

Guantánamo: The Amen Temple of Empire

by

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ABSTRACT

Guantánamo: The Amen Temple of Empire connects the fetishization of the trauma of nine/eleven with the co-constitution of subjects at Guantánamo—that of the contained Muslim terrorist prisoner silhouetted against the ideal nationalistic military body—circulated as ‘afterimages’ that carry ideological narratives about U.S. Empire. These narratives in turn religiously and racially charge the new normative practices of the security state and its historically haunted symbolic order. As individuals with complex subjectivities, the prisoners and guards are, of course, not reducible to the standardizing imprimatur of the state or its narratives. Despite the circulation of these ‘afterimages’ as fixed currency, the prisoners and guards produce their own metanarratives, through their para-ethnographic accounts of containment and of self. From within the panopticon of the prison, they seek sight lines, and gaze back at the state. This dissertation is thus a meditation on US militarism, violence, torture, race, and carceral practices, revealed thematically through metaphors of hungry ghosts, nature, journey and death, liminality, time, space, community, and salvage. Based on a multi-sited, empirical and imaginary ethnography, as well as textual and discourse analysis, I draw on the writing and testimony of prisoners, and military and intelligence personnel, whom I consider insightful para-ethnographers of the haunting valence of this fetishized historical event.

DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to my mother and my father-to their young selves and to their rebirthed selves-because their journeys toward grace taught and continue to teach me; to my siblings, Robert, Michael, Jill, Denise, and Aretha, and the histories we inhabit; and my nieces and nephews: Brandon, Connor, Samantha, Faith, Alec and Emily who are full of life and laughter. To my children, who light this world: Rory, Brooke, Caitlin, and Mackenzie, and to the grands, who swell my heart: Cadan and Delaney, I am joyfully indebted. And to Marco, my compadre and novio throughout this academic and life journey, endless gratitude for reminding me daily that what matters is not the matter, but the making and being.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
LIST OF FIGURES.....	vii
CHAPTER	
1 INTRODUCTION: OUR HUNGRY GHOSTS	1
The Wisdom of the Haunting	4
Ash	12
Cairns and Theoretical Signposts.....	17
Fetish.....	19
Code breaking the Crypto.....	27
Ethnographic Assemblages.....	36
The Law of (the) Good Land.....	47
2 AT SEA	50
Against the Current.....	61
My Rivers Tilt	95
3 RIHLA AND THE SENSORIUM OF THE HUMAN VESSEL.....	101
Fixity	117
What of Silence and Unethical Soundscapes.....	120
Locating Self vs. Being Located.....	122
How to be Outside of Time and Place.....	129
A Terrible Timelessness.....	133
How Reverberations Travel.....	136

CHAPTER	Page
4	CONTAINERS 139
	Inside the Sea Cans150
	Containers, Containment, Containerization 158
	Excremental Assault.....165
	Contamination.....172
	Sisyphean Tasks.....174
5	UMMAH AND THE GESTURING OF CIVILIZATION..... 176
	Ummah, Nation, Community180
	Gesturing Civilization.....190
6	AL BARZAKH..... 209
7	SALVAGE 225
	Staging Ground.....235
	Dramas of War, Being, and the Body..... 239
8	BAD DUDES AND IDEOLOGICAL PRODUCTION 244
	Guantánamo 2.0 248
	Who is Audience?.....256
	Water and Fire.....256
	REFERENCES267

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure	Page
1. Columbus Marker Guantanamo	53
2. McKinley-Roosevelt Campaign Poster	60
3. Guantánamo Cartoon	80
4. Naval Chapel Stained Glass Window.....	109
5. Veterans Village.....	148
6. 9/11 Relic.....	229

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION: OUR HUNGRY GHOSTS

Hyperobjects leave footprints everywhere, like the invisible goddess Astraea, the goddess of justice, 'forever departing from this world.'

Timothy Morton, *Hyperobjects*

Philosopher Slavoj Žižek says of “the Event” and the disproportionate response that follows, “[I]t’s not just that the symbolic order is all of a sudden fully here - there was nothing, and moments later it is all here - but there is nothing and then all of a sudden, it is as if the symbolic order was always-already here, as if there was never a time without it.”¹ The requisite and vital work of scholars in the humanities during this critical time, and perhaps that means at all times, is to parse how this symbolic order is generated and reproduced, to recognize and resist structures and ideologies that harm, and to claim and stake an expansive space for doing so. Guantánamo is a key site in the symbolic order that has been structured by the United States in the twenty-first century, and therefore a crucial enterprise to examine in historical context and as a contemporary *happening*.

This project connects the fetishization of the trauma of *nine/eleven* with the co-constitution of subjects at Guantánamo—that of the Muslim terrorist prisoner and that of the U.S. *service* member—contained and offered up for consumption to produce enabling ideological narratives about U.S. Empire that

¹ Slavoj Žižek, *The Event: A Philosophical Journey Through a Concept*, (Brooklyn: Melville House, 2014), 135.

in turn religiously and racially *charge* the new normative practices of the security state and its historically *haunted* and *shocking* symbolic order unfolding at light speed. The prisoners and guards are, of course, individuals with complex subjectivities, not reducible to the standardizing imprimatur of the state or its narratives about them. Though the ‘after-images’ that are circulated are a fixed currency, the human beings are not; within the meta-narrative, the prisoners and guards are para-ethnographers who speak of containment and of self. And from within the panopticon of the prison, the prisoners and guards have sight lines, and gaze back at the state.

Guantánamo, the prison, a spatial project of the neoliberal “Global War on Terror,” was designed to be a highly visible—though never transparent—curated performance through which the Muslim terrorist subject and imaginary could be constituted, encountered, subdued, brokered, and mastered, against the idealized (and idolized) uni-formed military body. The iconic orange jumpsuits that anonymized and collapsed the individual identities of prisoners into the politically useful category of terrorists provided a visual center for the world’s gaze after the event that became *nine/eleven*.

The prison was and is instrumental as a space where particular religiously and racially inflected/infected bodies are co-constituted, ideal American religious military *servants* sketched against dark dangerous Muslim terrorists. The two populations are unambiguously silhouetted in light and darkness that over-inscribes and re-animates deeply racialized American mythologies about innocence and guilt. Guantánamo sings the song of American Exceptionalism to

the tune of Manifest Destiny. It is a space where individuals are consigned to social death, without charge, trial, or sentence, a normalization that provided a segue to the routine commission of extrajudicial murder of non-citizens and citizens by the US government. Guantánamo prison issues a heartfelt amen to American empire.² Like all amens, it signals affirmation and implies a covenant. The ongoing operation of Guantánamo prison is an affirmation of the *Global War on Terror* and a promise that the United States government can and will continue to flaunt international human rights law, and to operate within its deliberately cracked frames. But more than that- it is a site where bodies are inscribed for consumption; the circulation of their after-images signals back to Guantánamo, the ultimate reference point and invocation when there are demands for the social death of the religious/racial/political or otherwise transgressive stranger. And as the amen temple, it sanctifies the *mission* of U.S. Empire at home and abroad.

² Sixteen year old, Abdulrahman al-Awlaki was killed in a drone strike in 2011, along with his teenage cousin. His father, also a U.S. citizen, was killed in a drone strike two weeks earlier. A third U.S. citizen, Samir Khan, was also killed. The Center for Constitutional Rights filed a case on behalf of the Khan and Al-Aulaqi (alternate transliteration) families. The killings were extrajudicial; none of the three had been charged with a crime. In the first month of the Trump administration, another child from the family, 8 year old Nawar al-Awlaki, was shot in the neck by U.S. Navy Seals in Yemen, and died. See: "Al-Aulaqi v. Panetta," Center for Constitutional Rights. <https://ccrjustice.org/home/what-we-do/our-cases/al-aulaqi-v-panetta>, see also: Glenn Greenwald, *The Intercept*, Jan 30, 2017. <https://theintercept.com/2017/01/30/obama-killed-a-16-year-old-american-in-yemen-trump-just-killed-his-8-year-old-sister/>

The wisdom of the haunting

This project is haunted by my father's ghost. I could choose to banish or bracket his ghost from the reader's view; it would be academically sound/safe practice. For a long time, I was committed to doing just that—his presence was carefully elided. My writing became increasingly remote and technical until even I did not recognize the phrases as my own. But the silences...the silences were Cage-y, and the cropped fragments, meaningful lodestones. I wondered if my own redactions were stunting my writing, a manifestation of my own traumatisation. The problem I faced was that my father—in life, death, and after— was the signpost that always pointed me toward this work, the specter that animated the journey, and the presence that stubbornly seeped through the crevices. It began to feel dishonest and limiting to throw holy water and to use sharp scissors and to somehow think I could strike an authentic voice that did not acknowledge how much the life, violence, madness, and death of my soldier father and his experiences with war informed my thinking. I am the daughter of a Vietnam War veteran who brought the war into my consciousness when he left for training the year I turned six and brought the violence and trauma of war home when he returned nearly two years later.

The raw happenings and subjects that animated my childhood revolved around the carnivore/val of fire, war, race, drugs, alcohol, ritualized abuse and abandonment. Amid the realities of smoke, slurs, and small bruised bodies—and a mother's eight-year absence—a particular, if abstract, fascination was electrocution. Before and after the war, my father worked as a lineman for PP&L,

Pennsylvania Power and Light. My grandmother emphasized often that we should not upset our father because his work was dangerous. Post-Vietnam, my brothers and I strove not to upset him, because *he* was dangerous, but I was not incurious about the stories of danger my grandmother hinted at, and sometimes our father would tell us stories of electricity and danger and death that could be ours if we were foolish enough to provide ample conduction, or tautly reference the death that danced and buzzed near him during his war and work days. We had seen/not seen the slide images of Vietnam projected on the screen in our living room, and watched as the slide carousels were hidden away, taking on sacred status in our home as relics that were dangerous, forbidden, and tempting, ensconced in a stack of reliquary Kodak boxes marked by father's hand and stored in his bedroom closet next to his rifles.³ As careful-one might say compulsive-as I became to dry my hands before touching a light switch, to keep appliances at some distance from water, or to unplug the toaster before fishing out smoking, inaccessible toast, I was particularly taken with the idea that a current could seize hold of a body, and that no amount of personal struggle could result in liberation. Only with the intervention of another body willing to put itself at comparable risk could the current be interrupted. I practiced many times how I might launch my very self at one of my younger siblings to free them from

³ The not/seen aspect of the slides both when we watched them ceremonially, and when the slides were secreted away in the closet, mapped onto to the pain of our father's absence and the fear of his presence. We studied the slides for secret and dangerous knowledge; they held death, fire, and suffering. The images of war carried our father's experiences, and we were hungry to know this place called Vietnam and this violence called war that he traveled to and returned home with inside him.

the electrical current of white rage that was my post-war father. It remained a practiced fantasy; I could neither speak nor launch. When he died, my brothers burned the information into their very bodies. For what I could not do for them with my child's physical body, I hope to do for others through practiced and reasoned language, not in the guise of my childhood cape, but as a steady and conscientious disrupter of currents of hate which paralyze both the extollers and those who become mesmerized by, or subject to the stupefying currents of ignorance. What lies within, I continue to wonder. What makes the currency possible? What invites it? And what of conduction?

Much of the research material that surrounds me as I write features absence; I would go so far as to say that absence is the hallmark challenge and defining characteristic of this project. Broad strokes of negating marker eliminated names, dates, actions, locations from all manner of evidence and testimony locked in closets, disappeared, guarded by rifles. One of the camps at Guantánamo was itself called "No," as if no-where and no-thing. Another Camp X-Ray, an implied visibility that reduced man to his bones, absenting soft flesh and organs. And that was only when the disappearances left some trace that made the absence perceptible; more often, they did not. What was I denying by intentionally participating in that absenting? And what did that denial mean, beyond an evident sense of compliance with academic mores that were self-imposed? I thought long about the denial and began to see how my omissions of violence and madness in my familial history (origin story) were intimately bound up in this country's perpetual denial of its own violence, anxieties, alienation, and

madness. “Erasures of present history” as I heard Cathy Caruth express as a concern in her Cambridge talk, “After the End: Psychoanalysis in the Ashes of History,” a phenomenon that shares kinship with what James E. Young refers to as our amnesiac spaces, histories held in concrete memorials that are matter, but do not matter or remember, until we come to them and commit to know and to remember.⁴ Young also considers that when one enters spaces that engage horror, “detached reflection” is “neither possible” nor “desirable,” the self has to come, too.⁵ It is pretense to pretend otherwise.

In one of my father’s most fragile periods, he bent his body, head into hands, as he repeated thousands of times, “I’m afraid, I’m afraid, I’m afraid.” Yes, me too, I spoke-through the muted grammar of silence. My once hard muscled father whose temper and violence could electrify a room lived in a constant state of anxiety and psychosis. When the violence burned away from his being, there was only fear left to speak from his core, “I’m afraid, I’m afraid, I’m afraid.” When I would ask what he was afraid of, thinking—again and again I slipped into the hapless practice of rational engagement—that summoning an object of fear would help point to solutions, he answered, “everything.” And his answer was—in the main—true. His fears were bottomless, extra-temporal, existential, and yet hung

⁴ Cathy Caruth, “After the End, Psychoanalysis in the Ashes of History,” (Lecture) Cambridge University, March 10, 2011. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1REBql6hD1A> Caruth gave the keynote address for the “Memory and CounterMemory: Memorialization of an Open Future” Research Symposium at ASU in 2011.

⁵ James E. Young, *The Texture of Memory*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993), xii.

on the camouflage which mundane concerns provided. His fears were excruciating, irrational, misdirected, and deeply American.⁶

The electric meter that hung on the side of his Pennsylvania row home had been hit by a wide truck, driving through the too narrow side-alley some years ago. The meter was replaced the same day. He worked for the electric company and called a crew himself. But now years later, he fretted about the installation. He obsessed about the connections, endlessly considering the circuitry. He anticipated flames. He worried until bills arrived safely each month. He worried that he hadn't been charged correctly. Perhaps he owed more. It took a long time to write a check and to place it inside the envelope, but once we did, slowly step-by-step together, he worried that he might have forgotten to sign the check. If I opened the envelope to show him that it was signed, he would ask if the amount was right, and the amount would have to be compared again to the bill. If an hour later, we managed to finally mail the bill, from the moment the envelope passed through the slot, he would obsess that we had forgotten a stamp, or that it needed more postage, or that the address was wrong, or that the bill would get lost, or that someone at the company would make a mistake and not record it. For every mechanism I invented to soothe him, he had a work around. Every scenario he could conceive for an imperfect resolution for the bill due to actually be paid and processed would beat on his consciousness (and conscience) like a punishing

⁶ There are a number of works on anxiety, alienation and fear within the American psyche, see Barry Glassner, *Culture of Fear*, (New York: Basic, 2009), Roger Hart's work on the shifting geographies of childhood, and Peter Stearns, *American Fear: The Causes and Consequences of High Anxiety*, (New York: Routledge, 2006).

drum. There was no salve or respite for what he owed. And what he owed could not be named.

In 2013, Esperanza Spalding wrote and performed a song she hoped would be “proactive, creative and productive,” calling for the closure of Guantánamo prison.⁷ She calls the song “We are America.” The video performance includes cameos by Savion Glover, Janelle Monae, Stevie Wonder, and Harry Belafonte.⁸ The song’s lyrical strength lies in its refrain, “we are American, in our America, we don’t stand for this. In our America, we take a stand for this.” Spalding’s lyrics echoed the outrage of many in the United States in the 21st century, who claimed—and to be clear, I claimed with them— “this is not who we are” with regard to endless war, torture, incarceration, deeply rooted racism, xenophobia, and ever-deepening inequality, as anxiety and alienation were projected/redirected onto transgressive bodies crossing borders of all kinds. The perceived threat posed was too ambiguous, too large to confront.

Anxieties about global issues often nest the local invisibly layered like the deceptive hollows of a matryoshka.⁹ “As Arif Dirlik argues (Dirlik 1998, 2000),

⁷ Esperanza Spalding “Esperanza Spalding: Guantánamo doesn’t represent ‘Our America,’” Interview on Tell Me More, *NPR*. November 22, 2013. <https://www.npr.org/2013/11/22/246617031/esperanza-spalding-guantanamo-is-not-our-america>

⁸ Edna Gunderson, “Esperanza Spalding song, video call for Gitmo Closure,” *USA Today*. November 18, 2013. <http://www.usatoday.com/story/life/music/2013/11/18/esperanza-spalding-we-are-america-calls-for-gitmo-closure/3618669/>

⁹ Alexander Klose references the Matryoshka Principle in his book, *The Container Principle*, as a metaphor and model that provides structural imaginaries for

this asymmetry is most evident in discourses of globalization, where the global is often equated with space, capital, history and agency, and the local with place, labor, and tradition.”¹⁰ From the right in the United States, one can read a fear of a double displacement, one localized, the other globalized...a fear that the default white racial frame which grants implicit societal positioning is disappearing, good jobs have gone elsewhere, U.S. social/moral mores are shifting, the wolves are at the door, and all this is nested within a foreboding that the U.S. is in decline, with the result that these huge and hovering anxieties are addressed through exerting dominance and control in discernible arenas.

Women’s bodies, LGBTQ bodies, bodies of color must be controlled and that borders of all kinds must be protected/defended, from national borders to the bounds of unruly voices to the thresholds of homes, to even one’s own critical distance—a personal inviolate space, as in the Florida “Stand your ground” law. Some families in Morocco use the story of a wolf at the door to manage unruly children; here it is grown men and women who are mediating their own anxieties by the projection of ‘wolves’ at every turn. These fears can be managed in a way that the looming fears about changes to circumstance cannot—through violence, linguistic, legal, judicial, virtual, or materially realized in the form of police swat

programming, business and institutional models, and other design thinking, but it is a widely used metaphor in organizational, and imaginative, thinking. See 68-69.

¹⁰ Arturo Escobar, “Culture sits in places: reflections on globalism and subaltern strategies of localization,” *Political Geography* 20 2001 (139-174), 141.
http://www.unc.edu/~aescobar/text/eng/escobar_culture_sits_in_places.pdf

teams, Homeland Security, airport scanners and pat-downs, home security systems and personal weapons.

And of course, 2016 saw Colin Kaepernick refusing to stand for those things about America which he could not stand: the killing of brown and black bodies by agents of the state. For taking a stand by taking a knee, a humbling position of prayerful conscience, Kaepernick, was excoriated by conservative sectors of white America. Kaepernick was threatening not because of his bodily motion of taking a knee; the danger was that he and his action had become a magical metonym that conjured acts of resistance and truth telling. More terrifying than Kaepernick, was the breach he tore and the new opening for resistance. The more I research and write and watch political events unfold, the more deeply I believe this is who we are, this is America, our America, and there are forces that want to compel us to ‘stand for this.’ It is this compulsion to stand and be grateful in this face of one’s own subordination (or stigmatizing erasure, as in the case of the AIDs crisis) that ‘sings’ back to America through the character of Belize in Kushner’s *Angels in America*:

The white cracker who wrote the national anthem knew what he was doing. He set the word ‘free’ to a note so high nobody can reach it. That was deliberate. Nothing on earth sounds less like freedom to me. You come over to room 1013 over at the hospital, I’ll show you America. Terminal, crazy and mean.¹¹

How could it be otherwise, given our sublimated foundational histories? But also, how can it be otherwise? How might it be otherwise?

¹¹ Tony Kushner, *Angels in America: Perestroika* Act 4, Scene 3, (New York: Theatre Communications Group, 2006), 228.

Ash

I first observed the offerings to hungry ghosts while walking through the streets of Singapore with a friend. Her Malay and Hadhrami Muslim background cast her as a minority in the Chinese dominated culture of Singapore. The *kampungs* of her parents' childhood had been razed, and the history of her indigenous ancestors systematically erased and overwritten. Though the Festival of the Hungry Ghosts was a Buddhist/Daoist celebration, the idea of unsettled ghosts that return to haunt the living played on her sympathetic and poetic imagination and my own. In Singapore (and throughout Asia) effigies of consumer goods are purchased, offered, and burned to ash. I thought about the staff effigies of the grand buildings of European empire that had gone to ash during and after the Columbian Exposition and its glistening White City and what that signaled long term for American Empire, cravings, fetish, emptiness, and impermanence.

It is not just the ghost of my father that haunts, nor only the hungry ghosts of Singapore (and Chicago) that animate my sympathetic imagination. It is the way in which the specter of Guantánamo haunts US discourse and is so deeply entwined in its history. I realize that I am sensitized because of this sustained focus, but my own attunement brings the blunted normalization of the prison into sharp relief. I set up a Google Alert for "Guantánamo" in May of 2012 and have received and read thousands of digests with my daily morning coffee. The prison is ever a part of my day, a subject pursued with intention, but Guantánamo often catches me off guard, referenced precisely when I step away to

breathe, and the messages come hard in that space with *takes* that are casually comic, careless, blithe, and/or explicitly weaponized.

Guantánamo is so often a hungry ghost in the mirror of US Empire. I would suggest to readers a visit to Ian Alan Paul's *Guantánamo Museum of Art and History* to backdrop this work, but like so much of what swirls around Guantánamo and its contemporary history, the museum itself is crypto-fictive and virtual, a truth telling project of critical imagination hosted only in cyber space.¹² The museum calls for "collectively remembering a passed future."¹³ In this endeavor, the museum accomplishes something that Cage wrote plainly rather than excised: "Hearing. Deafness...well..."¹⁴ Or seeing. Blindness...well. Or reading. Redaction...well.¹⁵

In approaching this work, I listened for silences, read the redactions, and remained attuned to the ghosts as I looked for how religious subjectivities were constituted within Guantánamo and in discourses about Guantánamo, with deep interest in 'how' objects, rituals, and narratives meant. Throughout, I consider religion as an expansive category encompassing the civil (Christian inflected) religion of state and military that feature so prominently in the U.S. project of

¹² The Guantánamo Bay Museum of Art and History. Website. <http://www.guantanamobaymuseum.org>

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ John Cage, *Silence: Lectures and Writing*, (Hanover, N.H.: Wesleyan, 1973), 216.

¹⁵ I realize this may be taken for the diminishing language of ableism. It is not meant as such. It is meant to disrupt and displace notions of how we are abled or disabled. If I don't manage to do that well in this project, then I need to rethink or reshape the language.

empire. I analyze the presence of beliefs and sustaining practices as sources of identity and reflections of worldview, but also of strength and dignity, communal bonds, sites of resistance or absolution, means to punctuate the days, and as mechanisms for structuring the experience of the prison environment and the subjectivity of others within the camp. The project places the meaning making practices of the prisoners and guards at Guantánamo within larger and more complex frames of belonging. This research fills a niche by addressing how religious understandings inform experiences, attitudes, and relationships within the camp, and how those forms of knowledge (and knowledge production) circulate and map more broadly. In other words, it considers how the excess of Guantánamo and its meanings seep beyond its geography and spill over its nomenclature.¹⁶ The project claims double consciousness as the focus shifts between the discrete space of the prison and the individual subjectivities and experiences contained within, and the reverberations of the prison beyond its borders. Guantánamo is freighted with meanings, and it is critical to advance scholarship that tugs at the density of organizational assemblages while centering the human individuals contained within the logic of the apparatus.

I knew the work was important when I began the project, but it has become increasingly urgent in the current geo-political landscape. My own thinking has changed dramatically over the years spent thinking through the meaning of this camp and its particular work. In the early years of the research, I

¹⁶ Thomas Blaum Hansen and Finn Stepputat, *Sovereign Bodies: Citizens, Migrants and States in the Postcolonial World*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005).

consistently read Guantánamo as an anomaly, that could be protested in isolation, something apart, developed in a state of exception; the further I progressed with the project, the weaker that organizing principle became for me. A haunting and haunted space, Guantánamo echoes past horrors and gestures future atrocities.

I situate myself uniquely as a scholar of contemporary Islam, complemented by a strong interest and background in Post-Holocaust ethics and memory studies. These strengths are nested within dual competencies in the study of literature and the history of empire and nation. Though my work emanates from a concern for fellow human beings, their status and rights, and our collective future, I concur with Yale University Professor of Law Muneer Ahmed when he emphasizes that though Guantánamo is often placed in the human rights frame, the framing is problematic. He argues:

Guantánamo has been a project of dehumanization, in the literal sense; it has sought to expel the prisoners—consistently referred to as ‘terrorists’—from our shared understanding of what it means to be human, so as to permit, if not to necessitate, physical and mental treatment (albeit in the context of interrogation) abhorrent to human beings. This has been accomplished through three forms of erasure of the human: cultural erasure through the creation of a terrorist narrative; legal erasure through formalistic legerdemain; and physical erasure through torture.¹⁷

The logics and language of human rights and human rights law require a transaction that I cannot broker, and consciously choose not to trade with, in my approach. Though this work shares concerns and sympathies with that literature,

¹⁷ Muneer I. Ahmed. “Resisting Guantanamo: Rights at the Brink of Civilization,” *Northwestern University Law Review* Vol. 103, No. 4: 1687 retrieved from: <http://www.law.northwestern.edu/lawreview/v103/n4/1683/LR103n4Ahmad.pdf>

it lies adjacent. I have the greatest respect for the work the language of Human Rights (and International Humanitarian Law) is meant to do, but this is accompanied by a deep frustration with its limited agency and application in addressing exceptional and extrajudicial violence deployed by the United States. This became even clearer to me as I made several forays into the study of law as a layperson. I participated in a three-day intensive workshop offered jointly by the ASU School of Law and International Committee of the Red Cross, earned certificates through Catholic Legal Immigration Network (CLINIC) first in the fundamentals of immigration law and later in comprehensive immigration law, and am a trained legal observer. In London, I spoke at a Parliamentary Meeting on behalf of the last British resident to be held at Guantánamo, and attended other Parliamentary meetings while in London, including a discussion led by William Schabas on the utility and limitations of the International Criminal Court established through the Rome Statute; African leaders who commit genocide, war crimes, and other crimes against humanity stand to be prosecuted, and leaders of Western countries who commit war crimes do not, especially if, as in the case of the United States, the country does not ratify the agreement.¹⁸ This does not signal a turning away from the legal mechanisms meant to protect life and human dignity, but rather recognition that the legal coding is perceived as disingenuous by much of the rest of the world, and that I find the critique fair and true, in the main. So often during these forays into the legal mechanisms, I heard the voice of Swift and his critique that “Laws are like cobwebs that may catch small flies,

¹⁸ Of the eleven investigations into crimes, ten are directed to African nations.

but let wasps and hornets through.”¹⁹ Swift’s observation lies juxtaposed with a memory of sitting next to a Jain scholar at a panel in Bangladesh. As she recited a long poem as her gift to us, the panel, she covered her mouth with a thin white cloth to ensure that she would not accidentally breath in and swallow even the smallest creature. Not to rarify, but in that moment, in the words of Guantánamo prisoner/poet, Abdullah Majid al Noaimi, “my heart was wounded by the strangeness.” In the heaviness that accompanies the toll of this research, and in the disciplinary, neoliberal space of the corporate academy that leads to a certain scarring, it is good to maintain tender spaces.

Cairns and Theoretical Signposts

Allen Feldman’s work has been vital in pointing toward ways to think about ‘how’ the bodies of prisoners and guard mean, and how they are intimately connected in a project that demands a positing of roles in a war play that stages particular (ideological) messages simultaneously called *truth* and *fakery* for consumption at a speed that disorients. The ‘how’ framing is drawn from studies of material culture, and is most commonly applied to objects, but the bodies of prisoners and guards are objectified, and though I am not inclined to think about human beings in this way, it has been an important heuristic (approach) in theorizing the way the state transacts bodies. In the case of the Troubles in Northern Ireland, Allen argued, “the practice of political violence entails the

¹⁹ Jonathan Swift, *A tale of a tub: the Battle of the books and other early works*, Volume I in *The Prose Works of Jonathan Swift D.D.* (London: Bell, 1907), 295.

production, exchange, and ideological consumption of bodies.”²⁰ In Feldman’s notion of political violence, the prisoners and military personnel at Guantánamo, and more broadly in the Global War on Terror, both belong to groups of bodies called into being, conjured like soldiers marching out of Kurosawa’s dream tunnel. “The Islamic terrorist” is an amplification of the threatening body called into being and re-produced alongside the military body as the “after-image” that follows commodification.²¹ The two types of bodies are invested with meaning and as such they are exchanged and consumed, cultivating and producing particular knowledge economies and histories. Some guards and prisoners raise this very idea, not as a touch point of theory, but as a matter of fact. These recognitions are moments that unsettle the differences structured to separate the men into the unknowable alien other. These are the flash points in which a guard realizes that he is very much in the cages, too, while bearing responsibility for the maintenance of the conditions, and of the status quo. Michael Taussig draws attention to the social cohesion created through the cultural construction of evil and its management.²² This is a deep facet of military training and culture at Guantánamo and permeates military and civil society teaching us how to think about and behave toward the security and military forces in the US. Though

²⁰ Allen Feldman, *Formations of Violence: The Narrative of the Body and Political Terror in Northern Ireland*. (Chicago and London: University of Chicago, 1991), 9.

²¹ Susan Buck-Morss. *The Dialectics of Seeing: Walter Benjamin and the Arcades Project*. (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1989): 312.

²² Michael Taussig, “Culture of Terror—Space of Death, Roger Casement’s Putumayo Report and the Explanation of Torture.” *Comparative Studies in Society and History*. Vol. 26 No. 3 (July, 1984), pp. 467-497.

Taussig points us toward cohesion, it is important to remember that there may be multiple cohesions around interpretations of threat and deep and contentious breaches between those favoring differing analyses and prescriptives, i.e. no guns/more guns; no more war/ endless war; prison abolition/tougher sentencing.

Fetish

In the sacred decade, the ten years of a relatively cowed hush following September 11, certain fetish symbols emerged in the United States consciousness, including the Twin Towers, which were *and* were not there. That there was some kind of psychic wounding resulting from the event and the use of the event by the state in the decade after, is obvious, but what was the nature of loss on *nine/eleven*? There was death and destruction, and the immediate disruption of daily life for New Yorkers, and travelers, but what was threatened at the level of the unconscious, and how have those anxieties been mapped onto other fears? What was fetishized in the wake of the loss, and what kinds of narratives arose to compensate and overwrite other possibilities? In this long journey researching facets of Guantanamo and the related shadow sites, I spend considerable time thinking about the conditions that have made torture, rendition, indefinite captivity without trial, and targeted killings, normative.

For more than a year after September 11th, 2001, the *New York Times* had pages dedicated to those who died. The obituaries ran day after day. An effort was made to give names, faces, and histories to those who were killed, to inscribe them in the book of life and memory. In her work on Hiroshima, Yuki Miyamoto

considers how commemoration is a transaction with the dead, and how these transactions—especially on the part of the state—may be considered ethical or unethical, according to how the memories are used, specifically critiquing the use of the dead for the purpose of cultivating nationalist sentiments.²³ The lives of those named, inscribed, and painstakingly counted after September 11th, were those the U.S. proceeded to claim as victims, and justification for the Global War on Terror.

When the U.S. invaded Afghanistan and then Iraq, it was clear that there would be no similar obituaries for the dead who came after. Dead military were ‘honored’ sometimes by name and photo, or simply by a ticker tape across the bottom of the screen, but the *New York Times* did not have pages dedicated to these U.S. dead, and certainly not to the Afghani or Iraqi dead. For those who were being killed, and are still being killed, and will go on being killed, there was, is, and will be, no effort made to humanize them in the public’s mind or heart. Not only were the Afghans and Iraqis not named or inscribed, as human beings with intrinsic value and a clear claim to life and inscription, they were not counted. They are not even marks on a wall. General Tommy Franks made it clear early on, by March of 2002, before the Iraqi campaign got underway, that “we don’t do body counts.”²⁴ Oh, but surely, we do. We counted and named the bodies

²³ Yuki Miyamoto, “The Ethics of Commemoration: Religion and Politics in Nanjing, Hiroshima and Yasukuni,” *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 80, no. 1 (March 2012): 34-63.

²⁴ Edward Epstein, “How Many Iraqis Died?” *San Francisco Gate*. May 3, 2003. <http://www.sfgate.com/news/article/NEWS-ANALYSIS-How-many-Iraqis-died-We-may-2650855.php>

of 'our' dead. The figure of 3,000 continues to be repeated, and the grim work of recovery is not over, after sixteen years fragments continue to be located and identified and returned to families. And even within the tally of our dead, there is a hierarchy that privileges the heroes, the fire fighter and police officer, and disappears the immigrant. In March of 2018, Mehdi Hassan asked Brigadier General Mark Kimmitt, "how many civilians were killed, do you think, by the U.S. forces in 2004?" to which Kimmitt responded, "I have no idea...you should tell me." When Hassan presses Kimmitt that he should know, has a responsibility to know, the general responds, "We got out of the body count business years ago," signaling that the logic of erasure has been institutionalized.²⁵

By and large, the U.S. remained subdued for an entire decade. There were protests against the war, but little traction or media coverage was granted. Sharon Olds publicly refused Laura Bush's invitation to attend the 2005 National Book Festival in D.C., held the same weekend as an anti-war/pro-peace gathering I attended.²⁶ That was something, but the letter and the protest did not garner much attention outside academia and small groups of activists. Yet at nearly the stroke of the end of the sacred—by which I mean both sacrosanct and inviolate—decade, the Occupy Movements burst forth. On the heels of the Arab Spring and the Indignado movement in Spain, which spread across Europe, finally the U.S.

²⁵ "Is it time the U.S. apologized for invading Iraq?" *Al Jazeera*. March 9, 2018. <https://www.aljazeera.com/programmes/upfront/2018/03/time-apologised-invading-iraq-180309093248027.html>

²⁶ Sharon Olds, "Open Letter to Laura Bush," *The Nation* September 19, 2005. <http://www.thenation.com/article/open-letter-laura-bush>

resistance found voice. That the manifestations were mocked and belittled and furiously policed is another, though related, story. The security apparatus in the United States steadily expanded throughout the quiet decade, and police departments were heavily militarized. What were Americans doing during the previous ten years? As Roger Waters so plaintively crooned, “we were watching TV.” Many Americans were watching reality shows, and the sacred decade was one in which the mythos of the American dream played out over and over again on nighttime television, even as the myth that never quite rang true eroded further in real time. These shows follow the same rote format: a group of people begin with equal opportunity, and through claimed meritocracy, one person ‘wins,’ while others are buzzed, gonged, or shamed with “you’re fired!” *American Idol* claimed the highest viewership for most of the decade (2003-2011) holding the record for the most consecutive years since Nielson began keeping track in the 1950s. Is there a way to think about this consumption as a kind of misdirected mourning, and/or a screening of trauma? And this consumption of competition and winning would help seed the election of our first game show host president. It’s *Wheel of Fortune*, ‘round the clock now, kids.

In Freud’s *Beyond the Pleasure Principal*, a toddler’s anxiety about his mother’s leave-taking, to which he does not react, is mediated through a game in which he directs the loss and retrieval of objects in which he is not as intimately vested, and actually transforming the experience into the realm of the pleasurable or even thrilling. The anxieties are displaced into a zone and objects over which

he may exert control.²⁷ In the 21st century, all but the wealthiest Americans experienced a decline in real net worth, and white male conservatives (and the strong supporting cast of female Conservatives, to be fair) began to reckon with shifting demographics and balances of power both within the United States and globally. The dominant default white racial frame, that sociologist Joe Feagin sketches, is still solidly if invisibly in place, but as it comes more clearly into view, it can be recognized and dismantled.²⁸ Is it possible to think of the desire to control-through legislation-marriage, access to arms, sexuality, and women's bodies as part of a fort-da exercise, and to understand this exercise of domination as bound up with the project of Guantanamo? I think so.

The fears and anxiety are intertwined but concern brown bodies, (as the 'face' of America is changing), declining power, increasing economic disparity, a dysfunctional government and the constant electrifying current of colorful terrorist threat, that may be dialed up or wound down, but never unplugged. I do not think I overstate; the spring 2013 intelligence report from the Southern Poverty Law Center warned that "the number of conspiracy-minded antigovernment 'Patriot' groups reached an all-time high of 1,360 in 2012."²⁹

²⁷ Sigmund Freud, *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*. (Buffalo: Broadview, 2011), 57-58.

