

The gender apparatus

Torture and national manhood in the US 'war on terror'

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Feminist protest against US torture practices, including outcries over the use of sex, sexuality and sexual identity in the torture of prisoners at US detention sites from Guantánamo to Abu Ghraib, have understandably tended to focus on what the abuse destroys – the victim and his or her community. Here, though, I ask what the torture *produces*. Borrowing and revising a question that Catharine MacKinnon posed about genocide ('What is the sex doing in the genocide?') I ask: What is the sex doing in the torture?

As many feminists have pointed out, the 9/11 attacks on US soil catalysed an urgent quest to re-assert US national manhood, a desire that had played an important part in US politics since the humiliating loss of the Vietnam War and that was reinvigorated by the events of 11 September 2001.² But it is common for these analyses to focus on 'national manhood' as a psychological project.³ Susan Faludi's influential account, for example, envisions national manhood as a fantasy through which the nation convinces itself of its invulnerability in response to a kind of traumatic psychic wounding and the primal fear of annihilation that accompanies it. But aggressive capitalist imperial aspirations and naked bellicosity are not reducible to psychological phenomena, even though the psychic figure of wounded national manhood is central to their operations. Here I show that 'national manhood' is essentially a *justificatory* operation that necessitates an *ontological* project.⁴ Because 'national manhood' cannot, properly speaking, be said to exist, it is constantly forced to borrow its ontological weight from something else. This process of borrowing does not operate exclusively at the level of collective national fantasy, but through a material process of production – that is, through an *apparatus*.

As I have argued elsewhere,⁵ gender structures multiple dimensions of human existence, from the way we live our bodies to how we imagine ourselves socially, to practices of language. Gender is not

reducible to the individual subject's experience of it, but it is one of the central nodes of meaning through which a social order gives me my *place in being*. The social constitution of gendered existence does not diminish in the least the sense of reality it finds for the individual subject, who most often lives gendered identity as both profoundly real and essential: to her self-understanding, to his sense of social location, to patterns of intersubjective belonging – which is to say lived gender collects ontological weight in the body and the person of the individual subject.⁶ In fact, gender infused in flesh and blood, in the most viscerally experienced corporeality of subjects, is the raw material upon which the apparatus works to acquire weight for something that is far lighter – the manhood of the nation. In so far as it is successful in its attempts to annex this ontological weight from elsewhere, 'national manhood' acquires the force to justify the aggressive movement of capital accompanied by thousands of soldiers in humvees, spectacular aerial bombardment, and the more or less wanton destruction of others' lives. This relation between the apparatus and lived gender is not new, though it reinvents itself for the specific historical moment – but it is rarely analysed.

The apparatus and the urgent need

In what follows, I consider the torture apparatus in the 'war on terror'. I show that the circuitry of gender in this apparatus of torture is *productive*. It *makes* something.⁷ We find that the manhood of the nation is much more than a mere psychological defence against vulnerability; instead it is a circulatory, self-affirming and material operation of justification, which frees capital and its sponsoring government from the need for external legitimation.

Althusser's claim that 'ideology has a material existence', and that 'ideology always exists in an

apparatus and its practice or practises',⁸ is the central insight which motivates my own use of the term. While Althusser's formulation is too well known to require careful elaboration here, I will simply remind the reader that on his account, while the repressive state apparatuses (the police, the army) produce compliance or obedience most directly through overt violence, the ideological state apparatuses (the church, the school) work 'on the side of the (repressive) state apparatus', primarily through other means, though always with violence as a back-up. The purpose of the apparatus is the reproduction of the productive forces, of the relations of production, and of the material conditions of production, which require 'a reproduction of [labour power's] submission to the rules of the established order'. To this end, ideology does its work at the level of the subject, it 'interpellates individuals as subjects'.⁹ He says at various points that ideology 'hails', 'recruits', 'appoints', and 'pre-appoints' subjects (even before birth).¹⁰

Of course Althusser's concern with the class struggle and its contradictions as the 'real conditions of existence' (famously: 'ideology is a "representation" of the imaginary relationship of individuals to their real conditions of existence'¹¹) has long since been amended by thinkers like Foucault and Agamben, who insist on broader engagements of the operations of power across various lines of demarcation that are neither extricable from nor reducible to class. Althusser's focus on the public operation of the ideological state apparatuses is broadened in later accounts to include operations of power that are public, semi-private, or even apparently private (such as in the family). Foucault uses the term *dispositif* to designate 'a thoroughly heterogeneous ensemble consisting of discourses, institutions, architectural forms, regulatory decisions, laws, administrative measures, scientific statements, philosophical, moral and philanthropic propositions... The apparatus itself is the system of relations that can be established between these elements.'¹² Although Foucault does not intend to uproot his use of the term from Althusser's material base entirely, he states that he is looking for 'the elements which participate in a rationality'; these elements are discursive *and* nondiscursive, they include utterances *and* institutional practices and rituals.¹³ In other words, the 'apparatus' is the coordinated (however chaotically) operation of these heterogeneous elements to make possible the functioning of power.

My own use of the term might strike readers as a more or less sloppy homogenization of Althusser's account with later accounts, and this would not be an unfair reading. The point, however, is that in the

practice of torture, the lines are in fact blurred between material, institutional and discursive practices; between openly public and secretive dimensions of government policy; between something like a publicly funded medical clinic and a clandestine torture chamber. Gender is itself sloppy, both fundamentally private and individual and profoundly public, material and institutional. It structures operations in the school and the church as well as in the family and the bedroom. It is, in fact, one of the structures that translates practices *across* social locations, so that what is done in the 'interrogation' room echoes and repeats what is done in the law office, what is experienced by the adolescent boy dreaming of manhood echoes and repeats what is experienced by the nation which fears its loss. 'Apparatus' is a term that helps to make these crossings, these relations, visible. Identifying gender as an apparatus and tracing its workings disrupts our persistent tendency to understand gender as merely one dimension of individual psychic life.

The apparatus, for Foucault, always responds to 'a historically specific *urgent need*'.¹⁴ Whatever this need is, in order to meet it 'power [has] to gain access to the bodies of individuals, to their acts, attitudes and modes of everyday behavior', he writes.¹⁵ Agamben insists, on his reading of Foucault, that an apparatus is 'first of all a machine that produces subjectifications, and only as such is it also a machine of governance': 'I shall call an apparatus literally anything that has in some way the capacity to capture, orient, determine, intercept, model, control or secure the gestures, behaviours, opinions, or discourses of living beings.'¹⁶ Sex and sexuality are central to the strategic nature of the apparatus for Foucault, because 'sex is located at the point of intersection of the discipline of the body and the control of the population.'¹⁷ In other words, sex is the circuit of the apparatus that allows power to get its claws into the body. Sex gives the apparatus its *charge*.

