash"; Al-Fatiha Foundation, "Al-Fatiha Condemns Sexual Humiliation." Al-Fatiha's founder and director Faisal Alam opines, "As queer Muslims, we must condemn in the most forceful terms, the blatant acts of homophobia and sexual torture displayed by the U.S. military. These symbolic acts of abuse represent the worst form of torture."
35. Stout, "Rumsfeld Offers Apology."
36. Fuoco and Lash, "A Long Way."

37. Crea, "Gay Sex," 38. Sullivan, "Daily Dish."
39. Chow, *The Protestant Ethnic*, 107.
40. Moore, "Gay Sexuality."
41. Foucault, *The History of Sexuality*, 6.
42. S. Ahmed, "Affective Economies," 134.
43. Crea, "Gay Sex." Osborne, "Pentagon Uses Gay Sex as Tool." See also OutRage!, press release.
44. Osborne, "Pentagon Uses Gay Sex as Tool."
45. Ibid.
46. Dahir, "Gay Sex and Prison Torture."
47. Jacques et al., "Fighting for Freedom."
48. Letellier, "Egyptians Decry 'Gay' Abuse."
49. Moore, "Gay Sexuality."
50. Amnesty International, "USA: Pattern of Brutality and Cruelty."
51. Rubin, "Thinking Sex," 11.
52. Deb and Mutis, "Smoke and Mirrors," 5. For a similarly politically astute analysis, see S. P. Shah and Young, "A 'Morning After Prescription.'"
53. Harding, "The Other Prisoners."
54. Axel, "The Diasporic Imaginary," 414. Axel is quoting Mamood, *Fighting for Faith*, 40.
55. Bourke, "Torture as Pornography."
56. S. Ahmed, *The Cultural Politics of Emotion*, 123, 131.
57. Zernike et al., "Accused Soldier."
58. Al Jazeera, "Hersh."
59. Rejali, "A Long-Standing Trick." Also see Hilton, "Torture." Hilton's article provides an overview of U.S. practices, support, and tolerance of torture beginning in the 1970s up through the current war on terror. Her article is notable for its mapping of American practices that lead to her concluding point: "The pattern is too widespread, the official response to the disclosures too muted to allow for any doubt that the sanction for torture comes from a high level of policy."
60. Although neither mentions the flag-as-hood, for more on Hieronymus Bang, see Salter, review of *I'm Gonna Kill the President*; Goldberg, "Is This Play Illegal?"
61. The San Francisco gallery showcasing Colwell's work was closed in May 2004 after the owner, Lori Haigh, received death threats and was physically assaulted. See Ryan Kim, "Attacked for Art."
62. Rejali, "A Long-Standing Trick."
63. Sontag, "Regarding the Torture of Others," 42.
64. Rejali, "A Long-Standing Trick." Additionally, the Prison Litigation Reform Act of 1996 delimits what are deemed to be frivolous lawsuits, ensuring that prisoners must demonstrate signs of physical injury prior to claims of mental or emotional injury.
65. Žižek, "What Rumsfeld Doesn't Know," 32.
66. Neumayr, "The Abu Ghraib Collection."
67. R. Goldstein, "Stuff Happens!"
68. Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, 492.
69. Hersh, "Chain of Command," 39.
70. For instance, Human Rights Watch reports, "In Maricopa County, Arizona, a sheriff

who dresses male jail inmates in pink underwear introduced live ‘jail cam’ broadcasts on the internet in 2000. Three cameras covered the holding and searching cells of the jail, including shots of strip searches, inmates bound in ‘restraint chairs,’ and even, for a while, unobstructed views of women using the toilet. The broadcasts ended up being copied onto web porn sites”; Fellner, “Prisoner Abuse.” See also Herbert, “America’s Abu Ghraibs”; and Bernstein, “2 Men Charge Abuse,” among many other reports.