²⁸ Debra Van Ausdale and Joe R. Feagin. *The First R: How Children Learn Race and Racism*. (New York: Rowman & Littlefield, 2001), 28-32.

²⁹ Mark Potok. "The Year in Hate and Extremism," *Southern Poverty Law Center Intelligence Report*. (Spring 2013), 1.

<http://www.splcenter.org/home/2013/spring/the-year-in-hate-and-extremism>

Note: these numbers have come down, but white nationalist groups became much more visible with the election and inauguration of Donald Trump. See:

What if in the immediate wake of *nine/eleven*, the petulant question of “why do they hate us?” couched in willful ignorance had prompted a redirection, or corrective to the question(s), a space that could have been left fallow for deeper contemplation? But, instead was promptly filled with a simplistic response of “because we are free,” question and answer both supplied by the president within days of the attacks, and onto the flow of this false breast, America latched.

In “Grief and a Headhunter’s Rage,” Renato Rosaldo asks us to consider “the cultural force of emotion” as he discusses the Ilongots of Southern Luzon, in the Philippines. Rosaldo, an ethnographer, cannot grasp the practice as explained to him, he cannot wrap his ‘head’ around it, not until, he recounts, his wife dies in a senseless plunge to her death, a miss-step on what was an ordinary day.

Rosaldo experiences his own rage, and though his head hunting is metaphoric and unrealized, he owns the impulse in a way he could not previously. As his own subjectivity is radically altered, he comes to an understanding of the rage against death that the Ilongots situate in the head of their victim. The head is thrown, and the grief is discharged with it.³⁰ When headhunting is outlawed by the state and a severe penalty enacted, the Ilongot are pained and have difficulty adjusting. They mourn the loss of the practice deeply, and in a double bind, have nowhere to go with that grief either. What are they to do with their pain? Rosaldo considers

Heidi Beirich and Susy Buchanan. “2017: The Year in Hate and Extremism.” *Southern Poverty Law Center*. Intelligence Report. February 11, 2018. <https://www.splcenter.org/fighting-hate/intelligence-report/2018/2017-year-hate-and-extremism>

³⁰ Renato Rosaldo, “Grief and a Headhunter’s Rage,” in *Death, Mourning and Burial: A Cross Cultural Reader*. Edited by Antonius C. G. M. Robben. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004).

“their dilemma with the notion that the failure to perform rituals can create anxiety.”³¹ Perhaps, this was what prompted our government to send us to shop, and to sporting events, to circumvent our grief in demonstrations of canned patriotism. “Consume” was the battle cry of a mourning empire at home.

Guantánamo is one of the reliquaries for an enshrined piece of Twin Tower steel, salvaged from the wreckage, a totem of the fetishistic wound, a key site in the narrative of *nine/eleven*, and a critical circuit of its distribution. In his chapter, “The Commodity,” in the first volume of *Capital*, Marx develops the notion of commodity fetishism, as something that becomes vested in the object made from raw materials from human hands or intervention. Marx taps into religion, to sketch his concept: as humans create relations with-and between- the gods they have generated, so too, the objects created by human beings come to take on meanings (and value) beyond the initial creation. Marx pronounces, “I call this the fetishism which attaches itself to the products of labour as soon as they are produced as commodities, and is therefore inseparable from the production of commodities.”³² Marx stays with the notion that this process is a bit mysterious, as “value...transforms every product of labour into a social hieroglyphic.”³³ A couch was something to sit on, but a Davenport became something to own.

³¹ Rosaldo, 169.

³² Karl Marx, *Capital*, Vol. 1. (London: Penguin, 1990), 165.

³³ Marx, 167.

Fetishism in the Freudian sense is the anxiety and compensation related to disappearance, and absence, and the fetish is the symbol of mastery, or “token of triumph” over that which is there/not there.³⁴ This is key in thinking about the circulation of the relics of the Twin Towers in the chapter on salvage. Vincent Crapanzano, in his discussion of Freud and Lacan with regard to trauma, notes that both “called attention to the way in which the traumatic event continually repeats itself in the dreams of the traumatic neurotic....for Freud, this repetition was about mastery.”³⁵ I think about these psychic woundings through Crapanzano who muses that the physical wound may leave a “final referent,” a scar to stroke, or remember with, while the psychic requires a different sourcing.³⁶ The psychic and the somatic are lived together and mark one another, as my brothers with their twin tattoos of mourning (touchstones of trauma, or corporeal cryptography).

Agamben takes up fetish in his *Stanzas*, providing like William Pietz, an excavation of use that returns to the Portuguese root, feitiço, though the two trace slightly different meanings at the source. Agamben finds “artificial,” while Pietz understands “manufactured,” but in Agamben, it is a translation of translation, and perhaps ‘the violet is finally lost in the crucible.’³⁷ I prefer manufactured,

³⁴ Sigmund Freud, *Sexuality and the Psychology of Love*. (New York: Touchstone, 1963), 206.

³⁵ Vincent Crapanzano, *Imaginative Horizons: Toward an Anthropology of the Imagination*. (Chicago: University of Chicago, 2004): 94-95.

³⁶ Crapanzano, 93.

which encompasses without plasticizing. We can burn a table made from wood (or imperial buildings made of staff) and know something of the ashes.

Marxist theorist, Guy DeBord posits, “the spectacle cannot be understood as an abuse of the world of vision, as a product of the techniques of mass dissemination of images. It is rather, a Weltanschauung [a worldview], which has become actual, materially translated. It is a worldview which has become objectified.”³⁸ In his historical account of the Harkis (Algerian troops who fought on the side of the French), Crapanzano demonstrates that the traumatic repeats. By tracing how the fetish produced out of trauma takes on a life of its own, he invites thinking about how the traumatic travels and shift-shapes, while shaping/repeating (history) all the while.

In the fetishistic tension of the science fiction show *Fringe*, the twin towers are absent in this world, but present in the mirror world of “the other side.” The towers are there and not there in the viewer’s imagination. The Statue of Liberty reliably appears in both, referencing freedom and permanence, but “over there,” in a parallel iteration of the United States, the statue is kept polished, and fictions are maintained.

Code breaking the crypto: On language(s)

The language of the U.S. military is replete with jargon, slang, acronym,

³⁷ Giorgio Agamben, *Stanzas: Word and Phantasm in Western Literature*. Trans. Ronald L. Martinez. (Minneapolis and London: University of Minnesota Press, 1993), 35. And William Pietz, “The Problem of the Fetish, I” *Res* 9(1985):5.

³⁸ Guy DeBord, *Society of the Spectacle*. (Detroit: Black and Red, 1983), 8.

obscuring and layered representations, and it has taken years to become conversant with its doublespeak and to read its crypto-fictions. What is the work of language in forever wartime? And in the sense that it performs particular kinds of work, what does that tell us about the productive capabilities that call it into being? “Representation” Deleuze tell us, “has only a single center, a unique and receding perspective, and in consequence a false depth. It mediates everything, but mobilizes and moves nothing.”³⁹ But after-images mediate reality in infinite replication of a stabilized representation of constituted subjects. Two books that I have lived with and thought through are James Boyd White’s *When Words Lose their Meaning* and Pierre Bourdieu’s *Language and Symbolic Power*. White is concerned with language that goes slack and conceals, while Bourdieu points to the relationship and work of authorized and authorizing language. I draw into conversation Fred Halliday’s *Shocked and Awed: A Dictionary of the War on Terror*, which is indeed a lexicon of that which conceals rather than discloses, which describes the crypto-defensive language of military and intelligence communication and records. Adjacent lie three works that deal with different components of metaphor: Victor Turner’s *Dramas, Fields and Metaphors*; George Lakoff and Mark Johnson’s *Metaphors we Live By*; and Erin Steuter and Deborah Wills’ *At War with Metaphor*.

Restraint and abuse is always coached in terms of functional necessity in the official record, and often echoed in the media. One can read Special

³⁹ Gilles Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, Trans. Paul Patton. (New York: Columbia, 1994), 55-56.

Presidential Envoy Zal Kahlizad's report to Washington concerning the conditions of the airport holding facility in Kabul. Beards were shaven because of lice, "As part of a delousing program, the military has had to shave off the beards of some of the Cuba-bound detainees, a practice the Red Cross has approved."⁴⁰ Here, I think of James Boyd White's reading of Swift's "Tale of a Tub." White points to the tension Swift creates "between word and background that gives these terms a revived clarity and life."⁴¹ How might I create such a tension within the banal descriptions, and the 'approval' of the Red Cross? Or to use White's own question: "How is it possible in world (like our own) so much made up of false speech and dead speech, for the mind in need of education to form itself and learn to talk?"⁴²

Susan Sontag's *Regarding the Pain of Others* provided an early backdrop for thinking about narration and representation, as does her debate with cultural theorist, essayist, and novelist John Berger.⁴³ Narratives matters: The address that was delivered by George Bush the night of *nine/eleven* reads like those pre-fabricated obituaries of the public figures, that wait patiently in the archive for

⁴⁰ Karen J. Greenberg and Joshua L. Dratel. *The Torture Papers: The Road to Abu Ghraib*. (New York: Cambridge, 2005), 1171-1172.

⁴¹ James Boyd White, *When Words Lose Their Meaning: Constitutions and Reconstitutions of Language, Character, and Community*. (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press) 120.

⁴² James Boyd White, *When Words Lose Their Meaning: Constitutions, and Reconstitutions of Language, Character, and Community*. (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1984), 115.

⁴³ John Berger and Susan Sontag: *To Tell a Story*. (1983)
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MoHCR8nshe8>

deployment upon death: “America was targeted for attack because we’re the brightest beacon for freedom and opportunity in the world. And no one will keep that light from shining...America and her friends and allies join with all those who want peace and security in the world and we stand together to win the war on terrorism.”⁴⁴ That bedtime story became a staple.

The agency of language, of course, does not belong to those outside looking on from the distances of space and/or time. Communication is a mode of resistance for those in captivity, and resistance is sustaining and often communal. Shahla Talebi writes of the complicated and creative endeavor of writing letters within a tightly proscribed environment. There is “a shared symbolic culture” between the prisoners and the guards which makes the coding and decoding of language more challenging.⁴⁵ Moazzam Begg, a British man arrested in Pakistan, the homeland of his parents, rejects the language to which he is subjected and through which his subjectivity is developed: “I don’t recognize your terminology. I am the hostage, you’re the kidnapper.”⁴⁶ When he speaks of what has happened to him, it is in reference to his “abduction.”⁴⁷

Texts are not located only in the realm of words, as we know, text may be

⁴⁴ George Bush. Speech. September 11, 2001. CNN Archive. <http://archives.cnn.com/2001/US/09/11/bush.speech.text/> and <http://www.americanrhetoric.com/speeches/gwbush911addresstothetation.htm>

⁴⁵ Shahla Talebi, *Ghosts of Revolution*. (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2011), 73.

⁴⁶ Moazzam Begg, *Enemy Combatant: My Imprisonment at Guantanamo, Bagram, and Kandahar*. (New York: New Press, 2008), 324.

⁴⁷ Begg, 7.

read in space and place, in the wild and in the urban landscapes, and on/in/through our bodies, in our dreams and visions, and of course mediated through image. Several works on visual studies have helped me learn to read beyond words and first impressions. Robert Harriman and John Louis Lucaites' *No Caption Needed* has been a resource for reading the reproductions of the WWII Raising of the Flag at Iwo Jima, in companion with Tedd Thomey's *Immortal Images*. Steven F. Eisenman's work, *The Abu Ghraib Effect*, taught me to see more clearly how the representation of the bodies of prisoners, and their after-images layer are received and mapped onto repositories of visual narratives of power that span centuries.

It was helpful to pay attention to how the world outside these borders was interpreting the times; Hassan Mutha's tableau, *Great American Nude*, was on display in the summer of 2005, as part of the *Africa Remix* exhibit at Centre Pompidou, in Paris. Painted in 2002, the work is foreground with a U.S. flag that covers the entire background of the painting. The stripes evoke textiles of North Africa...one can read Bedouin tents and rugs. The starry field has small flags and some dozen Harley Davidsons, and positioned across the whole, a nude Bin Laden propped on his left arm, stroking his beard, post-coitus. He has—to be crude—just fucked the U.S., but as he is positioned, one can read that he is now to be subject to U.S. desire; a seductive transactional agreement has been realized.⁴⁸

Andreas Huyssen's *Urban Palimpsests and the Politics of Memory* offers

⁴⁸ Hassan Musa. "Great American Nude," *Africa Remix: L'Exposition*. Centre Pompidou. (Paris: Adagp, 2005): 21. To view an image of the painting: <http://universes-in-universe.de/specials/africa-remix/musa/english.htm>

companion pieces to Young's work on Berlin memorials, and opens up to discussions of Argentine memory, and U.S. "Twin Memories: Afterimages of Nine/Eleven." Triangulation, which I have found a useful approach in my own work, is not so much a tri-partite construction, which can be too much a limiting *built* environment, but rather a generative mirroring space, which offers what I would describe in poetic language as reflectaphors, a neologism drawn from John Briggs's *A Turbulent Mirror*. The cross positioning of mirroring surfaces is not meant to distort, as in a house of mirrors, but to cross-pollinate.⁴⁹ Thus site visits to and the literature of and about spaces of atrocity were part of this journey.

I found it invaluable to step outside of default consciousness. In spending time with people, texts and places that illuminate the period of dictatorship in Argentina, the United States' Global War on Terror was backlit, and came more clearly into focus as war that was begin waged within U.S. borders, too. To think with sensitivity and depth, meant it was necessary to break through frames I have inherited, and that meant first identifying and tracing them, which is different than simply knowing such constructions exist and are imprinted. It is one thing to nod along with Foucault and Gramsci, to underline Agamben, and to cheer the power of the transgressive diagonal path with DeCerteau; it is another to identify one's own boxes, walls, and routine lines of thought. It was during a visit to the Escuela Superior de Mecánica de la Armada (ESMA) in Buenos Aires that I experienced a cognitive opening about military and state connections. I had to

⁴⁹ John Briggs. "The (implicate) universe as a work of Art." in *Quantum Implications, Essays in Honor of David Bohm*, New York: Routledge, 1987.
<http://people.wcsu.edu/briggsj/Reflectaphors.html>

step outside a U.S. milieu that inevitably instructed how I understood (was meant to understand) for example, formations of power in the Soviet Union under Stalin, Spain during the Civil War, and of course, Germany under the National Socialists, but blurred and fictionalized my own history and surrounds.

When David Hicks describes his journey through U.S. custody, he describes series of events that repeat time and again in what comes to be recognizable and anticipatable violent patterned happenings. Hicks began to recognize the signature. And I begin to recognize the patterns after reading memoir after memoir of former captive, implicating the category of ritualized violence. Indeed, the dramaturgy was highly orchestrated throughout. Over and again he describes the process of double handcuffing (with metal and plastic), the methodical hooding and taping of the head, the blows to the head which knock weak bodies to the ground one by one, and the kicking of the bodies by a series of other bodies-in-charge, uniformed legal bodies. These events occur during periods of transfer between points, though the transfers are sometimes reversed and repeated. The uniformed legal bodies, headhunters who cannot take heads, nevertheless direct rage and grief on un-uniformed captured bodies in stylized communal events in which the bodies of hooded prisoners were positioned with care, sometimes in lines, other times in half-circles, and when not being forced to kneel, spun around to disorient, then knocked to the ground again. In Hick's case, his Australian belonging with which a U.S. soldier might identify, must be turned against him, and he becomes bestial, "a kangaroo-fucker" even as he was the one being threatened with rape, and told that he was "fucking" with a New

Yorker now.”⁵⁰ At Bagram, the captive bodies were made to lie face down in the cold, wet mud” with their handcuffed hand open so that “there would be no pain” as the soldiers walked across their bodies. These violences were not rogue unthought acts by individuals, but orchestrated, participatory events carried out publicly with broad involvement, and viewing audiences. Catherine Bell offers a cautionary with respect to the dichotomizing of thought and action in the application of ritual theory.⁵¹ The thought and action are bound up in one another.

The brutalization is usually though not always codified. In the realm of interrogation, it often is scripted, and so too the violence that accompanies the procedures of detention, which are practiced and mastered in advance. If, as Colin Dayan demonstrates, legal rituals unmake persons, so too, do military rituals in active and emphatic ways. The military dog ‘barks’ with the intention to fragment.

In *Discipline and Punish*, Foucault offers “a general recipe for the exercise of power over men: the ‘mind’ as a surface of inscription for power, with semiology as its tool; the submission of bodies through the control of ideas; the analysis of representations as a principle in a politic of bodies that was much more effective than the ritual anatomy of torture and execution.”⁵² The bodies of

⁵⁰ David Hicks, *Guantanamo: My Journey*. (William Heinemann, 2010), 201,203.

⁵¹ Catherine Bell, *The Practice of Ritual Theory*, (New York: Oxford, 2002), 48.

⁵² Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*. (New York: Vintage, 1995), 102.

the Guantanamo captives, and many others, were tortured after nine/eleven, but the emphasis was not torture and not killing, but domination, the absolute control of the United States as to their bodies. But of course, it was more than that; while the displaced rage of particular soldiers was clearly imprinted on the captive bodies, there was a meta-level to the violence. Foucault is clear that “the overall political issue around the prison” rests “in the steep use of these mechanisms of normalization and the wide-ranging powers which, through the proliferation of new disciplines, they bring with them.”⁵³ This is true in the way the mechanisms traveled, but there were more than just the disciplinary structures and the discrete power, there was the project of animating a new order, or re-inspiring the old. And there is something religious about the order, which imposes as something already present and over-determined, “a belief,” echoing William James “that there is some unseen order, and that our supreme good lies in harmoniously adjusting ourselves, thereto.”⁵⁴

So thematically, ritual features into explicitly religious practice of the captives, ablution, prayer, fasting, but also in the highly ritualized procedures that are exerted on their bodies at Guantanamo. The guards have been through their own rituals of training, indoctrination, some of which continued at the camp and daily re-enactment of shacklings, transport, and unshacklings. Bell’s notion of redemptive hegemony, “the coherence is rendered and experienced as

⁵³ Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, 306.

⁵⁴ William James, *Varieties of Religious Experience*, (New York: Random House, 1994), 61.

redemptive for those empowered by the schemes of the ritual.”⁵⁵ And so it was for the military personnel who remained within the spell of the training. For those who did not, the incoherence of their participation was often soul fragmenting.

Ethnographic Assemblages

As I have traveled through the stages of this project, I have been drawn toward an approach that is more akin to fictocriticism (some say gonzo anthropology).⁵⁶ This project demanded a rupture of method and of language, and I have given myself those permissions in order to open space to accommodate the diversity of data streams I am drawing on, the voices I am writing with, and the layered interpretive questions I am asking. In those ruptures, violence and trauma inevitably break through.

The query, “what is your dissertation about?” is inevitably followed by, “so, have you been there, have you traveled to Guantánamo?” I did, very early on in the project, investigate the possibility. I wrote to a public relations officer who referred me to someone who he said could better address my interest. Emails were not returned. I spoke next to an attorney who represented a prisoner at Guantánamo. His interpretation was that the military did not have a box to tick for the category of academic. He suggested I might try another avenue, but that even if I were able to arrange a visit, it would be a highly scripted tour with no

⁵⁵ Bell, *Ritual Theory*, 115.

⁵⁶ I was writing within the genre of fictocriticism long before I knew it had a name, but the naming also carries authority that wants to delimit.

prisoner contact. It soon became evident that it would not be possible to conduct significant ethnographic work (or ethnographic work of significance) within the prison. I will visit the base and prison one day, but it will be for a future iteration of this work. I will travel to Havana in June of 2018 to present as part of a panel, “The U.S. Naval Base at Guantánamo: Freedom, Emancipation, Possibility” at the *Caribbean Studies Association* Annual Conference with other contributors to a new edited volume on Guantanamo and will travel to the Cuban province of Guantánamo on the other side of the wire as part of that trip.

I faced the inherent difficulty of silenced and imperiled subjects because of the security clearance agreements the military demands. Most personnel will not risk violating a non-disclosure agreement, and it would be unethical to ask them to do so. Former guard Albert Melise was threatened by the military after he gave an interview to Jason Leopold. Melise was warned that he faced a bar against reenlistment and the loss of his veteran benefits and was in fact eventually barred from the military.⁵⁷ Other former guards have reported similar experiences.⁵⁸ The considerations are graver for former prisoners, who also sign agreements when transferred or released. Prisoners face significant pressure to remain silent and compliant. Former prisoners have been harassed; at least one, Saeed al-Shehri, was killed in a drone strike after release, and the five prisoners traded for

⁵⁷ Jeffrey Kaye, *Shadowproof*, <https://shadowproof.com/2011/09/08/dod-persecutes-guantanamo-guard-who-talked-about-the-torture/>

⁵⁸ The Peter Collins Show (Podcast) February 28, 2011. <http://www.peterbcollins.com/2011/02/28/wisconsin-14-sen-fred-risser-on-the-class-war-showdown-in-madison-2-former-gitmo-guard-talk-about-their-experiences-and-the-price-they-pay-for-them/>

Bowe Bergdahl were openly threatened with the same end in the U.S. press. Moazzam Begg, a British prisoner who was released from Guantánamo with no charge after nearly three years of torture and imprisonment, subsequently published an account of his experience. He was arrested in 2014 in the UK, and in a nightmarish turn, denied bail, and held at Belmarsh prison for seven months. In October of 2014, he was finally brought before a judge who swiftly determined that there was no case. As one can imagine, even if the prisoners are willing to take the risk of speaking out, and some are, there is considerable pressure from family members to remain quiet and paradoxically ‘free.’ There is also the significant psychic strain of reliving the experiences in a climate where the former prisoners are never cleared, but in a permanent state of contamination. There is a fatigue of witnessing among former prisoners-recalling the experiences takes a significant emotional and physical toll. Witnessing opens the former prisoners to further abuse. Some prisoners have spoken publicly, given testimony, and published poems and memoirs, often in conjunction with large advocacy groups, major media outlets, historical witness projects, or through their legal team.

There are additional challenges. More prisoners have been released from Guantánamo than remain. Of the 779 men held at Guantanamo since January 11, 2002, 41 are still imprisoned as of February 24, 2018. Of the 41 who remain, 5 are cleared for release, and 23 are not cleared for release but have not been charged.⁵⁹ In many press accounts, the 23 are casually referred to as the “forever prisoners.” This speaks to the lack of avenues for release. Some of the 738 no

⁵⁹ ACLU, “Guantánamo by the Numbers,” <https://www.aclu.org/issues/national-security/detention/guantanamo-numbers>

longer among the imprisoned are dead or missing, but most of them are resettled either in their country of origin or in a new locale. But that is also a complicating factor; prisoners have been released to at least 55 different countries. Some have stayed in those countries, but others have moved.

George Marcus identifies the challenge I faced: “How, then, does an anthropology of contemporary problems, spread across sites, subjects, and organizational assemblages, while being deeply normative in its commitments and engagements with other knowledge economies, also sustain more broadly a lineal concern with a classic anthropology of value?”⁶⁰ I will do my best to answer the broad thrust of the question. I looked for other ways to approach the project. I found alternate modes of being with the prisoners. I began to painstakingly collect and parse memoirs, public interviews, poetry, artwork, testimony, transcripts and video content of current and former prisoners, guards, and other individuals with intimate connections to Guantánamo. I joined vigils with family members and advocates in the United States and in Europe. I traveled to Amnesty International Conference in Chicago that drew clear lines connecting US violence domestically and the waging of wars abroad. I attended and spoke at Parliamentary Meetings at Westminster in conversation with lawyers, imams, policy makers, friends and family of prisoners, and former prisoners. I listened through days of public testimony in North Carolina as

⁶⁰ George E. Marcus. “Experimental forms for the expression of norms in the ethnography of the contemporary” 2013 | *HAU: Journal of Ethnographic Theory* 3 (2): 197–217.

former prisoners, guards, interrogators, military lawyers, psychologists, and experts on torture, including Juan Mendez, former U.N. Special Rapporteur on Torture, contributed accounts and answered questions from a formal panel. I was afforded the opportunity to join some members of the panel and speakers afterward to ask further questions and discuss my project. For insights into approach, I pored over works of experimental literary ethnographies that suggested alternative methods of immersion and possible critical interventions.⁶¹ Ethnography, Sherry Ortner reminds “has always meant the attempt to understand another life world using the self—as much as it of possible—as the instrument of knowing.”⁶² Ortner’s approach is suggestive of ficto-criticism, or gonzo anthropology, or some poetics of anthropology, approaches that I have long been drawn to without having a way to name what I was trying to write.

In this work, I place individual prisoner narratives of experience in conversation with one another in thematic spaces with various ethico-theological formations and Islamic modernities that are either explicitly mentioned, or indirectly invoked by the prisoners.⁶³ In the case of the guards and other

⁶¹ Gabriele Schwab, *Imaginary Ethnographies: Literature, Culture & Subjectivity*, (New York: Columbia, 2012) and Vincent Crapanzano, *Imaginative Horizons: Literary, Philosophical Anthropology*, (Chicago: University of Chicago), 2004.

⁶² Sherry B. Ortner, *Anthropology and Social Theory: Culture, Power, and the Acting Subject*, (Durham: Duke University Press, 2006), 42. Also, see Carole McGranahan *Savage Minds: Notes and Queries in Anthropology* (now, thankfully renamed, “anthro(dendum”) Group Blog: <https://savageminds.org/2017/03/21/rogue-scholarly-responsibility-in-the-time-of-trump/>

personnel, I draw on disclosures that reveal religious beliefs, tendencies, and attitudes informed by familial background and/or the civil religion of the military and state. Eyal Weizman's examination and indictment of just war and collateral damage as religiously glossed structural expressions of power offer a lens to illuminate strands of religious thought prisoners and guards may have brought to the camp. And Guantánamo as place and system has its own richly marked religious landscape and overlay that moves from birth through death, burial, and commemoration. As the prominent stained-glass window of the Naval Station Chapel at Guantánamo proclaims, Christ will guide the sailor through the danger waters, and un-trouble the wake of history.

The eight prisoner memoirs available in the United States reflect the experiences of nine prisoners from four continents: David Hicks (Australian); Moazzam Begg (British); Ahmed Errachidi (Moroccan); Abdul Salam Zaef (Afghani); Murat Kurnaz, (born and raised in Germany, a child of Turkish guest workers); Mamdouh Habib (Egyptian); Mohamedou Slahi (Mauritanian) and a joint memoir from Lakhdar Boumediene (Algerian) and Mustafa Ait Idir (Algerian). I have been unable to secure a copy of the book by two brothers both imprisoned at Guantánamo: Badr Zaman Badr and Abdur Rahim Muslim Dost who published a work in Pashto with dozens of photographs. The work, as far as I know, has never been available in any form in the United States except via download from sites I am leery of accessing. I do have a collection that contains

⁶³ Toshiko Izutsu, *Ethico-Religious Concepts in the Qur'an*, Kuala Lumpur: Islamic Book Trust, 2004; Mahmoud Mohamed Taha, *The Second Message of Islam*, trans. Abdullahi an Naim, Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1987.

some of Dost's poetry. Mark Falkoff advocated for the right of the detainees' poetry to be published, and ultimately published a collection in 2007. Kristina Reardon cogently observes "Since he has not had his day in federal court, Marc Falkoff presents his clients' poems as witness testimony in the court of public (literary) opinion."⁶⁴ There are also several biographies of one of the younger prisoner acknowledged to be held, Omar Khadr (Canadian), which adds another continent to the list.

There are memoirs from personnel, as well. One former guard, Terry Holdbrooks, has published a memoir of his time at Guantánamo and his conversion to Islam. I met with Terry regularly while he was re-writing his memoir for publication, and he shared the original version with me early on in the process. He speaks publicly on the record about his experiences. Other guards testified at the Winter Soldier hearings, gave testimony through the UC Davis Center for the Study of Human Rights in the Americas, or spoke out in public interviews. Staff Sergeant Joseph Hickman, now a researcher at Seton Hall University School of Law just published his account of the alleged suicides at Guantánamo. Former medical officer, Montgomery Granger, has written an impassioned defense of his time at Guantánamo, and still fiercely promotes and defends his views and the book on social media. Intelligence officer, Erik Saar offers yet another view. Each has something to contribute to my process of understanding the way in which the religion was a constant presence at

⁶⁴ Kristina Reardon, "Amidst the Chime of the Razor Wire: Narrating Poetic Justice at Guantánamo Bay," *The Quiet Corner Interdisciplinary Journal* Vol 1 Issue 1 UConn, March 2015. <http://digitalcommons.uconn.edu/tqc/vol1/iss1/6>

Guantánamo. Some individuals with limited relationships to Guantánamo have published works that offer insights into official visits and practices; this includes Lieutenant Colonel Gordon Cucullu's, *Inside Guantánamo: The True Story behind the Myths of Guantánamo Bay*, Rosa Brooks' *How Everything became War and the Military became Everything*, and a number of works by attorneys representing detainees.

I consider the source materials that emanate from direct experience of Guantánamo to be the work of para-ethnographers. Herbert Marcus describes para-ethnographers as “moderately empowered people” who are “deeply complicit with and implicated in powerful institutional processes.” For Marcus, this would encompass the realm of the guards, interrogators, medics, and translators, but would necessarily bracket the prisoners. I choose to include the prisoners as insightful para-ethnographers who bring unique subjectivities and creative capacities to bear as they reflect on their surroundings and circumstances, and their captors. As Linda Tuhiwai Smith enjoins in her work on decolonizing methodologies, there is an arrogance in bracketing “the forms of knowledge, systems of classification, technologies and codes of social life” that have their own histories and logics; there are insights and critiques that must come from within, and I listened carefully for those.⁶⁵ Sherry Ortner also implicates approaches that bracket the agency of interlocutors; “it seems to me

⁶⁵ Linda Tuhiwai Smith, *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples*, (New York: Palgrave, 2002), 61.

grotesque to insist on the notion that the text is shaped by everything but the lived reality of the people that the text claims to represent.”⁶⁶

Close recursive readings of the work of the para-ethnographers of Guantánamo: prisoners, legal counsel, guards, interrogators, medics, military personnel, journalists, etc. over the course of seven years allows me to pursue a particular kind of work with my interlocutors, an experimental, imaginary, literary, and multi-sited ethnography- part gonzo and ficto-critical, helpful in navigating spaces that are so often told through the crypto-fictions of the state. The imaginative and creative practices of the prisoners are present in their stories, poems, dreams, nightmares, gardens, drawings, paintings and modes of resistance. The inter-subjectivity of the prisoners and guards is fleshed out in my research through careful and recursive readings of a jigsaw of texts, and through thinking with images and metaphors consistently invoked by prisoners and guards, including: journeys and pilgrimage; shackles, cages, and shipping containers; forbidden and permissible gardens; water and the sea; dreams, daymares and nightmares; sustenance and hunger, and the gauzy separation of life and death.

Within the juxtaposition of prisoner and guard stories, there are fertile openings for considering the precarious belongings of the 21st century, in terms of religion, ethnicity, national identity, citizenship, and ultimately humanity.⁶⁷ I do not want to speak from an abstracted position about the men; I want their voices

⁶⁶ Sherry Ortner, *Anthropology and Social Theory: Culture, Power and the Acting Subject*. (Durham: Duke University Press, 2006), 59.

⁶⁷ See Talal Asad, 2003; Mohammed Bamyeh, 2007; and Wendy Brown, 2006.

to speak throughout the text, as I grant the spaces their theoretical due and give shape to the project. I am leery of imposing frames that do not account for other forms of knowledge, that may be reductive, and/or collapse differences. While I think Guantánamo in the 21st century offers a site through which to refract a number of critical issues that haunt, I want to maintain the integrity of the focus on the experience of the dual populations and allow their accounts to open the possibilities for discussion.

Some of the guiding questions were: Was it possible and if so, how, for the captives at Guantánamo to co-create community or disparate communities? How did the men understand their relationality, as human beings and as Muslims, and how did they see the guards? And at the core of that question, how did and do these individuals understand themselves, again at the level of self, local camp community (ies), and global ummah? The known prisoners were all male and Muslim, all but one of them was Sunni, and they were citizens of 48 different countries and spoke dozens of languages. Were they able to cobble together any sense of community, and if so, how difficult was it to bridge differences? What theological and philosophical underpinnings were present, and did those grounds shift over time, for some? What facets of the imagination came into play and what were the sources? How did the poles of sensory deprivation and sensory overload shape experience? Of particular interest are the spaces in which cognitive or spiritual openings and closings may have occurred during encounters with other prisoners or guards, through contact with new information and environments over time. Some of these questions arise in conversation with memoirs and

testimony from survivors of concentration camps, state terrorism, and other kinds of violence, but while were/are connections to be made with those literatures, there are also distances to be maintained.

Erving Goffman, a sociologist known for his work on institutions, was interested in how individuals whose bodies were controlled by the state, those in asylums, camps, prisons, etc., acquiesced to playing certain roles, and yet managed to resist. Goffman writes: “the individual acts to say: ‘I do not dispute the direction that things are going and I will go along with them, but at the same time I want you to know that you haven’t fully contained me in the state of affairs.’”⁶⁸ Each experience is understood as unique, as are variables such as age, individual physical and psychological resilience, conditions of individual confinement, resourcefulness, personality, sense of future, and religious perspective. Some prisoners were subject to more extreme forms of physical torture, some lived through prolonged periods of solitary confinement, some had serious health issues, and all of them arrived with the cultural knowledge absorbed through family, community, travel, and lived experience.

The men offer an opportunity for examining military, intelligence, and defense culture through their eyes, as para-ethnographers. They are attuned to notions of religion and observe racial hierarchies. No one has been inside the camp observing the inner workings of this military prison so long as the captives themselves, and their observations illuminate. One poignant and recurrent

⁶⁸ Erving Goffman, *The Goffman Reader*, Eds. Charles Lemert and Ann Branaman (Oxford: Blackwell, 1997), 39-40.

sentiment expressed in memoirs, is that many of the men thought that being turned over to the United States military meant that there would be a fair process, that they would be treated decently, and that they would be cleared and released quickly. In other words, their conception of the United States led them to feel a sense of relief at the thought of being in U.S. custody. For them, it implied basic protections and a legal standard that afforded due process.

The corollary experience of the guards brings a richer dimension to the project. The guards serve rotation of six months to one year at the camp, and more than one unit serves at a time drawing from career military and national guard units. A number of former guards have written or spoken publicly about their time served at Guantánamo and indicated shifts in how they viewed the prisoners and the official military discourse about the prisoners during the course of their year long time at the camp.

The law of (the) good land

Wendell Berry offers a powerful essay, the ninth chapter in *The Gift of Good Land*, in which he presses the case of solving for pattern. By the phrase, “solving for pattern,” Berry means thinking about the connections, seeing the organic whole and thinking through, as best we are able, the consequences of “solving our problems.” In Elaine Scarry’s *Thinking in an Emergency*, she offers a cautionary corollary that implicates speed, and there is no doubt that we live in fast times. Berry is especially concerned with the solution which immediately aggravates the very problem it sets out to solve, causing he says, “a hellish

symbiosis in which problem and solution reciprocally enlarge one another in a sequence that, so far as logic is concerned, is limitless—as when the problem of soil compaction is ‘solved’ by a bigger tractor, which further compacts the soil, which makes a need for a still bigger tractor, and so on.” Guantánamo, as a key facet of ‘the global war on terror’ has functioned as that bigger tractor, a solution that immediately aggravated the very problem it set out to solve. (If one is to believe that it was ever meant to solve anything.) We have hit mercury with a sledgehammer and we are left with the wide splatter of quicksilver. Berry continues: “good solutions have wide margins, so the failure of one solution does not imply the possibility of another...to have a lot of power should not make it impossible to use only a little.”⁶⁹

These were men purchased so that the United States could exact retribution and demonstrate swift retaliation on bodies that met certain obvious criteria. For the most part, these men were not masterminds of plot, nor extraordinary players, but victims of happenstance, served up as offerings for days and years of retribution. The after-images of their beaten and shackled bodies represented some totality of U.S. military domination of imaginations and ideologies—something that is not possible. These men were not protected as citizens of a nation-state. As Muslims, their suspect identities were transferred to the realm of non-regularized belonging and the legal shadows of no man’s land.