More than this, the apparatus which produces certain modes of subjectification reproduces itself through them. This is to say that as the subjectifications sediment into stabilities that have ontological weight for living subjects, the regime can borrow itself back from these subjects, in the form of their national devotion, consumer confidence or soldierly loyalty. But 'national manhood' may require something else in addition, particularly if new markets are to be opened in resistant territory. To justify extreme imperial manoeuvres, the phantasm has to appropriate an ontology for itself through more drastic means.

It is still the ontological weight of lived gender in the lives of subjects that will provide the raw material for

this dramatic operation. As feminist phenomenologists have recognized, through processes of sedimentation and stylization, the most intimately experienced and viscerally lived realities of gender accrue ontological weight. Even as it belongs to the individual subject at the level of what we call 'identity', its power is deeply collective, establishing one's belonging in this or that gender. It is in my own experience of myself as a woman that gender carries both its greatest ontological certainties and vulnerabilities. Poststructuralist insights convince us that gender identity is never finally stable or fixed; nor is it necessarily 'matched' to the traditionally expected bodily morphology. But if gender is always a product of historically and culturally specific social inscriptions and the subject's unique assumption of and resistances to those inscriptions, it is nevertheless ontologically heavy *for me*. Its power is such that its loss, especially its sudden and involuntary loss, would be equivalent to a loss of self, to a loss of place in a human world, to a profound, even lethal shame – to an ontological dislocation.¹⁸ If Foucault is right, and the most urgent need of power is 'to gain access to the bodies of individuals, to their acts, attitudes and modes of everyday behaviour',¹⁹ then this is the regime's portal. The key that opens it will be that contempt for women that is central to many versions of masculine identity.

But *what power*, and *to what end*? Here, the power in question is a set of powers, more or less closely allied: those of the US government and its corporate associates. For this power alliance there have been at least three ends at stake in the operation of gender in relation to the US 'war on terror' and its amalgamated profiteering. First and most obviously, there is a need to produce the *soldier* who fights the war. Second, there is the need for justification. Because the 'war on terror' violates all internationally recognized forms of legitimation, because it might easily be 'read' as an act of imperial theft (a pre-emptive war tied to private wealth and interests, which, most obviously in Iraq, was based on outright lies to the public that were quickly exposed), it has always been a war in urgent need of justification. Third, the apparatus chooses national manhood as its vehicle of justification, and therefore must *produce* it. In the 'war on terror', then, the success of the circuitry between gender and war is in the production of *soldiers*, *justifications* and *national manhood*.

In 2003 and 2004, when information that was publicly available and widely disseminated drained Bush's 'war on terror' narrative of any possible justificatory power, the *operation* of justification was apparently

untouched (Bush subsequently won re-election and continued funding for the wars). The American people seemed possessed by an aggressively persistent ignorance that made us wilfully resistant to facts, based in a process of justification going on at an embodied, aesthetic level.²⁰ In other words, in this case the operation of justification worked at a level before and beneath thoughtful deliberation.

The crucial fact deployed to catalyse the process was initially that the United States as a nation had suffered an attack that exposed a shameful and unexpected softness or vulnerability. Accomplished by a few men with box-cutters, the stunning spectacle of the collapsing towers was immediately read by multiple sources as an assault on American virility, the fundamental conceit of which is its own invincibility. Faludi did a commendable job of tracing this 'suspicion that the nation and its men had gone "soft"' in her 2004 text.²¹ Commentators worried openly about 'The Pussification of the American Man', even that 'the phallic symbol of America had been cut off, and at its base was a large smoldering vagina'.²² Carla Freccero asked feminists to consider this reading of the twin towers attack as 'the spectacle of the pierced and porous male body, a male body riddled with holes'.²³ She noted that many of the political cartoons that circulated after 9/11 turned on themes of penetration, such as images of Osama bin Laden sodomized by a US bomb, with the caption 'bend over Saddam'. Freccero asks, 'What does it mean that a certain US cultural imaginary associates this attack with being sodomized and sodomizing in return?'²⁴ Cynthia Enloe noted the awakening of 'the male politician's angst over not appearing manly' and claimed that 'the conventional notion of manliness' must be considered 'a major factor shaping US foreign policy choices'.²⁵

Indeed, at the same time that the insecurity of our national masculinity was announced, a reassertion of manly self-confidence was under way. Conservative pundit Peggy Noonan's *Wall Street Journal* article welcomed back the manly man and his 'manly virtues', which she saw rising 'from the ashes of September 11'.²⁶ Bush promised that though 'these attacks shattered steel, they cannot dent the steel of American resolve'.²⁷ The nation quickly reinvested in 'a national fantasy', Faludi argued, 'our elaborately constructed myth of invincibility'.²⁸

But what is the appeal to manhood an *appeal* to exactly? This appeal is, of course, part of American military adventures more broadly, and has been recognized in retrospective reflections by US soldiers from other wars.

'National manhood'

In Tim O'Brien's prize-winning literary reflections on the Vietnam war, *The Things They Carried*, he has the young O'Brien, who has taken off to the border of Canada with the intention of dodging the draft, engaged in a desperate moral struggle over the decision to flee or be sent off to a war he believes is wrong. His nightmarish midnight reflections keep him envisioning conversations in his hometown: 'It was easy to imagine people sitting around a table down at the old Gobbler Café on Main Street, coffee cups poised, the conversation slowly zeroing in on the young O'Brien kid, how the damned sissy had taken off for Canada.'²⁹ O'Brien carries on elaborate arguments with the imagined townspeople, in which he confronts them with their total ignorance about the war, the history of Vietnam, the injustice of colonial violence, until the moment when he realizes that he is in the grip of something that is more compelling than reasoned arguments.

O'Brien helplessly imagines a scene that leaves him sobbing: 'Traitor! they yelled. Turncoat! Pussy! I felt myself blush.'³⁰ The shame O'Brien dreads is expressed in the choice of names he imagines being called: 'sissy', 'pussy', 'coward', 'traitor'. These are the sorts of names that Helen Benedict records being used by drill sergeants to produce their soldiers: '*pussy, girl, bitch, dyke, faggot, and fairy*'.³¹ A structured set of equations is already in play, and he can't seem to undo them. To be a sissy, like a girl, is to have a pussy, a girl's body, is to be a coward, is to be a traitor. He is in the grip of an imaginary in which what is female is linked to an unsurvivable shame that threatens to undo him.

