



## *Abu Ghraib and Beyond: Torture as an Extension of the Desiring Machine*

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### INTRODUCTION

No barrel, even though it's lost a hoop  
Or end-piece, ever gapes as one whom I  
saw ripped right from his chin to where we fart:  
his bowels hung between his legs, one saw  
his vitals and the miserable sack  
that makes of what we swallow excrement.  
While I was all intent on watching him,  
he looked at me, and with his hands he spread  
his chest and said: "See how I split myself!  
See now how maimed Mohammed is! And he  
who walks and weeps before me is Ali,  
whose face is opened wide from chin to forelock.  
(Dante 259)

The above quotation is the description of Prophet Mohammed's journey through hell according to the Italian poet, Dante, in *The Divine Comedy*. In his discussion of Dante's *Inferno*, in *Orientalism*, Edward Said (1995: 68) notes that Prophet Mohammed occupies the eighth circle in the nine circles of Hell. To reach Mohammed, Dante has to pass through "circles containing people whose sins are of a lesser order: the lustful, the avaricious, the gluttonous, the heretics, the wrathful, the suicidal, the blasphemous" (*Ibid.*: 68). Only falsifiers and traitors supplant Mohammed in evilness, before one actually reaches the bottom of hell. (*Ibid.*: 58) Given the



intrinsically perceived evil nature of Mohammed, he can only be subjected to the worst kind of torture. Said (*Ibid.*: 68) adds that Mohammed's punishment is not merely his logical eternal fate but is also a castigation of the most repugnant kind. In Dante's belief, Mohammed is deserving of this punishment because of his sensuality and claims to theological eminence. It is worth noting that Ali, Mohammed's cousin, is also present in this line of sinners, his punishment administered by the devil that sees fit to split him in two. (*Ibid.*: 69) As the two historical figures emanate from the Eastern world, they can never be considered anything but evil, sub-humans who will never be granted entry to the civilized world. Mohammed is at best seen as a false prophet, deserving of punishment.

Dante's graphic description of the torment inflicted on the latter symbolically evokes scenes of terrible forms of torture. Unfortunately, such torture has and is still to some extent being used in the world today. Of late we witnessed examples of brutal persecution in Abu Ghraib and Guantanamo Bay prisons. Prisoners, not only, were subjected to physical abuse, somewhat reminiscent of the aforementioned punishment, but were also subjected to acts of sexual perversion. The leaked photos of the torture incidents in Abu Ghraib unveiled episodes of sodomy, rape, and an over indulgence of voyeurism. The photos also revealed that those who partook in the execution of these actions seemed to be enjoying the power that the exercise of torture gave them. Robert J.C. Young (1995: 98) states that Colonialism "was not only a machine of war and administration, it was also a desiring machine". This poses the question as to whether torture does allow for the enactment of repressed desire or even sanction perversion by allowing it to surface by providing it with a venue in which it becomes acceptable in a world that would have otherwise not allowed it to surface. In this paper, I would like to study whether Colonialism in its previous or in its current form of imperialism can only sustain itself fundamentally through constant violence, of which perversion is a vital component. This paper will further investigate if such extreme practices could also be playing into the repertoire of the evil East, as described by Said's *Orientalism*, a site that has to be conquered and made civilized. I will only refer to a few photos in detail, predominately from Abu Ghraib prison, in order to attempt to elucidate the reason behind the choice of these particular methods of torture on prisoners rather than why they were administered in the first place.

#### POST-SEPTEMBER 11<sup>TH</sup> EVENTS: HOMO SACER AND THE POINT OF EXCEPTION

After the US-led coalition invasions of Afghanistan and Iraq and the incarceration of alleged Al-Qaeda members and possible terrorists, a number of prisons were set up



in various locations in the world, the most visible being Guantanamo Bay and later Abu Ghraib. According to Diane Marie Amann:

At one point the detainee population approached 700 [in Guantanamo]. Detainees reportedly came from dozens of countries. They may have been as young as eleven and – according to the claim of one released detainee – as old as 105. According to the *New York Times*, “Of the 779 people who have been detained at the United States military prison at Guantánamo, 600 have been transferred and 171 remain”. (2005: 2088).