How did the country whose discourse ‘sings’ so tirelessly of freedom and democracy so lightly enable its antithesis? Virillo reminds, “It is something the

⁶⁹ Wendell Berry, *The Gift of Good Land*, (Berkeley: Counterpoint, 1981), 142.

lawyer, Laurence de Chasourne warned us about: 'Emergency does not produce laws because laws come from the normal political process.' I think this statement is essential. The law of the fastest is the source of the law of the strongest. These days, laws are under a permanent state of emergency."⁷⁰

⁷⁰ Paul Virillo, *The Administration of Fear*. (Los Angeles: Semiotext(e), 2012), 92.

CHAPTER 2

AT SEA

*It is elemental. It is racial. God has not been preparing the English-speaking and Teutonic people for a thousand years for nothing but vain and idle self-contemplation and self-admiration...He has made us the master organizers of the world to establish system where chaos reigns. He has given us the spirit of progress to overwhelm the forces of reaction throughout the earth.*⁷¹

The story of Guantánamo does not begin in the 21st century. The symbolic order did not arrive on nine/eleven, and the prison and the base cannot be fully understood without examining historical linkages to the imperial project inaugurated by the Columbian Exposition of 1893, which carries the trace of Columbus and his landing at what is now called Guantánamo Bay, harkening back to the original Taino name.

The camps at Guantánamo provide a spectacle akin and historically linked to the World's Columbian Exposition of 1893 in terms of set, staging, and ideological production of ideas about race and religion.⁷² By returning to the Columbian Exposition, a potent ideological project that reinforced U.S. perceptions of its own exceptionalism and propelled the United States toward empire as the twentieth century loomed, we can more fully understand the phenomenon of "Guantánamo" and its particular utility in the early twenty-first century. Each site imagined and iterated a worldview, and powerfully deployed religiously infused political language to create instrumental shifts in and

⁷¹ Indiana Republican Albert Breveridge quoted in H.W. Brands, *The Reckless Decade: America in the 1890s*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995), 335.

⁷² The World's Columbian Exposition of 1893 was popularly known as the Chicago World's Fair, and was the site of the first World Parliament of Religions.

reinforcements of the conception of the American self and foreign policy. The 1893 exposition drew on the religiously sourced language of Manifest Destiny to christen the new world's venture into imperialism. Manifest Destiny is best described as the nineteenth-century idea that the European Christian expansion across the western United States was divinely inspired and blessed, and that Anglo-Americans were exceptional in the eyes of God.⁷³ The concept was contentious as policy, but the fair provided a site for reanimating, grounding, and disseminating the idea, as well as extending it to imperialist aims abroad. The sacral language that infused rhetoric surrounding Guantánamo and the War on Terror expanded on the notion of Manifest Destiny, resurrecting Cold War tropes that pitted neat constructions of good against evil and invigorated the civil religion of military patriotism with zealous religiosity.⁷⁴ Yet there were stark contrasts in the futures these productions forecast. The Columbian Exposition gestured toward a celebratory and utopian twentieth-century vision, while the twenty-first-century future as gestured to and signaled from Guantánamo was, and is, distinctly dystopian: the promise of the fair against the threat of the prison.

⁷³ For a discussion of Manifest Destiny, see Anders Stephanson, *Manifest Destiny*. For background on how the process of racialization is bound up with Manifest Destiny, see Reginald Horsman, *Race and Manifest Destiny*.

⁷⁴ For historical background on the systematic introduction of religion into the U.S. military during World War I, see Jonathan H. Ebel, *Faith in the Fight*. For a discussion of mid-twentieth-century indoctrination, see Joseph P. Herzog, *The Spiritual Industrial Complex*. For a broader look, see Peter Gardella, *American Civil Religion*. While Gardella's work is not explicitly about religion and the military, it offers valuable insights into the construction and stoking of patriotism, nationalism, and the cultivation and circulation of positive military sentiment.

The 1893 World's Columbian Exposition was an international event to mark the 400th anniversary of Cristóbal Colón's unintentional arrival in what would become the Americas. By the nineteenth century, his name was already anglicized to Christopher Columbus. In the course of the second voyage, in April of 1494, he and his men came ashore at what is now called Guantánamo Bay. Columbus named the bay Puerto Grande [Large Port]. The indigenous Taino were in the process of cooking the day's catch of fish and iguana, but retreated when they spotted the ships. Columbus and his men, made their way to shore, and proceeded to eat the fish.⁷⁵ The marker below is located at Fisherman's Point on the US base.⁷⁶ With the Exposition, the history of his exploits was co-opted to support a national narrative of empire. It was the first year that Columbus Day was celebrated as a national holiday in the United States.⁷⁷

⁷⁵ Francis Augustus MacNutt, ed. *De Orbe Novo: The Eight Decades of Peter Martyr D'Anghera*, Vol. 1 (New York: Putnam and Sons, 1912), 94-95.
https://archive.org/stream/deorbenovoeightd01angh/deorbenovoeightd01angh_djvu.txt

⁷⁶ David McLean, "Columbus' Journey to Guantánamo Bay," Joint Task Force Guantánamo Public Affairs, Oct. 14, 2009.
<https://www.dvidshub.net/news/printable/40103>

⁷⁷ I begin the chapter with the name Cristóbal Colón. I make a deliberate shift to the Anglicized Christopher Columbus throughout the rest of the chapter. I deviate only when another author uses the name Colón.



Figure 1. Marker to commemorate the 1494 landing of Columbus at Guantánamo Bay Photo Credit Emily Brown [Public domain], via Wikimedia Commons

The U.S. House of Representatives examined competing petitions from the cities of St. Louis, New York, Washington, D.C., and Chicago expressing the desire and ability to host the exposition, but the bid from Chicago—financially backed by a cadre of elites in banking, real estate, railroads, and the stock market—prevailed.⁷⁸ The committee from Chicago pledged 5 million dollars, and with assurances that 5 million more could be raised; President Benjamin Harrison signed into law the congressional bill selecting the city as the official site for the exposition.⁷⁹

⁷⁸ Julie K. Rose, *The World's Columbian Exposition*.

⁷⁹ Richard J. Ellis, *To the Flag*, 8.

The fair cost over 33 million dollars and had a total attendance of over 27 million during its yearlong run. While this figure likely includes double or triple counting, including those who visited on multiple days, it remains a striking figure, as the total population of the United States according to the census of 1890 was just under 63 million.⁸⁰ The setting was vast and lush, with over 600 acres made available between Jackson Park and Washington Park.⁸¹ The fair encompassed two interrelated projects within one contiguous space: the White City with its gleaming exposition buildings that showcased the accomplishments of Western science, technology, and the arts positioned against the Midway Plaisance, a mile-long boulevard with coarser entertainments and lavish ethnographic displays of human beings.

The optic reach of the exposition was powerful in scope: 55 nations and 37 colonies participated, in addition to all the states and territories of the United States.⁸² The dedicatory ceremonies were attended by the vice president of the United States; members of the House and Senate; Supreme Court Justices; bishops and cardinals; and admirals and major-generals. President Grover Cleveland pressed the button to open the fair proper on May 1, 1893. There were close to 6,000 addresses—object lessons—given over the course of the year by

⁸⁰ United States Census Office, *Report on the Population of the United States at the Eleventh Census: 1890*.

⁸¹ *Dedicatory and Opening Ceremonies of the World's Columbian Exposition, Historical and Descriptive*, 58–59.

⁸² All but one of the states contributed buildings.

experts on nearly every topic imaginable.⁸³ Press coverage was extensive, and on message: the United States had arrived as a powerful young nation and nascent world power. The *New York Times* alone published hundreds of articles on the Columbian Exposition during the year-long celebration.⁸⁴ It was at once a fearsome consolidation of power, a snuffing of the labor movement, a dismantling of Reconstruction efforts, a retrenching of racial relations, and the grand opening of a new era of imperialism. There was also a movement to demand a particular kind of citizen body. While a Civil War veterans group, the Grand Army of the Republic (GAR) had mobilized around the 1876 centennial to invigorate their goal of ensuring a flag, oath, and salute in every public school, the efforts spearheaded by George T. Balch achieved a reach limited to New York City and government mandated residential Indian schools in the West.⁸⁵ A later project with far reaching consequences emerged from the marketing department of a very popular children's magazine, and successfully aligned with the Columbian Exposition. James Upham, nephew of the publisher of the *Youth's Companion*, had already begun experimenting with programs to reinvigorate American patriotism through the indoctrination of school children. In 1888, flags first appeared among other premiums that could be earned or purchased at a

⁸³ See Rose.

⁸⁴ A search and review of the *New York Times* database using the search term "Columbian Exposition" found over 200 articles appeared between May 1, 1893, and May 1, 1894.

⁸⁵ Peter Gardella, *American Civil Religions: What Americans Hold Sacred*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 85.

reduced price through the sale of subscriptions to the magazine.⁸⁶ As Richard J. Ellis carefully explores in *To the Flag*, the official editorial stance of the magazine took a tone seemingly at odds with the schoolhouse flag movement, emphasizing in an 1889 editorial “Teaching Patriotism,” that flag ceremonies belonged to the military domain, while schools should focus on teaching history and civics. The following year, despite the official expression of ambivalence toward flag waving, Upham succeeded in mounting an essay contest through the pages of the *Youth’s Companion*. One essay prize would be awarded to a student in each state, and the prize would be a nine-by-fifteen-foot flag for the school.⁸⁷ By the end of 1890, “the magazine declared its ambition to see the nation commemorate the ‘Four Hundredth Anniversary of the Discovery of America by Columbus’ by ‘raising the U.S. Flag over every Public School from the Atlantic to the Pacific.’”⁸⁸

The significance of the date chosen for the opening of the fair cannot be overstated: this particular May 1 fell just seven years after the day when 35,000 Chicago workers left their stations to agitate for an eight-hour day. Through the selection of this date for the opening of the Chicago Exposition, the strongest labor movement in the country was neutralized and permanently delinked from the international labor movement it propelled into existence. A state-sponsored Labor Day in the fall would become a day granted for barbecues, not taken for

⁸⁶ Richard J. Ellis, *To the Flag: The Unlikely History of the Pledge of Allegiance*. (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2005), 6.

⁸⁷ Ellis, 7.

⁸⁸ Ellis, 7.

protest marches, a definitive co-opting that effectively cut any ties to the Haymarket Square uprisings. As Eric Hobsbawm quipped, “[C]akes and ale were not part of the revolutionary gameplan.”⁸⁹ The strategic choice of May 1 as the opening day of the Columbian Exposition was a successful move to diffuse the political currency of the day for the U.S. labor movement, thwarting alignment with the socialist-inflected International Workers Day.

The labor movement was framed as a foreign threat, fueled by terrorists ready to incite violence and unsettle the status quo, with the aggrieved workers painted as victims not of their working conditions, or of business owners, but of the labor organizers. Reverend Theodore Thornton Munger, remembered as a progressive New England Congregationalist, wrote a long essay for *Century Illustrated Monthly* in which he blamed “indiscriminate immigration” for social unrest and argued that “the negro problem aside...it is the foreign element that poisons politics, blocks the wheels of industry, fills our prisons and hospitals and poor houses, defies law...”⁹⁰ The fair soothed those Americans who were unnerved by the labor strikes and the inflammatory rhetoric of the press by offering a digestible narrative about the social order within an authoritative setting backed by the science—and the academy—of the day. Order would be

⁸⁹ Hobsbawm, “Birth of A Holiday: First of May,” in *On the Move: Essays in Labour History presented in Philip Bagwell*, edited by Chris Wrigley and Jonathan Shepherd, 104–122, (London: Hambledon Press, 1991), see 112.

⁹⁰ Theodore Thornton Munger, “Immigration by Passport,” *The Century Illustrated Monthly Magazine*, vol. 35. eds. Joseph Gilbert-Holland and Richard Watson. (New York: Century Company, 1888), 798. For further insights into late-nineteenth-century violence and social unrest, see James Green, *Death in the Haymarket*, 9.

restored. The authoritarianism flouted at Guantánamo performs a similar symbolic function post *nine/eleven*. Guantánamo signals that the world can be disciplined and re-ordered according to the will and desires of the United States, tortured into compliance, if necessary. It affirms a worldview in which the religious and/or racial other is a threat, to be subordinated or eliminated. Robert Rydell gestures to Jerusalem in his chapter on the Columbian Exposition, and frames the city as a pilgrimage site, invoking Robert Herrick's literary impressions of the fair as a place where "the toil and trouble of men, the fear that was gripping men's hearts in the markets, fell away from men and its place came Faith. The people who could dream this vision and make it real, those people...would press on to greater victories than this triumph of beauty—victories greater than the world had yet witnessed."⁹¹

The 1893 exposition set the stage for the subsequent establishment of Guantánamo as a base and future prison by advancing the idea of the U.S. as a nascent world power and empire, laying the groundwork for the U.S. entry into Cuba's War of Independence against Spain. The year 1893 was one of severe financial crisis in the United States, the worst up to that point in American history. At the close of the nineteenth century, the exposition in Chicago responded to the deep insecurities of the elite as they resisted the race and class realignments of post-Civil War Reconstruction. The project cemented power relations within the country and forged pathways for international commerce

⁹¹ Robert Herrick, qtd. in Robert W. Rydell, *All the World's a Fair: Visions of Empire at American International Expositions, 1876-1916*. Chicago: University of Chicago, 1984), 38.

while promoting a refreshed utopian vision of an imperial and uniquely God-blessed United States. Through the enshrinement of Columbus and the progress attributed to Europeans in the Americas, especially the U.S., the exposition signaled that though the Western frontier was officially closed, the world beyond was ripe for expansion.⁹² General James Rusling gives this account of a General Missionary Committee meeting in which President McKinley describes his prayer inspired awakening that the United States was bound to keep the Philippines:

I am not ashamed to tell you, gentlemen, that I went down on my knees and prayed Almighty God for light and guidance more than one night. And one night late it came to me this way—I don't know how it was, but it came: (1) That we could not give them back to Spain—that would be cowardly and dishonorable; (2) that we could not turn them over to France or Germany—our commercial rivals in the Orient—that would be bad business and discreditable; (3) that we could not leave them to themselves— they were unfit for self-government—and they would soon have anarchy and misrule over there worse than Spain's was; and (4) that there was nothing left for us to do but to take them all, and to educate the Filipinos, and uplift and civilize and Christianize them, and by God's grace do the very best we could by them, as our fellow-men for whom Christ also died.⁹³

This Republican campaign poster shows incumbent President William McKinley and vice-presidential candidate Theodore Roosevelt. Between 1896 and 1900 during McKinley's first term, the United States would gain control of Cuba, Puerto Rico, Guam, the Philippines, and Hawaii. The Phrygian cap in the laurel leaves lit by the sun implies freedom and promise of U.S. leadership, set against

⁹² The Western Frontier was declared officially closed by the Superintendent of the U.S. Census in 1890, just as the plans for the exposition were emerging.

⁹³ General James Rusling, "Interview with President William McKinley," *The Christian Advocate* 22 January 1903, 17. Reprinted in Daniel Schirmer and Stephen Roskamm Shalom, eds., *The Philippines Reader* (Boston: South End Press, 1987), 22–23.

the images of shackled prisoners, financial instability, and ruin under Spanish rule.⁹⁴



Figure 2. McKinley-Roosevelt Campaign Poster (Wikileaks Commons)

The European scramble for Africa was underway, but expansionists in the U.S. were drawn to alternate territories. This shift in the ideological balance contributed to the necessary conditions for U.S. entry into the war against Spain, ostensibly on behalf of the Cuban people, a move that ultimately led to the demand for the permanent occupation of Guantánamo Bay. As architectural critic Herbert Muschamp wrote in a retrospective piece for the *New York Times*

⁹⁴ Note the pictorial claim that the United States control in Cuba meant release from prisons and shackles.

celebrating the 100-year anniversary of the exhibition, the fair “was a full dress rehearsal for the American Century. It announced to the nations gathered around the lagoon, thanks very much for the Nina, the Pinta, the Santa Maria...now it’s the New World’s turn to frame a new world order.”⁹⁵ Guantánamo Bay Prison in the twenty-first century functions to send a similar announcement about the coalescing of order and power, but in a much more threatening tenor.

Against the Current

In the months after nine/eleven, Americans were exposed to a steady barrage of messages, verbal and visual, cautioning that unfortunate shifts in domestic and foreign policy were required because the United States faced an amorphous enemy, one coded through constructions of religious and racial otherness. The humanitarian argument was also deployed through the lens of gender. Americans were warned that these twenty-first-century enemies were a threat to the structure of the country and assured that all measures necessary would be taken to protect the homeland and its interests. The continued political utility and critical valence of rhetoric surrounding the use of the U.S. naval base at Guantánamo is clear in the wake of the 2016 election of Donald Trump as President of the United States, and in his selection of General John F. Kelly as Secretary of Homeland Security. Kelly oversaw Guantánamo in his role of Commander of U.S. Southern Command from November 2012 through January

⁹⁵ Herbert Muschamp, “Architecture View: The Nina, the Pinta, and the Fate of the White City,” *The New York Times*, November 8, 1992.
<http://www.nytimes.com/1992/11/08/arts/architecture-view-the-nina-the-pinta-and-the-fate-of-the-white-city.html>

2016.⁹⁶ A number of human rights groups expressed concern about Kelly's appointment based on his performance at Guantánamo.⁹⁷ Kelly was responsible for the media blackout on the daily number of hunger strikes at Guantánamo, a strategic move that undercut the critical valence of the prisoners' protest.⁹⁸ While Obama was not successful in fulfilling his commitment to close the military prison on the base, the total prisoner population was 60 men at the time of the November 2016 election, down from 242 men when he began his first term of office in January 2009.⁹⁹ During the transitional period leading up to Trump's inauguration, additional prisoners were released, leaving 41 prisoners as Trump took office.¹⁰⁰ Trump has invoked Guantánamo as a site for expansion rather than closure, and has indicated a willingness to try citizens and noncitizens alike in military tribunals at the base and to imprison them there, meaning the number of prisoners could rise.¹⁰¹ Guantánamo provides a useful reference for authoritarian leaders, as it has become synonymous with harsh punishment for the 'worst of the worst' of our enemies. The name of the base encompasses an

⁹⁶ J. Wells Dixon, "President Obama's Failure to Transfer Detainees from Guantánamo," 53–54.

⁹⁷ The ACLU, Human Rights Watch, and Amnesty International all expressed concern about the appointment of General Kelly.

⁹⁸ Carol Rosenberg, "Military Imposes Blackout on Guantánamo Hunger-strike Figures."

⁹⁹ Dave Boyer, "Obama's Biggest-Ever Release of Gitmo Detainees Blasted by Donald Trump, Lawmakers."

¹⁰⁰ See "Guantánamo by the Numbers," *Human Rights First*.
<https://www.humanrightsfirst.org/sites/default/files/gtmo-by-the-numbers.pdf>

¹⁰¹ Patricia Mazzei, "Trump: Americans Could Be Tried in Guantánamo."

entire narrative, as simplistic and rife with error as the version of Columbus taught in US primary schools throughout much of the 20th century.

Allen Feldman is an anthropologist whose work centers on the body, violence, and political terror. While his earlier research focused on violence in Northern Ireland, his work in the twenty-first century is often turned toward the United States. Feldman retrieves Derrida's discussion of a structuring enemy to lay bare the usefulness of the unstructured enemy in the War on Terror.¹⁰² In *The Politics of Friendship*, Derrida argued that the structuring enemy makes the political possible.¹⁰³ Feldman traces how Derrida sourced the idea of a structuring enemy to Carl Schmitt (and Hegel) as he anticipated the political necessity of a replacement for Communist Domino Theory, an absence that required a ghostly new foil to justify the 'freedom and democracy' agenda of U.S. Empire.¹⁰⁴ On September 16, 2001, Vice President Dick Cheney infamously promised:

We also have to work, though, sort of the dark side, if you will. We've got to spend time in the shadows in the intelligence world. A lot of what needs to be done here will have to be done quietly, without any discussion, using sources and methods that are available to our intelligence agencies, if we're going to be successful. That's the world these folks operate in, and so it's going to be vital for us to use any means at our disposal, basically, to achieve our objective.¹⁰⁵

¹⁰² Feldman, *Archives of the Insensible*, 185–86.

¹⁰³ Jacques Derrida, *The Politics of Friendship* (London: Verso, 2005), 84.

¹⁰⁴ Feldman, *Archives of the Insensible*, 185–86.

¹⁰⁵ Dick Cheney, interview by Tim Russert, *Meet the Press*.

This shadow work required the production of ongoing ideological grounds and an unstructured enemy—supplemented by a sensitization and disciplining of the population through a continuous state of emergency meant to justify secrecy, securitization, militarization, and the breaching of values, laws, and international agreements. The War on Terror and the category of Islamic terrorist provided cover for an agenda that claimed the side of light and freedom, however much it operated in the dark.

Though the Bush administration and the Department of Defense gestured to the shadows, the work was hardly conducted in secret. Politicians, attorneys, physicians, psychologists, academics, journalists, and intelligence and military personnel, as well as professional organizations that govern the ethical conduct of individual members, were knowing and willing participants in legitimizing and facilitating the repurposing of Guantánamo as key site in the War on Terror. Anthropologist Talal Asad reads the shadow world as a facet of disciplinary, rather than sovereign, power; thus, Asad indicts the power of the state, “which works through the normalization of everyday behavior.”¹⁰⁶ Americans have been groomed to tacitly acknowledge and support rendition, imprisonment, and torture as a normative and necessary apparatus in the new world, and to accept the enhanced securitization and surveillance that emerged. The message was fitted tongue and groove to its counterpart, the production of a spectacular terrorist narrative about the prisoners at Guantánamo and why “they” hate “us.”

¹⁰⁶ Talal Asad, “On Torture, or Cruel, Inhuman, and Degrading Treatment,” in *Social Suffering*, Arthur Kleinman, Veena Das, and Margaret Lock, Eds. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), 288.

All facts, history, and context are excised from this potent framing, and because the enemy is so loosely structured, anyone who opposes the interests of the state can be categorized to fit the part. Bits of metadata, scraped from social media, can be retrofitted to produce a particular narrative that implicates, or operationalized to curry political support. When retired Army Colonel Stuart Herrington was asked to “visit and advise the interrogations command” in 2002, shortly after the first prisoners arrived, he was taken aback, “Of the 300, they were sure they had the correct identification, name and biometric data of about 30% of them.”¹⁰⁷ This means that in early 2002, with over 300 prisoners in U.S. custody being described as the worst of the worst, and subject to horrific conditions and endless interrogation, the U.S. was not sure who over 200 of the men even were.

While Cheney invoked the shadowy language of the intelligence world, President Bush embedded the language of the sacred, which was immediately mirrored back and amplified in the words of bin Laden, as Bruce Lincoln so neatly outlined in *Holy Terrors: Thinking About Religion after 9/11*, pointing to the “symmetric dualisms found in Bush and bin Laden’s language.”¹⁰⁸ Just hours after Bush ended his October 7, 2001, announcement that the U.S. would be launching attacks in Afghanistan with “May God continue to bless America,” bin Laden opened his videotaped remarks with “Here is America struck by God

¹⁰⁷ Spencer Ackerman, “Bad lieutenant: American police brutality, exported from Chicago to Guantánamo.” *The Guardian*, February 18, 2015. <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2015/feb/18/american-police-brutality-chicago-guantanamo>

¹⁰⁸ Bruce Lincoln, *Holy Terrors*. See Chapter Two, 19–32.

Almighty.”¹⁰⁹ Lincoln rightly distinguishes Bush’s wording as subtext, observing that “it suggests Bush and his speechwriters gave serious thought to the phrase and decided to emphatically reaffirm the notion that the United States has enjoyed divine favor throughout its history, moreover that it deserves said favor insofar as it remains firm in its faith.”¹¹⁰ Bush had invoked the claim of Manifest Destiny. Lincoln reads bin Laden’s response as directly oppositional: “[I]n the opening words of bin Laden’s text, September 11 is construed as nothing less than the visitation of divine vengeance on a sinful nation.”¹¹¹ From bin Laden’s perspective, the United States was a hypocritical exporter of violence around the world, but especially to Muslim majority countries.

Guantánamo provided a unique whetstone to sharpen the Bush Administration’s binary of good and evil for the American people. From the Department of Defense came the language that marked the men as animalistic meta-predators: “[T]hese are people that would gnaw hydraulic lines in the back of a C-17 to bring it down,” General Richard Myers, Chairman of the U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff, told the press as the first prisoners were flown to Guantánamo.¹¹² While Meyers admitted almost immediately that his statement was hyperbolic, another vivid—and dehumanizing—image of the prisoners had been conjured,

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, 30, 22.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 30.

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*, 22.

¹¹² “Shackled Detainees arrive at Guantánamo,” *CNN World*, January 11, 2002.

and so entered the media echo chamber and the U.S. imagination.¹¹³ This type of metaphoric allusion does a particular kind of work in that it hits at a visceral and emotional level, and is not easily refuted with facts or logic once a person or a group has been stigmatized in this way. Negative depictions of Arabs and Muslims were not confined to occasional military press conferences, but part of a systemic barrage that included popular media like *24*, *Homeland*, and *Zero Dark Thirty*.¹¹⁴ In his work on individuals and groups that are subject to stigma, because of social transgression, or physical or mental illness, sociologist Erving Goffman coined the term “spoiled identity.”¹¹⁵ Some theorists use stronger terms like “social death” to explain the consequences.¹¹⁶ Murat Kurnaz describes his first impressions of the enclosure in which he was kept as “a pen, also made of chain-link. These were cages. Prisoners in orange overalls were already sitting there, each in their own little cages...all in a row, like tigers or lions at the zoo.”¹¹⁷ Moazzam Begg, a British citizen, writes not only of being caged like an animal,

¹¹³ Ibid.

¹¹⁴ See Jack G. Shaheen, *Reel Bad Arabs: How Hollywood Vilifies a People* (Northampton, MA: Olive Branch Press, 2015) and Evelyn Alsultany, *Arabs and Muslims in the Media: Race and Representation after 9/11* (New York: New York University Press, 2012).

¹¹⁵ Erving Goffman, *Stigma: Notes on the Management of Spoiled Identity* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1963).

¹¹⁶ “Social death” is a term used in conjunction with slavery, the Holocaust, and prison, as well as dementia. Some key theorists include Zygmunt Bauman, Giorgio Agamben, Colin Dayan, Frank B. Wilderson III, and Lisa Guenther.

¹¹⁷ Murat Kurnaz, *Five Years of My Life*, 95.

but of being treated as one: “We are held here in limbo, our loved ones lost to us, our lives shattered, and we are treated like animals.”¹¹⁸

The disciplinary effect of the terrorist threat influenced not just the American public, but also its elected officials, including former President Barack Obama. One of his first official acts as a freshly inaugurated first term president in 2009 was to sign an executive order to close Guantánamo, but much like Bill Clinton’s post-election wavering on the continued imprisonment of Haitian refugees at Guantánamo in 1992, Obama’s resolve faltered as obstruction and political repercussions loomed. Rosa Brooks summed it up this way: “Who would want to take the political heat for such a decision? If the Obama administration released someone who end up carrying out another 9/11, the Democratic Party would be finished.”¹¹⁹ In both cases, Democratic presidencies carried the legacies of Bush presidencies into their own moral compromises. In Clinton’s case, a lawsuit forced his hand, though with the caveat from the Justice Department that the ruling be vacated to avoid setting a legal precedent that would interfere with future use of the base as an indefinite detention center.¹²⁰

Carceral technologies and torture techniques have histories and leave traces; they travel across time and geographies. Historian Jonathan Hyslop examines the years between 1896 and 1907, the period when the first

¹¹⁸ Moazzam Begg, *Enemy Combatant*, 128.

¹¹⁹ Rosa Brooks, *How Everything Became War and the Military Became Everything*, 63.

¹²⁰ See Benjamin Wittes, *Law and the Long War*, 268, note 33.

concentration camps emerged in Cuba, in the territories of Southern Africa during the Boer Wars, and in the Philippines, connecting the early camps and the military professionalism that facilitated them “to mid 20th century camps...through a global diffusion of the concept, via new forms of print media.”¹²¹ The Spanish general Valeriano Weyler implemented the camps in Cuba in 1896, after his predecessor refused to do so.¹²² The U.S. intervention in Cuba against the Spaniards drew on diverse streams of support. While the expansionists saw opportunities for lucrative trade and annexation, humanitarians referenced the cruelty of the *reconcentrado* (concentration camp) strategy of the Spaniards. The idea, conceived and executed by General Weyler, involved internal displacement of the peasant population from their lands into fortified camps. If you were inside the camp, you were not able to aid or join the rebels, and if you were outside the camps, you were fair game to be killed. A corollary policy was the destruction of the farmers’ crops. While the Spaniards were destroying the food crops, the rebels burned the export crops of sugar cane, and tobacco. Even though the horrors of the camp had helped sway the U.S. populace toward intervention in Cuba, within a few years, the United States military made the strategy its own, establishing concentration camps in the Philippine provinces of Batangas and Laguna, following a long siege against the local Filipino resistance that included the razing of homes and crops; the slaughter of livestock; and the mass imprisonment, torture, and murder of

¹²¹ Jonathan Hyslop, “The Invention of the Concentration Camp,” 251.

¹²² *Ibid.*, 258.

resistance fighters.¹²³ It is difficult to overstate the irony of the eventual establishment of the notorious U.S. detention camps at Guantánamo Bay built on land that was taken in a war that Americans purportedly waged to liberate people from concentration camps, constant surveillance, and other abuses experienced under rule by a foreign power.¹²⁴ H.W. Brand writes of the early uses of the water cure by U.S. forces:

In the Philippines, American soldiers and some of their Filipino allies—the war divided Filipino society as deeply as Cuba had been rent by the anti-Spanish war there—resorted to torture of suspected guerrillas and sympathizers. The most notorious method of extracting information was the ‘water cure,’ by which interrogators forced a gallon or more of water down the throat of a suspect until his stomach was all but bursting, and then pummeled and kicked his bloated belly. More than a few people died under the treatment. Although such atrocities nagged the consciences of those responsible—and provoked congressional inquiries—many Americans were willing to accept that in a war between the white race and a colored race harsh measures were necessary. (Sixty years late, when American troops were again fighting in Southeast Asia, some of this same sentiment would come to haunt America—and do more than haunt Vietnam. Meanwhile, the concentration camps U.S. troops had created in the Philippines would be resurrected as ‘strategic hamlets.’)¹²⁵

These mechanisms of torture continued to be reproduced and circulated with both subtle nods and active participation by U.S. military and police departments. I heard Myrla Baldonado’s account at the 2014 Amnesty International Conference in Chicago. She spoke at a session on “Accountability for Torture: in Chicago, the United States and Around the World.” Baldonado was disappeared during the Marco dictatorship and held for two years in close

¹²³ Ibid., 260.

¹²⁴ H. W. Brands, *The Restless Decade: America in the 1890s*, (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1995), 305.

¹²⁵ H.W. Brands, 337.

proximity to a U.S. Naval Base. During those two years she was subjected to water torture, (simulated drowning, more accurately describes the measure) and sexually harassment from her captors. As she recounted, and as recorded in the program, “during the height of her torture, she felt there was training going on,” and “she later learned from a U.S. intelligence officer that the Naval Base officers knew about her arrest.”¹²⁶ Former Chicago Police Commander Jon Burge brought the military torture mechanisms he learned in Vietnam as a military police officer to bear on poor minority population in Chicago. Darrell Cannon, who spoke in the session with Baldonado, spent twenty-four years in prison, before being exonerated in the wake of an investigation that determined that Burge

was responsible for orchestrating, perpetrating, and covering up the torture of roughly 120 individuals in the South Side of Chicago, at least 110 of whom were African American males. He and his midnight shift officers forced confessions—many of them false—from their suspects using electrocution, beatings, suffocation with plastic bags, simulated shotgun executions, and a myriad of other internationally outlawed methods of torture.¹²⁷

It was in the context of the Amnesty conference that I learned of Chicago police detective Richard Zuley’s role in promoting torture in Chicago ‘off-sites.’ A Navy Reserve Lieutenant, Zuley was responsible for egregious abuses of prisoners at Guantánamo, including Mohamedou Slahi. A probe led by an investigative team

¹²⁶ “Bringing Human Rights Home,” *Amnesty International Human Rights Conference* (April 4-6, 2014) Testimony from Baldonado and Cannon given Saturday April 5, 2014 Program Block 1 (11:15-12:30) JW Marriot Chicago Loop. Printed Program, see pages, 32-33.

¹²⁷ Julian Duggan, “Police Abuse in Chicago: Part 1,” *San Francisco Gate*, March 23, 2015. <http://uchicagogate.com/articles/2015/3/23/chicago-police-abuse-continues-part-i-john-burge/> See also, Noah Berlatsky, “When Chicago Tortured,” *The Atlantic*, December 17, 2014.

at the Guardian found clear linkages between the experiences of those who had been tortured by Zuley in Chicago, and those he tortured at Guantánamo.¹²⁸ It was no accident that Zuley was given the assignment to serve as an interrogator and the head of the “Special Projects Team” at Guantánamo. Zuley’s “interrogation plan for Slahi received personal sign-off from then-defense secretary Donald Rumsfeld.”¹²⁹ Zuley was praised for ‘getting’ information, just as he was praised in Chicago for ‘getting’ confessions. And Zuley, like Burge before him, targeted minorities with what has been described as “racial animus.”¹³⁰ Currents of racism and the desire to dominate brown and black bodies connect Chicago to Guantánamo, both sites whistle messages that powerfully coalesce and marshal racist and xenophobic elements.¹³¹ These connections serve as a potent reminder of how violent practices are reproduced across temporal and geographic distances, and how differently the violence of an enemy continues to be viewed and interpreted in comparison to our own.

Waterboarding offers another example of the migration of disciplinary and retributive apparatus, not only through time and space, but in and out of legal

¹²⁸ Spencer Ackerman, “Guantánamo torturer led brutal regime of shackling and confession,” *The Guardian*, Feb. 18, 2015. <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2015/feb/18/guantanamo-torture-chicago-police-brutality>

¹²⁹ Spencer Ackerman, “Bad Lieutenant: American Police Brutality Exported from Chicago to Guantánamo,” *The Guardian*, February 18, 2015. <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2015/feb/18/american-police-brutality-chicago-guantanamo>

¹³⁰ Spencer Ackerman, “Guantánamo torturer.”