In Anthony Swofford's acclaimed account of his life as a marine in the first Gulf War, he understands himself to have been set on the path to being a marine at the age of fourteen. Describing his fascination with the story of the bombing of the US marine barracks in Lebanon in 1984, he writes: 'The marines were all sizes and all colors, all dirty and exhausted and hurt, and they were men, and I was a boy falling in love with manhood. I understood that manhood had to do with war, and war with manhood, and to no longer be just a son, I needed someday to fight.'³²

But what was O'Brien afraid of losing, and what was Swofford falling in love with? Almost all feminist critics point out the two ubiquitous components of the American fantasy of patriotic manhood: a central conceit of invulnerability and virulent contempt for women. Indeed, both of these make appearances on nearly every page of Swofford's memoir. But if our analysis stops there, we ignore what is important about these aspects of manhood in the context of nationalism,

that they make the needed loyalties, passions and behaviours of both the soldier and the citizen so very *producible*.

The teenaged Swofford is falling in love with an ideology of contempt for women that promises invulnerability, but the impact of his memoir is largely carried by Swofford's naked honesty about one thing: the marines, especially at the outset, don't care at all why they are fighting or if the reasons are good ones or bad ones, whether they are fighting for oil or profit or freedom. These worries are mere abstractions in relation to what they do care about: being men of the most extreme, and they believe exemplary, variety; they care deeply about the homo-social bonds of this extreme manhood, though they are vaguely aware that these passions have been harnessed for purposes they do not share.

What is more deeply at stake in 'manhood' of this variety is exposed in Harvard professor Harvey Mansfield's post-9/11 book *Manliness*. While this book might well have been written at other times in US history, its publication in the midst of the post-9/11 reanimation of the project of national manhood is certainly significant, especially given that the central claims, which would have been thought, just a few years before, to be so hopelessly retrograde as to be laughable, take on an air of seriousness and toughness in the post-9/11 environment.

Claiming to be brave enough to say what other men (and women) deeply believe, Mansfield connects manliness to the Greek notion of *thumos*, which he defines as a certain 'spiritedness' that manifests itself in contempt for women and women's work, in raw aggression and 'philosophical courage'. (Manliness is sometimes found in women, Mansfield acknowledges, but not very often.) He laments the 'gender neutral society' in which 'men have had to curb, if not totally suppress, their sense of superiority to women'. This repression constitutes a denial of the hard facts that 'men are still in charge', and 'women still rather like housework, changing diapers, and manly men'. Citing Nietzsche in a chapter that acknowledges the excesses of manliness, Mansfield notes that Nietzsche's claim that 'a good war hallows any cause' amounts to the assertion that 'the apparent end becomes victory followed by victory, endlessly, in order to produce manly men'. Perhaps most tellingly, Mansfield connects manliness to 'authority'. 'Manly men take authority for granted – the need for authority in general and their own particular authority.' Mansfield argues that what most deeply distinguishes manliness is at bottom not only aggression, but aggression that asserts a certain

cause linked to an insistence on self-importance which 'needs to be proved'. How? Through aggressive self-assertion. A manly man 'stands for stubborn insistence on himself'; to be manly is in fact to 'justify the way you do things', 'to justify the way you rule'.³³

Mansfield's grand conclusion is that manliness is the 'assertion of meaning when meaning is at risk', which is perhaps why it is so needed in a post-9/11 'America'. 'The most dramatic statement of manliness would be the one where the man is the source of all meaning, where nothing else has meaning unless the man supplies it';³⁴ in other words, where the assertion is itself the justification of the assertion, like we imagine to be the case with the speech of a god. It was Simone de Beauvoir who first linked masculine self-justification to the existential need for meaning, misplaced through the machinations of a pathological social order onto fantasies of god-like omnipotence. What fourteen-year-old Swofford fell in love with, I think, was the possibility of this aggressive, self-justifying assertion of self-importance.

Such young men with their passions are the perfect soldiers for the war on terror, but their passions are also collectivized in a cultural milieu saturated with narratives and images of extreme manhood. Mansfield's particularly American and charmingly naive phenomenology of US American manhood exposes its usefulness to the apparatus. The apparatus must produce its justification. Its justification is the manhood of the nation. *Manhood is that which justifies itself*. There are certainly other self-justifying operations, but in the contemporary United States, with its musclemen and monster trucks, manhood is as ready to hand for the teenaged boy raised in poverty with few future prospects as it is for the defence intellectual crafting national security policy.

Torture

It is time to return to the central question of this essay, *what is the sex doing in the torture?* How is the apparatus of torture wired with gender, sex, sexuality? What is the relation between this sexual circuitry and the production of national manhood?

It is important to recognize that the apparatus of torture is a multiplicity not a singularity, so that the apparatus of torture will share circuits with a plurality of *institutional centres* of decision and action. These institutional aspects of the apparatus bear the stamp of American manhood in their modes of operation. We see, for example, the precise operation of self-justifying self-aggrandisement described above in the deployment of law in the war on terror, particularly

through the convention of the legal memo. The memos in question, many of them secret, were passed back and forth between lawyers working in the Office of Legal Counsel to the President, Bush, Cheney, Rumsfeld and a few others.

The early memos did the work of restoring virility to the man-in-chief by setting aside statutes limiting presidential power and establishing a 'doctrine of presidential prerogative'.³⁵ They claimed 'the centralization of authority in the President alone', and appealed to so-called 'inherent executive powers that are unenumerated in the constitution', including 'the power to initiate military hostilities',³⁶ which is interpreted to be distinct from and superior to congressional power to declare war. The legal memo produced 'executive supremacy and the imperial presidency', as Eugene Fidell put it,³⁷ coming close to equating federal law with the president's word and will. The most infamous of the lawyers, John Yoo, argued that congressional power does not extend to tying 'the President's hands in regard to torture as an interrogation technique'. He claimed that 'it's the core of the Commander in Chief's function. They can't prevent the President from ordering torture.'³⁸

Later memos would restore the power of aggressive self-assertion to the interrogators and keepers of prisoners at Guantánamo, Abu Ghraib, and a host of other US prisons. As John Maguire, a veteran of the CIA's clandestine service put it, the guys at the CIA's Counter Terrorism Center 'got exactly what they wanted ... the authority and the congressional funding to do anything they wanted and needed to succeed'. 'Before that', he laments, 'they were neutered. They couldn't do anything that resulted in injury or death.'³⁹ It was executive virility (god-like speech) that restored the virility of the interrogators. 'I determine that the Taliban detainees are unlawful combatants and, therefore, do not qualify as prisoners of war under Article 4 of Geneva', Bush decreed.⁴⁰

Lawyers are hired. Paper circulates. Memos are stashed away in secret files as security against future recriminations. Obstacles to aggressive self-assertion are removed by legal acrobatics conducted entirely on paper and often in secret (no need for a judge or a court or a congress). The machine produces its own virility, which is its own legitimation, internally, in this case by writing.