The exact figures of inmates are not known nor are the deaths really documented as there is no evidence that body counts were carried out. However, holding the prisoners in third world countries and neutral ground made it possible for certain procedures that do not conform to accepted international conventions, such as the Geneva Convention in respect to prisoners of wars, apply. The horrific photos that emerged namely from Abu Ghraib prison in Iraq and Guantanamo Bay detention facility, which is located within the US naval base in Cuba, shocked the world and left people wondering at the cause of the brutality that became evident with the published photos.<sup>1</sup> In addition, I would also argue here that the place of exception, as in neutral ground of Guantanamo or the notorious Abu Ghraib prison near Baghdad, made this brutality possible. In the era of the former Iraqi dictator, Saddam Hussein, Abu Ghraib, which is around 40 kilometers west of the Iraqi capital, Baghdad, was the site of torture, executions, carried out in awful and cramped living conditions. In this place of exception, Homo Sacer is created. Giorgio Agamben states:

The relation of exception is a relation of ban. He who has been banned is not, in fact, simply set outside the law and made indifferent to it but rather *abandoned* by it, that is, exposed and threatened on the threshold in which life and law, outside and inside, become indistinguishable. (1998: 28)

Homo Sacer, the sacred man or accursed man, is the man who has been banned by the law; being outside the jurisdiction of the law makes the sacred man expendable, worthy of being killed or sacrificed. The inmates in Abu Ghraib became the epitome of Homo Sacer and were all deserving of sacrifice, administered primarily through physical abuse, which would mark them as being less than human. Mark Bowden (2004: 37) writes: “Routine physical abuse appears to have resulted already at Abu Ghraib, where such torments were apparently employed wholesale, and where a climate of dehumanization and sadism took root”. The photos exposed an array of

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<sup>1</sup>For more information, please refer to:

<<http://topics.nytimes.com/top/news/national/usstatesterritoriesandpossessions/guantanamobaynavabasecuba/index.html>>



torture methods ranging from forced fellatio, homosexual rape, sodomy with batons, victims terrorized by dogs, pouring phosphoric acid on detainees, forcing naked male detainees to wear women's underwear, victims tied and dragged on all four like dogs, victims ridden like donkeys, wounded victims pounded and naked victims piled on top of one another in the form of a pyramid, whilst the architects of these acts looked on.<sup>2</sup> In all the photos, the soldiers were seen wearing gloves, never touching the victims except through batons or other instruments, sending a signal that these are contaminated individuals, sub-humans not to be touched by those who are considered civilized.

The barrier between those who are civilized and those who are not is also created through the use of language. Dora Apel (2005: 92) remarks, "The necessary emotional distancing and dehumanization of the Other is also revealed by language. The Nazis referred to Jews as 'pieces'; American soldiers refer to an Iraqi prisoner as 'it'. At other times, the Iraqis were referred to as *Hadjis*. (Al Kadry and Witt 2009: 148) *Hadji*, which is a term used to describe a male person who has performed the Moslem pilgrimage while at other times is used to respectfully address an elderly person, is here used in a derogatory fashion, as a label to mark all Iraqis irrespective of their religion or gender. In his book on the Nazi camps, Agamben (2002: 44, 55) noted how Homo Sacer occupied the place of exception, which was neither for the living nor the dead, and marking the place between the human and the non-human. In such a place, Agamben adds that the inmates were often labeled derogatively, donkeys in Dachau, cripples in Stutthof, camels in Neuengamme and tired sheikhs in Buchenwald. The process of dehumanizing the other is essential for such cruelty to be rendered possible, without the feeling of guilt.

#### HOMO SACER: INFLICTING PAIN WITHOUT REMORSE

The perpetrators of these torturous methods at Abu Ghraib showed no remorse. In most of the pictures, they stood with smiles on their faces, as in the photo with Lynndie England, US army reservist who is seen holding a man on a leash and broadly smiling, or Sabrina Harman, also a former US army reservist, who posed with the body of Iraqi detainee Manadel al-Jamadi who was packed in ice. Keith Tester (2005: 140) states:

Sabrina Harman is not just looking at the camera; she is also looking at everyone who identifies with her and, through her look and smile, she is

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<sup>2</sup>For more information please refer to:

<[http://www.nytimes.com/2005/01/12/international/12abuse.html?\\_r=2](http://www.nytimes.com/2005/01/12/international/12abuse.html?_r=2)>

And the Taguba Report on Abu Ghraib:< [http://www.npr.org/iraq/2004/prison\\_abuse\\_report.pdf](http://www.npr.org/iraq/2004/prison_abuse_report.pdf)>



forcing virtually all viewers to enter into some kind of relationship of togetherness with her. The pictures are the drama of force with violence replaced by a giggle. To this extent, the pictures are shocking because they suggest a shared complicity that includes everyone who identifies with the we-group.