¹³¹ Chicago is consistently highlighted as a center of black on black crime by conservative politicians.

and moral categories; at the outset of the twenty-first century, waterboarding shifted from the clearly defined realm of torture to the semantic legal fiction of “enhanced interrogation techniques.” Some members of the U.S. military used waterboarding to extract confessions from resistance fighters in the Philippines at the beginning of the twentieth century and there were instances again during the Vietnam War, but waterboarding was considered an out-of-bounds practice, with practitioners subject to investigation and punishment, at least when specific instances surfaced publicly in the newspapers. Official policies changed during a five-year period in the early twenty-first century as waterboarding and other forms of torture were legally shoehorned into a newly created category of enhanced interrogation techniques. This might be called the discounted known, riffing on Donald Rumsfeld’s phrased pairings of the known and unknown as categories between which accountability so carelessly—or carefully—slips.¹³²

Early attempts to describe and interpret the post-9/11 deviations from normative military and policing practices drew heavily on the idea of the state of exception created in response to an emergency. Feldman, whose work on violence and political terror is mentioned above, issued a corrective to Judith Butler, Giorgio Agamben, and others by insisting that the frames of law, of war, of institutions, and of the state itself no longer constitute boundaries that must be stepped beyond to enter exceptional time-spaces. In other words, it is not that we have stepped outside the boundaries during a critical time, still recognizing the frames as intact, with the hope of returning to the stable forms once the

¹³² Donald Rumsfeld, News Conference.

imminent threat has passed. Instead, he argues, the frames were deliberately, systematically, and perhaps irreparably damaged to allow all manner of permanent slippage and seepage domestically and abroad, evident in the visible metonymic sites like Guantánamo, in the shrouded dark sites, in the use of drone strikes, the side-stepping of human rights covenants, and changes within the domestic security state.¹³³ In this way, ideas of justice, and law and order appeared to maintain structure for many or perhaps most Americans, even as the integrity of the forms demonstrated major cracks—something legal scholars and human rights groups have pointed to with alarming frequency. Naomi Klein, Greg Grandin, and others have written about this damage as a consequence of the shock-strategy of late stage or hyper-capitalism.¹³⁴ The prison-at-large at Guantánamo has been a strategic mechanism used to weather and test the frames to allow the seepage. This has happened through the way prisoners have been designated as enemy combatants. One telling sign is that even though Obama reversed Bush administration policies permitting torture, public opinion has near steadily shifted positively toward the use of torture.¹³⁵

The World’s Columbian Exposition provided an earlier and crucial ideological proving ground for an imperial United States. Just five years after the

¹³³ Feldman discusses this in *Archives of the Insensible*, 41; see also the associated note on 66 (note 22). He explains further in his 2010 interview “The Autograph” with *Press TV*.

¹³⁴ Naomi Klein, *The Shock Doctrine*, and Greg Grandin, *Empire’s Workshop*.

¹³⁵ Bruce Drake, “Americans’ Views on Use of Torture in Fighting Terrorism Have Been Mixed.”

fair opened, the country went to war against Spain with the stated mission of liberating Cuba. The Spanish-American War resulted in U.S. control over Guam, the Philippines, Puerto Rico, and Cuba, and contributed to the U.S. annexation of Hawaii. In 1898, U.S. Secretary of State John Hay deemed it “a splendid little war.”¹³⁶ It was also a perfectly orchestrated strategy:

Spain’s harsh handling of the Cuban insurrections quickly aroused American sympathies. Humanitarians argued for American intervention for the dual purpose of alleviating the suffering of the Cuban people and teaching the despicable Spaniards a lesson. Expansionists saw an opportunity to eject Spain from the Caribbean and extend American influence southward either by outright annexation of Cuba or by the establishment of an American protectorate over a nominally independent Cuba. Politicians of both parties saw Cuba as an issue upon which the Americans might release the frustrations that were surfacing as labor violence, political unrest, and other manifestations with the American status quo. Better that Americans vent their frustrations on a foreign enemy than on each other—or, worse, on their elected representatives.¹³⁷

There are clear parallels to the way the wars of the twenty-first century have been packaged and sold to the public. Politicians and military leaders continue to invoke multiple rationales for invasions and occupations, including the necessity of combatting terrorism and the idea of saving or liberating vulnerable populations, and in this way draw support from both the hawks and the humanitarians. The utility of the terrorist narrative is that it provides an unstructured enemy that must be pursued across all time and geographies, as well as victims who require U.S. intervention, even as clear strategic and economic interests drive policy. While the Spanish-American War served as a

¹³⁶ John Taliaferro, *All the Great Prizes*, 330.

¹³⁷ Brands, 306.

distraction from domestic concerns, it built upon and clearly referenced long-standing policies concerning U.S. access in the Caribbean. As early as 1790, then Secretary of State Thomas Jefferson wrote to William Carmichael, the U.S. chargé d'affaires for Spain, about the use of the Spanish port in New Orleans. Jefferson asserted that “the right to use a thing, comprehends a right to the means necessary to its use.”¹³⁸ With this statement, Jefferson sent a message embedded with a threat; the U.S. claimed the right to use the port and was prepared to defend that claim through force, if Spain resisted.

It is useful to examine how the fair projected a particular worldview. The celebration of the anniversary of 400 years of colonization in the Americas brought an exotic (and erotic) assortment of *mise en scènes* to the fair. One could stroll down a street in Cairo, enter a Turkish mosque, observe an African Dahomey village, or *jalan-jalan* through a Javanese village accompanied by gamelan music; upon entrance to this precursor of Disney’s Epcot Center Pavilions (or Disney World’s Animal Kingdom Asia with its Kali River Rapids on the Chakranadi River) the visitor was promised all “the earth for fifty cents.”¹³⁹ The spectacle operated as an inter-objective expression and experience of mastery, mummery, guising, and ownership.¹⁴⁰ The architectural forms of European empire were imagined anew in a cheap faux alabaster façade made of

¹³⁸ Thomas Jefferson, “To William Carmichael,” 64.

¹³⁹ See Rose. And <https://disneyworld.disney.go.com/attractions/animal-kingdom/kali-river-rapids/>

¹⁴⁰ Interobjectivity as described by Latour grants meaning-making to the objects (which are sometimes living) that constitute environment.

plaster of Paris strengthened by the addition of hemp¹⁴¹. With the creation of the White City, America glistened back at herself in a pure imperial vision, as virginal as her myths of origin. The buildings that made up the White City were like what Laurel Kendall calls “ritual props” of material goods, cheap imitations of fetishized luxuries, like those I saw offered to the hungry ghosts in Singapore, destined to burn away to ash.¹⁴² But the White City fed the hungry ghosts and the American imagination of self. Guantánamo does similar work as a site that contrasts the given unimpeachable moral goodness of U.S. violence against the irrational evil violence of others.

The Columbian Exhibition was also a serious ideological project of anthropology at work to reshape the racial dynamics of post-Reconstruction America. Contemporary literary critic Danton Snider explains that the Midway was organized as a “sliding scale of humanity. The Teutonic and Celtic races were placed nearest to the White City; farther away was the Islamic world, East and West Africa; at the farthest end were the savage races, the African Dahomey and the North American Indian.”¹⁴³ The idea of the monstrous race is evocative and indeed a continuation of the European ethnographic descriptions of the first encounters in the Caribbean, a time when Colón wrote of a place “where the people with tails are born,” of cannibals, sirens, and hairless beings.¹⁴⁴ This

¹⁴¹ This mixture is called staff, and calls to mind materiality in service of power.

¹⁴² Laurel Kendall, “Of Hungry Ghosts and Ritual Consumption in the Republic of South Korea,” *American Ethnologist*, March 17, 2008.

¹⁴³ Zeynep Çelik, *Displaying the Orient*, 83.

project foreshadowed the ways in which images of the prisoners of Guantánamo have been used to establish and reinforce the notion of Western Christian superiority over a racialized Islam, both in official coverage and narratives of the state and in U.S. mass media and popular culture. Jack Shaheen’s study of more than 1000 films with an Arab and/or Muslim character demonstrates that film and television (and theme parks) took on the racialization project as the fairs of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries receded in prominence. After 9/11, the depictions became more frequent and more threatening; Shaheen uses the word “bombardment” to describe the prominence of Arabs and/or Muslims as terrorists in entertainment.¹⁴⁵ Guantánamo has featured in multiple genres including poetry, fiction, cartoons, music, film, visual art, television, and plays. *Harold and Kumar Escape from Guantánamo Bay* and the one-man play by Irish comedian Abie Philbin Bowen, *Jesus: The Guantánamo Years*, make some comedic critical interventions while popular crime and action shows like *24*, *SVU*, and *Homeland* tend to present Guantánamo as a useful and necessary threat ready to punish evil-doers.¹⁴⁶ It has become a facile trope, a cultural reference so clearly understood that it requires no context or explanation. Viewers implicitly understand the desired linkage between terrorism and Guantánamo without reference to any unsettling issues of legality, morality, U.S.

¹⁴⁴ Peter Mason, *Deconstructing America*, 102–3.

¹⁴⁵ Shaheen, xv.

¹⁴⁶ Carol Rosenberg, “Guantánamo Omnipresent in Pop Culture,” *McClatchy Newspapers* <http://www.popmatters.com/article/guantanamo-omnipresent-in-pop-culture/> September 17, 2007.

military interventions and occupations, or human rights. The call for individuals to be sent to Guantánamo made across the political spectrum. Barack Obama was the subject of numerous political cartoons that showed him in an orange jumpsuit imprisoned at Guantánamo, sympathizing with terrorists at Guantánamo, or chained to moral weight of Guantánamo because he failed to close the prison.¹⁴⁷ Amid the chants to “lock her up,” there were (and continue to be more than a year post election) references to sending Hilary Clinton to Guantánamo, and political cartoons, memes, and t-shirts depicting her at Guantánamo or calling for her to be sent there. Likewise, when Donald Trump announced his intention to keep Guantánamo open, there were angry responses that called for it to be kept open so that he could be sent there. The antipathy toward high profile politicians is less shocking than how casually the threat is deployed toward athletes who take a knee, or toward activist students. The base is even seen as a solution for undocumented children from Central America; this suggestion comes from DeWayne Wickham, founding dean of Morgan State University’s School of Global Journalism and Communication, “at the Navy base, which boasts movie theaters, American fast-food restaurants and excellent recreational facilities, care of the child migrants should be put in the hands of officials from the Department of Health and Human Services, rather than the Department of Homeland Security.”¹⁴⁸ Guantánamo (and its signature of torture)

¹⁴⁷ Examples: “How to Close Guantánamo,” *The Economist*, February 24, 2011. <http://www.economist.com/node/18231360>

has become a deeply embedded cultural and political reference point for Americans and the international community.



Figure 3. The Heart of America Wordpress¹⁴⁹

In the cartoon above, the phrase drawn from Martin Luther King’s 1963 “I have a dream” speech is changed from “God” to the Arabic translation “Allah,”

¹⁴⁸ DeWayne Wickham, “Wickham: Send border children to Gitmo” *USA Today* July 7, 2014.

<https://www.usatoday.com/story/opinion/2014/07/07/wickham-border-children-gitmo-immigration-obama-column/12315921/>

¹⁴⁹ Heart of America Wordpress

<https://theheartofamerica.wordpress.com/category/military-matters/page/7/>

and “Obama” is added. Both the substitution and the addition are meant to carry a negative valence. King’s altered words are put into the mouths of prisoners being freed from Guantánamo. The angry prisoners are depicted variously as suicide bombers strapped with dynamite and fighters wielding rifles and swords. Numerous negatively charged semiotic identifiers are included. One prisoner has a prayer cap and a face covered with a scarf. A second with a heavy dark beard and unibrow is depicted wearing a turban and sandals. Another is hooded in black with an accentuated nose. The sleeves of each prisoner, now imagined as fierce jihadis, are wrinkled as if the agitated bodies of the former prisoners cannot be constrained by clothing. Obama is shown hammering a closed sign at the gate of the prison, but looks on in despair tempered with regret. The invocation of an MLK speech for this cartoon links enslaved African Americans and imprisoned Muslims deliberately with Obama, the first African American president.

The juxtaposition of the prisoners and guards at Guantanamo as representational of civilizational ideals at odds maps onto the teleological project presented in Chicago in 1893. In the 21st century, the object lessons of Guantánamo are mainly absorbed via internet, news programs, and popular culture, though military personnel also circulate stock narratives through their families and communities pre and post deployment to the base.

At the Columbian Exposition, three distinct arrangements of the first peoples of the Americas were offered: two versions inside the fairgrounds and a third just adjacent. On the Midway Plaisance stood facsimiles of Indian villages

complete with Native Americans performing, including a Fourth of July performance where “a chorus of native Indians sung national songs in the Manufactures building.”¹⁵⁰ Buffalo Bill was denied space for his show inside the fair proper, so he rented a 15-acre parcel of land just adjacent to the fair.¹⁵¹ His show did not fit the broader fair narrative. Within the grounds of the fair proper, indigenous people were presented either as primitive, as in the village setting, or as having been properly civilized through exposure to white culture and schooling away from the reservation. Instead, the indigenous performers in Buffalo Bill’s show were free agents with contracts, capitalizing on their skills in a way that unsettled the clear racial and social relations the fair sought to depict.

The positioning of race at the exposition was critiqued directly by intellectuals and activists in the black community, and with good reason. Frederick Douglass, Ida B. Wells, F. L. Barnett, and I. Garland Penn wrote and published an on-demand pamphlet in English entitled “Why the Colored American Is Not in the World’s Columbian Exposition.”¹⁵² Wells and her co-authors called on the fair’s organizers to showcase the many contributions that had been made by African Americans and tendered a searing moral indictment at the exclusion: “Only as a menial is the Colored American to be seen—the Nation’s deliberate and cowardly tribute to the Southern demand ‘to keep the Negro in his

¹⁵⁰ *Dedicatory and Opening Ceremonies of the World’s Columbian Exposition, Historical and Descriptive*, 36.

¹⁵¹ Duane A. Smith, Karen A. Vendl, and Mark A. Vendl, *Colorado Goes to the Fair*, 69.

¹⁵² Ida B. Wells, ed. *The Reason Why the Colored American Is Not in the Columbian Exposition*.

place.’ And yet in spite of this fact, the Colored Americans were expected to observe a designated day as their day—to rejoice and be exceeding glad.”

Sociologist Robert Bogdan notes,

White Americans had no interest in seeing the run-of-the-mill Negro, but they did want to see the warriors, the bestial Africans, and the pygmies. Showmen thus had a mandate to mold the presentation of the Africans they exhibited to justify slavery and colonialism—that is, to confirm the Africans’ inferiority and primitiveness.¹⁵³

Bogdan’s assertion that white Americans wanted to see the performance of black exoticism and primitivism on the Midway is likely true—Wells makes a similar charge. It is equally true, however, that they did want to see “the run of the mill Negro”—but only, as Wells writes, firmly in his or her place in the greater context of the fair. *Harper’s Weekly* ran a 15-part cartoon series lampooning a fictional African American family and their adventures at the fair.¹⁵⁴ In it, the family was consistently and conspicuously framed as completely out of place in the role of visitors to the fair.

Meanwhile, African American workers occupied particular and crucial roles, mainly in the background; African Americans were among the laborers who cleared the land and constructed the buildings; in addition, the janitorial staff was 100% African American, and predictably the “janitors were paid less than any other worker at the Exposition.”¹⁵⁵ This draws a striking comparison to the reliance on the cheap international labor of third country nationals (TCNs) to

¹⁵³ Robert Bogdan, *Freak Show*, 187.

¹⁵⁴ Bridget R. Cooks, “Fixing Race.”

¹⁵⁵ David Silkenat, “Workers in the White City,” 282.

provide much of the labor behind the scenes at Guantánamo Bay. Jamaican and Filipino workers have been repeatedly sought out for construction, maintenance, and food services. In 2002, when Kellogg, Brown and Root, a subsidiary of Halliburton, was awarded the contract for Camp Delta, they turned to a company based in the Philippines for contract labor. Anglo-European Placement Services (AEPS), aided by the U.S State Department, was granted travel and working documents from the Philippine Overseas Employment Administration for nearly 200 Filipino workers in less than a day.¹⁵⁶ The workers were paid \$30 (\$2.50 per hour) for each twelve-hour workday. They worked seven days a week for two months. According to workers, they were “housed in enormous tents, where they were not allowed access to television, radio, or newspapers and were not allowed to call their families for more than two minutes at a time.”¹⁵⁷ A worker interviewed by Filipino American journalist Rick Rocamora explained, “we had our own guards and could not leave our compound.” Not only does this kind of contract labor allow for maximum profit extraction and artificially low personnel counts, but these precarious workers are far less likely to critique base operations or to become whistleblowers. Jana Lipman ponders rhetorically in the epilogue to her monograph on the history of Cuban workers at Guantánamo, “As the U.S. military adapts to the War on Terror, is it worth asking who does the dishes, serves the beers, and ‘waxes the floor’ of empire?”¹⁵⁸

¹⁵⁶ Pratap Chatterjee, *Halliburton’s Army*, (New York: Nation, 2009), 75.

¹⁵⁷ Pratap Chatterjee, 75.

The laborer as backdrop was a feature of the Columbian Exposition, as well. All but one of the states at the fair had a building showcasing their state, but the sites of some of the former slaveholding states provide the greatest insights into the U.S. psyche during Reconstruction. In the description of the Virginia building, it is mentioned without irony, “The furnishing included articles collected from all parts of the state—heirlooms in old Virginia families. Old Virginia negroes were the servants in attendance.”¹⁵⁹ The Florida structure was modeled on the Spanish Fort Marion at St. Augustine: “In the moat is a sunken garden where were produced miniature fields of cotton, sugar, rice (sic), tobacco, etc. showing the natural resources of the State.”¹⁶⁰ The cultivated resources were on display, absent any history of the means of production; the crops on this model plantation appeared in careful rows, as if organically determined by God and nature. The two exhibits demonstrated Wells’ contention that African Americans “had contributed a large share to American prosperity and civilization,” and that African American labor produced the wealth that “has afforded to the white people of this country the leisure essential to their great progress in education, art, science, industry and invention.”¹⁶¹ Cuba was also represented at the 1893 exposition, of course as a Spanish territory. Eleven years

¹⁵⁸ Jana K. Lipman, *Guantánamo: A Working-Class History between Empire and Revolution*. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2009), 227.

¹⁵⁹ *Dedicatory and Opening Ceremonies of the World’s Columbian Exposition, Historical and Descriptive*, 104.

¹⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 96.

¹⁶¹ See Ida B. Wells.

later, at the 1904 St. Louis World's Fair, Cuba had its own structure, a "Spanish renaissance" mansion with an open-air rotunda replete with "busts of Maceo, Marti, Cespedes, and Agromanti, Cuban patriots draped with Cuban flags."¹⁶²

The intellectual architects of the Chicago Exposition and those of Guantánamo prison make the claim that the world requires the firm resolve and ubiquitous hand of the United States. Both the prison and the exposition have aimed for and captivated national and global audiences, addressing deep social anxieties as they functioned as sites for performing the order and power of nation and empire in the sharply defined contrast of civilization with barbarism. At the World's Fair, this was accomplished through the geographic distribution of high and low culture, in the Great Halls that showcased the technological advances and bounty of the Europeans and especially the United States as against the dangerous and unruly displays of the uncivilized on the Midway Plaisance.

At Guantánamo, the bifurcation of the base and prison is equally dramatic. The base boasts a beautiful shoreline, rare and protected species, apartment buildings, townhouses, single-family residences, fast food restaurants, worship spaces, a hospital, a daycare center, K-12 education, Scout troops, youth sports, a marina, a bowling alley, batting cages, shaded playgrounds, a skate park, a free outdoor movie house with nightly screenings, a radio station, a television station, a glistening pool facility with water slides, a veterinary clinic, hospice care, a

¹⁶² James William Buel, ed., *Louisiana and the Fair*, 2195.

cemetery—all unremarkable facets of any idyllic waterfront community.¹⁶³ I recognize the weight of the listing, place after place, but it is important to let the words carry the density of the occupation on the page, to signify the colonization on Cuban soil.

It is the White (or more accurately, light beige) City set against to the stark and racialized space of the prison inside the wire.¹⁶⁴ Yet this same community is home to the guards, staff, and officers who oversee the most infamous prison of our time, located within the geography of the base. Each day and night guards, medics, and other support staff travel by bus to the prison inside the wire. The realities of the two spaces are jarring when considered as a whole. The prisoners may smell the salt air, but they do not experience the water; indeed, they rarely even see it. Ahmed Errachidi, a prisoner from Morocco, remembers, “[B]reezes would bring in the sea’s salty moistness, but only in one cell block did I ever glimpse even a tiny piece of its vast blueness.”¹⁶⁵ Yet water is a common feature of the prisoner paintings; many of the paintings feature buildings looking out onto the sea, or boats on the water. The paintings are nearly all landscapes or still lifes, disturbingly flat in affect, but the frequency of boats on the water suggests how

¹⁶³ Department of Defense Website: Military Installations, Naval Stations, Guantánamo Bay, Cuba.

¹⁶⁴ Toni Morrison draws our attention to the power of the metaphorical use of race in creating and masking distributions of power, see *Playing in the Dark: Whiteness and the Literary Imagination*, 63.

¹⁶⁵ Ahmed Errachidi with Gillian Slovo, *The General*, 76–77.

strongly the knowledge of the nearby sea has affected the imagination of the prisoners.¹⁶⁶

Often the photographs chosen for distribution to media channels show the prisoners as disheveled and disoriented; they are photos that communicate threat. The widely circulated photograph of Khalid Sheikh Mohammad is a prime example of shaping the persona of the prisoner for consumption. Over time these photographs have been juxtaposed and interspersed with regular installments from documentary filmmakers and human rights activists, as well as odd and distorted accounts from such diverse observers as Miami Dolphins cheerleaders, country music stars, and a few circus performers who traveled to Guantánamo to entertain the troops and surreptitiously filmed a documentary film. This circulation of images in conjunction with the withholding of key pieces of information about the facility and the people in it maps onto the domestic practice of police departments and reporters sharing photographs of the victims of police shootings that frame the victims as dangerous bodies. The prisoners are very rarely visible except as tainted and dangerous bodies infected with the spores of terrorist impulse—no matter that for the vast majority of prisoners there has been no charge, no trial, no defense, no verdict, no sentence.¹⁶⁷

¹⁶⁶ Andy Worthington, “First Glimpse of Guantánamo Prisoner Art.”

¹⁶⁷ As of January 9, 2017, one detainee, Ahmed Ghailani, had been prosecuted in a federal court, and eight had been convicted in GTMO military commissions; one of those convictions was partially overturned, however, and another three completely overturned. See *Human Rights First*.

And yet the prisoners have found sites of resistance. Sadiq Ahmed Turkistani confided in his attorney about the secret garden he and other prisoners started, using seeds from foods they were served.¹⁶⁸ Ahmed Errachidi writes of projecting himself outside of his cell, flying “up into the clouds...and conjuring the sea as well.”¹⁶⁹ Mamdouh Habib recounts how some prisoners saved their milk so that it would sour into the leben of the Middle East.¹⁷⁰ They did this in defiance of the guards, in order to taste a familiar food. Murat Kurnaz fed the zunzuns (small hummingbirds) with breadcrumbs he hid inside his shirt. He remembers, “I used to talk to the birds about how strange the world was. They used to be in a cage, and I would visit them, but now the situation was reversed.”¹⁷¹

In considering reversals and displacements, it is vital to remember that the Columbian Exposition was conceived and staged during a period of severe economic crisis, complex race and class negotiations, and violent labor disputes. The glimpse it offered of possible futures and coordinated power relations among the nation’s elite dangled in front of its audiences troubled faces a utopian vision of a just U.S. empire. This picture, which presented opportunities for political dominance and the near-limitless expansion of wealth for the industrious,

¹⁶⁸ Andrew Buncombe, “Guantánamo Bay Prisoners Plant Seeds of Hope in Secret Garden,” and P. Sabin Willit, “Wilting Dreams at Gitmo.”

¹⁶⁹ Errachidi with Slovo, *The General*, 132–33.

¹⁷⁰ Mamdouh Habib, *My Story*, 167.

¹⁷¹ Murat Kurnaz, *Five Years of My Life*, 160.

enticed many stakeholders. Of course, some groups were excluded from direct participation, among them the economically marginalized; the average worker, for example, could not afford to attend with his or her family.

A large private militarized security force dubbed the Columbian Guard, which included police and firefighting units led by Col. Edmund Rice and intelligence services headed by John Bonfield, managed the fair.¹⁷² Bonfield was a Chicago policeman best known for his anti-labor actions, including violence directed toward transit workers in 1885. He also contravened the mayor's orders and directed his men to infiltrate the Haymarket Square protests in 1886.¹⁷³ His appointment as head of the intelligence services after his questionable role in the Haymarket Square protest is a historical precursor to the appointment and confirmation of General Kelly as Director of Homeland Security following his role at Guantánamo Bay.¹⁷⁴ Technologies circulate and leave their trace, but individuals do, as well. History would repeat in the 21st century as a notoriously

¹⁷² Benjamin Cummings Truman, *History of the World's Fair*, 79–80. For additional insights, see David Silkenet, "Workers in the White City," 266–300.

¹⁷³ Stephan Benzkofir, "Legendary Lawman."

¹⁷⁴ The intentional circulation of military personnel known for their violent practices is further illustrated by the case of General Jeffrey D. Miller, the commanding officer at Guantánamo during the torture of Abu Qahtani who was later sent to 'Gitmotize' Abu Ghraib, and by the assignment of Chicago police officer Richard Zuley, who had been implicated in a pattern of intimidation and torture of minority suspects, to lead interrogations at Guantánamo. See Josh White, "Abu Ghraib Tactics Were First Used at Guantánamo," and Spencer Ackerman, "Bad Lieutenant: American Police Brutality, Exported from Chicago to Guantánamo."

brutal Chicago policeman who was also reserve military was called to run an interrogation team at Guantánamo under General Geoffrey Miller.

In the 1890s, steel magnate Andrew Carnegie, railroad and mining executive Franklin B. Gowen, and railroad baron Jay Gould had the men of the Pinkerton Detective Agency work with the police to break heads and labor strikes in the 1890s. The elites of the twenty-first century had the private military security companies to amplify the scope of the U.S. military (and defense contractors) in Afghanistan, Iraq, and beyond, securing resources and crippling dissent in the privatized prisons system, and in the increasingly militarized local police forces and private security firms, poised to crush movements from Occupy Wall Street to Black Lives Matter to Standing Rock.¹⁷⁵ Thus, the narrative storyboards of Guantánamo prison made claims of manifest destinies as well, though with a distinctly dystopian edge. The future would hold fast, at least for elite interests, the prison instructed, through the discretionary global power of a militarized police state.

The first prisoners of the twenty-first century to arrive at Guantánamo Bay inhabited the cages of Camp X-Ray left vacant when the Cuban ‘excludables’ among the 1990 asylum seekers were finally repatriated. Photographs of prisoners kneeling between alleys of chain link and barbed wire evoked comparisons to dog kennels and prompted international outrage from human

¹⁷⁵ The United States is not a signatory of the United Nations Mercenary Convention, a finding that deems the use of mercenary forces illegal, but in any case, the U.S. argues that Private Military Companies are not mercenaries. See Alexander G. Higgins, “U.S. Rejects UN Mercenary Report.”

rights groups. While the military insisted on the language of detainment and detainees—a directive—those held were clearly prisoners. With the iconic orange jumpsuits and masks that anonymized and collapsed the individual identities of the prisoners held captive, the first photos trained the world’s gaze on this military base and prison located in Cuba, land essentially occupied by the U.S. Rumsfeld answered charges with the retort, “[T]hat prison is a world-class operation.”¹⁷⁶ It is certainly true that the world was meant to take heed of the operation.

Dozens of prisoners were moved within months of their arrival from the chain link cages to a newly constructed facility on the grounds of Camp Delta. Camp Delta had been the site of the world’s first concentration camp for HIV-positive people. After the overthrow of Jean-Bertrand Aristide, the first democratically elected president of Haiti, many Haitians fled their country by boat and were subsequently picked up by the U.S. Coast Guard. Some were taken to Guantánamo. The Haitians were tested for HIV; those who tested positive were held apart, and the female prisoners who tested positive were subjected to Depo Provera shots without their knowledge or consent.¹⁷⁷ For many, the injections were not just a gross violation of their personhood, but also a violation of their religious beliefs as Catholics. Now the newest prisoners, those swept up in what the U.S. was calling “the Global War on Terror,” inhabited the new prison at Camp Delta, which was wrought from the ultimate detritus of global capitalism—

¹⁷⁶ John Barry, “Donald Rumsfeld on What Went Right.”

¹⁷⁷ Paul Farmer, *Pathologies of Power*, 62–63. See also Nancy Ordoover, *American Eugenics*, note 13, 264–65, and A. Naomi Paik, *Rightlessness*, 110–11.

used commercial shipping containers cleaved lengthwise. The supposedly temporary prison, constructed by Kellogg, Brown, and Root, represented refuse from which one last gasp of profit could be extracted.¹⁷⁸

Following the invasion of Afghanistan, Guantánamo quickly became the symbolic location of the terrorist body mastered and subdued, at least for Americans, who were repeatedly told that the worst of the worst were being captured and contained there and guarded by brave and selfless troops. The base at Guantánamo represented domination over an ambiguous enemy, and the men imprisoned there came from across the globe, citizens and residents of dozens of countries who spoke dozens of languages. The architects of the prison made the claim of exception, taking recourse in political, semantic, and legalistic maneuvers, claiming safe haven from national and international jurisdictions as a temporary emergency measure—but it is in breaking with that narrative and recognizing the permanency of the project, as Feldman encourages, that the long-term effects of the prison become clear.

The Director General of the Exposition, Col. George R. Davis, had opened his introduction to the fair with attention to its pedagogical aims: “When the gates of the World’s Columbian Exposition have finally closed it will be time enough to impress its lessons upon the world.”¹⁷⁹ The White City gestured toward progress and opportunity. But if the spectacle was directed toward the future, its

¹⁷⁸ Kellogg, Brown and Root (KBR) is a subsidiary of Halliburton.

¹⁷⁹ George R. Davis, “Introduction” to *The World’s Columbian Exposition 1893*, 11.

espoused realities pointed backwards—toward fixed racial boundaries, tiered classifications of identity and social belonging. Meanwhile Guantánamo is the loupe for the shadow world, the black hole, and the “black sites.”¹⁸⁰ The exposition and the prison pull us backward even as these sites try to direct our gaze forward. At both the Columbian Exposition and Guantánamo, human beings are overtly or covertly on display as abject subjects, objects of the lessons meant to contrast civilization and anti-civilization. Utopian and dystopian, both promise emergent worlds. Chicago presented a world that amazed and excited, while Guantánamo showcases a future that makes one shudder at the next iteration of American Empire.

What then, of the object/abject lessons of Guantánamo? Guantánamo holds a century plus of referents in the U.S. psyche, provoking different reverberations for specific demographics. It represents expansionism wrapped in the rhetorical mantle of liberation and humanitarianism. It conjures the Cold War drama of the missile crisis of the 1960s and the hysteria aimed toward those possibly infected with HIV/AIDS in the 1980s and 1990s. Guantánamo speaks to bio-politics imposed on immigrant bodies to limit their legitimacy, transit, and legal status. But the symbolic purchase of Guantánamo is that it stands in for the hundreds of U.S. military bases located around the world, and the prison on the

¹⁸⁰ Again, the idea is that the real darkness is ‘over there.’ The U.S. employs “white torture,” uses “white noise,” but the real dark and black sites of violence are always “over there” outside the United States.

base is simply the most visible piece of a network of associated “black sites.”¹⁸¹ It is unlikely that the prison will be closed anytime soon, and less likely that the base will close in the foreseeable future. As Luke Vervaeet warns, “[E]ven if Guantánamo eventually closes, the problem that Guantánamo symbolizes—the lawlessness, racism and imperialist mentality of the powerful—remains,” a legacy and mechanism of empire.

Interlude: Vietnam- My Rivers Tilt Stirred by Forough Farokhzad.

*At the skin, my blood calls out to
your heart, my whole sky craves
an island of tenderness.*

My rivers tilt towards you.

Marina Tsvetaeva

*Pompeii has nothing to teach us,
we know crack of volcanic fissure,
slow flow of terrible lava,
pressure on heart, lungs, the brain
about to burst its brittle case
(what the skull can endure!)*

H.D.

¹⁸¹ Even the descriptive naming of off-shore torture centers as “Dark Sites” or “Black Sites,” is racialized, as if appropriate places for dark, dangerous bodies.

I am taken back to the third-floor ward at the Tu Du Hospital in District One of Saigon, summer of 2012. I am there to make a donation in my father's memory from our family, to pay for a surgery for one child. It is part of a journey to the Vietnam that came into my consciousness as a child. A place where I was—and am—taken aback. I had an agonizing panic attack the day before deep under the earth in the tunnels of Cu Chi in the Mekong Delta. I could not breathe or crawl and cursed my decision to enter the cramped metered wormholes beneath the earth. Still, I chose that journey.

Whose bodies? Whose pain? I do not know what pain this child- who does and does not resemble any child I have previously encountered in 50 years on this earth with his impossibly large watermelon head, paper thin skin and bulging eyes that do not focus-feels. Did his eyes once come together to fix a gaze? Does he see me, or know that it is my hand that he touches? How many months or years with no intervention did it take for this child's head to reach such a size? What has the pressure done to a brain perhaps born healthy? He lacked a mechanism for the drainage of cerebral fluids. This is a reparable glitch of human anatomy. Had he been born in a different geography, his condition might have been fixed at birth, but then in a different geography, he might not have been poisoned before conception.

Some children are tied in their cribs; those who are active, but fragile, or prone to seizures, but not the children with impossibly large heads, because they are weighed down like boulders in their crib prisons. An arm can move, or a leg...a hand can grasp and feel, but the body will go nowhere. And the arms and

legs do not move much. The tube that runs into the nostril carrying nutrients is undisturbed. These children are not picked up and cradled, not even for feeding. How much the head must weigh...more than the tiny bodies which do not grow. How large can a head grow? What can the skull endure? Is there nothing to be done now? There are sounds, which are not of agony, but not of pleasure or contentment either. Sounds that indicate experience, but of what? Boredom. Discomfort. Pain. Restlessness. These should all be questions, because I cannot know, but only intuit and sense. With more time, I might begin to learn the language of these sounds. I am no medical expert, but the time for something to be done, some miraculous reversal, is-I suspect-long past. These children with their impossibly large heads will languish in their cribs until they die. To where do their spirits drift hour after interminable hour?

The tiny boy with no eyes is perfectly proportioned, tiny and thin for his four years, the size of an average two-year-old. He does not speak, and there is some question concerning his hearing. My assessment as someone who has spent many years caring for infants and young children is that he is profoundly deaf. He does make prolonged sounds, which haunt. I experience these sounds as distress, and I hold him for a long time before he quiets. I try different positions, cradling him like the tiniest of infants, then up against my shoulder with his head resting against me, so that I can stroke his hair. His body is without clear words, and I cannot search his eyes, so what can I know, but what his body seems to communicate? He quiets, and I perceive he is interested in being held, but he also throws his head violently at times, and moans intermittently. Am I hurting him?

Is the position uncomfortable? Does he want something else...is he hoping for food or a drink, the provision of which is strictly scheduled? He's warm. I don't need a thermometer to know that he has a bit of a fever. Against what I expect to feel, before first touch, I don't want to put him down. I want to hold this child throughout his forever. He will not have miraculous interventions. He will not grow up to be Helen Keller. I don't think he will grow up at all.

There are eight children in this room with just one day nurse. There are four rooms like this on the floor. One is for infants, then this room for children who are up to about age six. Then follow two rooms for older children and adults, one for males and the other for females. A man from Japan is here volunteering. The room attendant was not here when I arrived, just the children and a Japanese volunteer. He is in Vietnam for a six-month stay, and his company grants him one day each week to volunteer with the children. He has a two-year old son in Japan, whom he misses very much. The children on the floor, who are able to demonstrate their emotions in language I can read, clearly love him.

The hospital is a very busy urban care center filled with clinic patients waiting to be seen. Some of them are quite ill. I find my way to various outpatient spaces, and the maternity unit. I am pulled into a photo with a new father and his mother. The newest member of their family is a delicate beauty who appears to be in perfect health...if she had not been, then what? I wonder. I wander. Finally, I encounter a nurse who speaks French, and we are able to communicate...she recognizes the name of the doctor I am seeking, and the ward she oversees, but by

now it is lunch time, and no-one acknowledges my knock on the doors. The nurse recommends that I try the ward after the nap hour.

When I make my way up the third-floor steps after lunch, I am greeted by a teenager making his way on short stumps of legs, his face a grin from ear to ear. He grabs my hand with no words and motions me toward a cot bed. While I am still lost in confusion, he has grabbed one end of the heavy cot, and motions me to the other. There are no adults in view, and I have not been logged in or acknowledged by authorities, but it is clear that he means me to take the other end of the bed and head down the hallway...and so I go. He tells me something in Vietnamese, and I nod dutifully. There is a freshly painted empty room, and surely this has something to do with our transport project. My young friend motions with his head...the cot is to be placed alongside the right wall all the way flush with the outside wall. He is exuberant with our effort, and quickly exits the room to retrieve the next cot. In all we move 8 beds together, back along two sides of the room. My young friend beams with the success of our effort.