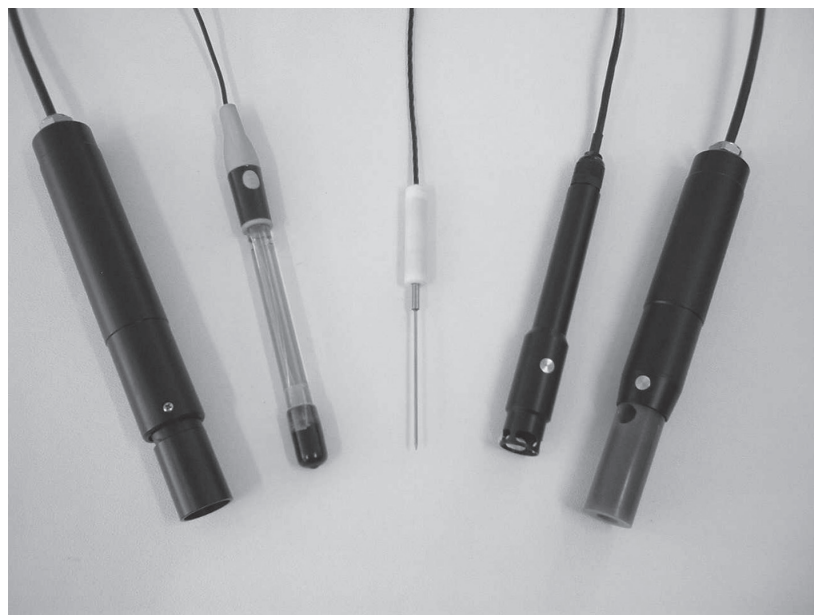
The institutional centres of the torture apparatus also include medicine and science, which work sometimes beneath the purview of the law and sometimes in open collaboration with it. Under the Bush administration, medicine collaborated openly in torture;

so-called BSCTs (Behavioral Science Consultation Teams) were ‘used to pinpoint an individual’s vulnerability to certain stresses, including humiliating sexual provocations and contemptuous mishandling of Islamic symbols like the Qur’an’.⁴¹ But the first circuitry of the relation between medicine and torture in the war on terror was laid down in the 1950s and 1960s, between the Central Intelligence Agency, the funding organizations it secretly created to support the scientific research it wanted, and the scientists who were paid to conduct the research.⁴² The point of the clandestine programme, called MKULTRA, was to find a path to omniscient control of prisoners in US custody. They sought a way to ‘break’ and then control the future actions and beliefs of individual prisoners. In the end, as Naomi Klein reports, ‘eighty institutions were involved’, ‘including forty-four universities and twelve hospitals’.⁴³

Perhaps the most notorious chapter in this story is the one about McGill University’s Ewen Cameron, whose CIA-funded experiments on Canadian mental patients became a public scandal in the 1970s when a group of Cameron’s former patients sued the CIA. Cameron believed that to cure mental illness (particularly schizophrenia) the mental patterns of the illness had to be ‘broken up’, but in order to do this one had to ‘depattern’ the *person* to the extent that they could no longer function as an adult. Cameron administered massive doses of electroshock ‘to the point where the patient developed an organic brain syndrome with acute confusion, disorientation and interference with his learned habits of eating and bladder and bowel control’.⁴⁴ This ‘treatment’ was even more devastating when it was administered to patients who were in states of sensory deprivation brought on by drug-induced prolonged sleep. Cameron identified three stages of depatterning, or ‘degrees of disturbance in the individual’s space–time image’, which could be achieved by mixing these approaches. The third and final stage involved ‘not only a loss of the space–time image but loss of all feeling that [one] should be present’.⁴⁵ During the desired third stage, the patient was regressed to a total state of dependence on his or her ‘caretakers’. Cameron’s work was one influential source for the development of the KUBARK manual, the CIA’s ‘Counterintelligence Interrogation Manual’

written in 1963, and used in developing interrogation strategies in the war on terror.⁴⁶

These institutional centres of action and decision, along with many others, are wired into the circuitry of the torture apparatus in the war on terror, where they are charged with the collaborative task of restoring the manhood of the nation. When we understand this, we understand that ‘national manhood’ is not reducible to its psychic manifestations, but includes a whole economy of institutional structures and practices. These structures and practices *are* the apparatus of torture, in so far as they are its history, its enabling conditions, its efficacy. But to recognize these institutional elements is not yet to give an account of the productive function



of *torture itself* in the war on terror. For this, we need to turn to the actual practices of the torturing regime.

In the spring of 2004, shortly after photographs of the torture of Iraqi citizens at Abu Ghraib prison became public, Scheherezade Faramarzi, reporting for the Associated Press, made public an interview he had conducted with a young Iraqi man, Dhia al-Shweiri, who had been detained by US forces in Iraq. Shweiri explained his decision to commit himself to the armed struggle against the US occupation of Iraq as, in part, a result of his experience of torture and humiliation at the hands of US operatives at Abu Ghraib prison. Having suffered extreme forms of physical torture while imprisoned by Saddam Hussein for his resistance against that regime, including electroshock and strappado,⁴⁷ Shweiri claimed that his treatment by US forces had been far more damaging. Describing an incident in which he and other prisoners were forced to strip and then bend over with their hands on a wall in front of them, while Americans looked

on, Shweiri reports, 'They were trying to humiliate us, break our pride. 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 their 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.'⁴⁸ Schweiri claimed that the effort to 'shatter' his manhood and make him 'feel like a woman' was not only the worst insult, but also the worst form of torture imaginable.⁴⁹

One could simply note that Schweiri seems to share the misogyny of his persecutors, and this would not be an inaccurate observation, but on its own the observation misses something even more significant. (Not to mention: it is a strange response to the claims of a man who has just been tortured.) Instead, I propose that we take seriously and try to learn something from Schweiri's claim. If manhood as lived in the individual body is the sort of thing that can be shattered, and such testimony is powerful evidence that it is, it presents itself as a tool of entry to the inner depths of the person. We should note that part of what makes this entry so available to the interrogator is precisely the misogyny sedimented into the core structure of manhood for both. Specifically, a deeply sedimented contempt for women that is integral to the stylization of masculinity in many cultural manifestations presents itself as a tool for *undoing* a man.