The viewers in this case are her colleagues [a point I will return to later in the paper]; onlookers will identify with the living rather than the dead in the photos. As outsiders, we are inadvertently invited into the world that England and Harman have created. Posing with dead corpses was also seen in Afghanistan, in which a US army killing squad used to stage an alleged Al Qaeda attack, then take photos with the dead, and cherish them as trophies.<sup>3</sup> In both instances, England and Harman are seen proudly displaying their trophies in the photos taken in Abu Ghraib prison, completely oblivious to the misery they have inflicted on their victims. According to Mohammed G. Alkadry and Matthew T. Witt (2009: 136):

The events narrated by victims and perpetrators are remarkably similar in that there are not two versions of what happened – one by the victims and another by the perpetrators. Victims have described several forms of torture with consistent themes of sexual and physical abuse, sexual assault, rape, treatment like animals (ordering victims to bark and walking them on a leash), and denigration of religious symbols and sacraments. [...] Perpetrators have recalled such accounts dispassionately, and in many instances express indifference toward their crimes.

The indifference and lack of remorse are seen through the expressions on the photos and later documented in the testimonies in the Taguba report.<sup>4</sup> Bowden (2004: 38) noted that the smiles on the faces of the tormentors not only showed a lack of moral judgment but also demonstrated that these soldiers felt they had the right to abuse. In an interview with CNN's Paula Zahn, Spc. Roman Krol, who also served at Abu Ghraib, was queried about his reaction, to which he said, "One word, indifference" (Alkadry and Witt 2009: 139). Moreover, Alkadry and Witt (2009: 137, 136) suggest that there is now evidence in the United States that it is more acceptable to abuse the civil and human rights of Arabs and Moslems, as they are considered the uncivilized others, and that the soldiers "were overwhelmed by a sense that torture was acceptable and that their victims were superfluous demons".

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<sup>3</sup>For more information, please refer to: <<http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2011/mar/21/us-army-kill-team-afghanistan-posed-pictures-murdered-civilians>>

<sup>4</sup>For information on the Taguba report please refer to this document: <[http://www.npr.org/iraq/2004/prison\\_abuse\\_report.pdf](http://www.npr.org/iraq/2004/prison_abuse_report.pdf)>



Moreover, Hollywood has had a long tradition of dehumanizing the Arab. Jack Shaheen (2008: XI) argues that Arabs “remain the most maligned group in the history of Hollywood,” ... and how malicious stereotypes of the Arabs have endured for more than a hundred years. Shaheen (2009: 8) remarks that since 1896 the Arab in film has predominately been “Public Enemy # 1 – brutal, heartless, uncivilized religious fanatics and money-mad cultural “others” bent on terrorizing civilized Westerners”. These images and stereotypes persist to this day. Such representations can partially justify the abuse that we saw in Abu Ghraib and Guantanamo. When Ken Davis, a US soldier, sought advice, “... on the rules of engagement on his first day as a gunner in Iraq, Ken Davis was told that “if it looks like the enemy, shoot it”. He elaborated that “everything looks like the enemy out here” (Kennedy 2007).

While in another incident,

On March 12, 2006, another Hadji Girl – fifteen-year-old Abeer Qasim Hamza – after weeks of being stalked and sexually harassed by U.S. soldiers at a military checkpoint in Mahmoudiyya, Iraq, faced an even uglier fate than that of the little sister in the Hadji Girl song [this song was published on YouTube, and the words invoke the killing of a young Iraqi girl and her brothers for fun]. The nine soldiers from the 502nd Infantry Regiment, part of the 4th Infantry Division, stormed Abeer’s house claiming to be looking for insurgents, and separated Abeer from her mother, father, and little sister. After repeatedly raping Abeer, the soldiers set her lower body on fire, shot the rest of her family and left. Abeer and her family were buried by relatives without a funeral. (Al Kadry and Witt 2009: 148).