As we finish a nurse arrives, smiles at me, and motions me into a room I had passed some 16 times. She points me toward a young man who doesn't seem to understand what she says but smiles and nods nonetheless. He breaks into spare English, which is miles beyond my Japanese or Vietnamese, and I understand him to be a regular volunteer. The nurse is relieved. I have been placed with a guide to the care and feeding of the young wards of this floor. No one asks what I am doing there. We play with the children who are able to be moved from their beds and are joined by kids from other rooms who are mobile enough to make

their way to us. I ask about toys, and Tomo shows me a cabinet full of cheap, but suitable, playthings. The toys are not brought out very often he shrugs...the nurses don't like the mess.

There is an odd mix of patients...some are seriously ill, while others are perfectly healthy children in mind and body, but for their short limbs. A pixie of girl makes her way onto the volunteer's lap. He explains that she is very jealous of the other kids. I catch myself again and again asking why a particular child lives in the hospital ward, known not by name, but by gender and date of abandonment.

I am surrounded by smart, funny, smiling, mischievous children who don't have families because their limbs are abbreviated, because the United States poured trans-generational war poison into the soil their grandparents and parents farmed, and their families cannot-or choose not-to keep them. I am also surrounded by moaning bodies in cribs, some with impossibly large heads, and others with no eyes. I am caught in the tension between their reality and my grief. I am not happy with my limitations, though I am the one who leaves with properly proportioned limbs, ears that hear, and a sighted head, at the end of the day. The house is black, indeed. And yet, moon. Sun. Flower. Tender-sky-child. Fevered moans and laughter. My rivers tilt.

CHAPTER 3

RIHLA AND THE SENSORIUM OF THE HUMAN VESSEL

*All I want to do is find a place to lay it down now and again,
a safe nest where it will neither be scattered by the winds,
nor remain forever buried beneath the sod.*

I just need to lay it down sometimes.

*Even in the rare silence of the night,
with no faces around.¹⁸²*

*I can only say, there we have been: but I cannot say where.
And I cannot say, how long, for that is to place it in time.¹⁸³*

Prisoners and guards do not arrive at Guantánamo out of the ether, and their histories are more than plot points on data maps that unhappily converge at Guantánamo. The 779 men and boys seized by the U.S. came from more than 40 countries and spoke dozens of languages. Many had been on some kind of journey at the time of initial detainment, and all of them have been on a journey through chains of custody since then. Each prisoner has a *rihla*, each journey inscribed though the senses. Most simply, *rihla* is the account of a journey told by a traveler. *Talab al-‘ilm* is travel for the sake of acquiring religious knowledge, and the *rihla* recounts the pilgrimage, journey or voyage of the traveler (*talib al-*

¹⁸² Edwidge Danticat, *The Farming of Bones*. (New York: Penguin, 1998), 266.

¹⁸³ T. S. Eliot, “Burnt Norton,” *Four Quartets*, (New York: Harcourt, 1971), 16.

‘ilm), the student seeking knowledge.¹⁸⁴ Ibn Battuta’s account of his 14th century journey is commonly referred to as the *rihla* of Ibn Battuta, and Ibn Khaldun, often referenced as the first sociologist, chronicled his 15th century travels in the *Muqaddimah*, which may be read as a kind of *rihla* organized by data and interpretation. There are main three types of *rihla*: the first category is a travel tale that takes place within Morocco; the second is a travel tale connected to *Hajj*; and the broadest is a travel tale through foreign lands, but in each case, it is also a record of an interior journey. There is also the *rihla* that speaks to a universal: the journey toward death, that can also be understood as the death of old self and the birth of the new. Even the journey toward death is not thought of as an absolute journey in Islam, but as a passage from one world to another. These are the primary understandings of *rihla*, but I found it helpful to expand the category to think about the narratives told by individual military personnel, and the state, too. The *rihla*, with its implicit signature of movement, also helps capture the reproduction and transmission of the narratives told through the distilled afterimages, at a pace that is faster than mechanical. Through the many forms of media and the diverse streams of digital reproduction, the *rihlas* move at light speed, afterimages and accompanying narratives fixed, yet in motion and infinitely reproducible. We like or dislike; pass over or re-post/tweet; we @ influencers and media conglomerates, directing the flow as we assign value to the currency of particular (and often competing) narratives. In this chapter, I

¹⁸⁴ Sam I. Gellens, in Dale Eickelman and James Piscatori, Eds. *Muslim Travellers: Pilgrimage, Migration, and the Religious Imagination*. (Berkeley: Social Science Research Council, 1990), 50.

examine and theorize the way in which journeys or pilgrimages featured in the lives of the men imprisoned at Guantánamo, in those who guarded them, and in the narrative *rihla* told by individuals and by the state.

Travel and movement are intrinsic facets of Islam, understood as part of what it means to be a Muslim. There is the movement of the body enjoined to pray in and through ritualistic motion five times a day; the attention to *hijra* as both the historical movement of the early Muslim community from Mecca to Medina and the concept of travelling toward a full Muslim community and onto God; and the culminating experience of Hajj in the life of a practicing Muslim. Even the destination of *Hajj* is not a static encounter with a site in Mecca, but experienced through the senses, through movement, in the company of strangers, transforming, as Shari'ati explains, from a bystander looking on from "the banks of this 'river;'" a creature of "mud" "clay" and "earth" to a being "flowing and moving...finding your way to the gardens to grow heaven in the hearts of the salty deserts," and warning, "if you do not move you will become like clay, hard and solid."¹⁸⁵ The *Hajj* is defined by movement, the *tawaf* or circumambulation of the *Kaaba* seven times, the back and forth tracing of Hagar's desperate steps, the striking of the ground for water, the stoning of Satan, all parts of a culminating experience that actively claims and enacts belief in a way that is world (view) confirming, but also a confirmation of one's place within humanity and the cosmos. Abdellah Hammoudi, writes from his insider outsider position as an anthropologist negotiating the *Hajj* experience. Hammoudi captures the active

¹⁸⁵ Ali Shariati, *Hajj*, trans. Ali A. Behzadnia and Najla Denny, (North Haledon, N.J.: Islamic Publications International, 1977), 33-34.

nature of the flow, “everything was on the move: masses of human beings, currents of thought, merchandise, images, profound and superficial wisdom, doctrine, discourse, prejudices, and stereotypes. The diversity of nations and languages was making nation and language relative.”¹⁸⁶

In addition to *Hajj*, there are other journeys important within Islam, that feature may feature in *rihla*. *Hijra* (or *Hegira*) references the journey from Mecca to Medina made by Muhammad and his followers. In this historical sense it means migration. The Arabic word means “to abandon” or to “break ties with someone.”¹⁸⁷ It can also mean journey out of a dangerous space and toward ideal Islamic community, both in the world and between worlds. The term in Urdu means third sex, in this sense a break from or abandonment of the binary of male/female gender roles. It derives from the Arabic *hjr*. *Isra* and *Al-miraj* are related (though not etymologically) as the twin components of the night journey of the Prophet Muhammad to al Aqsa in Jerusalem and to the circles of heaven on the winged creature Buraq. It is a powerful motif that incorporates dreaming, pilgrimage, and ascendance.¹⁸⁸

The *rihla* then is the tale of a meaning making journey, or a journey toward discovery and meaning. It is a trip, and sometimes a trip-ping, that pays

¹⁸⁶ Abdellah Hammoudi: *A Season in Mecca: Narrative of a Pilgrimage*, (New York: Hill and Wang, 2005), 99.

¹⁸⁷ Muhammad Khalid Masud, “The obligation to migrate: the doctrine of hijra in Islamic law,” in *Muslim Travellers: Pilgrimage, Migration, and the Religious Imagination*, ed. Dale F. Eickelman and James Piscatori, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990), 30.

¹⁸⁸ Miraj means ascent.

attention to the rough edges and between-ness, the stumbles, and it is dialogic in this sense of encounter of the old self, speaking to the new (and the newly birthed self, speaking to the past self). Travel is understood as a mode of acquiring knowledge (spiritual and worldly) in Islam, referenced in the Qur'an and in the Hadith literature. It is also an explicit social aspect of mosques in Muslim communities in many parts of the world. Mosques are understood to be a space where a (male) Muslim traveler will be offered the comfort of food, shelter, and companionship. I have observed this phenomenon and spoken with travelers staying in mosques in Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore, South Africa, Morocco, Nicaragua, and the U.K., but it is a common feature in the *rihlas* of the Guantánamo prisoners.

Movement is often connected to crises that may be personal or societal, rooted in spiritual, economic, or domestic issues, or connected to political conditions. Julie Kristeva's notions of the subject are rooted in motion and crisis, as she moves beyond the subjected to the object...the foreigner, the stranger, the other...because, as Kristeva so rightly acknowledges, the strangeness of the foreigner is political.¹⁸⁹ And if the strangeness is political, it is also politicized, traded on and consumed.

While the *rihla* of the prisoner may tell of a journey that involve actual travel, or trace a record of spiritual growth, there is also the *rihla* that tells of time spent in the chain-and chains-of custody, the movements from cell to cell, and camp to camp. Within those physical journeys there is an interior, sometimes

¹⁸⁹ Julie Kristeva, *Strangers to Ourselves*, (New York: Columbia, 1991), 193.

fragmented by the sequential transfers. The prisoner is in conversation with the self and the environment (which may or may not include much contact with others) over time.

The purifying and contaminating rituals of police and the military that conjure the terrorist subject are evident as the men are processed through a chain of custody to end at Guantánamo. Various prisoners account for the meaning or absurdity of their imprisonment differently, and a parallel is found in how personnel relate their own participation. Many of the men imprisoned were Afghans living in their own country, some were foot soldiers, others were economic migrants crossing borders to earn money or look for trade opportunities in order to support family members back home. There were men who had moved with friends or family seeking community. Some men were aid workers. There were those looking for return to an ancestral home or idealized religious community. There were travelers on holiday seeking adventure. There were foot soldiers, too, fighting as Taliban or on behalf of the Taliban. There were diplomats like Abdul Salam Zaeff, who was the Afghan ambassador to Pakistan at the time of his arrest. There were journalists, like Sami al Hajj, who was on assignment with Al Jazeera. Djamel Ameziane, who entire adult life before Guantánamo was migration in search of work, papers, and asylum. There is also a small subset of prisoners who are accused of active involvement in planning terrible violent strikes that murdered or were meant to murder, these prisoners were brought to Guantánamo by the CIA years after the camp opened, and in many cases after years of torture elsewhere. You will note that I do not use

terrorism as a category, here. This is not because I do not think there is a kind of violence we can call terrorism, I do. And it is not that I do not want to call actions by their name. I think there is fearsome power in naming. It is that I choose not to honor the distinction that the U.S. makes between our violence and the violence deployed by the stranger. This is mirrored domestically in the way violence is named differently depending upon the race, religion, class, and politics of the perpetrator.

Literary tales in the 'Western Canon' often feature pilgrimage and other journeys: the epic of *Beowulf*, Homer's *Iliad* and *Odyssey*; Virgil's *Aeneid*; Cervantes *Quixote*; and Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales* are a brief and incomplete listing. Travel is a feature of the *bildungsroman*, the coming of age novels like Hesse's *Demian*, Joyce's *Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, and Thomas Wolfe's *Look Homeward, Angel*.¹⁹⁰ Travel tales feature prominently in U.S. culture (even if travel outside our borders does not). The U.S. military encourages young recruits by using language that promises them many things, but always features travel. An ad for the U.S. Army tells potential recruits of the military: "it's an acceptance letter," "it's a passport," "it's a magnet," "it's a pair of wings," "it's a breakthrough," "it's a diploma," "it's a secret handshake," and "the jersey of the greatest team on earth," and that the uniform can "make you

¹⁹⁰ Though less frequent, there are also *frauenromans*, Brontë's *Jane Eyre* and Chopin's *The Awakening* are frequently listed, but one is more likely to find final closures in attics and lakes rather than spiritual openings that lead to self-discovery and re-integration. The prequels or fictively realized histories like Rhys's *Wide Sargasso Sea*, or Morrison's *Beloved* re-tell of fire and some kind of *mad-ness*, but deeply implicate the sources. One can think here also of Nawal Al-Saadawi's *Woman at Point Zero*.

stronger, wiser, more substantial, more respected.”¹⁹¹ Joining the army is then equivalent to college acceptance and graduation tassel with Greek ties that bind for life; it means finally making the varsity team and implies glory days to remember; a uniform that will draw sexual partners; and the promise of flights to destinations otherwise out of reach. College bound European youth (of certain means) take a gap year, a freewheeling backpack journey during the period between high school and the deferred first year of university. American college students are less likely to take a gap year.¹⁹² Instead U.S. college students (again, of certain means) take summer road trips, or study abroad for a semester or a year. Americans across sectors participate in church mission/missionizing trips. Travel has long been a feature of self-discovery, meaning making, and religious longing. Movement is likewise tied to finding routes to economic opportunities.

¹⁹¹ “United States Army-Symbol of Strength-More than a Uniform”
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=i5ufp07bmuw>

¹⁹² Malia Obama just did take some version of a gap year, deferring her Harvard admission by a year to take an internship.



Figure 4. Naval Station Guantánamo Chapel Guantánamo Bay

In the Naval Station Chapel in Guantánamo Bay, a stained-glass window in the wall above the altar shows Christ guiding the young white male sailor at the wheel. Christ's left hand holds the sailor's shoulder with a steady and weighted influence, while his right arm is straightened to grasp a knob of the wheel, steering the ship. God is steering the boat, even as the hands of sailor are also on the wheel. There is a storm or a rough wave ahead of the boat, but the horizon is

clear behind. There is a sense that the past will be tranquil (tranquilized) and recede into the sunset, even as the present is tumultuous. The individual sailor's (as a figural representation of all sailors) future path is guided and protected by Christ who will smooth the water and the weather *behind* the journey, calming the troubled waters of history. Christ is not only on the journey with the sailor, he is steering the journey. The idea that one's actions are guided by God is a concept that is considered alarming and dangerous when it informs the conjured Muslim body, especially when militarily or politically engaged; when the steering influence is called Allah, the body is presumed to be necessarily irrational and the impulses terroristic. For the U.S. military body, God is often fused into the rituals of indoctrination and inscription.

Dale Eickelman and others examine pilgrimage through the lens of social action. "The significance of texts derives not from their inherent centrality but from the contingent political, social, and economic circumstances of those interpreting them."¹⁹³ Muhammed Masud discusses *hijra* as a theme in contemporary Islamic political thought, as an "obligation to migrate."¹⁹⁴ The significance is not derived through interpretation, but also, by those invoking and referencing them. For instance, the Qur'anic verse "oppressed of the earth" is electrified by Fanon's "wretched of the earth," and "became consciously (and brilliantly) fused in the speeches and writings of such figures as Ali Shari'ati (d.

¹⁹³ Eickelman and Piscatori, 14.

¹⁹⁴ Muhammed Masud in Eickelman and Piscatori, 29.

1977).”¹⁹⁵ Sometimes the migrations are electrified by fusions of religion and politics, but often they are more clearly economic and social.

Ahmed Errachidi was born into a large family in Tangier, Morocco in the 1960s, but got a passport at 18, and moved to London where he lived and worked for nearly two decades as a chef. When he decided to set out on this journey his father was pained to see him leave. Errachidi recalls:

I felt such guilt about the pain I was causing him, but I wanted so much to travel that I didn't listen. I don't think this is unusual: I think all mankind yearns to see other places. Curiosity about the world is in our nature, and in those days many young men like me also traveled to Europe and learned more about other peoples and other ways of life first-hand.¹⁹⁶

Errachidi draws a distinction between then and now, before and after: “This is no longer possible for people like us – there's such a distrust of Muslims that our young men can only go to places like Afghanistan and Pakistan and that changes their ideas. I met such a young man in Guantánamo, there only because he wanted to go on holiday.”¹⁹⁷ Errachidi embeds the subtle observation that the Western restrictions on the free movement of young Muslim bodies contribute some kind of negative exposure in the spaces that are organized within and around the resentments of the permissible.

Of course, not every prisoner had been traveling outside the borders of civic belonging; 220 of the prisoners brought to Guantanamo were citizens of Afghanistan, arrested for the most part in their own country. Said Abasin was a

¹⁹⁵ Eickelman and Piscatori, 19.

¹⁹⁶ Errachidi, 16.

¹⁹⁷ Errachidi, 16.

twenty-year-old taxi driver arrested near his home in Afghanistan. One of his passengers, Afghani businessman Alif Khan was also arrested. Said Abasin was imprisoned first at Bagram, and then spent a little over 9 months at Guantánamo before being repatriated to Afghanistan. Alif Khan was also imprisoned at Bagram and transferred to Guantánamo. He was held captive from June 13, 2002 to March 23, 2003. According to the DoD transfer documents, Said was held because of “general knowledge of activities in the area of Khowst [sic] and Kabul based as a result of his frequent travels through the region as a taxi driver.”¹⁹⁸ The region of Khost has over half a million people, and is about four and half hours away by car from Kabul, a city that has over four million people. Can one overstate the comparable absurdity of imprisoning a California taxi driver claiming that “he had general knowledge of activities in the area” of Los Angeles and Bakersfield? Taxi passenger, Alif Khan, was held because of “possible knowledge of an Afghan Machas Refugee Camp located near Miram, Pakistan.”¹⁹⁹ Again, this was a dubious insinuation, and an even weaker claim for rendition, but Abasin’s movements within his own country and community were suspect because of the religious political valence of his movements. He could not simply be a taxi driver, or if he was simply a taxi driver, any knowledge he gained through his work somehow belonged to the United States and could be extracted accordingly.

¹⁹⁸ <https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/projects/guantanamo/detainees/671-said-abasin>

¹⁹⁹ <https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/projects/guantanamo/detainees/673-alif-khan>

These stories of capture and circumstance must be coupled with the practice of dropping leaflets by the thousands over miles of impoverished villages, promising that in exchange for turning someone in it was possible to “Get wealth and power beyond your dreams.” In just one day, October 15 of 2001, the United States dropped over 400, 000 leaflets in numerous languages. It was also the heaviest day of bombing since the campaign in Afghanistan began ten days earlier. Those initial drops (of flyers, food, and bombs) were to soften the population, and to communicate proper relations between the locals and the United States.²⁰⁰ Soften-ing is a word that gets slapped over the word terror-izing; softening is often a combination of techniques that disorient and shock with the intent to make compliant or submissive. Both individual prisoners and populations are subject to softening. What is a population to think of the pop-tarts and radios and bombs and flyers that fall out military planes? Other flyers offered bounties, sometimes for specific individuals, but often for anyone the informant (who could be anyone) deemed to be connected with the Taliban or Al Qaeda. Psychological Operations and Psychological Warfare veteran, Major Ed Rouse maintains an archive of images that includes the type, number, and intended geography of flyers distributed.²⁰¹ Rouse provides images of forty-two distinct flyers were dropped in Afghanistan during Operation Enduring Freedom.

²⁰⁰ U.S. Drops Bombs Leaflets in Afghanistan, *ABC News*, October 15, 2001. <http://abcnews.go.com/International/story?id=80480&page=1>

²⁰¹ <http://www.psywarrior.com/Afghanleaflinks.html>

The body of a stranger-or a local enemy-was suddenly commodified, and movement was made suspect and dangerous.

The image below shows the front of a flyer that promises both “wealth and power,” the back of the leaflet (not depicted) translates to "You can receive millions of dollars for helping the Anti-Taliban Force catch Al-Aaida and Taliban murderers. This is enough money to take care of your family, your village, your tribe for the rest of your life. Pay for livestock and doctors and school books and housing for all your people."²⁰²



Image of flyer dropped in Afghanistan²⁰³

A Rihla is commonly understood as a travel tale, but it is more than this. A rihla utilizes a record of geographic movement through the world as a creative frame of understanding one's self in the world, in this sense a quest. Also, a

²⁰² <http://www.psywarrior.com/afghanleaf40.html>

²⁰³ <http://www.psywarrior.com/Herbafghano2.html>

voyage. As Errachidi pointed out, there are reasons that young Muslims may choose, or be relegated, to travel within Muslim majority countries. Certainly, language and cultural familiarity may play a part, but access and acceptance do as well.²⁰⁴

As an American with my third worn U.S. passport, bulging with the addition of 24 pages to accommodate the entry and exit stamps my privilege grants, the implications of my own movement across borders throughout the world often sits in sharp relief to the experiences of relatives, friends, and classmates, but in even sharper distinction to Muslim bodies, especially young male bodies from Muslim majority countries.

In the 1970s, Victor Turner predicted that participation in pilgrimages (of many kinds) was going to increase because “institutionalized social forms and modes of thought are in question.”²⁰⁵ Turner thought this signaled “a reactivation of many cultural forms associated traditionally with normative *communitas*.”²⁰⁶ By normative *communitas*, as opposed to existential or ideological, Turner emphasized “non-utilitarian experience of brotherhood and fellowship which the resulting group tried to preserve, in and by its religious and ethical codes and legal and political statutes and regulations.”²⁰⁷ Many of the

²⁰⁴ See Netton, *Seek Knowledge: Thought and Travel in the House of Islam*, 104.

²⁰⁵ Victor Turner, *Dramas, Fields, and Metaphors: Symbolic Action in Human Society*, (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1974) 172.

²⁰⁶ Turner, 172.

²⁰⁷ Turner, 169.

memoirs and testimonies seem to bear this instinct out: there is a component of *rihla*, a prefacing of the time of imprisonment with brief biography, a professed restlessness or longing, and then a tale of a journey toward *placing* oneself within a welcoming community, and working toward a deeper connection to God.

Certain bodies are allowed free movement, while the movement of other bodies that are considered dangerous or transgressive because of race, religion, poverty, or political ideology are constrained, judged suspicious, and tracked. And in the 21st century, data points gathered through social media, cell phone tracking, and other digital footprints may be woven to create narratives after the fact. U.S. Christian churches send members on far-flung missions with impunity. But Muslim men on the move are suspect bodies. There is a negative charge attached to their itineraries. And the masses fleeing poverty and violence are simply not welcome. From the 1950s through the 1970s, Afghanistan was a destination for Western travelers looking for adventure and exoticism on the cheap. Arizona State professor William Podlich photographed extensively during his time with UNESCO, and his photos show the casual interactions of Western travelers with the local communities.²⁰⁸ Guantánamo does not just hold suspect bodies that were transferred into US custody in the wake of 9/11; it is being revitalized as a holding center for new “mass migration events.”²⁰⁹ RQ Construction, LLC, of Carlsbad California won a 23 to 27 million dollar contract

²⁰⁸ William Podlich, “Afghanistan,” Photo Archive by Clayton Esterson
<http://www.pbase.com/qleap/afghan>

²⁰⁹ Robert N. Hein and Jason Tama, “Keep the U.S. Naval Station at Gitmo Open,” *Brookings Institute*, March 25, 2015. <https://www.brookings.edu/opinions/keep-the-u-s-naval-station-at-gitmo-open/>

to build a “Contingency Mass Migration Complex” at Guantánamo that could hold up to 30,000 migrants:

The project will include site shaping for tents, concrete pads for camp headquarters, galleys and dumpsters, perimeter and service roads, and a mass notification system. Supporting facilities include utility systems (electrical, water, and sanitary sewer), exterior lighting, information systems to include fiber optic cable service, utility infrastructure expansion, vehicle parking area, storm drainage, and removal of two family housing trailer units.²¹⁰

Fixity

Annie Dillard speaks of lines and their “infinite points,” and T.S. Eliot of the dance, which may arc and circle back, but what does it mean to read those points from nowhere, to be denied access to orientation, to the briefest fixity, to either the sweep of the liberating arc, or to Eliot’s still point upon which it all turns?²¹¹ Or conversely, to have the data points of one’s life dance back-plotted with an eye tuned toward implication? For the men imprisoned at Guantanamo Bay Prison, time and place were sites of de-centering and dislocation as they were variously denied access to sensory information through blindfolding, ear muffling and hooding, confined to cells with no visibility, provided no terminus for the imprisonment, and geographically distanced from the known terrain of home, family, and friends.²¹² When the senses were engaged, it was frequently in the

²¹⁰ “Release No: CR-035-18 Contracts, U.S. Department of Defense, Feb. 22, 2018. <https://www.defense.gov/News/Contracts/Contract-View/Article/1448206/>

²¹¹ Dillard, *Holy the Firm*, 71.

²¹² The U.S. Military continues to call Guantanamo Bay a detention facility, and to instruct those who work there to refer always to the prisoners as detainees, but

form of an assault against the body and mind of the prisoner. If this impressing of the senses can be called information, certainly it carried, as singer-songwriter Suzanne Vega cautions about any extreme violation of the self, something of “bad wisdom.”²¹³

Each philosopher, poet, and theologian encountered during this journey—and often the lines blurred between such categories—had something to say about the nature of being in this world, and sought to express how one might do this in full-or fuller-thrust, against a parched rationalism or one dimensioned existence, with the “willingly accepted openness,” Pieper posited in the writings of Plato.²¹⁴ Some agency is presupposed for the audience of readers, who while acknowledged as beings struck through with the multiple imperfections of the human condition, are able nonetheless to access nature, create space, and manage the conditions that make it possible for one to dwell, to choose reflection, to retreat into reclusivity and contemplation, to expand into community, or to broker the median; that is, there is an unspoken assumption of potentiality. There is an expanse. One may dance. In Guantanamo, agency is severely delimited; it is, after all, intended as a prison, a punitive environment, a site of interrogation, of torture, and the brokering of power. If one could imagine the

things should be called by their proper names, and Guantanamo is certainly a prison, and those detained there are prisoners.

²¹³ Suzanne Vega, “Bad Wisdom,” 99.9 F° A&M Records, 1992.

²¹⁴ Josef Pieper, “*Divine Madness*”: *Plato’s Case against Secular Humanism*. (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1995), pg. 58.

antithesis of dwelling, surely interminable existence in such a place would fit the parameters quite neatly. How can one remain human in such a place?

In this section, I examine memoirs, poems, and testimonies of prisoners through the broad prisms of place and time and language as explored in Lane, Picard, Dillard, Buber, Heidegger, Schwab, and Eliot across ways of knowing and thinking about these situational concerns, and how we are bound up in and by them. Though I read and think with a concern attuned to their stake in broad concerns of humanity, rather than to concerns about relative guilt or innocence of any particular individual, I do want to note that the conditions and situations described by the prisoners are corroborated time and again by former guards, lawyers, journalists, human rights activists, and by the military's own records, so carefully kept. This is not to evaluate the 'facts' of the imprisonment in order to write an empirical account-this has and will continue to be done-but rather to flesh out and make human the experiences of the prisoners and to stare long and hard into the meaning of what has happened to fellow human beings, and how it is meant to mean. While we may be bounded by our personhood and our experiences deemed singular and personal in that sense-it is healthy we say to recognize where I end and you begin-living things are connected after all and bound up with others in the collective turn of being. Even, and perhaps especially, bad wisdom travels across that arc and finds its way. This is a pragmatic concern but does not have primacy over relationality and Buber's notions of universal reciprocity, or the heart of the matter...something-care, respect, recognition, dare we hope for love and kindness- which ought to be

extended, as a classmate once so carefully put it, by the reality of our being, making it enough that we come into this existence.²¹⁵ Even a stone may speak, and to us.

What of silences and unethical soundscapes?

There are chosen silences and those silences that seize us; Annie Dillard does not choose the impossible silence of the field and is unsettled by it—and the call to attend. It was “of loneliness unendurable,” but neither the field of silence, nor the implicit invitation, mean her violence.²¹⁶ Hers is an unsettling that says grow, be, expand, wake up and attend to the world, well...and more. Imposed silence, silencing of the outside world through sensory deprivation and isolation, or dissonance at high decibels; these are violent scapes of silence and sound. Where is the space for quietude when communication is forbidden or violent, silence and sleep are persistently disrupted, and the sounds imposed are designed to be jarring and disturbing? In what can one abide?

Darius Rejali’s tome, *Torture and Democracy*, contains a full chapter titled “Noise.” Rejali is a professor of political science and has written extensively about torture in and beyond Iran. Rejali notes that the low tech uses of noise: intimidating noise, surprising noise, masking noise, irritating noise, emotive noise, vibrating noise and loud noise were combined with other stressors and

²¹⁵ Martin Buber, *I and Thou*, (New York: Touchstone, 1970), 67.

²¹⁶ Annie Dillard, *Teaching a Stone to Talk*, (New York: HarperCollins, 1982), 135.

recounts a statement from a U.S. military official about Camp Delta and how noise was enhanced with other modalities and utilized against the prisoners. The official noted that when uncooperative, prisoners were made to undress down to their underwear, and were then shackled hand and foot to the floor in stress positions. Loud rap or rock music was played while the air conditioning was set at the lowest temperatures and strobe lights completed the environment.²¹⁷ The description paraphrased above does not include additional strategies that have been described and documented: the withholding of food and drink, or the encouragement of food and beverage consumption and the withholding of bathroom privileges, excremental assault and sexual humiliation. Temperatures were not always lowered; often, heat was used. While these techniques were employed in the interrogation rooms, the prisoners' own cells offered no sure reprieve, and no space to dwell, as the body was on display, and concerns for modesty or the barest comfort were dismissed or capitalized for control.

In his work on silence, Max Picard prominently devotes a chapter to noise, and how timely was my re-reading. I read it the day of the targeted assassination of America's number one enemy in 2011, an event that flooded the world with the noise of words. I shut it off, but the persistent nature of the noise seeped in through cracks. I am with Picard, "the noise is itself part of the demonic."²¹⁸ It is precisely Picard's notion of being carried along that I fear and from which I

²¹⁷ Darius Rejali, *Torture and Democracy*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007), 366.

²¹⁸ Max Picard, *The World of Silence*, (Wichita: Eighth World Press, 2002), pg. 179.

withdraw...give me some quiet, in order that I may think, but so clearly this is conscious choice for some and an impossibility for others. Again, one encounters the problem of agency. A prisoner at Guantanamo has no control over the auditory assault; with hands chained to the floor, there is no opportunity to cover one's ears. The interrogator controls the knobs of temperature and the volume of harsh repetitive noise. The senses are so hyper stimulated and anguished that finding a still point may not be possible, or possible only through disassociation and decompensation, an alienation from self.

Locating self, versus being located

Many of those who have been held at Guantanamo experienced a series of imprisonments, as they were handed over from group to group and transferred from prison to prison, in the period leading up to the long rendition flight to Cuba. Binyam Mohammed was arrested in Pakistan, where he was imprisoned for several months, then picked up by representatives of the United States government, "black clad, masked Americans. The men stripped Mohammed naked, took photos, inserted something in his anus, and dressed him in a tracksuit, then blindfolded him, placed earphones on him, shackled him, and put him on a plane."²¹⁹ He was moved first to Morocco, then to Afghanistan, and

²¹⁹ Trevor Paglan and A.C. Thompson, *Torture Taxi: On the Trail of the CIA's Rendition Flights*, (Cambridge: Icon, 2007), pg. 18. See also the book by Mohammed's attorney, and director of Reprieve, Clive Stafford Smith, *Eight O'Clock Ferry to the Windward Side: Seeking Justice in Guantanamo Bay*, (New York: Nation, 2007), pgs 56-57. Smith has served as an attorney for more than fifty prisoners at Guantanamo.

ultimately to Guantanamo Bay “at the behest of the CIA.”²²⁰ Binyam recounts that “what they wanted changed all the time. First in Morocco it changed, then when I was in the Dark Prison, then in Bagram and again in Guantanamo Bay.”²²¹ The want was endless, the sequent interrogations constantly demanding information that would never close the psychic breach or break experienced on nine/eleven. Instead, the words ran through the breach, and the demands were inexhaustible. The transfers occurred from prison to prison, and then at Guantanamo, from camp to camp, block to block, cell to interrogation room to cell. Though prisoner after prisoner describe the uncertainty of their own location and next destination, the military and intelligence communities recorded the location of the prisoners with precision and cold calculus. In “Guantanamo: Honor Bound to Defend Freedom,” a play taken from spoken evidence, English solicitor Gareth Pierce names these phenomena of extraordinary rendition to unspoken prisons for what it is, “a grotesque international redistribution.”²²² She notes that though there might have been 700 (there were more) prisoners at Guantanamo, there have been thousands of others circulated through secret prisons worldwide. The *New York Times* Guantánamo Docket uses the term “roughly” to describe the number of prisoners held at Guantánamo post 9/11.²²³

²²⁰ Ibid.

²²¹ Clive Stafford Smith, 79.

²²² Victoria Brittain and Gillian Slovo, *Guantanamo: ‘Honor Bound to Defend Freedom’* (London: Oberon Modern Plays, 2004), pg. 33.

The convention is 779, but there are reports of prisoners coming and going, and unsubstantiated, though not necessarily untrue, claims of children even younger than those documented, and also of women being held.

Giorgio Agamben exposes the paradox of lives deemed sacred by and subject to the nation state. The case of Murat Kurnaz illustrates the ‘sacred life’ of the subject and his relationship to the sovereignties of power, when posited in a state of exception. Kurnaz was born in Germany. Because he was born to Turkish parents who were guest workers, he didn’t meet the criteria for German citizenship. He was a legal resident of Germany, but technically a citizen of Turkey. In 2001, at the age of nineteen, he left home, and without his parents’ knowledge or consent, traveled to Pakistan to study Qur’an. Kurnaz was initially detained in Pakistan in a random sweep by a policeman who stopped the bus in which he was traveling. He was held for reasons that are not entirely clear, but center around two issues: his complicated status in relation to a given nation state, and his strand of religiosity. The ambiguousness of his relationship to Germany and Turkey was a legal situation into which he was born, yet the vagueness of his identity and belonging (or non-belonging) and suspect allegiance to Islam categorized him somehow as rootless and inscrutable with regard to the nation-state and therefore dangerous. The second issue was highlighted in part due to something his mother had mentioned to the local police during her attempt to find her missing son, “he had changed recently,

²²³ Guantánamo Docket, *New York Times*, February 22, 2017
<https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/projects/guantanamo>

growing a beard and becoming religious.”²²⁴ Murat was in Pakistan, and on his way back to Germany. He had no weapon, no connections to the Taliban, and nothing indicated he was headed anywhere but home. Still, the data points of his profile as a young Turkish Muslim, who had become more religious while living as part of a minority population in Germany, and had traveled to Pakistan in the fall of 2001 to study Qur’an as part of his deepening faith was held up as proof positive that he was guilty of some high crime and so dangerous, that he needed to be bound hand and foot, transported half a world away and detained in the most extreme conditions for an undefined period of time.

And so, nineteen-year old Murat Kurnaz, born to Turkish parents in Germany, was arrested in Pakistan. He was pulled off a bus at a police checkpoint, and held because his fact pattern as a Turk, traveling in Pakistan with a German passport, was considered suspicious in the political climate of October 2001. It was an inopportune time for travel for particular bodies, marked by religious and ethnic belonging, and by gender. The Pakistani police handed Kurnaz over to U.S. forces in Pakistan, and he was whisked off to Afghanistan and then to Guantanamo; Kurnaz describes his attempt to orient himself after months of detainment: “It was unbelievably hot on the bus, we must be in a country with warm winters...Southern Turkey? It was February or March...Adana could have been this hot.... then we stopped. The bus began to sway. We must be on a ship, I thought...Is there an American military base on an island off the coast

²²⁴ Murat Kurnaz. *Five Years of My Life: An Innocent Man in Guantanamo*. (New York: Palgrave, 2008), 15.

of Adana?”²²⁵ Kurnaz was masked and bolted to the floor during this bus ride, and his ears were covered with a sound canceling head set.²²⁶ Kurnaz describes the constant control over the bodies of the prisoners; even shackled and subdued, their bodies were subject to continuous correction and assault. They were kicked, stomped on, and however one positioned the body according to orders barked, the positioning was wrong.²²⁷ At Guantanamo, prisoners came to understand where they were in terms of location but suffered greatly from the monitoring of their bodies and the relative inability to access space or create place. Heidegger poses that “of time it may be said: time times. Of space it may be said: space spaces,” but when access to these modes of situating are denied or deliberately blurred and distorted, the human experience of the world is likewise distorted and dislocated, in what can be a terrifying unmooring.