But what is the purpose of this undoing? While it seems clear that building the persons of potential soldiers around a love for manhood is necessary to capital, what does this apparatus for *undoing* produce? We are continually reminded that the purpose of 'harsh interrogation' is to produce information that will save American lives. *KUBARK*, the CIA's 'Counterintelligence Interrogation Manual' states that, most fundamentally, interrogation is 'simply a method of obtaining correct and useful information'.⁵⁰ The US government has long known, however, that 'correct and useful' information is precisely what is *not* produced through torture. Miles reports that 'advisors to Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld informed him of the research showing the inefficacy of harsh interrogation. The secretary then authorized the same harsh techniques that had been discredited by the research.' The problem is that 'as prisoners disintegrate, harden, or dissociate under pain, they tend to give inaccurate, useless, or misleading information.'⁵¹

One can only conclude that 'information gathering' or 'intelligence gathering' are terms that hide the purposes of torture. Naomi Klein cites the Physicians for Human Rights' definition: 'Perpetrators often attempt

to justify their acts of torture and ill-treatment by the need to gather information. Such conceptualizations obscure the purpose of torture.... The aim of torture is to dehumanize the victim, break his/her will, and at the same time set horrific examples for those who come in contact with the victim. In this way, torture can break or damage the will and coherence of entire communities.'⁵² Amnesty International offers the following definition: 'Torture is the systematic destruction of person, family, neighbourhood, school, work, formal and informal organizations, and nation, with the purpose of controlling a population the state perceives to be dangerous.'⁵³

On these accounts, torture as the brutal unmaking of the will of a people is systematically destructive. But what is its *productive* function? Certainly one could say that the destruction of the people's will is simultaneously the production of a docile, 'feminized' population, but history does not bear this out. Where torture is used, it produces an entrenched multi-generational hatred of the torturing government or group that fuels bloody and relentless resistance. Accounts of torture that see only its control function are like the description of a mirror that is only viewed from its back side. The terrorization and breaking of the will of a people have as their other effect the establishment of a reflective surface in which the image of the torturing nation is reflected, distorted to several times its actual size.⁵⁴

Elaine Scarry gives a breathtakingly disturbing description of this process in her groundbreaking 1985 text *The Body in Pain: The Making and Unmaking of the World*.⁵⁵ For the torture victim, 'the most crucial fact about pain is its presentness and the most crucial fact about torture is that it is happening.' To have pain is to experience certainty. The pain has an 'incontestable reality' for the one who suffers it, a 'compelling vibrancy' that is 'effortlessly grasped'. The absolute epistemic certainty of the one in pain can be 'appropriated away from the body and presented as the attribute of something else (... something which does not itself appear vibrant, real, or certain)'. Through a process of 'analogical substantiation' or 'analogical verification' the suffering of the prisoner is converted to a 'wholly convincing spectacle of [the regime's] power'.⁵⁶

I would add that the sexual humiliation of the prisoner, the feminization or homosexualization of the prisoner, which the prisoner experiences in his body as an excruciating undoing, can be appropriated, lifted out of the prisoner's body, to produce an analogical ontology for something which has no substantial ontology of its own – the 'manhood' of the torturing regime.

It is precisely the non-existence of the manhood of the nation, its evident fragility, its ephemeral nature, that requires bodies to be tortured, so that ‘the sheer material factualness of the human body’ might be ‘borrowed’ by the regime.⁵⁷ A conversion is performed ‘to shift what is occurring in the mode of sentience into the mode of self-extension and world’, so that ‘the pain’s reality is now the regime’s reality; the factualness of corpses is now the factualness of ideology.’⁵⁸ ‘Factualness’, on my revision of Scarry’s account, refers not only to the brute reality of human sentience in such contexts, but to the dislocation of the subject in gender through violence to the gendered body, the devastating undoing of manhood as the lived ‘*what-ness*’ of the subject. As the prisoner loses his socially constituted, but ontologically heavy, gendered *place in being*, the regime gains its own.

To perform this conversion, the regime engages in ‘obsessive, self-conscious display[s] of agency’.⁵⁹ From one perspective torture simply is this relentless display, which takes myriad forms, many of them saturated with gendered meanings. *KUBARK*’s authors encourage interrogators to ‘create and amplify an effect of omniscience’, so that the prisoner believes that ‘all is known and that resistance is futile’.⁶⁰ The interrogation log for Guantánamo prisoner Mohammed al-Qahtani, leaked by a government source and published by *Time* magazine in March of 2006, provides apt examples.⁶¹ The log details obsessive displays of agency that include brutal religious humiliation, extreme sleep deprivation, and sadistic physical and emotional abuse, including subjection to relentless loud music and medical complicity in the torture. ‘Control used “onion” analogy to explain how detainee’s control over his life is being stripped away. Control gives detainee three facts: we are hunting down Al Qaida every day, we will not stop until they are captured or killed, we control every aspect of your life.’⁶² And days later:

Detainee began to cry during pride and ego down. Detainee was reminded that no one loved, cared or remembered him. He was reminded that he was less than human and that animals had more freedom and love than he does. He was taken outside to see a family of banana rats. The banana rats were moving around freely, playing, eating, showing concern for one another. Detainee was compared to the family of banana rats and reinforced that they had more love, freedom and concern than he had. Detainee began to cry during this comparison.⁶³

When the CIA wrote their *KUBARK* manual, ‘what most captured the imagination of Kubark’s authors ... was Cameron’s focus on regression – the idea that

by depriving people of their sense of who they are and where they are in time and space, adults can be converted into dependent children whose minds are a blank slate of suggestibility.’⁶⁴ The *KUBARK* authors themselves put it this way: ‘It is a fundamental hypothesis of this handbook that these techniques, which can succeed even with highly resistant sources, are in essence methods of inducing regression of the personality to whatever earlier and weaker level is required for the dissolution of resistance and the inculcation of dependence.’⁶⁵ Perhaps most importantly, the obsessive displays of agency destroy the prisoner’s capacity for language, as Scarry notes, ‘bringing about an immediate reversion to a state anterior to language, the sounds and cries a human being makes before language is learned’.⁶⁶ *KUBARK*’s authors note that ‘an interrogatee ... is likely to see the interrogator as a parent or parent-symbol’.⁶⁷ As historian Alfred McCoy put it, sensory deprivation made subjects especially desperate for human contact, so much so that ‘they bond with the interrogator like a father... If you deprive people of all their senses, they’ll turn to you like their daddy.’⁶⁸ The *KUBARK* manual makes multiple specific references to the interrogator’s father-role.⁶⁹ ‘He exercises the powers of an all-powerful parent, determining when the source will be sent to bed, when and what he will eat, whether he will be rewarded for good behavior or punished for bad.’⁷⁰ The brutal infantilization of the prisoner is converted to the expanding paternalization of the regime.