In an interview with the *Washington Post*, Green said: “I went to Iraq to kill people” (Sengupta 2010). Green also adds: “it’s something I had been through a million times, in training for raiding houses. It was just eliminating targets” and according to him in Iraq “killing people is like squashing an ant” (Sengupta 2010). The targets were dispensable sub-humans. The abuse resembled a ritual of sacrifice in some instance; showing no remorse for their deeds, the ritualized torture inflicted on victimized prisoners resembled sacrificial rituals, as became evident in the photos, and Abu Ghraib prison and Guantanamo made such sacrifices possible. In addition, Tester (2005: 138) argues that the Abu Ghraib photographs expose perpetrators completely oblivious to the humiliation that they are causing to their victims, and namely because the prisoners are excluded from the civilized world, which functions on a Manichean order.

Creating prisons in occupied or neutral land allows for a place of exception to exist; in this place, the boundaries are clearly defined, those who are worthy of living and the others that are sacrificed for their sake, hence the indifference of the humiliation or even pain caused to the victims of torture. Nancy E. Snow (2009: 559)



argues that by making the prisoners wear uniforms as in the case of those in Guantanamo Bay, and hoods covering their faces, adds to the process of dehumanizing the individuals, stripping them of their identities; furthermore, eliminating eye contact with the victim essentially takes away any chance of portraying emotions or pain, as these black hoods mask the humanity of the figures. Tester (2005: 139) noted that from the beginning of the Iraqi invasion, the coalition forces were identified as actors fighting an invisible enemy that only became visible when dead. This also explains the reason for the numerous pictures of soldiers posing next to corpses. Sardonicly, to these soldiers, the only acceptable Arab or Moslem is a dead one. When the prisoners were compelled to masturbate in front of the eyes of the torturer, an erection becomes proof of further humiliation, and this becomes more effective especially when the subaltern is seen performing in the invisible Oriental space, and kept formally invisible through the masking of the eyes from those who are not given permission to see (Mirzoeff 2006: 25-6). One of the photos that was circulated widely in the news media showed Lynndie England pointing her fingers in gun-like fashion at the hooded prisoners, who were forced to masturbate, and with a cigarette hanging from her mouth, her lips were pressed in a sneering smile.<sup>5</sup> In another photo, England appeared holding a nude male Iraqi prisoner on a dog leash. (Snow 2009: 555) Nearly all the victims were hooded. Apel (2005: 92) argues that the hood not only disorients the victim but also "effaces their humanity for the perpetrator and more easily turns the subject into an object". Young (1995: 173) states that Colonialism begins by acts of violence, which it continually perpetuates, in an attempt to call forth an answer from the colonized; in this instance, however, the masking of the face and eyes does not demand a reaction from the victim, simply a surrender and an acknowledgement of humiliation and defeat.

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<sup>5</sup>The photo can be found in this site:  
<[http://axisoflogic.com/artman/publish/Article\\_63513.shtml](http://axisoflogic.com/artman/publish/Article_63513.shtml)>



*The Hooded Figure of Abu Ghraib*

The photo above depicts what has become known as “the hooded figure of Abu Ghraib”.<sup>6</sup> The hooded figure, to which some refer as a scarecrow, and who is seen barely balancing on a cardboard box, has become an iconic photo that now symbolizes the atrocities that took place in Abu Ghraib prison. The hooded figure with wires attached to his penis, fingers and toes, was falsely told that electric current was running through the wires and he had to maintain his balance to avoid being electrocuted. (Snow 2009: 555) The attire or the rag the hooded character is made to wear not only shows depravity but also resonates of a bygone era; his world is one of backwardness. The arms of the hooded figure are outstretched and as Steven C. Caton (2006: 120) remarks, “the symbol of the Christ figure is unmistakable in the images of prisoners pinioned from behind to jail bars or with arms outstretched and palms outward in the gesture of crucifixion”. Moreover, the hooded figure’s arms are welcoming even though positioned so the figure does not trip. Apel (2005: 91) sees in the mortified Christ-like an image that signals both abjection and surrender, “a modern emblem of martyrdom”. The hooded figure is Homo Sacer par excellence, banned and sacrificed. In a letter that was smuggled out of Abu Ghraib, believed to be written by Nour, an Iraqi woman prisoner, in which she recounted stories of rape and abuse against male and female prisoners, she wrote pleading that the prison is struck by bombs as they “are all prepared for martyrdom. Death is in the cause of freedom and is more precious than a life without honor or dignity” (Caton 2006: 120). They are all Homo Sacer, ready for sacrifice.