There is something quite perverse in what Foucault terms the “disciplinary monotony” of the spatial distribution within the enclosure of a high security prison, and at Guantanamo, this is taken to an extreme level.²²⁸ The sameness of the space and the equality of distribution creates a space for ease of control of the physical body; one man, one cell, one small sliding window and a guard with a chart to tick marks noting the presence of the still living body of the prisoner

²²⁵ Murat Kurnaz, *Five Years of my Life: An Innocent Man in Guantanamo*, (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2008), pg. 93.

²²⁶ Ibid, 93.

²²⁷ Kurnaz describes this throughout the work, see pages 91-107 for examples of how this was used to harass the prisoners.

²²⁸ Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, (New York: Vintage, 1995), pg. 141.

within the confines. When Kurnaz arrived at Guantanamo, the military was still using the cages that resembled dog runs while additional facilities were being constructed. Kurnaz notes that his cage was smaller than a regulation size dog run in Germany. During this time, his senses were overloaded, when night fell, spotlights were turned on and remained on throughout the night. Music blared, his attempts to sleep were routinely (systematically) disturbed by the guards, and the nights were punctuated by visits from unfamiliar island creatures, banana rats, spiders, snakes and insects. This was his experience at Camp X-Ray, which as Kurnaz notes, was “supposed to be a prison camp in which everything was transparent.”²²⁹

Humans will go mad in small boxes, suffering greatly when deprived of sensory information; scientists have borne this out through experimentation with living subjects in the 20th century. Psychologist Ewen Cameron conducted experiments of this ilk at McGill University. The whole of his proposal aimed at dissolving extant personalities and replacing them with new ones. Cameron was successful at ‘depatterning’ human beings, but the experimentation stuck there, his patients in long-term, perhaps endless, limbo. Cameron’s language discloses a patent disregard for the self, for his purposes just a pattern or formulaic representation to be manipulated, a mechanism upon which his will could be exercised through experimentation. Still the CIA kept Cameron on the payroll for five years as he explored variations of his model. The ‘psychic driving’ or re-patterning he envisioned failed, and worse, “a follow-up study of Cameron’s de-

²²⁹ Kurnaz, 99.

patterned patients from the early 1960's showed that 60 percent could not remember anything about themselves as they had been six months to ten years prior to treatment."²³⁰ Donald Hebb, also a psychologist at McGill, experimented with sensory deprivation boxes, but has maintained publicly that he never intended to have his work transfer to methods of torture.²³¹ A colleague at the National Institute of Health had no such qualms, and pushed the boundaries of the experimentation, regularly seeking additional funding from the CIA, until a CIA medical official balked, and soundly refuted the project. In his zeal to push the boundaries of his box experiments, he moved on to apes, some of whom he lobotomized before subjecting them to further torture.²³² The subject of this section is not the scientific community, though sectors of this community are deeply involved in developing and supporting the range of dehumanization that has occurred, and for that, must bear responsibility. This includes physicians sworn at minimum to first do no harm. Yet, as Gabrielle Schwab notes, the theories and methods of torture have been honed through scientific study, and "increasingly attack the structures of selfhood." There is a deliberate unweaving of subjugated self of the prisoner, on whose body, a larger scale of dominion is exercised.²³³

²³⁰ Rejali, 370.

²³¹ Hebb was interviewed for the documentary, *Taxi to the Dark Side*. His claim is corroborated in Rejali, 368. <http://www.american-buddha.com/taxidark.84.htm>

²³² Rejali, 369.

How to be Outside of Time and Place

The perversion: the self cannot locate itself, but the self is observed by others--located and recorded in time and space, at all times. This occurs in what Heidegger deems the dominance of space and time, “the battle for dominion.”²³⁴ There is an approach to fixity that seeks a center for the self in a world hurtling at light speed. And there is a malignant impulse that seeks to fix-not repair- the world in ways that seek to control the time space of others, to freeze them to allow one’s own self movement. Prisoners are monitored for a number of reasons including the risk for suicide, another perversion, in that one can be tortured physically and psychically to the point of abject desperation and near death, death can be simulated through virtual drowning, and all hope can be tidily dispatched, i.e. you are never getting out of here, your wife has been imprisoned, raped, remarried, or killed, your parents, siblings, children, friends have been murdered, we are going to kill you in the end, and yet, the prisoner must be observed in order to prevent suicide...he cannot be afforded agency even over death. The body must be preserved to suffer and be dominated. But most importantly as an object to broadcast.

Contact with the outside world was severely limited and scrutinized; letters were heavily monitored, and some prisoners maintain that ingoing and outgoing mail was confiscated and never returned. Contact was not conducive to

²³³ Gabriele Schwab, *Haunting Legacies: Violent Histories and Transgenerational Trauma*. (New York: Columbia, 2010), 159.

²³⁴ Heidegger, *On the Way to Language*, 105.

the interrogation practices; if a prisoner knew a family member was well and safe, then that avenue of torture became a blind alley, and a source of comfort that might have offered some strength. Abdullah Thani Faris al Anazi, who lost both legs in Afghanistan, was sent to Guantanamo in 2002, wrote to his father, in *Poems from Guantanamo*: “When you hear the voice of my anguished soul, send sweet peace and greetings to my Bu’mair; Kiss him on the forehead, for he is my father.”²³⁵ Admitting any concern for family members opened a vulnerability, though, because the driving strategy of the torture was to identify such openings. Mamdouh Habib, Egyptian by birth, had lived in Australia since 1982, and was an Australian citizen. Habib’s story echoes that of Kurnaz. He was traveling in Pakistan, in October of 2001. He was taken off a bus with two young Germans, ostensibly because all foreigners were suspect, and eventually handed over to U.S. authorities, transferred to Egypt to be tortured.²³⁶ Habib recounts that during that flight, he was drugged and left to soil himself, and that “I felt I couldn’t face anything anymore: it was the end.” Habib was subjected to months of torture, but a low point was when he was drugged and forced to watch a film that appeared to be his family being blown up. He writes that his eyes were held open “with clips” and that he was made to watch the film over and over again.

²³⁵ Abdullah Thani Faris al Anazi, “To My Father,” *Poems from Guantanamo: The Detainees Speak*. Ed. Mark Falkoff. (Iowa City: University of Iowa, 2007), pg. 25.

²³⁶ Mamdouh Habib, *My Story: The Tale of a Terrorist who Wasn’t*, (Melbourne: Scribe, 2008) See Chapter 5, “Arrested in Pakistan.” Habib, like Kurnaz, was likely purchased through payment of a bounty to Pakistani authorities. The U.S. government offered bounties in Pakistan and Afghanistan, paying anywhere from \$5,000 to \$20,000 for prisoners, princely sums in these regions.

Habib says that time fell away, “I lost it and went a bit crazy. I can’t remember for how long, but I was in another world.”²³⁷ After this he was transferred to Guantanamo, but remained out of touch, “sometimes, I thought I was dead and being punished for my sins. At other times, I believed I was still in Egypt or Afghanistan or, occasionally even in Australia. I remained in this hazy state for over a year. The Egyptians had told me that my family had been blown up, so I was convinced I was alone and didn’t have much reason to live.”²³⁸ Throughout this period at Guantanamo, Habib describes being moved from cell to cell at Camp Delta, in and out of isolation. The cells at Camp Delta were made from shipping containers. Camp Delta was comprised of various numbered sub-camps, and those sub-camps had different blocks. The camps had various nicknames attached, and were known for particular conditions, “Camp 5 was an isolation camp; a big concrete building, a terrible place—freezing cold, with constant loud music and noise, and glaring lights.”²³⁹ Moazzam Begg tells of the disorientation that occurs in the enclosures, noting, “I was not prepared for solitary confinement in a room deprived of any natural light. I could not have imagined I would be held alone in these conditions for twenty months.”²⁴⁰

²³⁷ Habib, 124-25.

²³⁸ Habib, 152.

²³⁹ Habib, 154.

²⁴⁰ Begg, 189.

Dislocations

There is a lack of color in the space of Guantanamo, in the later camps, the cells are white, the light is white, there are no windows, no view of the outside world. One can see the orange of the jumpsuit. There are scant possessions, an absence of materiality. In her work on imprisonment in Iran, Shahla Talebi devotes pages to the investment of the imprisoned into the reach of the natural world, flowers become color for painting, date seeds are transformed into “necklaces, bracelets, or hair clips” demonstrating “that in prison anything can be the ground on which creativity blossoms.”²⁴¹ The natural world becomes a site of resistance and a reminder of life beyond. For Murat Kurnaz, the proximity to nature, and the denial of access was a torture in and of itself; he writes “The cages were so small it drove you to desperation. At the same time, nature—and freedom—were so tantalizingly close it could make you go crazy. An animal has more space in its cage in a zoo and is given more to eat. I can hardly put into words what that means.”²⁴² The sterility of the environment, the extremes of temperature and light, and the lack of even visual contact with nature are frequently invoked as painful aspects of the experience. A 2011 hunger strike at Guantanamo hints at the power of found or received articles: prisoners who were being transferred to another unit were assured that they could keep their scant collection of personal items. When this promise was breached, prisoners rebelled with their very being, refusing to eat. With so few modalities for expressing self or

²⁴¹ Shahla Talebi, *Ghosts of Revolution*, (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2011), 203.

²⁴² Kurnaz, 99.

creating a sense of place, the confiscation of personal belongings however meager, was an impossible assault. *Truthout* published a long piece about the hunger strike and the conditions which prompted the protests, "they were told [Camp 5] would be better," said one Guantanamo guard. "They were told they could bring nonessential items they collected. But after they were transferred, those items were confiscated. They were essentially lied to. Overall, they just felt the living conditions were worse at Camp 5."²⁴³ The comfort of received or found objects, and the meanings invested were so deeply held, that prisoners were willing to give up physical nourishment to protest—and perhaps mourn—the denial and loss.

A Terrible Timelessness

Moazzam Begg, a second generation British Muslim, was arrested at his home in Pakistan. He was labeled an enemy combatant, though he was nowhere near Afghanistan. He was imprisoned in Kandahar, at Bagram and then told by U.S. authorities, "you will eventually be sent to Guantanamo, and you will be held there indefinitely, and you will never see your family again."²⁴⁴ Begg says that during his confinement at Guantanamo, he sometimes heard "chilling screams of a woman next door. My mind battled with asking questions I was too afraid to

²⁴³ Jason Leopold, *Truthout* "Guantanamo Detainees Stage Hunger Strike to Protest Confinement Conditions," *Truthout*, 29 April 2011. Accessed: <http://www.truth-out.org/guantanamo-detainees-hunger-strike-protest-confinement-conditions/1304092655>

²⁴⁴ Begg, 161.

learn the answer to: ‘What if it was ...my wife?’”²⁴⁵ This was a kind of torture that prisoners often described as taking them out of themselves. Schwab discusses torture that continues over long periods as a suspension of time, with an implication of infinite suffering or alternately a collapsing of all time into the present, a heavily sedimented horror.²⁴⁶ So either the torture is experienced as all pain ever experienced present in the moment, or as an endless-and never ending-subjugation.

In a time of unparalleled addiction in the United States, a phenomenon that cannot be separated out from acceleration, the alienation of hyper-capitalism and the precarious futures promised, Lorde croons “We are never done killing time.” Lorde, Amy Winehouse, Lana del Ray, and others sing rihlas of pausing life through numbing out, or accelerating death by overdosing, killing time and being in times that are too painful. Some guards at Guantánamo self-medicated with alcohol to get through their deployments and were medicated by the V.A. to help them cope with after effects. Prisoners were also treated with drugs when referred for psychiatric concerns. The alienation caused by a world moving so quickly and carelessly has consequences. This was not lost on the prisoners who both experienced the consequences of systems moving carelessly and could see other kinds of fallout. In words that have even deeper valence now, Moazzam Begg wrote in 2005,

²⁴⁵ Begg, 161.

²⁴⁶ Gabriele Schwab, *Haunting Legacies: Violent Histories and Transgenerational Trauma*. (New York: Columbia, 2010), 156.

your gun lobby, the National Rifle Association, is one of the most powerful in the U.S. You fight for the right to bear arms, in a country that is plagued by firearms violence: juvenile college killings, shopping-mall snipers, serial killers, Hollywood-style shoot-outs with the cops, gang violence from all your races – Latino Lords, Mexican Mafia, Crips and Bloods, Aryan Brotherhood, Klu Klux Klan; highest crime figures in the world, especially murder in your capital city. I’ve met soldiers now from almost every state in your country. Everyone I’ve spoken to knows someone who’s been shot or killed. Some have even been shot themselves. They’d have been far safer in Afghanistan.²⁴⁷

Here, Begg points to the dangerous nature of America, of the homeland, of the internal violence that alienates and haunts. He also is capturing something of the demographic of the guards, and their communities of origin.

Like Supermax, modeled on Supermax, but worse in a host of ways in that there was no charge, no trial date, no verdict, and no sentence; the time was timeless. Andy Worthington, a UK journalist notes “the Guantanamo prisoners were still held in legal limbo, with no access to lawyers, no access to their families, no books apart from the Koran, no other forms of recreation, and no notion of when, if ever, their detention would come to an end. What none of them knew at the time, was that the worst was yet to come.”²⁴⁸ As terrible as the tiny cages were, the prisoners had some view of the outside world, and of each other, but as the Delta camps were constructed, some prisoners were moved into boxes with no possibility of a breeze, no access to sunshine or stars, or even most living creatures to remind them of the outside world.

²⁴⁷ Moazzam Begg, 234.

²⁴⁸ Andy Worthington, *The Guantanamo Files*. (London: Pluto, 2007), pg. 134.

How reverberations travel

When one thinks of James Yee, the prisons in Iran, Abdulrahman and Kathy Zeitoun, and Bradley Manning, there is a stark realization that the implementation of cruelty cannot be contained within walls, cells, island prison camps and other zones of disappearance...the violence vibrates across land, across oceans and infects the culture of origin. Cruelty and its mechanisms travel, and gain currency through circulation. James Yee, a West Point graduate and army chaplain was arrested in 2003 after his deployment to Guantánamo. He was stopped at an airport in Florida as he was making his way home to see his wife and daughter, whisked away to a military prison in North Carolina, and held in solitary confinement. Yee realized when he was shackled, blindfolded and had noise cancelling ear muffs placed on his head, before being thrown into an unmarked van, that the rules of law had changed for U.S. citizens, as well. Yee was eventually released, and given an honorable discharge from the military, but had been disappeared, held in solitary for over two months, and subjected to death threats by the U.S. military. Prisoners in Iran are now threatened with torture from GTMO; where the acronym itself acts as a promise. Husband and wife, Abdulrahman and Kathy Zeitoun survived Hurricane Katrina—Kathy and the children had been evacuated—but Abdulrahman stayed behind to help in relief efforts. He was arrested in a home he owned on suspicion of terrorism, profiled because of his name and Middle Eastern appearance, and “held without contact, charges, bail or trial.”²⁴⁹ The disaster zone of New Orleans was being

²⁴⁹ Dave Eggers, *Zeitoun*, (New York: Vintage, 2009), 255.

managed as a conflict zone full of enemies. Eggers writes that Zeitoun “did not want it to be true that his home and city were underwater. He did not want it to be true that his wife and children were fifteen hundred miles away and might by now presume him to be dead. He did not want it to be true that he was now and might always be a man in a cage, hidden away, no longer part of the world.”²⁵⁰

Bradley (now Chelsea) Manning, a member of the U.S. military, spent months in solitary confinement after providing documents to Wikileaks, subject to forced nudity and suicide watch. She was subsequently transferred from Quantico to Fort Leavenworth, before the commutation of her sentence by Barack Obama during his last year in office.²⁵¹ Former Guantanamo Guard, Otis Mixon, wrote in his blog, *The Paper Trail*, after the Wikileaks document release about Guantanamo prisoners, “I knew it all along...but how do you explain knowing about something like that when they all treat you like a child? Like you are too small and too insignificant to understand the grandeur of their manly, adult plan. But I knew...It was all broken and we are going to Hell for what we did.”²⁵²

Like Moazzam Begg, Murat Kurnaz, and thousands of others swept up in the War on Terror, Mamdouh Habib was eventually released, but the experience

²⁵⁰ Ibid, 256.

²⁵¹ <http://emptywheel.firedoglake.com/2011/04/20/miks-new-sources-on-bradley-mannings-treatment-pentagon-officials/>

²⁵² Otis Mixon, “I told you so,” *The Paper Trail* <https://otismixon.wordpress.com/2011/04/26/i-told-you-so/> This is an example of the infantilization, or feminization of the protester or resister, by the hyper-masculine culture of the military, rampant on comment threads on social media. When a veteran protest, resists, or becomes a whistleblower, he or she faces the added dimension of betrayal.

stays with him: “for a long while after, there is no firm reality. The world is full of terrors, and life is a nightmare.”²⁵³ Abdulrahman Zeitoun was also released after a devastating confinement. Zeitoun’s wife was not physically locked away, but she says of his disappearance and secret imprisonment in the United States, her country and his, “I felt cracked open...it broke me.”²⁵⁴ The idea of brokenness and betrayal is evinced in the rihlas of prisoners, guards, and precarious and alienated selves within the homeland and around the world. How can this—or that—be happening?

²⁵³ Habib, 255.

²⁵⁴ Eggers, 319.

CHAPTER 4 CONTAINERS

*All constructive reveries—and there is nothing more essentially a builder than the reverie of power—are brought to life by the hope of surmounting adversity, by the vision of a vanquished adversary....and let no mistake be made: the adversary that does the questioning is not necessarily a man, for things also question us. On the other hand, in his audacious experimenting, man brutalizes the real.*²⁵⁵

If *rihla* suggests fluidity and movement and the interior self, containers are about solids: walls, cells, boxes, borders, fences, chains, confinement, structures, uniformity, schedules, and the ordering of permissible and forbidden movement and being. The *rihla* reveals, while the container conceals. There are connections to be drawn between the symbolic order stabilized through Guantánamo, and the *homeland* post *nine/eleven*, reflections that flash back religious, racial, and ideological divides, and economic consolidations and disenfranchisements.

At the most prosaic level, Guantánamo is a joint task force military base and prison on Cuban soil established as a coaling station and Naval base after the Cuban War of Independence and the U.S. occupation of Cuba in 1898.

Guantánamo became an iconic symbol of the Cold War. At one time, the fence separating the militarily occupied land from Cuba was the most heavily mined border in the world with some 70,000 land mines placed along the 17.4 mile stretch by the U.S. and Cuban militaries in the years after Castro took power.²⁵⁶

The U.S. mined one side, and the Cuban military mined the other, jointly creating

²⁵⁵ Bachelard, Gaston. *Water and Dreams: An Essay on the Imagination of Matter*, (Dallas: Dallas Institute of Humanities and Culture, 1983) 160.

²⁵⁶ Carol Rosenberg, "Guantánamo base free of landmines," *The Miami Herald*, June 29, 1999. Archived in Latin American Studies.

<http://www.latinamericanstudies.org/cuba/guantanamo-mines.htm>

a hazard zone that has claimed the lives of at least eighteen US military personnel and five Cuban asylum seekers.²⁵⁷ In 1997, former President Bill Clinton issued a directive to demine the fence on the U.S. side, a concession after declining to sign the Ottawa Treaty, an agreement that called for a full international ban on anti-personnel mines.²⁵⁸ The Department of Defense made the case that landmines were essential for another two decades to maintain the border between North and South Korea. The base side of the fence at Guantánamo was fully demined in 1999, but the Cuban side remains mined, and both sides have troops guarding the border. In February of 2018, when a wildfire had the audacity to cross borders, some of those mines exploded, and Cuban and US troops worked jointly to contain and extinguish the fire.²⁵⁹ The U.S. allowed a Cuban helicopter to fly across the fence to deliver water drops.²⁶⁰ The military has contingency plans in place at Guantánamo in the event of fires and hurricanes. In October of 2016, military dependents and pets were flown to safety in Florida when a hurricane threatened the base, but most military personnel and contract workers

²⁵⁷ "Cuba Mine Ban Policy," *Landmine and Cluster Munitions Monitor: Archives 1999-2014* <http://archives.themonitor.org/index.php/publications/display?url=lm/1999/cuba.html>

²⁵⁸ Philip Shenon, "Clinton Still Firmly against land mine treaty," *New York Times* <https://www.nytimes.com/1997/10/11/world/clinton-still-firmly-against-land-mine-treaty.html> An anti-personnel mine is distinguished from an anti-tank mine by the relative size of the charge, but anti-tank mines are also likely to be anti-personnel mines because the personnel within the tanks may be killed in the explosions, or in the subsequent evacuation from the tank.

²⁵⁹ Carol Rosenberg, "Wildfires at Guantánamo Ignite Cuban minefield force brief evacuation of Navy base Housing," *The Miami Herald*, February 22, 2018.

²⁶⁰ Carol Rosenberg, "Wildfires at Guantánamo," *The Miami Herald*,

remained.²⁶¹ In 2017, when Hurricane Irma threatened, a decision was made for everyone to stay put, however, “the spokesman for the 1,500-staff detention center declined to say whether the prison’s temporary troops — mostly National Guard soldiers on nine-month tours of duty, without family — would remain in trailer-park style Containerized Housing Units, or CHUs, or would be evacuating to cots in the base gym.”²⁶² During the fire and explosions in February, a number of base housing communities were evacuated, but there was no word about the prisoners who were also in close proximity to the wildfire and explosions.²⁶³ Denny LeBoeuf, an ACLU attorney for Khalid Sheikh Mohammed, said that the fire and explosions gave him pause: “One of the things that occurred to me is, evacuating a high-security prison in the event of a hurricane is one thing,” but that “evacuating people for a wildfire is really something else. And I wonder if JTF has a plan to evacuate Camp Seven and the other camps of imprisoned, locked down men in a hurry.”²⁶⁴

²⁶¹ Terri Moon Cronk, “Hurricane Prompts Evacuation of 700 Family Members from Guantánamo Bay, *Department of Defense News*, Oct. 3, 2016.

<https://www.defense.gov/News/Article/Article/962078/hurricane-prompts-evacuation-of-700-family-members-from-guantanamo-bay/>

²⁶² Carol Rosenberg, “Guantánamo Base to ‘shelter in place’ for Cat-5 Irma,” *News and Observer*, September 5, 2017. <http://www.newsobserver.com/news/politics-government/article171442147.html>

²⁶³ <https://www.military.com/daily-news/2018/02/23/wildfires-gitmo-force-evacuation-some-housing-areas.html>

²⁶⁴ <https://www.military.com/daily-news/2018/02/23/wildfires-gitmo-force-evacuation-some-housing-areas.html>

In *A Few Good Men*, a 1992 film set at Guantánamo Colonel Jessup (Jack Nicholson) paternalistically instructs, “We live in a world of walls, and those walls have to be guarded by men with guns,” (and mines, and tanks, and drones, and bombs).²⁶⁵ In the film, the message was issued from Guantánamo, but spoke to movie going civilians domestically. In Jessup’s monologue civilians were instructed in a threatening tone to be grateful to violence workers for allowing civilians to live freely without having to participate in the violence directly; the threat from Jessup, “you need me on that wall” frames violent protectionism as a necessary evil, a burden that the brave must carry for the weak and willfully ignorant, but nature and human beings cannot be so easily compartmentalized and contained as Jessup’s guarded walls suggest.

In 1989, Philip Bennet pointed to Guantánamo base as “an island on an island,” where every necessity has to be brought in by plane or boat, something still true nearly thirty years later.²⁶⁶ The base is an insular space, that contains the prison within its (Cuba’s) borders, and the prison contains the prisoners, and during their shifts, the guards and third country nationals, itinerant workers on temporary contracts, subject to renewal or cancellation.

²⁶⁵ *A Few Good Men*, 1992.

²⁶⁶ Philip Bennet, “Guantánamo: Isolated Pawn in Power Game,” *The Boston Globe*, April 2, 1989.
http://archive.boston.com/news/world/latinamerica/articles/1989/04/02/guantanamo_isolated_pawn_in_power_game/

Again, it is helpful to stop and think about the ‘how’ question? How do symbolic orders arrive, and how do they mean? *How* is the freight of empire dropped into place with such heft that the imprint is hard and fast and lasting across sea and land? In December of 2001, *The Washington Post* published an article that presented the many ways ISO (International Organization for Standardization) shipping containers were being repurposed in Kabul as shocking proof not only of Afghan poverty, but also of tragic cultural backwardness. The tone was one of lament laced with disdain at the post occupation landscape the reporter encountered.²⁶⁷ Rusted out shipping containers were pointed to as markers, signage of the state of the Afghanistan and its citizens. Kevin Sullivan wrote, “This bombed and battered country survives on what it can scrounge, and some of its most plentiful resources are big metal shipping containers. They are everywhere here, thousands of them, used as everything from shops, to homes, guardhouses and prisons.”²⁶⁸ One of the families interviewed was living in two containers fused together, and their home was cast disparagingly from the beltway as the “Afghan version of a double-wide.”²⁶⁹ Sullivan continues, “containers have been incorporated into what

²⁶⁷ The United States military left many traces in Vietnam after the war including dioxin and bullets. The U.S. also left more than 100,000 metal shipping containers in Vietnam. See *Joint Logistics Review Board* “Containerization,” Dec. 18, 1970. Pg. 11 <http://www.dtic.mil/dtic/tr/fulltext/u2/877965.pdf>

²⁶⁸ Kevin Sullivan, “Residents of Kabul recycle sea of shipping containers: Metal boxes used for housing, shops and police stations,” *The Washington Post*. A-18 December 15, 2001.

²⁶⁹ Sullivan.

passes for architecture in a country where building design ranges roughly from primitive to prehistoric.”²⁷⁰ That primitiveness was charged with a taint that meant to implicate Islam as primitive, fusing the people and their religion to the postwar conditions, but also a swipe at the poorest of rural Americans.

The idea of using shipping containers for housing was nearly inconceivable for most Americans in 2001, and the Washington Post writer could count on his readers to access mental images of *Mad Max*, and other post-apocalyptic tales—one of the earliest appearances of shipping containers as a facet of a post-apocalyptic carceral society is the 1986 film *Space Rage Breakout on Prison Planet*—but within a decade of the U.S. invasion of Afghanistan, containers were reimagined, re-branded, and marketed as potential tiny houses, a symbol that without irony signaled a rejection of consumption, of material accumulation, and permanence. The sofa had become a davenport. The shipping container had been glossed for consumption.

The tiny house concept carries a valence of alienation from community; the containers are isolated spaces meant to store humans sparsely as units for transport. While the surface messaging is of freedom of distilled lifestyle and movement, there is a strong undercurrent of contingency, of precarious and transient employment, of life on the edge, on the hinge, ready to swing with (mis)fortune. There are television shows, blogs, websites, books, and Pinterest boards devoted to the architecture, and lifestyle ‘concept.’ But this was post-event, after an event, *the* event that became September eleventh, and then further

²⁷⁰ Sullivan.

distilled to *nine/eleven*. “An event is the effect that seems to exceed its causes—and the space of an event is the distance of an effect from its causes.”²⁷¹ But more importantly-welcome to the 21st century-I repeat Zizek’s warning: “So it’s not just that the symbolic order is all of a sudden fully here—there was nothing, and moment later it is all here—but there is nothing and then, all of a sudden, it is as if the symbolic order was always—already here, as if there was never a time without it.”²⁷²

Intermodal containers changed everything about how goods are packaged, transferred, transported, and stored; supply chain management was revolutionized. Mark Levinson traces the history of cargo units and the role the standardization with an eye toward globalization and economy.²⁷³ Alexander Klose makes a bigger claim, he reads intermodality more philosophically as a paradigm shift that actually changes how we conceptualize the world and ourselves.²⁷⁴

Not only are the containers imagined as a creative part of the small/tiny/minimalist house movement, perhaps there is the micro of the dumpster looming, too. Dr. Jeff Wilson, a professor at Houston-Tillotson

²⁷¹ Zizek, *The Event*, Backmatter.

²⁷² Zizek, *The Event*, 135.

²⁷³ Mark Levinson, *The Box: How the Shipping Container made the World Smaller and the World Economy Bigger*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006).

²⁷⁴ Alexander Klose, *The Container Principle: How a Box Changes the Way We Think*, (Cambridge: MIT, 2009).

University spent an academic year living in a modified dumpster, through three phases of improvement as an exploration of minimalist sustainable living environments.²⁷⁵ One can find many creative examples of the use of shipping containers as repurposed structures on architectural sites connected to the tiny house movement. That the movement is connected to the economic impact of neoliberal economic policies that have devastated the middle class in the United States is unspoken and perhaps unrealized. We can all live in the shipping containers that were once filled with commodities that many can no longer afford economically and that the planet cannot sustain environmentally, containers for goods, containers for prisoners, containers for third country national workers, containers for economic refugees, containers for the new poor, and containers for contingent workers. In the U.K. the term redundant is used officially to refer to someone whose position no longer exists. A person is ‘made’ redundant through mechanical and digital shifts, or by transferring the work to consumers who process their own purchases, and pack their own groceries, but when workers can be part of the supply chain more effortlessly like in the man camp villages of pipe line workers, perhaps redundant labor everywhere can be ‘reformatted’ and shipped off, as Third Country Workers, or stateless workers. MODS

International advertises that they:

can create man camps and modular workforce housing solutions for any needs. Do you need to house hundreds or even thousands of workers on-site? Our units are ideal for oil and gas exploration fields, mining, medical facilities, remote research facilities, as well as emergency housing for

²⁷⁵ Stu Roberts. “Professor Living in a Dumpster for a Year to Investigate Sustainable Living.” *Gizmag* Online. October 16, 2014.

disaster victims and recovery workers. MODS custom designs and builds modular man camps to your requirements. We can deliver units of any scale, to any location in the world. We are able to provide a completely turnkey set up. All you need to provide is the concrete base, water, sewer and electric hookups, then MODS drops the units in place for immediate occupancy.²⁷⁶

MODs International is interested in providing temporary housing for the man camps, but is also invested in the tiny house model, including the Veteran Village Tiny Homes project unveiled in early 2018 in Las Vegas. The Veteran Village is meant to be a solution for homeless veterans nationwide, and not as a stopgap measure, but as “part of a national plan to address the Veterans Housing Crisis,” and “a model for the future.”²⁷⁷ Afghanistan has come half circle, as homeless veterans can be warehoused in shipping containers mocked as primitive less than two decades ago. “The first unit” the site announces, “is a 320 square foot model made from an unused 40' steel shipping container. By tiny home standards, this is quite spacious.”²⁷⁸ Veterans Village own site call the shipping containers re-purposed. Nowhere in the announcement is there a mention of war or trauma or PTSD. The veterans are homeless because of “funding problems” that “force vets to fend for themselves.”²⁷⁹ Veterans Village own site calls a new phase of the project, “Veterans Village Sands Cares Container Park Village.”²⁸⁰ U.S. military

²⁷⁶ “Man Camps & Work Force Housing,” *MODs International Website*, 2017
<https://www.modsinternational.com/man-camps/>

²⁷⁷ “Proudly Serving our Veterans,”
<https://www.modsinternational.com/proudly-serving-our-veterans/>

²⁷⁸ <https://www.modsinternational.com/proudly-serving-our-veterans/>

²⁷⁹ <https://www.modsinternational.com/proudly-serving-our-veterans/>

veterans struggling with homelessness will be disappeared, in essence, from the streets, and public conscience, into a container park. The veterans' condition of homelessness is a condition of moral injury, trauma, PTSD, depression, addiction, self-medication, all connected to participation in war, but this is missing from the narrative. Container Park Village is a project of concealment, in this sense. And the project relies on further funding from the public and corporate sponsors, rather than from the Department of Defense that the public already funds.



Figure 5. Veterans Village²⁸¹

Paul Farmer's account of the conditions in which the Haitians fleeing Papa Doc's dictatorship had been kept, especially those who protested the confinement, or who tested positive for HIV.²⁸² Those Haitian asylum seekers, kept in what was accurately dubbed "the world's first HIV detention camp"

²⁸⁰ <http://veteransvillagelasvegas.org/instant-built-house/>

²⁸¹ <https://www.modsinternational.com/proudly-serving-our-veterans/>

²⁸² Paul Farmer, *Pathologies of Power: Health, Human Rights, and the New War on the Poor*.

provided a trial run for the use of the camp as a prison.²⁸³ The cages signaled humiliation, and the association with the confinement of dangerous animals and contagious bodies (containers of infection that had to be contained, test tubes of pathogens kept in a locked unit, in a secured lab within in restricted remote facility, within a fenced perimeter) was apparent. With the funding of a new Contingency Mass Migration Complex at Guantánamo, there will be bodies contained for other reasons, including environmental. The Caribbean is mapped as a hot spot for future environmental migration.²⁸⁴

Early visual encounters with Guantánamo were through the ubiquitous and now iconic photographs of men in orange jumpsuits kneeling on the gravel alley between rows of chain link fence. Their eyes are blindfolded, and their ears are covered with muffling devices. Their mouths are not visible because of surgical masks fastened around their heads. Their hands are covered, and wrists secured by plastic bands. Most of the men are wearing orange beanies, slightly brighter than the orange of the uniforms. The chain link fences visible on either side of them were the sides of the early cages, vestiges of the Haitian internment camp. Swirls of razor wire top the fences. The first prisoners to arrive at Guantánamo were held captive in these cages in the early months of 2002. The

²⁸³ Michael Ratner, “How we closed the Guantanamo HIV Camp,” *Harvard Human Rights Journal* Volume 11, 1998. <https://web.law.columbia.edu/sites/default/files/microsites/human-rights-institute/files/Ratner%20How%20we%20Closed%20Guantano%20camp.pdf>

²⁸⁴ “Preparing for Environmental Migration,” Global Economic Symposium. 2010 Conference. <https://www.global-economic-symposium.org/knowledgebase/the-global-society/preparing-for-environmental-migration>

cages allowed no modicum of privacy even for toileting, no escape from the heat of day, or the cold of night. There were creatures of all kinds: birds, ants, scorpions, flying insects, iguanas, snakes, and banana rats. Those creatures had freedom of movement, and in some cases were under special orders of protection. To injure or kill a protected species, like the Cuban Rock Iguana, meant severe penalty. The law protected some living creatures, even as others were tortured within deliberately broken frameworks of law.

Inside the Sea Cans

The news that a new prison was going to be built at Guantánamo gave pause to those concerned with the launching of the war in Iraq, but not because of the architecture itself. Indeed, it seemed that a new prison would result in better living conditions. A number of prisoners were told this by guards and interrogators and believed the new structure would be an improvement to the conditions at Camp X-Ray. The concern arose because the contract had been awarded to Kellogg, Brown and Root, a subsidiary of Halliburton. Blackwater, Halliburton, and Kellogg Brown were all companies associated with war profiteering. Vice president Dick Cheney's association with Halliburton had caught the attention of critics of the Bush administration.²⁸⁵

I was long aware of the original Camp X-Ray conditions and the concerns about the KBR contract and the permanency suggested by new prison structures, but it was later that the use of shipping container cells caught my attention. The

²⁸⁵ See Pratap Chatterjee's *Halliburton's Army*, 75-77.

use of the containers was foregrounded by so many other concerns, but when I began reading memoirs and statements of former prisoners, I noted this facet of the conditions of imprisonment was consistently mentioned. This facet of the architecture of confinement *mattered* to the prisoners. The prisoners were hyper-cognizant of being held in converted shipping containers, much as the first prisoners were acutely aware of the dog-run simulacra of the early chain link cages. Remembering his experience of this period of confinement during the first months of 2002, Moazzam Begg, writes of an interchange in which he is asked if he had specific complaints: “Of course, I had complaints. I told him, just as I had the first time he came: I was in a dog kennel; letters were not making it through regularly; the food was disgusting; recreation was a joke; and worst of all, I had no idea about what was supposed to happen, and the lawyers I was supposed to have, had never come.”²⁸⁶ Mohamedou Slahi arrived at Guantánamo August 5th, 2002. He describes arriving at his isolation cell after the ritual of kneeling on the rocks, medical in-processing, being stripped and showered while in chains, then interrogated by a team of three, before being “dropped” in “the frozen-cold box” that would be his cell for the first month in Guantánamo.²⁸⁷ The kenneling and boxing of prisoners coincided with a social death. The dehumanizing rituals, the lack of legal process, and the modes of containment were interlinked.