The figure of the female, traditionally (if idealistically) associated, especially for the infant or young child, with protection, warmth and care, is deployed here as another tool of torture.⁷¹ An explicit ‘technique’ on the interrogators’ list is ‘Invasion of Space by Female’,⁷² in the face of which, the log indicates, Al Qahtani exhibits especially violent resistance. ‘Detainee became very annoyed with the female invading his personal space. He spit on her several times. He tried to push her away using his head. He attempted to move her chair by using his feet to push her chair away from him.’ At a later date a female interrogator writes,

I was forehead to forehead with the detainee and he stated that he would rather be beaten with an electrical wire than to have me constantly in his personal space. Also, he stated that he would rather die at my hands than to be subjected to my invasion of his personal space. He stated that this is unbearable to him, my being in his personal space.... He attempted to move away from me by all means. He was laid out on the floor so I straddled him without putting my weight on him. He would then attempt to move me off of him by bending his legs in order to lift me

off but this failed because the MPs were holding his legs down with their hands. The detainee began to pray loudly.

He is forced time and time again to look at pictures 'from a fitness magazine of scantily clad women' and answer detailed questions about them. He is doused with water when he refuses. Similar pictures are hung on his body. He is told that his mother and sister are whores and he is a homosexual. He is dressed up in a fake burka and forced to take 'dance lessons' with a [presumably male] MP. He is stripped and searched in front of female personnel.⁷³

This is what Ilene Feinman calls 'a racially gendered theater of subordination'. 'There is a unique dynamic to be examined here', she writes, 'with the use of female soldiers' symbolic racial power and sexuality to break down prisoners of war'.⁷⁴ Every aspect of what we might call the 'structure of masculinity', at least as the American interrogators imagine it, is under assault here. Al Qahtani is infantilized to a state of utter dependence, whereas dominant modes of masculinity are equated with independent adulthood. He is dressed in female clothing and given 'dance lessons', like 'daddy's little girl'. The female interrogator attempts to produce a state of involuntary arousal in the context of the most extreme powerlessness, whereas masculine arousal is, under 'normal' circumstances, associated with power and with the domination of women. The female interrogator, like the loud noise of the relentless music that is piped into the prisoners' cells, penetrates *into* the prisoner's body if arousal occurs, to the heart of the prisoner's own sexual agency, undoing it. The interrogators seek to create a breach between al Qahtani and Allah, *through* his body, by use of the sexualized female image. He is continually forced into situations in which the perceptual powers of his body are hijacked in ways that the interrogators imagine will be experienced by the prisoner as self-defilement, as acts of impurity.

The torturers employ an operation that substitutes the racial power of the female interrogator for the familiar sexual power of a man under typical conditions of male domination and female subordination. The racial power of the interrogator is sexualized in the process, so that the female interrogator is infused with the manhood of the nation as she sexually degrades the prisoner. Sexualized torture gets the interrogators into the *subjectivity* of the prisoner. It involves the simultaneous undoing of who al Qahtani is *sexually*, of who he is as a man, of who he is as a Muslim. The American nationality of the interrogator *becomes* gendered power through racialized

sexual abuse. The systematic unmaking of al Qahtani's manhood becomes the manhood of the nation that unmakes it. An ontology is borrowed from one order and translated into another, which has no ontology of its own. Most significantly, the regime appropriates at the same moment and with the same blows the self-justifying structure of manhood, the circulatory, self-affirming, chest-beating operation of justification that is fused with dominant figures of masculinity in the US imaginary.

Self-certainty of suffering

American manhood, of course, does not exist and has never existed. There was no 'manhood of the nation' to be imperiled by the events of 9 September 2001, or restored through hawkish posturing and war-making. The prospects of huge profits once a rich and ancient land was opened for plundering were, on the other hand, exquisitely real. What was needed was a justification. The apparatus of torture had as its task the production of a borrowed ontology for an ephemeral product. Manhood, at least on the dominant American model, operates as a self-justifying self-assertion. It legitimates without requiring itself an outside source of legitimation. It can do its work beneath rational processes of justification, providing the motivational impulse that sets those processes in motion.

I have tried to show that in the apparatus of torture, the circuitry that produces the current between war and gender is key to the torturing regime's access to the inner world of its victims. Sexualized torture allows the regime to reach into the gender identity and sexual agency of the prisoner and undo them. This undoing, which is understood to be and is conducted as a process of feminization and homosexualization, also *makes* something of the torturing regime. By inflicting excruciating pain and humiliation, the regime awakens in the body of the prisoner the self-certainty of suffering. Through an analogical substitution, the shattering of the manhood of the man lends its ontological weight to the manhood of the torturing regime, which could never have such weight on its own. Because manhood is grasped by the torturing nation as self-justifying self-assertion, it simultaneously produces the needed justification for a population which has much to lose and little to gain from these military adventures; a population that is too easily enthralled with manly men in times of war. The role of feminist critique is not only to identify certain psychological mechanisms that feed the nation's hunger for an unachievable invincibility, but to disrupt the *operation of justification* which is the manhood of the nation.