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<sup>6</sup>It is believed that the hooded man is Ali al Qaisi, who is currently living in Jordan.





Ever since the dissemination of the photos from both prisons in various media, abundant literature has been written. A lot of theory was propagated trying to understand the reasons for the extensive torture methods and the photos that were taken of them. Some attributed it to a few bad apples, emphasizing that this was not the standard practice but actions by an unguided few. Stjepan G. Mestrovic (2006: 5) questions:

How in the world could various handfuls of soldiers at different locations have become the architects of a pervasive policy of abuse? This contradiction is not resolved merely by pitting the government's rotten apple theory against facts that support what might be called a contaminated apple orchard theory.

The abuse itself was not confined to a few incidents or perpetuated by a few; instead it was a planned strategy and the soldiers were simply following orders. The abuse of the prisoners was made possible by the exception of the place and attributing to the Arab and/or Moslem prisoners the Homo Sacer status. The latter is justified by a psyche that has been, through the centuries, partly formed by a repertoire of images of a deviant Orient, which warrants if not condones such atrocities. In addition, colonialist or imperialist practices inscribe themselves through violence that is exercised against land and people in order to subject them to complete control, through a process of dehumanization and degradation (Young 1995: 173).

#### THE ORIENT: A GROUP FANTASY OF LICENTIOUSNESS

The Orient and the Arab world in particular, in the Western psyche, is a "living tableau of queerness" in which deviant characters dwell (Said 1995: 103). Given that the kind of torture we saw in Abu Ghraib and Guantanamo essentially resorted to sexual acts of perversion further emphasizes this conviction of the east as the place in which sexual abnormality and puritanical behavior exist side by side; the perceived repressed sexuality and modesty had to be violated while the alleged sexual perversion had to be acted upon to satisfy the images of the fantastical east. Young (1995: 97) argues that since the nineteenth century the link between race and sex were developed, a link that is derived from "cultural stereotypes in which blackness [For the sake of argument, black could be seen here as any color that is not the European white]<sup>7</sup> evokes an attractive, but dangerous, sexuality, as apparently abundant,

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<sup>7</sup>Young (1995: 101) states: "The monogenetic argument was that the different human races were descended from a single source, as it is suggested in the Biblical account, in which case racial difference was explained through the thesis of degeneration. This meant that the pure origin of man



limitless, but threatening, fertility". Moreover, fantasy evolves from this desire. Likewise, this world of fantasy has to be brought under control by stressing its backwardness and pretending that the colonialist's mission is to bring it under a civilized order, hence the sadistic practices on the prisoners. In *Orientalism*, Said (1995: 63) argues that the oriental stage at once evokes images of a fabulously rich world of ancient civilizations as well as monsters and uncontrolled desires, a repertoire of images that nourished the European imagination. This licentiousness can only be enacted in the place of exception. The prison's environment provided the site in which this deviousness can be played out and imagination exercised; the prison is the place, which is hidden from the world, a place of exception, in which sexual fantasies can be realized. The Orient is at once a place of prophets, demons, and sexual perverts. Said (1995: 108) states: "These contemporary Orientalist attitudes flood the press and the popular mind. Arabs, for example, are thought of as camel-riding, terroristic, hook-nosed, venal lechers whose undeserved wealth is an affront to real civilization". These beliefs, albeit weak excuses, can be used to justify the kind of torture that was inflicted on the prisoners. Furthermore, subjecting the prisoners to sexually deviant forms of torture is a way of avenging the Orient, which is the place that is supposed to harbour such practices. In addition, these fantasies have long existed in the minds of Westerners, and the East is the perfect place to enact them.