²⁸⁶ Begg, Moazzam. *Enemy Combatant: My Imprisonment at Guantánamo, Bagram, and Khandahar*. (The New Press: New York), 226.

²⁸⁷ Mohamedou Slahi, 39.

The early memoirs began appearing in 2005, coincident with the beginning of the burst of the housing bubble. Americans were losing their homes in great number. The devastation of the economy, deepening concerns about the environment, and the precariousness of the labor force would give rise to the tiny houses movement. At the time, I categorized the new movement and the new prison structures in distinct parts of my mind. It would not be until 2014 that I woke one night to a convergence. Discarded shipping containers, the refuse of the hyper-capitalism of globalization, the same containers converted to cage the prisoners at Guantánamo, and prisoners in Australia, the UK, and the United States, were now being hyped as a hip green alternative to traditional housing. One might see the promise of this intervention as a solution for those who had lost their homes post *nine-eleven*, or those who could no longer afford to enter the conventional housing market. But that marketing strategy would not have made a compelling entry in a country where mobile homes and trailer parks carry a strong negative connotation. The homes had to be made desirable: a cool, green, and a savvy option for the hip pioneer. The tiny and soon even micro housing units un-rooted to the land were still not affordable for many, and not a good value in terms of resale. Tiny house prices are measurably higher per square foot than conventional homes, and land is not included-though this is spun as a positive attribute. Certainly, the rootlessness of the tiny houses is part of the allure (and symptomology) in a country where employment is precarious and transitory; one transports the minimalist shell of protection on wheels. Tiny houses are more expensive than prefabricated mobile homes but are marked by

cachet rather than stigma. The first choice is hipster and the second is to be marked trailer trash. One wonder whether retirees and young families will make their homes in future shipping container parks, or high-density dumpster parks, much like the homeless encampments under bridges, in woods, and desert downtowns from coast to coast in 21st century America, or like the tech employees of Northern California sleeping in parking lots or nap pods.²⁸⁸ Will the economically precarious citizens of America's future be consigned to the shelter of salvage yards? Perhaps that will not happen, while the trailer park was so dubbed during prosperous times for most, the chic tiny house movement and the adoption of salvage as housing is burgeoning during a great transfer of wealth from the poor and middle class to the already wealthy. The top one percent of the population controls more than half of the world's wealth. What begins as a creative hipster alternative experiment in living, may be a harsh and less cheerful reality for the world's burgeoning poor. How might post war Afghanistan style conditions be made normative to Americans-what will your container look like in late stage capitalism? And we are reminded, it is called *hypercapitalism* because it is moving fast. Paul Virillo argues that that acceleration has been under conceptualized, arguing that the "question of speed is an eminently modern and

²⁸⁸ The \$13,000 pod is marketed for naps, but perhaps signals a move to appropriate the worker's *life-time* entirely. See, Zoe Henry, "6 Companies (Including Uber) where its okay to nap," <https://www.inc.com/zoe-henry/google-uber-and-other-companies-where-you-can-nap-at-the-office.html>

even postmodern question.”²⁸⁹ What happens when acceleration hits walls? How do we understand our *terminal* velocity?

When just three months after the event, the *Washington Post* published its disparaging piece about the daily life of Afghan citizens, the economic struggle was grimly sketched out by pointing to the use of shipping containers from boom times repurposed as storefronts, clinics, homes, and prison cells it was to summon a devastated and impoverished landscape, and a backwards people.²⁹⁰ The article goes on to express the desperation of a country reduced to using shipping containers as housing. This sets up the wasteland of Afghanistan as desperate for the intervention of the United States as an interventionist savior. The article ends with a lament from an Afghan mother that anticipates and echoes that of any poor woman in the United States, "This house is not a suitable place to raise children," she said. "But I am optimistic that we will have a better one in the future. And the life of women will be better. We will have comfortable houses, and we will be able to work. And there will be no more fighting."²⁹¹

The dire implications of habitation in repurposed industrial refuse in Afghanistan, as narrated by the *Washington Post* in 2001, shifts by the next decade, when rescued and rehabilitated as a narrative of purposeful hip-and

²⁸⁹ Paul Virilio, *The Administration of Fear*, (Los Angeles: Semiotexte(e), 2013),79.

²⁹⁰ Kevin Sullivan, "Residents of Kabul Recycle Sea of Shipping Containers: Metal Boxes used for Housing, Shops, and Police Stations," *The Washington Post* December 15, 2001. A-18.

²⁹¹ Kevin Sullivan, "Residents of Kabul Recycle Sea of Shipping Containers: Metal Boxes used for Housing, Shops, and Police Stations," *The Washington Post* Dec. 15, 2001. A-18.

suddenly environmentally friendly-digs. How dare the prisoners, refugees, and destitute of the world complain, when college graduates in wealthy countries were *choosing* shipping containers as new homes? This is akin, I suspect, to the conspicuous presence and circulation of Harry Potter books and movies at Guantánamo. The prisoners had art classes, soccer balls, video games, and the Harry Potter series—they had access to amenities that carried the valence of comfortable middle-class youth. This use of false equivalencies is a deliberate strategy woven into the discourse about conditions at Guantánamo and works on a second level to caricature the prisoners as childish or of diminished capacity. The imprisonment is couched in terms of leisure, amenities, access, and activities that reinforce resentments from disenfranchised Americans. This culture of childhood or young adulthood was put into place after the children were no longer children or teenagers.²⁹² The term ‘adultification’ used in Black activist communities is drawn from social science research that demonstrates the ways children of color in the United States are often subject to expectations for behavior that are not age appropriate, nor comparable to the expectations for white children. It means for the purposes of the state, a child is sped into adulthood through media messaging and legal mechanisms that allow children to be charged, tried, and imprisoned as adults. The term adultification can also be used to describe what happened to the child prisoners in Afghanistan, Iraq, and

²⁹² This rhetoric maps onto similar strands of speech deployed by and about the carceral state, domestically. The amenities are then weaponized against the prisoners, as in Sheriff Joe Arpaio’s mechanisms of using food and clothing as sources of punishment and humiliation.

in Guantánamo. Though their bodies were that of children, they were considered to already clearly signify the adult within, and that adult was dangerous. The Department of Defense own records published by Wikileaks and compiled by the UC Davis Center for the Study of Human Rights in the Americas include at least 15 children under the age of 18, and another six children who may have been between 17 and 18 years of age were taken to Guantanamo.²⁹³ These children were imprisoned and brutalized at Guantánamo in the first years of the camp operation. If the category is extended to age 20 through the term teenager, the number grows much larger. While children in the United States are prosecuted for crimes, sometimes within the juvenile justice system and other times as adults, with factors of race and class deeply implicated, in ways that are connected and unforgivable, war is a different context. Omar Khadr's legal representative, Lieutenant Commander Bill Keubler, made arguments in this vein. His paired lines of argument were that a) as a child brought to a war zone by his father, he should be considered a "child soldier in need of protection, not prosecution" and b) that "it is not reasonable to expect a child to understand these highly nuanced, sophisticated concepts of the war of armed conflicts that

²⁹³ "Guantánamo's Children: The Wikileaked Testimonies," *Center for Human Rights in the Americas*, April 24, 2011.
<http://humanrights.ucdavis.edu/reports/guantanamos-children-the-wikileaked-testimonies/guantanamos-children-the-wikileaked-testimonies>

say you can kill people but you can only kill people if you're wearing certain clothes."²⁹⁴

As the child prisoners were adultified, the adult prisoners were infantilized, diapered, and made to soil and wet themselves during periods of transfer and interrogation. The interrogation log for prisoner 063, Mohamed al-Qahtani details more than a solid month of twenty hour plus rounds of torture carried out by rotating teams drawing on the scripted routines and named techniques. There were times when he refused food and or water. The interrogators responded by flooding his body with IV fluids and then withholding bathroom access. The medical procedure is thinly veiled as 'care,' but in reality is a technique meant to recapture control of the prisoner's body, and to humiliate him in the process.²⁹⁵

In his memoir about his work at Guantánamo, medic Montgomery Granger includes 'hooch' in his glossary of terms, as "Army Dwelling. Could be tent, could be condo, or anything in-between that is used as a domicile while on deployment. In Abu Ghraib, it was a former prison cell."²⁹⁶ There is a sense that Granger wants his audience to know that he, too, was in a prison cell during his military deployment. The extra information indicates its work as a buffer and

²⁹⁴ Michelle Shephard, *Guantánamo's Child*, (Mississauga, Ontario: Wiley, 2008), 224.

²⁹⁵ "Interrogation Log Detainee 063," SECRET ORCON, See Nov. 25, 2002 11:15. <http://content.time.com/time/2006/log/log.pdf>

²⁹⁶ Montgomery J. Granger, *Saving Grace at Guantánamo Bay*, (Durham, CT: Strategic, 2010), 226.

anticipatory rebuff to challenges about conditions. It is another false but ideologically effective message: if soldiers (with all that is contained within the semiotic well of that subject formation) may be housed in former prison cells, why should detainees be better quartered?²⁹⁷ The strategy of drawing attention to the amenities of the prisoners and the harsh conditions experienced by the military personnel is a frequent parry thrust from conservative politicians and followers when discussing conditions at the prison, and the plight of the prisoners in general.

Containers, containment, containerization

In Afghanistan, General Dostum's Northern Alliance troops had forced the men into abandoned shipping containers and left them locked inside for days.²⁹⁸ Between several hundred and several thousand people suffocated or were shot to death under the command of General Dostum during the initial U.S. invasion of Afghanistan in 2001. In retrospect, Ahmed Errachidi describes his time of imprisonment in Pakistan, and later at Bagram and Kandahar as a "short stay in the neck of the bottle."²⁹⁹ What followed was full containment within the confines of the bottle. Zaeff begins the description of his first space with a recognition of

²⁹⁷ The semiotic well is a concept introduced by a blogger at American Buddhist. He describes it as "a gravitational bending within a semiotic network."

<https://americanbuddhist.net/2014/03/17/semiotic-networks-and-semiotic-wells/>

²⁹⁸ Zaeef, 201.

²⁹⁹ Ahmed Errachidi, 74.

his environs at Guantánamo with: “I was brought to a small cage made out of a shipping crate.”³⁰⁰

In his memoir, Afghan politician Abdul Salam Zaeef describes the Delta Block prison:

“Civilian contractors had welded four shipping containers end to end and replaced one of the long, newly created front walls with diamond wire. Diamond wire was also used to internally divide this enclosure into twenty-four cages, meaning each shipping container could contain six detainees in a manner the authorities described as ‘single-occupancy cell’. This long, narrow, twenty-four-cage structure was raised off the ground on cement blocks opposite another four shipping containers. A raised platform between the containers allowed enough room for a soldier to walk along and inspect detainees. This whole contraption was then covered in white panels and roofed, giving the appearance from the outside that we were housed in clean, comfortable, fabricated buildings, hiding the metal shipping containers and the internal forest of diamond wire in which we lived.”³⁰¹

British citizen, Moazzam Begg held for several years at Guantánamo recounts, “I only had once direction that wasn’t white steel wall to look at. Staring through the diamond-shaped caged mesh had begun to damage my eyes from day one in Guantánamo. Headaches increased and I was soon on more medication than I had been in my entire life.”³⁰²

At the end of a description of being moved from Camp X-ray to Camp Delta, David Hicks writes “the worst realization was that we were now all being

³⁰⁰ Zaeef, 188.

³⁰¹ Hicks, David, *Guantánamo: My Journey*. Pg. 237.

³⁰² Begg, 239.

housed in shipping containers.”³⁰³ Shipping containers are designed to securely hold commodities being transported from one location to another. What does it mean to be put inside a shipping container that no longer functions as a shipping container, a stainless-steel container and its contents (the prisoners) going nowhere? The commodified body of the prisoner is in long-term or permanent storage in steely industrialized confinement, and could be categorized as immaterial labor, in the sense proposed by Hardt and Negri. The performance of their confinement is the labor, which produces value, as a fixed afterimage in a particular ideological narrative. There is the all too real profit of war at stake. Kellogg Brown and Root, subsidiary of Halliburton received the contracts for the temporary structures. Foreign workers- referred to as third country nationals or TCNs-provided the labor. The foreign workers also lived in tents and shipping containers, environments that mimicked the transport of sex slaves and the undocumented refugees of the global economy. The shipping container has become a trope of films and detective shows like *SVU* and *the Wire* where young women trafficked from Eastern Europe or Southeast Asia, or refugees who have paid unscrupulous smugglers life savings to be brought to some port are depicted being liberated from (or found dead inside) shipping containers. The military housed the low-level members of the JTF Guantánamo in modified shipping containers, and in tents, with the barest of subdivisions. Members of the media were initially offered housing that journalist Carol Rosenberg compared to Motel 6 level accommodations. Over time the offerings have been degraded. Currently

³⁰³ Hicks, David. *Guantánamo: My Journey*. Pg. 237.

media are housed in the rough tents of the lowest level military. Lawyers are also subject to a host of micro-aggressions from the flight situations, the housing, endlessly changing rules, and recently on a much more serious level, violations of attorney-client privilege through the wire-tapping of the rooms where they prepare clients for hearings.

For the prisoners, details are carved into consciousness. One imagines that this is directly related to a minimalist setting. In testimonies and memoirs, one finds the body used to measure the space of confinement. In the film, *Nostalgia for the Light*, a now old man in sturdy black shoes, Miguel Lawner, a former prisoner, reflects on his confinement, and measures out his cell space from memory, walking the bodily memory for us. Lawner recounts that when he made the decision that he would create a testimony of the concentration camp in Chile, he began to measure all kinds of spaces. He would draw his calculations each night, and shred, and dispose of his measurements early the following morning. When he was in exile in Denmark, he drew them from memory.³⁰⁴

Colin Dayan's description of Arizona SMU 2 shakes with resemblances to Guantánamo units. The structuring of the environment, the rationales for levels of confinement and privileges, but also the prisoners' voices reverberate. As one inmate at SMU 2 wrote to her in a letter, "If they only touch you when you are at the end of a chain, then they can't see you as anything but a dog. Now I can't see my face in the mirror. I've lost my skin. I can't feel my mind."³⁰⁵ What does it

³⁰⁴ *Nostalgia for the Light*, 37:30.

mean to not see, or to see and not recognize- one's own face? To lose one's skin, a metonym for the loss of corporeality? And to no longer feel one's mind? The inmates in SMU 2 are disappeared from view. When Dayan visits, she is told, "This place is not like any other unit you've seen. You won't be able to see the inmates, but you'll hear them. Sometimes they scream."³⁰⁶ Dayan finds herself thinking in fragments of cliché, "the silence is deafening,' 'the quiet of the dead."³⁰⁷ She struggles to break through to make meaning.

A structure is not alive and, in this sense, cannot be malevolent, but designs and usage can be, and the containers are not neutral artifacts. In March of 2013, some 22 cargo-laden shipping containers bound for Guantánamo slipped off a U.S. Navy contract barge and escaped into the Atlantic. Marine biologists are currently studying a shipping container found on the floor of the Pacific Ocean to determine how local life forms interact with the alien structure in their midst. Some life forms have moved in, others not. One conjecture is that the poisonous nature of the surface paint may discourage some organisms from inhabiting the containers.

Shipping containers much like those now rusting on the ocean floor are conscripted to house prisoners. The containers brought by KBR (from South Asia) were cleaved lengthwise and subdivided to create cells of agreed upon dimensions, 6 ft. 8 inches, by 8 feet. 52 square feet, but this is not true floor

³⁰⁵ Colin Dayan, *The Law is a White Dog: How Legal Rituals Make and Unmake Persons*. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2011), 80.

³⁰⁶ Colin Dayan, 82.

³⁰⁷ Colin Dayan, 82.

space, as the bunk suspended from the wall and the toilet sink combo, reduce the actual space.³⁰⁸ Moazzam Begg finds it difficult to find adequate language to convey “the sense of utter desperation and claustrophobia I often felt during almost two years, isolated in a cell smaller than my toilet at home.”³⁰⁹

The men who the military refuses to call prisoners, are officially referred to as detainees, but the personnel call them packages, units, carrots, pumpkins, or by individual number or nickname-are stored in containers, so that they, and their dangerous contents are secured. As stock, or rather live-stock, they are kept in containers that have been cleaved length-wise, so the packages stored inside may be made visible for regular unit checks by the custodians. All packages must be counted and accounted for at all times. Boxes must be ticked to show that the package has been observed at precise increments. There are Bills of Lading to describe and count the inventory that arrived via cargo transports, and the chain of custody must be maintained.

The men-packages, units, carrots, pumpkins, detainees- are themselves containers. They contain the dangerous. Their bodies are full of dangerous potentiality that must be leached out slowly. Their minds are replete with dangerous information. And so, the seams of the mind and body must be shaken, made brittle through extremes of heat and cold, vibrations of sound, cracked, emptied over time. The dangerous contents are infinitely fine dangerous particles

³⁰⁸ Elizabeth Grant. “Pack’em, Rack’em, and Stack’em: The Appropriateness of the use and Reuse of Shipping Containers for Prisoner Accommodation.” *Austroasian Journal of Construction Economics and Building*. **13** (2) 35-44.

³⁰⁹ Begg, 239.

that can never be fully dislodged. And then there are seeds in these carrot-pumpkins that are understood to have the potential for further dangerous actions and thoughts. An industrial vacuum of great proportion, perhaps combined with a wash of interrogatory chemicals might reach deeply enough to make the container blank of particles, but there are the seeds, lurking in the organic recesses of body and brain. The containers are more properly stored indefinitely like radioactive materials winding down half-life by half-life or released for disposal by drone.

As the prisoners are moved some first through the shipping containers used in Afghanistan by the Northern Alliance, then into the container of the airplane transport, a tube, the men themselves as containers that held dangerous knowledge, secret information, foreign religion, poison, disease, all subject to forcible extraction. How did they see themselves? Also, as infinite repositories? Faith within? Guarded knowledge? Compartmentalized. Split. Imaginative creative loving protective guarded? Physical beings, emotional beings, religious beings, thinking resistant beings? Klose writes, "Enclosed and sealed in the container, the cargo is subject only to the time-space conditions of the box. Thus, to a certain extent, the cargo exits the time space continuum of the worlds in which it is produced, through which it is transported, and in which it is consumed. For this reason, every opening and unloading of a container is similar to a reemergence and resurrection. Container transport is the movement of the immobilized."³¹⁰ What did it mean to call them men pumpkins? It referred to the

³¹⁰ Alexander Klose, *Containers*, 19.

color of the uniforms. Pumpkins are meant to be carved, inscribed, transformed (or disfigured) into that which is feared. One can take the pumpkin, and to carve it is to shift the meaning to mirror the imagination of the carver, coopting the identity of the pumpkin. To transmogrify or objectify to suit the expectation of the carver-artist-guard-interrogator. Granger writes, “the nickname for Camp X-ray is the garden, because that’s where we take care of The Carrots, some of whom are turning into pumpkins.”³¹¹ Montgomery goes on to describe a whiteboard in the medic’s office that reads “Kill the Carrots,” and is covered with scrawls of ‘Die!’, ‘Die!’, ‘Die!’ Granger tells of a mentally ill prisoner who is referred to as “the Gitmo crazy carrot.”³¹²

Excremental assault

Terrence Des Pres’s essay on excremental assault introduced me to the concept, making the spreading of feces on the walls of H block outside Belfast take on new meanings, and brought into clear focus the MPs complaints on being hit with urine or feces at Guantanamo, both inversions of the assault. “Subjection to filth was an aspect of the survivor’s ordeal.”³¹³ This is bound up with the prolonged diapering technique sought by the CIA to infantilize and humiliate subjects. Also,

³¹¹ Montgomery Granger, *Saving Grace at Guantánamo Bay*, (Dunham, CT: Strategic, 2010).

³¹² Montgomery Granger, *Saving Grace at Guantánamo Bay*, (Dunham, CT: Strategic, 2010) 153.

³¹³ John K. Roth and Michael Berenbaum, Eds. *Holocaust: Religious and Philosophical Implications*. (St. Paul: Paragon, 1985), 204.

the administration of bags of IV fluids to prisoners during interrogation, flooding their bodies with fluids and then withholding access to toilet facilities.

The bodies of the prisoners, allowed to wash briefly just once a week, come to stink in the heat of the tropics, the hot seldom washed uniform, the proximity to the waste buckets, the long interrogation sessions, the stress of imprisonment. They are referred to then, as the Bad Odor Boys. Some prisoners fling a mixture of urine and stool at the guards, so that they too, may suffer the label. The logic may be: “We stink because of our conditions, which you maintain, and now you do, too.” The excremental assault flies both ways. A Muslim prisoner might be loath to ‘go on the blanket’ to protest, because modesty is so inculcated, and might not smear the walls with waste rather than empty a bucket, because bodily cleanliness features so strongly in purification for prayer, but the frustration about lack of access to water for ablution and proper regular showers combined with insults about odor layered over greater existential concerns about the present and future made the use of undeniably human waste as a weapon, nearly inevitable, and rooted in dignity and disdain. Terrance Des Pres first named the concept of excremental assault as a phenomenon of the death camps of World War II in his memoir, *The Survivor: An Anatomy of Life in the Death Camps*.³¹⁴ Padraig O’Malley records that Irish hunger strikers brought the wardens into the conditions of their protest when they were on the blanket. The prisoners on the blanket had unequal power, but “they forced the wardens to become part of the

³¹⁴ See Chapter 3 in Terrance Des Pres, *The Survivor: An Anatomy of Life in the Death Camps*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1976), 51-72.

environment of deprivation.”³¹⁵ Jerry Piven notes “jailers often refer to their prison as the ‘asshole of the world.’”³¹⁶ And Alan Feldman, *Formations of Violence*, discusses the spectacle of exams, the spectrality of the mirrors over which the political prisoners must squat.³¹⁷

Mohamedou Slahi recalls that even when called to an interrogation, he tried to clean himself. “‘Reservation!’ shouted one of the guards. My feet barely carried me. ‘Hurry up!’ I quickly washed up my face and my mouth. I tried to use every opportunity to keep myself clean, although I was deprived from the right to take a shower like other detainees. The team wanted to humiliate me.”³¹⁸ Though it was the interrogators who could influence what privileges a prisoner had, the lack of access to showers was weaponized, “‘What a smell!’ ---- used to say when he entered the room where he interrogated me.”³¹⁹ Slahi remembers that the guards taunted him, too. “‘Man, you smell like shit!’ said one of the guards more than once. I only got the opportunity to shower and change my clothes when his lowness ----- couldn’t bear my smell anymore: ‘Take the guy, give him a shower,

³¹⁵ Pdraig O’Malley, *Biting at the Grave: The Irish Hunger Strikers and the Politics of Despair*, (Boston: Beacon, 1991), 22.

³¹⁶ Jerry Piven, *Terror and Apocalypse: Undercurrents in History*, (Bloomington: iUniverse, 2002), 349.

³¹⁷ Allen Feldman, *Formations of Violence: Narratives of the Body and Political Terror in Northern Ireland*, (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1991),174.

³¹⁸ Slahi, 236-237.

³¹⁹ Slahi, 237.

he smells like shit,' he would say. Only then would I get a shower, for months to come.”³²⁰

Terry Holdbrooks, who was among the guards at Guantánamo the first year, writes of his quiet refusals,

“Bathing is not a privilege: it is a necessity. Taking bathing away is not something that should be used as a form of punishment. I believed this to my core, and since GTMO already had a bad smell, it was ridiculous following orders to withhold water for bathing...men who were not showering daily, living in an environment where they sweated all day, exposed to one hundred percent humidity while living in ninety-eight-degree weather resulted in an awful smell...So I conveniently forgot to follow orders denying bathing times.”³²¹

In *Discipline and Punish*, Foucault wrote that the “general recipe for the exercise of power over men: the ‘mind’ as a surface of inscription for power, with semiology as its tool; the submission of bodies through the control of ideas; the analysis of representations as a principle in a politics of bodies that was much more effective than the ritual anatomy of torture and execution.”³²² The bodies of captives have been tortured after nine/eleven, but the emphasis was not the torture, but the absolute control of the United States over particular symbolic bodies, and at a meta-level over the narratives that the bodies signed. Foucault is clear that the “overall political issue around the prison” rests “in the steep use of

³²⁰ Slahi, 237.

³²¹ Terry Holdbrook, *Traitor?* Loc. 2056.

³²² Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, 102-103.

these mechanisms of normalization and the wide-ranging powers which, through the proliferation of new disciplines, they bring with them.”³²³

The circulation of the dangerous body needs some kind of visible otherness, strange produce uniformed in orange, highly visible ‘over there’ on a military prison within a military base on occupied land, on a symbolically charged island. The orange suits are markers of assigned identity, signifiers that do work by carrying broad narratives and erasing individuals. In *Legible Bodies*, Clare Anderson’s monograph of “race, criminality and Colonialism in South Asia,” she argues, “dress is a text that determines perceptions of its wearer.”³²⁴ The public quickly learns to read the uniform as contained danger, or serious danger contained. For some of the Arab prisoners, the orange uniform was translated initially as a death sentence. This was the significance in their countries of origin where orange uniforms were issued to the condemned prior to execution, visible markers of impending death.³²⁵

“Capitalist production has unified space, breaking down the boundaries between one society and the next. This unification is at the same time an extensive and intensive process of *banalization*. Just as the accumulation of commodities mass-produced for the abstract space of the market shattered all regional and legal barriers and all the Medieval guild restrictions that maintained

³²³ Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, 306.

³²⁴ Clare Anderson, *Legible Bodies: Race, Criminality and Colonialism in Southeast Asia*. (Berg: Oxford and New York, 2004), 102.

the *quality* of craft production, it also undermined the autonomy and quality of *places*.”³²⁶

Mamdouh Habib, who was placed in Block India “an isolation block for uncooperative detainees” after a short hospital stay immediately upon his arrival at Guantánamo, remembers “everything was made of metal” and that there was “no natural light, all the windows had been blacked out.”³²⁷ Mamdouh recounts that he was kept in a cell, “where the walls, floor, and ceiling were made entirely of metal...I understood that the Americans had taken large, metal shipping containers, taken off the ends and one side, replaced them with mesh, and then divided the containers into cages.”³²⁸

Zaeef occasionally references a cell, but more often uses the term cage. “My cage was in the Gold block of the Guantánamo prison camp.” And “even though it was lonely in the cage, there was still a sense of freedom after the months imprisoned in Afghanistan. The cages were four feet wide, six feet in length and were lined up next to each other. Each cage had a metal board to sleep on, a water tap and a toilet. There were no real walls, just metal mesh which separates the cages from each other.”³²⁹

³²⁶ Guy Debord, *Complete Cinematic Works: Scripts, Stills, Documents*. Ken Knabb, (Trans. and Ed.) (Oakland: AK Press, 2003), 66-67.

³²⁷ Mamdouh Habib, *My Story: The Tale of a Terrorist who Wasn't*. (Carlton North, Australia: Scribe, 2008), 151.

³²⁸ Habib, 153.

³²⁹ Abdul Salam Zaeef, *My Life with the Taliban*. (New York: Columbia University Press, 2010), 188.

Slahi remembers, “Most of the time I recited the Koran silently. The rest of the time I was talking to myself and thinking over and over about my life and the worst-case scenarios that could happen to me. I kept counting the holes of the cage I was in. There are about four thousand one hundred holes.”³³⁰ Slahi did not spend all his time tracing the physical confines of his environment, he also framed the time as a period of spiritual and emotional growth, but his observations about the capacity to “learn about God” and “to learn about patience” are tempered by “the devastating side:”

In prison, you have nothing but all the time in the world to think about your life and the goal thereof. I think prison is one of the oldest and greatest schools in the world; you learn about God and you learn about patience. A few years in prison are equivalent to decades of experience outside of it. Of course, there is the devastating side of prison, especially for innocent prisoners who, besides dealing with the daily hardship of prison, have to deal with the psychological damages that result from confinement without crime. Many innocent people in prison contemplate suicide.³³¹

In *Holy Terrors*, Bruce Lincoln wrote that it was necessary to fuse “practice to discourse: providing each grubby, banal, or lethal act with authoritative speech that ennobles and redefines it not just as a moral necessity, but also as a sacred duty.”³³² This meshes with Catherine Bell’s emphasis on the connection between ritual action and thought. Even if the actions are un-thought, the actions carry speech.

³³⁰ Slahi, 288.

³³¹ Slahi, 319.

³³² Bruce Lincoln, *Holy Terrors: Thinking about Religion after September 11*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003), 11.

Contamination:

Once tagged, geo-tagged, ethno-tagged, cached, bounty in chain of custody, in possession, possessed, a package, the prisoner cannot move between, but not beyond category, and cannot be decontaminated. Even in case of the Kuwaiti prisoners, cleared for release, whose return would be to an American funded rehabilitation facility, release was subverted repeatedly. Prisoners who were released carried the contamination, so were often isolated on actual islands, Bermuda and Palau, or cultural and linguistic islands—the Uighur prisoners who were relocated to Albania, for example. Language can be acquired, but cultural isolation may remain when there are no social or familial referents available.

In 2013, the city of Vancouver revamped and expanded a social housing project for women, bringing a set of shipping containers to the project. The spaces are from 280 to 290 square feet. “Jang said one of the biggest challenges was overcoming the notion that the project would “stack up poor people and warehouse them” in containers.”³³³ This concern is valid. Shipping containers are not ideal housing for prisoners, for the poor, or for the displaced. The city of Brighton’s social housing project for rough sleepers, has been plagued with problems that are tied to the nature of the container.³³⁴ In Hasan Fathy’s

³³³ Bruce Constantineau, “Vancouver social housing built from shipping containers,” *The Vancouver Sun*, August 2, 2013. http://www.vancouver.sun.com/Vancouver+social+housing+built+from+shipping+containers/8739234/story.html#_federated=1

Architecture for the Poor, he envisions architecture that however humble is livable and spirit nourishing. In simple homes and spaces made of local organic and sustainable materials, Fathy's vision and execution always demands surprise and joie de vivre.³³⁵ In this spirit, Ronald Rael's edited volume on the US Mexico border conceives of walls that revolt, welcome, trans the border, remember, and fall down.³³⁶

The BBC followed a shipping container for one year, from fall of 2008 to fall of 2009 and at the end of the year the container was sent to Africa to be used as a soup kitchen, which provided a tidy upbeat end, that centers the vagueness of Africa as the needy and grateful recipient of Western charity.³³⁷ The war on terror, the tiny house movement, and the use of containers for prisons, homeless shelters, and refugees are not unrelated, but interwoven with neoliberal economics. Income inequality in the United States increased dramatically from 1986 to 2014.³³⁸ Meanwhile, the U.S. defense industry has thrived, even selling

³³⁴ James Rippingale, "Sneaking into Brighton's new homeless shipping container ghetto," May 9, 2014. http://www.vice.com/en_uk/read/i-spent-the-night-in-brightons-homeless-shipping-container-housing-project

³³⁵ Hasan Fathy, *Architecture for the Poor: An Experiment in Rural Egypt*.

³³⁶ Ronald Rael, *Borderwall as Architecture: A Manifesto for the U.S.-Mexico Boundary*, (University of California Press, 2017).

³³⁷ "The Box," *BBC* (Website) May 24, 2012. http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/in_depth/business/2008/the_box/default.stm

³³⁸ Emmanuel Saez and Gabriel Zucman, "Exploding Wealth Inequality in the United States. *Vox*. Oct. 28, 2014. <http://www.voxeu.org/article/exploding-wealth-inequality-united-states>

military hardware to Iraq, a country invaded under false pretenses by the United States after *nine/eleven*.³³⁹

Sisyphean tasks

The Guantánamo prisoner does a work with his body, not the work of prison labor that prints a plate, or paints highway striping, not even the spirit breaking “pointless” labor that Dayan writes about (page 84), but a dual labor, the personal desperate work of “killing time” in isolation, and the labor for the cause of war-making for empire. Hunger striking creates meaning. The pointless labor of the limestone quarry on Robben Island, where prisoners worked carrying rocks to a pile on the left, then the next day carrying them back to the original pile. It is some kind of labor for empire, but how so? Taussig insists—correctly—that “business can transform the use of terror from the means to an end in itself,” and so, too, the military.³⁴⁰ In South Africa, on the island prison where Nelson Mandela was incarcerated for decades, he labored breaking rocks, and in the limestone quarry. When I visited Robben Island, our docent, a former prisoner, noted that when he was being punished—more correctly, additionally punished—he would be made to move stones from one side of the quarry to the other, and

³³⁹ Peter Van Buren. “Once Again, American Weapons-Makers are Making a Killing in Iraq,” *Mother Jones*, January 16, 2015. <http://www.motherjones.com/politics/2015/01/iraq-military-win-business-not-war>

³⁴⁰ Michael Taussig, “Culture of Terror—Space of Death, Roger Casement’s Putumayo Report and the Explanation of Torture.” *Comparative Studies in Society and History*. Vol. 26 No. 3 (Jul., 1984), pp. 467-497.

back again. Some prisoners at Guantánamo engaged in a covert mandala-like labor, a creative, meaning making of composing and inscribing poetry into Styrofoam cups with a thumbnail. The cups were seized daily. The materiality of the inscribed cups was disappeared from the prisoners, along with the lines of poetry. But the words were theirs and had been passed through their body and into the soft flesh of the cup. Paul Virillo believes the body has something to say, “In a world characterized by mass individualism, my body becomes the final rampart. And even skin finds an echo in screen interfaces. The surface of the body becomes an emblem of my finitude. It resonates with the plentitude of the finite world.”³⁴¹

³⁴¹ Paul Virillo, *The Administration of Fear*. (Los Angeles: Semiotext(e), 53.

CHAPTER 5

UMMAH AND THE GESTURING OF CIVILIZATION

To become an object of consumption, an object must first become a sign. That is to say: it must become external, in a sense, to a relationship that it now merely signifies. It is thus arbitrary — and not inconsistent with that concrete relationship: it derives its consistency, and hence its meaning, from an abstract and systematic relationship to all other sign-objects. Only in this context can it be 'personalized', can it become part of a series and so on; only thus can it be consumed, never in its materiality but in its difference.

Jean Baudrillard

Ummah is means community, and communities are formed through interaction with others, and through knowing others by their faces, habits and names. Things also have names, so that we may know them. In the Global War on Terror, Guantánamo is the most known camp, the nameable place, the amen-temple, the container, within a highly curated space in US occupied Cuba. A few other prison camps and torture sites can be named; Abu Ghraib remains infamous, Bagram is still in our ear, and the abstract for *Senate Intelligence Committee Report on Torture* brings the existence of over crypto sites into wider public purview but uses pseudonyms. The layering of names is pervasive and distances realities of place, people and actions through peeling layers of falseness. For instance, a disclaimer from a monograph of the effectiveness of psychological operations in Afghanistan from 2001-2010 includes this proviso in the introduction, “in June of 2010, the Department of Defense (DoD) officially replaced the term PSYOP with *military information support operations* (MISO)” rendering one acronym that already distances from meaning into a more benign

sounding acronym that stands for an absolutely detached term.³⁴² This is a pervasive strategy at Guantánamo, but also throughout the larger military culture that conceals and obscures. The “Salt Pit” in Afghanistan sheds baggage to become “Cobalt,” a bruising shade of blue black, but neither of those names is the classified name, so there are nesting cups of names protecting the thing from the knowing. The torture site in Thailand is “Cat’s Eye,” but also called “Detention Site Green,” both of which conceal places we cannot know, because the public cannot know the true name. The forbidden knowledge is only for select members of the intelligence and military forces who can whisper together the secret dangerous language that ‘keeps us safe.’ This problematic exists across all attempts to stabilize and avenues to discover community at Guantánamo. Prisoners have names, often transliterated badly, or into a multiplicity of renderings. They are associated with aliases, some correct, some not. They are given numbers. They are nicknamed by guards and other prisoners. They are grouped into slurs. Much work was done early on to generate a database to try to sort identities and biographies of those being held at Guantanamo. Wikileaks was instrumental in bringing names to light, and Andy Worthington, an independent journalist in the UK worked tirelessly to cross check and chronicle individual stories, while large news agencies in the United States including the New York Times, and a few universities established publicly accessible repositories. If there

³⁴² Arturo Munoz, *U.S. Military Information Operations in Afghanistan: Effectiveness of Psychological Operations 2001-2010*, (Santa Monica: Rand, 2012), xiv. See also: Alfred Paddock, Jr., “PSYOP: On a Complete Change in Organization, Practice, and Doctrine,” *Small Wars Journal*, June 26, 2010.

are cages within cages, and names within names, there are also cups within nesting cups that one must keep opening.