71. Sontag, “Regarding the Torture of Others,” 27.
72. Carby, “A Strange and Bitter Crop.”
73. Mamood, *Fighting for Faith*, 189, quoted in Axel, “The Diasporic Imaginary,” 414.
74. See Amnesty International, “USA Amnesty International’s Supplementary Briefing”: “Evidence continues to emerge of widespread torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment of detainees held in U.S. custody in Afghanistan, Guantánamo Bay, Cuba, Iraq and other locations. While the government continues to assert that abuses resulted for the most part from the actions of a few ‘aberrant’ soldiers and lack of oversight, there is clear evidence that much of the ill-treatment has stemmed directly from officially sanctioned procedures and policies, including interrogation techniques approved by Secretary of Defense Rumsfeld for use in Guantánamo and later exported to Iraq.” Also visit Human Rights First, “End Torture Now.” for updated coverage on U.S. military torture.
75. Deer, “Iraq and Postcoloniality.”
76. Sontag, *Regarding the Pain of Others*, 10.
77. Žižek, “What Rumsfeld Doesn’t Know.”
78. Rush Limbaugh quoted in Sontag, “Regarding the Torture of Others,” 28–29.
79. Limbaugh, posting. See a transcription of Limbaugh’s comments at Media Matters for America, “Limbaugh on Torture of Iraqis.”
80. The Abu Ghraib abuse scandal has prompted the production of a play, *Guardians*. See Charles Isherwood’s review, “Shades of Abu Ghraib.” Isherwood summarizes the plot:

In London, a coldblooded tabloid journalist, his reptilian eyes on the prize of a column at a more respectable newspaper, *The Guardian*, finds an unexpected opportunity to further his career by manufacturing photographs supposedly depicting British soldiers abusing an Iraqi prisoner. His story is intercut with the confessional monologue of a young United States Army soldier from West Virginia who, in her role as a guard at a prison for insurgents in Iraq, becomes a scapegoat in a scandal involving photographs of actual abuse. . . . The story of the United States Army grunt, identified in the text as American Girl, is clearly based on the case of Lynndie England, also from West Virginia, who was convicted of misconduct for her role in the prisoner-abuse scandal at Abu Ghraib. And Fleet Street was indeed rocked, in 2004, by a fabricated photograph similar to the one described here that appeared in *The Daily Mirror*, the only one of London’s tabloids to oppose the Iraq war. The paper’s editor was forced to resign when the hoax was revealed.

81. For a summary of the nine convictions through September 2005, see the Associated Press, “A Look at Convictions.” The most recent conviction related to the abuses at

Abu Ghraib was that of Sgt. Michael J. Smith, an army dog handler. See Schmitt and Zernike, “Iraq Abuse Trial,” for reporting on the continued refusal to hold higher ranked military officials responsible for torture at Abu Ghraib. They report:

Among all the abuse cases that have reached military courts, the trial of the dog handler, Sgt. Michael J. Smith, had appeared to hold the greatest potential to assign accountability to high-ranking military and perhaps even civilian officials in Washington. Some military experts had thought the trial might finally explore the origins of the harsh interrogation techniques that were used at Abu Ghraib; at the Bagram detention center in Afghanistan; and at other sites where abuses occurred. Sergeant Smith, who was convicted Tuesday for abusing detainees in Iraq with his black Belgian shepherd, had said he was merely following interrogation procedures approved by the chief intelligence officer at Abu Ghraib, Col. Thomas M. Pappas. In turn, Colonel Pappas had said he had been following guidance from Maj. Gen. Geoffrey D. Miller, commander of the military prison at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, who in September 2003 visited Iraq to discuss ways to “set the conditions” for enhancing prison interrogations, as well as from superiors in Baghdad. General Miller had been dispatched to Guantanamo Bay by Defense Secretary Donald H. Rumsfeld and the Joint Chiefs of Staff to improve the interrogation procedures and the quality of intelligence at the compound in Cuba. But in Sergeant Smith’s trial, General Miller was never called to testify. . . . Several generals and colonels have received career-ending reprimands and have been stripped of their commands, but there is no indication that other senior-level officers and civilian officials will ever be held accountable for the detainee abuses that took place in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Sgt. Santos A. Cardona, another dog handler, began his trial on May 23, 2006, and his attorney, Harvey Volzer, “said he would seek to have Mr. Rumsfeld, Gen. John P. Abizaid, the commander of American forces in the Mideast, and General Sanchez all testify at Sergeant Cardona’s trial.” The *Journal Star* (Peoria, Ill.) editorial “The Aftermath of the Abu Ghraib Abuse” serves as an example of how the convictions of some of those involved in the torturing of prisoners at Abu Ghraib have been used to reassert the belief that the war in Iraq and “American values” are compatible. The editorial states, “Though these were not isolated instances—230 enlisted officers and soldiers have been punished for abusing detainees in Iraq and Afghanistan—there was little evidence it was ordered by senior officers,” at once acknowledging that torturing prisoners is not an exceptional practice by U.S. military personnel and disavowing any implications for higher level officials or the U.S. military (or prison industrial complex) as a whole. It concludes, “As outrageous as the Abu Ghraib incident was, how it was handled said some important things about America. First, there will be accountability for unacceptable behavior, even in a war zone. Second, the rule of law will prevail, no matter the consequences. Third, once inappropriate behavior is discovered, there will be full and fair investigation and subsequent public disclosure. Many a nation would not have owned up to such mistakes. Even in such an embarrassing episode, that says something positive about America.” This call for national pride in response to the scandal at Abu Ghraib rings false not only in terms of the limited scope of prosecution and drawn-out arguments about what constitutes

“torture,” but also in light of accounts that rapes of women and young prisoners were included in photographs taken at Abu Ghraib. So far there has been no public prosecution of anyone specifically on charges related to sexual assault.

82. *Washington Post*, “Sworn Statements”: “These documents are the official English translations of previously sworn statements by detainees at the Abu Ghraib prison in Iraq. Some of the names have been withheld from these statements by washingtonpost.com because they are alleged victims of sexual assault.”
83. Massad, “Re-Orienting Desire,” 373.
84. See Foucault, *The History of Sexuality*; Butler, *Gender Trouble*.
85. Franke, “Putting Sex to Work,” 1161.
86. Mbembe, “Necropolitics,” 34.
87. See Agamben, *Homo Sacer*, 159.
88. Žižek, “What Rumsfeld Doesn’t Know.”

### 3. intimate control, infinite detention

1. Hunter, “Sexual Orientation,” 1528, 1529.
2. *Ibid.*, 1534.
3. *Ibid.*, 1529, 1542.
4. Simon, “The Return of Panopticism.” Simon writes, “The icon for superpanopticism is neither the eye nor the camera but the database or even better *the form*: the marketing survey, the census form, application forms, medical forms, etc.” (16).
5. Foucault, “*Society Must Be Defended*,” 249, 252–53.
6. Massumi, untitled paper presented at “Beyond Biopolitics.”
7. Deleuze, *Negotiations*, 174–75:

We’re definitely moving towards control societies that are no longer exactly disciplinary. Foucault’s often taken as the theorist of disciplinary societies and of their principal technology, confinement (not just in hospitals and prisons, but in schools, factories, and barracks). But he was actually one of the first to say that we’re moving away from disciplinary societies, we’ve already left them behind. We’re moving toward control societies that no longer operate by confining people but through continuous control and instant communication. . . . One can envision education becoming less and less a closed site differentiated from the workplace as another closed site, but both disappearing and giving way to frightful continual training, to continual monitoring.

On Foucault and surveillance, also see Simon, “The Return of Panopticism”; and Wood, “Editorial.”

8. Clough, “Future Matters,” 4, 14.
9. *Ibid.*, 14.
10. Hunter, “Sexual Orientation,” 1528.
11. Agamben, *The State of Exception*, 3–4.
12. For a well-developed discussion of the Western media’s problematic reporting on Pashtun male sexuality, see Skier, “Western Lenses.” See *The Boston Globe*’s “Spotlight Investigation,” a website that includes “global coverage . . . divided into nine categories” and an archive of coverage beginning January 2002. One meeting of the