Notes

1. Catharine A. MacKinnon, 'Genocide's Sexuality', in *Are Women Human? And Other International Dialogues*, Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, Cambridge MA, 2006.
2. Examples include: Susan Faludi, *The Terror Dream: Fear and Fantasy in Post-9/11 America*, Metropolitan Books, New York, 2007; Susan Hawthorne and Bronwyn Winter, eds, *After Shock: September 11, 2001, Global Feminist Perspectives*, Raincoast Books, Vancouver and Washington DC, 2003; Zilla Eisenstein, *Sexual Decoys: Gender, Race and War in Imperial Democracy*, Zed Books, London, 2007.
3. Faludi's *The Terror Dream* is the most stark example. Other feminists whose work has been instrumental in problematizing masculinity in its relation to nationalism and militarization, and whose work has influenced my own, have not sufficiently understood or articulated the *productive* aspect of this relation, other than as a motivator for individual soldiers and citizens. Enloe emphasizes the policymakers' 'angst' over not appearing manly (see Cynthia Enloe, 'Masculinity as a Foreign Policy Issue', in Hawthorne and Winter, eds, *After Shock*, pp. 285–6), and Carol Cohn emphasizes the symbolic systems of meaning that circulate through language and pre-empt certain ways of thinking or problem-solving because of the subject's fear of appearing 'wimpy' or soft (Carol Cohn, 'Wars, Wimps and Women: Talking Gender and Thinking War', in Miriam Cooke and Angela Woollacott, eds, *Gendering War Talk*, Princeton University Press, Princeton NJ, 1993). None of these accounts is inaccurate, but none of them addresses the level of production that I am analysing here.
4. The term 'ontology' is used here neither to denote a science of being, nor to denote something that is substantially real in the brute sense of the term. I use it in the way that Judith Butler does on occasion (see note 22 below) to capture the 'realness' of gendered structures and experiences, the *making real* of such structures, and the sedimented significance of gender in both the lived reality of individuals *and* in public life, institutions, material practices, discourses, etc. One could say that gender has 'existential weight', but this would miss the ways that gender precedes and exceeds the individual subject and establishes one's *place in being*, so that *what I am* and *if I am* is already a gendered question.
5. Bonnie Mann, 'How America Justifies its War: A Modern/Postmodern Aesthetics of War and Sovereignty', *Hypatia*, vol. 21, no. 4, Fall 2006; 'Manhood, Sexuality and Nation in Post 9/11 USA', in Bárbara Sutton, Sandy Morgan and Julie Novkov, eds, *Rethinking Security: Gender, Race and Militarization*, Rutgers University Press, Chapel Hill NC, 2008. This multi-layered account of gender will be developed further in my *Gender: Style, Imaginary, Frame, Apparatus*, in process.
6. I am relying here on both phenomenological and post-structuralist accounts of gender. Some accounts have emphasized the 'lightness' and malleability of gender; others note, however, that being 'inside' gender is crucial to being identified as human, to living a liveable life (Judith Butler, *Undoing Gender*, Routledge, New York and London, 2004), or that gendered 'style' sediments over time in such a way that it becomes essential to who we take ourselves to be, and who we are taken to be by others. See Sara Heinámaa, 'Woman – Nature, Product, Style? Rethinking the Foundations of Feminist Philosophy of Science', in Lynn Hankinson Nelson and Jack Nelson, *Feminism, Science, and Philosophy of Science*, Kluwer Academic, Boston MA, 1996; Iris Young, *On Female Body Experience: Throwing Like a Girl and Other Essays*, Oxford University Press, New York, 2005).
7. Here I am noticing, along with Foucault, that the 'techniques of power are invented to meet the demands of production ... it can be a matter of the "production" of destruction, as with the army.' Michelle Foucault, 'The Eye of Power: A Conversation with Jean-Pierre Barou and Michelle Perrot', in *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings 1972–1977*, Pantheon Books, New York, 1980, p. 161, but in my account of production I show that it goes beyond the production of destruction –that is, of a negativity – to positively constitute the 'manhood of the nation'.
8. Louis Althusser, 'Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses', in *Lenin, Philosophy and Other Essays*, trans. Ben Brewster, Monthly Review Press, New York, 1972, p. 112.
9. *Ibid.*, pp. 96, 86, 89, 116.
10. See *ibid.*, pp. 117–19.
11. *Ibid.*, p. 109.
12. Michel Foucault, 'The Confessions of the Flesh: A Conversation with Alain Grosrichard et al.', in *Power/Knowledge*, p. 194.
13. *Ibid.*, pp. 197–8.
14. *Ibid.*, p. 195.
15. Michel Foucault, 'Truth and Power: Interview with Alessandro Fontana and Pasquale Pasquino', in *Power/Knowledge*, p. 124.
16. Giorgio Agamben, 'What is an Apparatus', in *What is an Apparatus and Other Essays*, trans. David Kishik and Stefan Pedatella, Stanford University Press, Stanford CA, 2009, pp. 20, 14.
17. Foucault, 'Truth and Power', p. 124.
18. I take it to be the most important contribution of Butler's later work, especially in *Giving an Account of Oneself* (Fordham University Press, New York, 2005) and *Undoing Gender* (Routledge, New York, 2004), that gender locates the subject ontologically, not only in the sense that it creates a psychic experience of locatedness or belonging, but that it is key to the establishment of the parameters of 'the human' both in the public imaginary and in relation to the material conditions of our lives.
19. Foucault, 'Truth and Power', p. 124.
20. There are a number of popular texts which attempt to grapple with just this problem, albeit with different commitments at play. I have in mind: George Lakoff, *The Political Mind: Why You Can't Understand 21st Century American Politics with an 18th Century Brain*, Penguin, New York, 2008; Drew Weston, *The Political Brain: The Role of Emotion in Deciding the Fate of the Nation*, Public Affairs Books, New York, 2007.
21. Faludi, *Terror Dream*, p. 8.
22. Both cited in *ibid.*, p. 9.
23. Carla Freccero, 'They Are All Sodomites!' *Signs: Journal of Women, Culture and Society*, vol 28, no. 1, 2002, pp. 453–5, 453.
24. *Ibid.*, p. 454.
25. Enloe, 'Masculinity as a Foreign Policy Issue', p. 286. This is actually a pre-9/11 essay that was reprinted