In *Anti-Oedipus*, Felix Guattari and Gilles Deleuze (2004: 32) argue that perversion is but an extension of a suppressed Oedipus complex, which is derived from a group fantasy rather than an individual's desire. In addition, they add, "desire is not bolstered by needs, but rather the contrary: needs are derived from desire: they are counterproducts within the real that desire produces" (Guattari and Deleuze 2004: 28). Moreover, according to Guattari and Deleuze (2004: 320) fantasy is nearly always one that involves a whole group. In this case, partaking in and sharing the atrocities by either being there or by later sharing the photos with colleagues are some of the enactments of this group fantasy. Guattari and Deleuze (2004: 195) also argue:

Oedipus is indeed a limit or a displaced represented, but precisely in such a way that each member of the group is always on this side of or beyond, without ever occupying the position ... It is colonization that causes Oedipus to exist, but an Oedipus that is taken for what it is, a pure oppression, inasmuch as it assumes that these savages are deprived of the control over their own social production.

In the confines of Abu Ghraib and Guantanamo, individual soldiers were not only able to enact this group fantasy but also deprive the "savages" of the control of their social

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was the white male – that universal mean and measure of all things – and that all other forms were a deterioration from this ideal, as a result of gender or geography, or both".



production. Furthermore, this deprivation had to be documented through photographs, which the group could share, stressing that it is indeed a group fantasy, in which all can indulge. Young (1995: 171) argues that the trapped flow of desire, stemming from a repressive social structure can potentially emerge in a colonial situation, which allows it to exist as a normal social experience.

The many statements given by the US army soldiers either to the media or during questioning have not only demonstrated that they did not feel any remorse but also were not aware that they were acting outside the accepted norms of humanity. To them, these were not people but sub-humans worthy of being killed. The torture methods employed in Abu Ghraib were in some ways modes of reconstructing the colonized subject into the oriental fantasy of the colonizer, and reshaping the subject into the perceived stereotypes that such an individual should be, rewriting the individual in a new geographical sphere and into the perceived collective consciousness of the torturer. Moreover, the place of exception is also the permissible place to act upon repressed desires.

#### THE DEVIANT EAST REPLAYED

It is not perchance that sodomy was used as one of the most practiced forms of torture in Abu Ghraib. Nicholas Mirzoeff (2006: 35) does not see sodomy in this case as merely a deviance stemming from the enemy but rather a reaffirmation of an old belief in Western discourse that Moslems are sodomites. Visual documentation of the brutal sexual acts that occurred in Abu Ghraib becomes a necessity; it at once allows for a keyhole kind of enjoyment resonating with pornography and the triumph of the imperialist body over the subaltern. Mirzoeff (2006: 26) argues “that the imperial body is best represented pornographically and understands itself as acting within pornographic scenarios of power”. The subaltern has no choice but to perform in this dictate of power; the body performs to become dehumanized. Drawing on another photograph, Mirzoeff (2006: 28) adds:

The presence in one photograph of Specialists Charles Graner and England posing as a dating couple behind a sodomitical pile of prisoners is a trophy not of deviance, but of the assertion of the imperial body, necessarily straight and white, over the confused sodomitical mass of the embodied spectacle that is the object of empire.

The spectacle helps in celebrating the colonial or empirical desire, “the fecund image [of the Easterner, which is a result of] “the prolific fantasies of the Westerner” (Young 1995: 98). However, the photos were supposed to be shared within the



confines of the place of exception; they were not intended to be disseminated to the various media outlets. Apel (2005: 92) notes:

Abu Ghraib, compact/discs, videos, and computer files of digital images performed the role of the postcards, and were meant to circulate only within the community of American military personnel, their families, and friends. The pictures established the right of the soldiers to "look" at the nude and brutalized bodies of their victims, even to pose with corpses, while effacing the look of the prisoners through hooding and other forms of degradation [and that] the photos were meant to add to the shaming as well as provide souvenirs. The thrills of sexualized violence became less veiled and more explicit ... to the point where photographs and videos of torture and the sexual abuse of prisoners were interleaved with images of American soldiers having sex with each other.