- in this volume, as an important analysis of post-9/11 nationalism.
26. Peggy Noonan, 'Welcome Back, Duke', *Wall Street Journal*, 12 October 2001; cited in Faludi, *Terror Dream*, p. 3.
 27. George W. Bush, 'A Statement by the President in his Address to the Nation', White House, Washington DC, 11 September 2001, www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2001/09; accessed 10 October 2006.
 28. Faludi, *Terror Dream*, p. 15.
 29. Tim O'Brien, *The Things They Carried*, Broadway Books, New York, 1990, p. 45.
 30. *Ibid.*, p. 59.
 31. Helen Benedict, *The Lonely Soldier: The Private War of Women Serving in Iraq*, Beacon Press, Boston MA, 2009, p. 50.
 32. Anthony Swofford, *Jarhead: A Marine's Chronicle of the Gulf War and Other Battles*, Simon & Schuster, New York, 2003, p. 179.
 33. Harvey Mansfield, *Manliness*, Yale University Press, New Haven and London, 2006, pp. x–xi, 4, 10, 12, 113, 17, 50, 53, 58, 71.
 34. *Ibid.*, pp. 201, 82.
 35. Cited in Jane Mayer, *The Dark Side: The Inside Story of How the War on Terror turned into a War on American Ideals*, Anchor Books, New York, 2009, p. 47.
 36. John C. Woo, 'The President's Constitutional Authority to Conduct Military Operations Against Terrorists and Nations Supporting Them', *The Torture Papers: The Road to Abu Ghraib*, ed. Karen J. Greenberg and Joshua L. Dratel, Cambridge University Press, New York, 2005, pp. 7, 8, 9.
 37. Cited in Mayer, *The Dark Side*, p. 230.
 38. Cited in *ibid.*, p. 153.
 39. Cited in *ibid.*, p. 41.
 40. George Bush, 'Memorandum for the Vice President, the Secretary of State, The Secretary of Defense, The Attorney General et. al.', in *Torture Papers*, p. 135.
 41. Jonathan D. Moreno, *Mind Wars: Brain Research and National Defense*, Dana Press, New York and Washington DC, 2006, p. 63.
 42. See Moreno, *Mind Wars*; Steven H. Miles, *Oath Betrayed: America's Torture Doctors*, University of California Press, Berkeley, 2006, 2009; Don Gillmore, *I Swear by Apollo: Dr. Ewen Cameron and the CIA Brainwashing Experiments*, Eden Press, Montreal, 1987; Anne Collins, *In the Sleep Room: The Story of CIA Brainwashing Experiments in Canada*, Key Porter Books, Toronto, 1997; Naomi Klein, 'The Torture Lab: Ewen Cameron, the CIA and the Maniacal Quest to Erase and Remake the Human Mind', in *Shock Doctrine*, pp. 29–58.
 43. Klein, 'The Torture Lab', p. 39.
 44. Ewen Cameron, 'The Depatterning Treatment of Schizophrenia', *Comprehensive Psychiatry*, vol. 3, no. 2, 1962, pp. 65–76, 65.
 45. *Ibid.*, pp. 66, 67.
 46. CIA, *KUBARK Counterintelligence Interrogation Manual*, compiled by Mind Control Publishing, www.MindControlPublishing.com, 2010.
 47. A form of torture in which the victim is suspended by the wrists, which are tied together behind the back.
 48. Scheherezade Faramarzi, 'Former Prisoner Prefers Saddam's Torture to US Abuse', Associated Press, 3 May 2004; reported in Common Dreams.org., www.commondreams.org/cgi-bin/print.cgi?file=/headlines/04/0503-02.htm; accessed 14 December 2009.
 49. Feminists seized on the statement to try to articulate the particular wrongs of this form of torture and its entanglement with gender and racism. See, for example, Juman Musa, 'Gender and Sexual Violence in the Military', in Tara McKelvey, ed., *One of the Guys: Women as Aggressors and Torturers*, Seal Press, Emeryville CA, 2007, p. 90; Timothy Kaufman-Osborn, 'Gender Trouble at Abu Ghraib?', in *ibid.*, pp. 157–61. Riva Koshana, an Iraqi-born American attorney in Washington DC, describes her client, a US torture victim, as being 'most traumatized by his interactions with female interrogators', in 'Women in the Interrogation Room', in *ibid.*, p. 180.
 50. CIA, *KUBARK*, p. 85.
 51. Miles, *Oath Betrayed*, p. 15.
 52. Naomi Klein, 'The True Purpose of Torture', *Guardian*, 14 May 2005, www.guardian.co.uk/world/2005/may/14/guantanamo.usa; accessed 8 September 2010.
 53. Amnesty International, www.amnestyusa.org/counterterrorism-with-justice/reports-statements-and-issue-briefs/about-torture/page.do?id=1031032; accessed 8 September 2010.
 54. I am, of course, using the famous image from Virginia Woolf, which has been taken up so many times by feminists, including Beauvoir and Irigaray. See *A Room of One's Own*, Harcourt, New York, 2005, p. 35.
 55. Elaine Scarry, *The Body in Pain: The Making and Unmaking of the World*, Oxford University Press, New York and Oxford, 1985. Scarry's text is central to my analysis of how something that has no reality of its own – 'the manhood of the nation' – appropriates or attempts to appropriate for itself the ontological certainty that in fact belongs to bodies in pain, to sexually violated bodies, to terrified prisoners in cages, to corpses.
 56. Scarry, *The Body in Pain*, pp. 9, 13, 4, 13–14, 14, 123.
 57. *Ibid.*, p. 14.
 58. *Ibid.*, pp. 36, 143.
 59. *Ibid.*, p. 27.
 60. CIA, *KUBARK*, p. 52.
 61. For information on al Qahtani's case, visit the Center for Constitutional Rights website at <http://ccrjustice.org/learn-more/reports/publication:-torture-mohammed-al-qahtani>, accessed 8 September 2010. Follow the link at the bottom of this page to the detention log at http://ccrjustice.org/files/Publication_AlQahtaniLog.pdf, which is cited here. Since the log's pages are not numbered, I've referenced citations by date of entry in the log.
 62. Log, 27 November 2002.
 63. *Ibid.*, 11 December 2002.
 64. Klein, 'The Torture Lab', p. 48.
 65. CIA, *KUBARK*, p. 41.
 66. Scarry, *The Body in Pain*, p. 4.
 67. CIA, *KUBARK*, p. 40.
 68. Cited in Mayer, *The Dark Side*, p. 160.
 69. CIA, *KUBARK*, pp. 78, 83, 90.
 70. *Ibid.*, p. 52.
 71. As recognized by Kelly Oliver in her *Women as Weapons of War: Iraq, Sex, and the Media*, Columbia University Press, New York, 2007.
 72. Log, 6 December 2002.
 73. *Ibid.*, 10 December 2002, 21 December 2002, 17 December 2002, 19 December 2002.
 74. Ilene Feinman, 'Shock and Awe: Abu Ghraib, Women Soldiers and Racially Gendered Torture', in McKelvey, ed., *One of the Guys*, p. 69.