The erotic fantasy of the shameless east became real and provided the stimuli for sexual activity between US soldiers and/or army reserves. The photographs at once sardonically provided a glance into the allegedly secret yet deviant world of the Orient and confirmed the stereotypes; the world is unveiled for the select few when desired. The individual soldiers provided the peep show for their colleagues to enjoy. Apel (2005: 92) adds, "the pornographic function of the torture scenarios serves a larger political function". Constructing Arabs and Moslems as "an undifferentiated mass," is part of a dehumanizing process administered en masse and hence makes the pleasure of causing intense pain more rewarding. (Apel 2005: 92) The soldiers commanded the spectacle, and the show had to conform to the images of the licentious east. Yet, in their minds, this world of the east has to be vanquished. Sexuality was used to humiliate, subordinate, and provide the spectacle. The Arab and/or Moslem inmates had to perform, had to be stripped in front of their spectators. The veil that is a symbol of modesty, and usually associated with the Moslem East, is symbolically removed when the victims are forced to strip naked as they stand bare performing singularly or in groups in front of the spectators, extensions of the colonizers' desiring machine, "with its unlimited appetite for territorial expansion" (Young 1995: 98). There were also cases of rape against the female prisoners, which were not documented until the letter by Nour, which I mentioned earlier, was smuggled outside of the prison and more recently when some of the former inmates testified.

Mirzoeff (2006: 27) adds, "The secret of torture at Abu Ghraib was in this sense a representation of the very erotics of global power, in which only certain actors have permission to look and to create what is to be seen". The photos that were taken were for the perpetrators' enjoyment, and were never meant to be circulated through the media. Essentially, they were taken as proof of this super power's ability to degrade the other. Arshin Adib-Moghaddam (2007: 25) argues that such acts were not merely



to humiliate the enemy of a country that one has been habituated to hate but is a result of a "licentious power ... that is motivated by desire, power that it is total in its ambition, the type of power that feminizes its object in order to violate her". Feminizing the male is a tactic that is not only used to humiliate the individual but is also employed to render the person a non-person; it is a priori a "sadistic imperative ... accompanied by the requirement of a masochistic submission by the subordinated, objectified woman" (Young: 1995: 108). In the Arab culture, which is basically patriarchal, and in which masculine and feminine roles are defined and expected, feminizing the male is considered extremely humiliating. These tactics were used in order that confessions were coerced from the victims, or what the US army called softening the prisoner. Raping the females was another way of humiliating the males, as they felt helplessness in protecting the female, especially in a culture when family honor is tied to the female.<sup>8</sup> The photos were namely taken for two reasons, visual documentation of the 'trophies' earned by the soldiers, which could be used for bragging amongst themselves, and as a weapon that could be employed against the prisoners by threatening to expose the photos to their families or society. Furthermore, "This belief illuminates the fact that the exercise of such sadism and humiliation is a fundamentally political act. The viewer [and in this case the one granted the privilege to look] is meant to identify with the proud torturers in the context of the defense of a political and cultural hierarchy" (Apel 2005: 89). Young (1995: 94) argues that the white Western European male is at the top while everyone else exists on a hierarchal scale. Race has been defined through gender difference and "a racial hierarchy was established on the basis of a cultural pecking order, with those who had most civilization at the top, and those who were considered to have none – 'primitives' – at the bottom ... European culture and now the US in its stead, given its hegemony, defined itself by placing itself at the top of a scale against which all other societies, or groups within society, were judged" (Young 1995: 94). Feminizing and abusing the male, abusing and objectifying the women, are double-subordination of a race, to ensure that the humiliation of the victims is total.

## CONCLUSION

On April 18<sup>th</sup>, 2012, *The Los Angeles Times* published eighteen photos of US soldiers from the 82nd airborne division posing with dead bodies and body parts in Afghanistan (Latimes.com 2012). The article described the paratroopers' actions as

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<sup>8</sup>The Taguba report confirmed Nour's letter, stating that was in it was accurate. After she was released from prison, there was no trace of Nour. It was believed that she became pregnant by one of the US soldiers, which probably brought shame on her family. It is likely that she was killed.



macabre as they grinned whilst inspecting the corpses and the body parts of the dead. This reasserts that the Arab or in this case the Moslem can only be visible if dead. Understandably, some of these soldiers have lost some of their comrades, but the insistence of being photographed near corpses and displaying the body parts of the dead enemy is akin to someone's souvenir collection from an exotic land that one can hold onto as a confirmation of having been at the place. The body parts are emblems of trophies gained from the other's vanquished body, a body that is not fully human and is now objectified into its parts. The torture methods, which we have seen in Abu Ghraib and Guantanamo, on the other hand, are not the acts of a few disturbed soldiers exercised over an objectified body but a sanctioned form of torture partially justified by a repertoire of images of the Orient as a place of deviance and evil, and a place in which the suppressed colonial desire can be enacted.

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