The difficulties presented by the constellation of names associated with each prisoner pales in comparison to the arduous task of naming and knowing those who interacted with them. While the prisoners were a discrete population, the guards and staff have rotated through in assignments of various lengths of 6 months to a year. Members of the intelligence community domestically and internationally flew to Guantánamo for much shorter stays. Access to the base and the prison within the base is irregular. Jesuit priest, Luke Hansen traveled to Guantánamo as a journalist.

I was on assignment for *America* to tour the detention camps, interview staff and bring to light what was happening in a place typically veiled in secrecy. General Kelly was at the base to install a new commander for detention operations. Public affairs officers escorted me to the Windjammer Ballroom for the change-of-command ceremony. The “high liturgy” included processions, music and an invocation. Flag bearers on the stage represented each branch of the military. At the podium, General Kelly said he would do something “a little unusual” for this type of event: speak directly to the troops about this “incredibly important mission.” The detainees’ hunger strike, then in its sixth month, had attracted a lot of unwanted attention and criticism, not only from human rights groups but also from the commander in chief. General Kelly seemed resolved to boost the morale of the 2,000 U.S. troops responsible for detention operations.³⁴³

It is telling that a Jesuit priest so clearly identifies and names the military rituals as “high liturgy.” Hansen sees the religious structure imprinted very clearly. He does not call Kelly’s speech a sermon, but the implication is there, as

³⁴³ Luke Hansen, “Morality and Morale: The Experience of US Soldiers inside Guantánamo Bay,” *America Magazine* May 6, 2014.

<http://www.americamagazine.org/issue/morality-and-morale>

Kelly indicates his inclination to address the troops directly about their “incredibly important mission.”³⁴⁴

Olivier Roy’s idea of de-territorialized Islam, provided an imaginary, as I pondered the notion of the community at Guantanamo, as a microcosm of the ummah.³⁴⁵ This notion is mirrored in an uncanny sense by the War on Terror with its own unbounded geography and Guantanamo as dislocated from a clear juridical authority. The site, with cages that echo dog runs, and later cells fashioned within shipping containers was a place of forced proximity and isolation, harsh confinement and frequent transfers from cell to cell, and from camp to camp, of intimidation, of exposure, and of fragmenting torture. How did the captives negotiate the harsh terms of their incarceration, the multiplicity of languages, the separation from sustaining frameworks? In these conditions what aspects of identity and praxis were preferenced, or even possible? With some forty-three different countries represented, how were local traditions considered and negotiated, as shared practice was cobbled together, or not, in a place of legal limbo, excruciating uncertainties, and extremely limited agency?

As I point to elsewhere, there are facets and conditions that are mirrored in the experiences of the prisoners and guards. This is true in the case of community. The guards are part of the U.S. military and this provides some sense

³⁴⁴ Luke Hansen, “Morality and Morale: The Experience of US Soldiers inside Guantánamo Bay,” *America Magazine* May 6, 2014.
<http://www.americamagazine.org/issue/morality-and-morale>

³⁴⁵ Olivier Roy, *Globalized Islam: The Search for a New Ummah*. New York: Columbia, 2004.

of collective identity, but within that community there are divisions and tensions of race, gender, geography, politics, and religion.

Ummah, nation, community of believers

The third Surah of the Qur'an, 'Al 'Imran' [The House of Imran] instructs:

Hold fast all together unto the bond with God, and do not draw apart from one another. And remember the blessings God has bestowed upon you: how, when you were enemies, He brought your hearts together, so that through his blessing you became brethren, and how when you were on the brink of a fiery abyss, He saved you from it. In this way, God makes clear His Messages unto you, so that you might find guidance, (103) and that there might grow out of you a community (of people) who invite unto all that is good, and enjoin the doing of what is right and forbid the doing of what is wrong: and it is they, they who shall attain to a happy state.³⁴⁶

The community at Guantanamo is a part of the world community of Muslims, but apart from communities of origin. Prisoners understood themselves as Muslims who had that connection to one another by default, but were separated by many differences and gulfs, too. Language, age, education, politics, health, class, ideology, resilience, and specificities of religious belief and practice could connect prisoners, but also fray relationships. One can look to the way individual Muslims living within large diverse communities, Phoenix, for example, cluster around the familiar cultures of food, language, politics, and class in choosing a particular mosque. But at Guantánamo, the conditions for connection were imposed externally, as well. The obvious is the imprisonment

³⁴⁶ Muhammad Asad, Trans. *The Message of the Qur'an*. London: The Book Foundation, 2008.

itself. The men were brought to the prison under the authority of the U.S. government and were a discrete population with a recorded high of 779. They were held and moved through various camps at different stages of imprisonment. Each camp had different possibilities for interaction. The architecture varied from the chain link cages of Camp X-Ray to the cells of the subdivided shipping containers, to the more communal living of the prisoners who are deemed highly compliant. Prisoners with chronic health issues might be more likely to cross paths with one another through the medical facilities. Some child prisoners were held in a separate space. Prisoners engaging in hunger strike might be fed in proximity to one another. Within the structure that allowed certain possibilities for communication and relationship, however sparse and intermittent, there were also the individual subjectivities that bring the complications of selfhood to relationality. This is to say that as in most instances of human community, the personalities and beliefs of a particular individual may attract or repel another who comes with all those complexities, too.

In some instances, connections were well established before arriving at Guantanamo, as in the case of the Tipton trio, Ruhul Ahmed, Asif Iqbal, and Shafiq Rasul, three of four friends from the UK who had traveled to Pakistan for a wedding and crossed over into Pakistan to render humanitarian aid.³⁴⁷ Some of the Uighurs knew one another, or were even related; Bahtiyar Manut and Arkin

³⁴⁷ The fourth member of the group of friends and traveling companions, Mounir Ali, has never been found, and is presumed dead. See Jane Tyler, "We Can Never Go Home: Tipton Trio," *Birmingham Live*, March 7, 2006.

<https://www.birminghammail.co.uk/news/local-news/we-can-never-go-home---20433>

Mahmud were brothers, and there were other Uighur prisoners had been at a training camp together. There was at least one other set of siblings, Muslim Dost and his brother Badr Uz Zaman, and also a father and son, Abdul Nasser Khantumani and his son Muhammad. Mamdouh Habib recounts that prisoners were often kept in cells near one another “if they were Level 1,” meaning highly compliant.³⁴⁸ In other instances, the captives might not have known one another, but at least recognized one another because they were held in the same place at some point before Guantanamo, be it a Northern Alliance shipping container, a Pakistani police station, Bagram, Abu Ghraib, or other lesser known facilities. In some cases, they had even prayed together as prisoners before reaching Guantánamo. Murat Kurnaz describes praying with other prisoners after his arrest in Pakistan.³⁴⁹ He was transferred repeatedly, and ultimately sold to the United States for \$3000. At the final holding spot, he met a man from Bahrain, who would also be transferred. Many captives relate the experience of multiple transfers before Guantánamo, and in this sense share a relatable journey and hold different pieces of a broader narrative.

Australian David Hicks, one of the earliest arrivals at Guantanamo, wrote about conditions improving after the first visit from the International Committee of the Red Cross, and he emphasizes communication and communal activities. “We were able to look around and talk to each other. We were actually allowed to

³⁴⁸ Mamdouh Habib, 176.

³⁴⁹ Murat Kurnaz, *Five Years of My Life: An Innocent Man in Guantanamo*. Berlin: Palgrave, 2007.

move around our cages and exercise.”³⁵⁰ On the other hand, the maintenance of personal relations was too painful, and was used against them. Hicks says that “letters became a source of pain and anger.”³⁵¹ Mamdouh Habib, writes that he believed his family dead, because it was easier. The families of captives were often used to break down the mental reserve of the captives, with reports of photos being altered to show wives and daughters being raped, and sons beaten up. Habib was also shown a photograph of his youngest daughter Hajer “ large Christian crucifix around her neck.”³⁵² Habib says he found these tactics bearable only by believing that his wife and children were already dead, and so no longer suffering.³⁵³ There was also a constant effort to erode positive relations between the men, by telling one captive that another had spoken against him during interrogation, or by sending special food to a particular captive, or giving him special privileges, or even blowing smoke at the captive during interrogation to ensure that he smelled like cigarettes when returned to his cell to make the others suspicious that some kind of cooperation had been exchanged for the cigarette.³⁵⁴ Each prisoner knew from their own experiences that there was a constant pressure to sign pre written narratives that implicated others.

³⁵⁰ David Hicks, *Guantanamo: My Journey*. Sydney: Random House, 2010. Pg. 219-220.

³⁵¹ Hicks, 221.

³⁵² Habib, 184.

³⁵³ Habib, 184.

³⁵⁴ Habib, 174.

For most of the prisoners there was a desire for connection, for community, and for news. “When someone was either being taken from or brought to the block, detainees would immediately call out: ‘Who are you?’ and ‘Where are you from?’ Whenever they could, people asked questions to gather information. This information would then pass from person to person, throughout the blocks and camps.”³⁵⁵ Resistance was also a form of community or provided the connections of community. Disrespect to Islam was a coalescing feature prompting solidarity and defiance, as was the interruption of prayer.³⁵⁶ After the first prisoners had been there about one month, the chaplain arranged for Qur’ans to be distributed and for the call to prayer to be broadcast, but according to David Hicks, this created further animosity on the part of the guards, who were angered by the presence of the Qur’ans. He says that this is when the abuse of the Qur’ans began.³⁵⁷ Mamdouh Habib, another prisoner, maintains that he, like others who were Level 4 minus, the lowest level of the rating scale that spelled privileges, never received a Qur’an. In Mamdouh’s memoir, he writes, “The Qur’an was treated by interrogators just like a blanket: if you co-operated, you got one, otherwise, you went without.”³⁵⁸ This is an example of the commodification of the Qur’an as an economic currency that

³⁵⁵ Habib, 160.

³⁵⁶ Hicks 230-31.

³⁵⁷ Hicks 232.

³⁵⁸ Mamdouh Habib, *My Story: The Tale of a Terrorist Who Wasn’t*. (Melbourne: Scribe, 2008), 159.

could be obtained only through submission. Prayer, too, was an occasion to manipulate. Mohamedou Slahi writes of an experience in which the guards encouraged him to pray, only to use the occasion to mock him. “I started to recite the Koran quietly, for prayer was forbidden. Once --- said, ‘why don’t you pray? Go ahead and pray!’ I was like, How friendly! But as soon as I started to pray, ---- started to make fun of my religion, and so I settled for praying in my heart so I didn’t give --- the opportunity to commit blasphemy.”³⁵⁹

Hicks notes that the bribes offered during interrogations (prostitutes, drugs) were “the wrong offerings for these customers.” He maintains that Islam gave detainees strength to resist. ³⁶⁰ He believes that this strategy was meant to cause a breach of faith, and ultimately the captives mental unraveling. Even the month of Ramadan was weaponized and was used as a tool to weaken the prisoners’ physical and mental resolve. Captives were subject to fasting whether they chose to or not. They were given an early morning meal, three dates at nightfall and then a meal about an hour later, but not enough fluids or calories for men fasting throughout the long days. Because of its relative proximity to the equator the time between sunrise and sunset is fairly stable throughout the year, so no matter when Ramadan fell in a particular year, the men were fasting 12 hours or more. The hour between the offering of the dates and the meal that would follow was a time used to interrogate, as the captives were especially vulnerable. The men experienced double vulnerability as they were weak from

³⁵⁹ Slahi, 241.

³⁶⁰ Hicks, 240.

lack of food and water, but also experiencing the stressors of being away from family during a time of the year when families and friends come together for iftar dinners as they look forward to Eid.³⁶¹

The disclosure of physical pain, and of torture was shared only after trust had been built up over time. There was a shared bond of outrage when a particular captive was especially abused, which escalated when it was rumored that someone had been killed. In spring of 2003, when the death was reported, there were incidences of excremental assault, “threats of mass suicide,” large scale hunger-strikes, spitting on guards, etc.³⁶² Resistance was also expressed by using noise, banging against the metal cages, and a shift in consciousness, Hicks refers to this as Guantanamo being “seen for what it was,” so prisoners “no longer had anything to lose.” (the man in question was not dead, but had suffered permanent brain damage after an IRFing by guards)³⁶³ This account is repeated in other memoirs, including Mamdouh Habib’s account, where the prisoner is identified as Mishal al-Harbi, a young Saudi. The injuries took place in isolation block India, often referred to as one of the worst blocks. Mamdouh Habib’s version is that something noxious had been sprayed in the vents, an irritant, perhaps a cleaning spray. As prisoners panicked and complained, al-Harbi, who had breathing issues anyway, threatened suicide, the one sure way to attract the

³⁶¹ Hicks, 259-260.

³⁶² Hicks, 272-273.

³⁶³ Hicks, 275.

attention of the guards. Habib maintains that Mishal was knocked to the ground during the guard team response, striking his head on the hard floor.³⁶⁴

Hicks viewed his eventual cooperation, his bargaining with his interrogator-and by cooperation, he does not mean answering questions truthfully, but rather parroting back what he was told to say- as “reduced to a shadow of his former self...consuming his own soul” and losing his sense of self, becoming a stranger to himself, “a product of the interrogation methods,” and that he felt like “something had died inside of him.”³⁶⁵ The interrogators also sought to turn prisoners against one another, as a tactic to gain information. The prevailing strategy was that if one prisoner could be convinced that another prisoner had turned on them, the first prisoner might in turn offer information about the person.³⁶⁶ For Hicks, his belief in Islam was eroded, he “had stopped praying and no longer took place in any religious observances,” though he maintains that this “had nothing to do with the religion itself, or the people...I believed what was happening to the Muslims of Kashmir and other places was atrocious; I had wanted to help them, to see them live in peace and security. However, by this time I had been so broken that I just wanted to resume the life I had before venturing overseas and put everything else behind me.”³⁶⁷

³⁶⁴ Habib, 160-161, 165.

³⁶⁵ Hicks, 266-67.

³⁶⁶ Hicks, 279.

³⁶⁷ Hicks, 292-93.

One complaint that repeats, are laments about lack of privacy and modesty. Men wanted privacy to shower, use the toilet and to change clothes...there were great concerns about modesty, most always couched in religious terms...for example, in level 4 minus, “ you had only one pair of shorts and nothing else. You sat all the time in shorts which is humiliating for many Muslims, especially when praying.”³⁶⁸ Another grievance was the forced shaving of beards and the cutting of hair, a tactic employed by General Geoffrey Miller, a shameful champion of abusive environments.³⁶⁹ Brigadier General Rick Baccus was assigned to Guantánamo in March of 2002, but was transferred after just six months, with insinuations that he was too soft on detainees.³⁷⁰ General Miller was later to sent to Abu Ghraib to Gitmo-tize the prison. It was under Miller’s policies that the worst of the abuses at Guantánamo and at Abu Ghraib occurred. Colonel Mike Bumgarner later replaced Geoffrey Miller.³⁷¹ One way to interpret the turnover of leadership and personnel is that the guilt is distributed so widely that it is difficult to gain traction for redress.

Modes of communication differed from camp to camp within Guantanamo depending on the specific conditions. In Camp 5, “the walls were solid, so the

³⁶⁸ Habib, 158.

³⁶⁹ Habib, 176.

³⁷⁰ Suzanne Goldenberg, “Former Guantánamo chief clashed with army interrogators, *The Guardian* May 18, 2004.
<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2004/may/19/iraq.guantanamo>

³⁷¹ Michelle Shephard, *Guantanamo’s Child: The Untold Story of Omar Khadr*, (Wiley: Mississauga, Canada, 2008), 108.

prisoners couldn't talk to one another. They did manage to devise inventive ways to communicate by shouting through plumbing pipes," or "by using hardened toothpaste to attach written messages to long threads they had picked off their prison suits which they would cast into neighboring cells."³⁷²

One of the first collective hunger strikes began in 2005, because of a number of incidents of desecration of prisoner Qur'ans. There were four key complaints/demands: 1) prisoners wanted trials; 2) improved medical care; 3) better conditions in Camp Five (specifically mentioned was the use of isolation, the refrigerator like conditions, and randomized punishment); 4) they wanted respect for their religion.³⁷³ Though separated by distance with no ready means of communication, prisoners at Delta heard about the hunger strike, and joined in solidarity. Across the camps, men who could not see one another, prayed together in virtual community as the call to prayer sounded. The calls to prayer helped the men mark the time and provided orientation of time and space when they were held in spaces with no natural light whatsoever, and 24-hour artificial lighting. When praying, one might imagine a sense of time depending on which of the five prayers was being prayed, and a sense of orientation, since the captives were told which way faced toward Mecca. Ramadan also provided a marker that another year had passed, though Ramadan prompted memories of prior holidays with family and community. Omar Khadr, one of the younger captives to be held

³⁷² Shephard, 159.

³⁷³ Shephard, 168.

at Guantanamo had memorized the Qur'an during the first years of his captivity, becoming a hafiz. Because of this he was chosen by other prisoners to lead prayers while in Camp 5.³⁷⁴ The choosing of leaders for cellblocks is mentioned in a number of memoirs.

“I could not hear the prayer call from the main camp. All I could hear most audibly in the rec yard, was the US National Anthem at 0800 hours and sunset....I got heartily sick of that sound.”³⁷⁵ Qur'an has long figured in prison stays. In a letter written in April 21st, 1961, toward the end of his three-year imprisonment, Muhammad Fadhel Jamali, former Prime Minister of Iraq, writes: “I am reading the Koran for the 35th time since entering the prison and every time I read it I discover wisdom and hidden things to which I had not been attentive in previous readings.”³⁷⁶ Jamali was reading the Qur'an in its entirety each month.

Gesturing Civilization

What is the work of language in wartime? And in the sense that it performs particular kinds of work, what does that tell us about the productive capabilities that call it into being, and ‘the beings’ that are alienated through language which draws the divides belonging and otherness?

Certainly, language carries valence. This can be thought of in terms of the semiotic well. In a published conversation with David Barsamian, Noam

³⁷⁴ Shephard, 169.

³⁷⁵ Begg, 215.

³⁷⁶ Mohammed Fadhel Jamali, *Letters on Islam: Written by a Father in Prison to his Son*. London: Oxford University Press, 1965.

Chomsky points out that no one questions the naming of military helicopters after victims of genocide: Blackhawk, Apache, and Comanche.³⁷⁷ There is a pervasive erasure of personae within the prison. While the bodies of individual Muslim prisoners carry responsibility for all acts of terrorism, the bodies of guards, interrogators, and medics carry no collective or individual responsibility. They bask in anonymity of characters. Hospital staffers assume the mononyms of Shakespearian characters, most guards have numbers instead of names, though Jason Leopold notes a guard named (or re-named) Wolfgang who was cleared and assigned to speak to the press during Leopold's visit.³⁷⁸ Some personnel simply obscure their names altogether. During his 2013 tour of the prison, journalist Leopold met a library technician with a tag that simply read Milton—there is no way to know if this was the man's first name, or a rueful reference to *Paradise Lost*, invoked in any case. Milton recounted that he had been told to create a display of the prisoners' artwork for "you guys," continuing, "I was told to hang this bulletin board up so that you can see what the detainees do."³⁷⁹ In the phrase "what the detainees do," may be understood as an unfinished sentence, a fragment, understood to be finished with in their free, down, or leisure time.

³⁷⁷ Noam Chomsky, *Propaganda and the Public Mind: Conversations with Noam Chomsky and David Barsamian*, (Chicago: Haymarket, 2014), 214.

³⁷⁸ Jason Leopold, "A Guantánamo Tour: Much Ado about Nothing" *Al Jazeera English*, June 19, 2013. (accessed February 3, 2018).
<http://www.aljazeera.com/humanrights/2013/06/20136197533407379.html>

³⁷⁹ Jason Leopold, "A Guantánamo Tour: Much Ado about Nothing" *Al Jazeera English*, June 19, 2013. (accessed February 3, 2018).
<http://www.aljazeera.com/humanrights/2013/06/20136197533407379.html>

These terms are not explicitly supplied, but there is a gesture toward the nicety of art classes and the privilege of culture and supplies, toward the benevolence of the military and by extension the U.S. government in offering such classes understood to be amenities. The men are ever the terrorists of 9/11, no matter that they are not, and the U.S. is ever the reluctant and too kind warden. What to do?

I long struggled to make sense of the emphasis on the presence of the *Harry Potter* books, and other artifacts of popular culture, like the 90s comedy show, *The Fresh Prince of Bel-Air* in accounts of the prison. There were several news articles that made much of the books as the most popular items in the prisoner library, and the books were a feature of the story line in the 2014 film, *Camp X-Ray*. It struck me as strange that the young adult fiction was being featured so prominently, and that the camp librarian emphasized the popularity. My initial conjecture was that the books were about how well the U.S. was treating the prisoners, carefully positioned objects in tableaux meant to signal the benevolence of the United States, but I felt I was missing something. I was mapping the artificiality and disconnect onto Terezin, a camp the Nazis used to make films for express propaganda purposes. I think it was the presence of art classes at both Terezin and Guantánamo and the obvious staging for site visits that kept suggesting the connection, but just as the art classes were demonstrably different projects in these two spaces, so too was the goal of the messaging. The bucolic videos staged at Terezin were distributed to International Committee of the Red Cross and other foreign agencies in order to conceal the nature of the

camp. That is certainly a feature of the scripted tours of Guantánamo and the official staging. But Guantánamo was not a death camp (though a place of social death, to be sure), nor a ghetto way station to a death camp, and there was something different in the meaning of the tableau being presented through the press. I was reading it incorrectly, or at least incompletely. The narrative of eager readers of Harry Potter being distributed was propagandistic, but the message was not a guise to mask the goals of the prison or fate of the prisoners, as was the case for those held at Terezin. It was meant to highlight the successful stamp of the imperial project, the *appearance* of the colonized subject. Like the indigenous students of the model Indian Schools of the Columbian Exposition, the prisoners wore the uniforms of compliance, white t-shirts and beige pants. Not the harsh orange that marked the early days, or the incorrigible. They could be presented as the tamed subject colonized through the tales of Harry Potter.

In the film *Camp X-Ray*, a prisoner strikes up a generally sympathetic relationship with a young female guard. Throughout the film, the prisoner is agitated because he has been waiting for the final book in the series, *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows* and believes that this is to punish him. He wants to know how it turns out. He is convinced that the book is being withheld as a kind of torture, a small source of pleasure that is being willfully denied to him. The Harry Potter book, which carries the narrative arc of the movie, runs almost completely counter to former prisoner David Hick's experience. Hicks says that the book was forced on him by an interrogator, for reasons he does not understand. When David Hicks interrogator asked if there was something he

might like, he asked for a copy of *The Lord of the Rings*. The next time he was taken to interrogation, there was a book on the desk, but it was not *The Lord of the Rings*, instead Hicks saw “a kid on a broomstick.” He was not interested and told the interrogator he did not want to read it. The interrogator was angry. A following day the same interrogator came to the cell with the same book. David says “he entered the cell block with some of his associates and threatened me with physical punishment if I did not take the book. I began to protest but he said I had no choice – I would have daily ‘special treatment’ until I read it. Scared and bewildered, I accepted the book.”³⁸⁰ Hicks continues:

The book turned out to be the first Harry Potter novel. The story was okay, but I felt it was in my interest to tell the interrogator I did not enjoy it. I had that opportunity a few days later when I informed the block guard I had finished reading the book, as I had been instructed. When I told the interrogator what I thought, he said ‘good,’ and passed me another volume. I couldn’t believe it, another one! But I knew the seriousness of my situation if I refused. I read the second book. Crackpot ideas were always being devised and implemented by teams of people who worked with the interrogators. The Harry Potter one is weird – how could being threatened with torture if I didn’t read the story of a boy wizard not be? But I can assure you that someone had a serious, premeditated reason. I wonder what J.K. Rowling thinks? After I had read the second book, numerous other copies were handed out to all detainees who could read and understand English. I was just the first guinea pig in this bizarre experiment. The Harry Potter books remained in English, but as time passed many other books were distributed to detainees in Arabic, Pashto, Urdu and other detainee languages. They were largely children’s books about Mickey Mouse and other cartoon characters, stories meant for preschool children. Harry Potter was even publicly reported to be the ‘most-requested book’ in Guantánamo by a US government spokesman. What is up with that?”³⁸¹

³⁸⁰ David Hicks, 266-267.

³⁸¹ David Hicks, 267-268.

So, what of the popularity of the *Fresh Prince of Bel-Air*, a story of displacement? I think the prisoners may be drawn to the story. After an altercation in his rough New Jersey 'hood' Will is sent to stay with his wealthy aunt and uncle in Bel-Air. The series plays on the tensions between Will's cultural formations and his new privileged settings, in which he is less free. There is something of the cage about Bel-Air and the expectations of the family and social milieu, and movement toward safety and economic security. It is a rihla of a young black teenager negotiating different worlds and expectations.

Guantánamo was an earlier serious symptom of the post-fact world in the United States. It is a place where the facts of its existence do not matter to those deployed, living and working there, nor to the families and communities that create the pageantry of the send-offs and welcome homes. The level of surreality that suffuses the base and prison has been captured time and again. The prisoners live in a space that is extra-judicial and also post-truth. Langer cautions us to maintain "a wary consciousness of the way in which 'free words' and their associations may distort the facts or alter them into more manageable events." (224).

In an article for the Wire, the official Joint Task Force publication on the base, Naval Petty Officer Nat Moger attempts to delink the privileges and activities afforded the prisoners from public perception. Moger makes the claim that the activities are available because "the JTF Joint Detention, in charge of the detention of the enemy combatants from the Global War on Terror, pursues this mission with a commitment to the 'safe and humane, care and welfare' of

detainees, regardless of the tenor of outside criticism. Hence privileges and special programs, consistent with international standards, are made available to detainees based on their compliancy status.”³⁸² The activities explicitly mentioned in Moger’s piece include daily recreation in the form of walks, education classes, reading the library (compliant prisoners may check out one book per week, highly compliant prisoners may check out two books per week). Moger also points to mail delivery, and the possibility of phone calls to family. The English classes, he notes, are limited.

The tours offer up a particular civilizational tableau for consumption: the prisoners are afforded art classes, they paint, they write poetry, they play soccer, they read popular fiction, they pray, and they have medical care. What is more, dietary needs and inclinations are generously indulged and provided for by the hard-working cooks of the camp. “Some say they’ve never eaten so well,” says Chief Warrant Officer Thelma Grannison, who headed the cafeteria. ‘A lot have gained weight.’”³⁸³ Attorney Debi Cornwall took photos of the compliant detainee media room, where it appears that a shackled prisoner can relax in an ample beige recliner.³⁸⁴ She also photographed feeding chairs and recreation pens.

³⁸² Nat Moger, *The Wire*, Vol 9 Issue 7, April 11, 2008 pg. 3
<https://www.dvidshub.net/publication/issues/3312> (accessed February 3, 2018)

³⁸³ Jeannie Ralston, “Serving Time at Guantánamo Bay,” *National Geographic*, April 2005.
<http://ngm.nationalgeographic.com/ngm/0504/feature8/index.html> (accessed February 6, 2018).

³⁸⁴ Debi Cornwall, *Welcome to Camp America: Inside Guantánamo Bay*, Santa Fe: Radius, 2017.

Everyone is *doing* for these ingrates, the narrative explains. When Leopold toured the camp, one of the senior clinic doctors expressed exasperation, “these are a challenging set of patients we are dealing with. They do not thank us for our good work. I am not used to that.”³⁸⁵ The nurse, Leonato, also invoked lack of gratitude on the part of the prisoners, “Detainees are actually living longer here compared with the lifespan in their home countries.” The doctor expects the prisoners to respect his social capital in his capacity as a medical military professional, and Leonato wants the prisoners to recognize their good fortune in being held in a U.S. military prison camp. He frames their imprisonment as good luck because some vague and unsourced metric that he has internalized indicates that the prisoners have a statistical probability to live longer in Guantánamo than in any number of home countries. There is no mention of the U.S. military strikes and operations that may influence the rates of death from destabilizing direct or structural violence, no mention of the ongoing wars, at all.

Close to Camp Delta is “Camp America, where the soldiers live in metal warehouses partitioned off with shower curtains into “hooches”—cubicles little bigger than a queen-size bed.”³⁸⁶ “Troops here say they are serving a role as important, if not as dangerous, as the one being played by soldiers in Iraq. Yet

³⁸⁵ Jason Leopold, “A Guantánamo Tour: Much Ado about Nothing” *Al Jazeera English*, June 19, 2013. <http://www.aljazeera.com/humanrights/2013/06/20136197533407379.html> (accessed February 3, 2018)

³⁸⁶ Jeannie Ralston, “Serving Time at Guantánamo Bay,” *National Geographic*, April 2005. <http://ngm.nationalgeographic.com/ngm/0504/feature8/index.html> (accessed February 6, 2018).

they describe life in Camp America as painfully dull. "It's like *Groundhog Day*—the same day over and over," says Sgt. 1st Class Steve Segin, a National Guardsman. Many seek diversion by scuba diving or tucking swatches of Astroturf into their golf bags so they can tee off on a grassless course."³⁸⁷ There is a pervasive culture of drinking- a numbing out at the end of a shift.

Dave Phillips, *New York Times* reporter who spent several days in early 2018, mused that "the troops who are familiar with both sides of Guantánamo," meaning the base side and the prison side, "can toggle back and forth in a way that would feel absurd anywhere else." He writes of the Army sergeant assigned to be his minder who transitioned seamlessly from deleting photos from his phone to chatting him up about "a few good places to go snorkeling."³⁸⁸

Abdul-Rasheed Muhammad became the first Muslim chaplain in United States Army in 1993. Prior to that time, rules defining how chaplains had to be certified were tailored toward Christian and Jewish traditions. David Hicks was among the first prisoners brought to Guantánamo. He remembers the chaplains as "fundamentally good people," "who did try to help us," and "went to bat for us" because "they were disgusted by what they witnessed."³⁸⁹ Hicks asserts that one

³⁸⁷ Jeannie Ralston, "Serving Time at Guantánamo Bay," *National Geographic*, April 2005. <http://ngm.nationalgeographic.com/ngm/0504/feature8/index.html> (accessed February 6, 2018).

³⁸⁸ Dave Phillips, "The Gift Shop on Guantánamo Bay," *The New York Times*, February 5, 2018. <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/02/05/insider/guantanamo-bay-base-community.html> (accessed February 6, 2018).

of the chaplains disclosed that he was also under constant surveillance, and that “other soldiers took notes of what he said during prayers at the soldiers’ mosque.” Hick relates that the same chaplain told him “they kept a list of all personnel who were Muslim, anyone who attended mosque and prayed” and that “Muslim soldiers at Guantánamo were treated as possible traitors.” He goes on to mention the case of James Yee.³⁹⁰ James Yee, a third-generation Chinese American and West Point graduate, was a convert to Islam who was actively recruited to serve as a Muslim Chaplain at Guantánamo. Yee had served at Guantánamo for eleven months in that capacity when he left the base for a long-awaited reunion with his wife and young daughter. Lieutenant Yee was detained at the Florida airport without explanation, after the first leg of his flight, and eventually handcuffed, shackled and transported to a military hospital, and then to an isolation cell in the brig. Yee was next transferred to a high security brig in Charleston, North Carolina where he was held in isolation for ten additional weeks. This would have been at the Naval Consolidated Brig, a site with the mission “to ensure the security, good order, discipline and safety of adjudged and pretrial prisoners; to retrain and restore the maximum number of personnel to honorable service; to prepare prisoners for return to civilian life as productive citizens; and when

³⁸⁹ David Hicks, *Guantánamo: My Journey*. (Sydney: William Heinemann, 2010), 229.

³⁹⁰ David Hicks, 229, 230.

directed by superior authority, detain enemy combatants in accordance with guidance from the President via the Secretary of Defense.”³⁹¹

Although not formally charged, he was threatened with multiple counts that carried the death penalty. His family was never notified of his arrest; they found out when the military broke the story to the press weeks later, claiming Yee was a traitor. No Muslim chaplain has been assigned to Guantánamo prisoners since that time. (There are always base chaplains for the troops.) Yee was eventually cleared on all counts, but his career was effectively destroyed, and he has since left the military. James Yee, the Muslim Chaplain at Guantanamo was stained with charges of pornography and an affair, a precursor to the way Manning would be stained first by homosexuality and then more spectacularly by gender non-conformity, and Assange permanently stained with rape, though he has never been charged.

The challenges of the project, include the practical difficulties of multi-sited ethnographies, the marked status of post-Guantanamo informants, and the presence of the absences-the redactions and silences, all in the presence of a deafening white noise, which in the way of white torture, conceals rather than elucidates, in terms of both naming and function.

³⁹¹ “US Naval Consolidated Brig Charleston” *Navy Personnel Command* Website <http://www.public.navy.mil/bupers-npc/support/correctionprograms/brigs/charleston/Pages/default.aspx>

History of the music debate

There are four main sources for determining permissibility in Islam: the Qur'an, the Hadith literature, ijma: the consensus or custom of scholars and/or the community and qiyas: reasoning by analogy, and though the four recognized schools of law in the Sunni tradition consider the Qur'an and the hadith literature as the primary sources, they draw on the secondary sources asymmetrically- which gives rise to varied interpretations.³⁹² Because Islam is not institutionally structured, religious scholars also weigh in with divergent opinions and rulings, and these may be delivered to communities and individuals in modes ranging from Friday sermons to personal websites. There are websites that make definitive pronouncements, and others that seek to discuss the issues. At the extreme end of the spectrum one finds individuals and groups who employ language which not only shuts down any debate, but effectively erases all traces of the debate, a tactic that digresses from an Islamic scholarly tradition of engaging in intellectual argument and repartee.³⁹³ Muslims who attend devotional music concerts, purchase the cassettes and cd's, or watch YouTube videos on the internet are rejecting the exclusivist truth claims of the radical

³⁹² See "Development of Law," in Ignaz Goldziher, *Introduction to Islamic Theology and Law*, trans. by Andras and Ruth Hamori. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1981) and Amnon Shiloah "Music and Religion in Islam," *Acta Musicologica* 69 No. 2 (Jul.-Dec., 1997), 144-45.

³⁹³ Shaykh Muhammad ibn Adam al-Kawthari, "Music and Singing: A Detailed Fawa," *Qibla*. Website. http://qa.sunnipath.com/issue_view.asp?HD=1&ID=1786 accessed, Feb. 27, 2013.

groups and movements, and this signals a rejection of more than an opinion on the permissibility of music in Islam; it signals a rejection of extremist views.

As the work of social anthropologist Charles Hirschkind highlights, Islam recognizes the “ethical and therapeutic virtues of the ear.”³⁹⁴ In Islam, listening practices are believed to shape the ethics of the individual, and to have therapeutic benefits. Audition and aurality are privileged in Islam; from birth to death the centrality of listening is clear.

The first words a Muslim newborn hears whispered into his or her right ear after birth is the *azan*, or call to prayer, followed by an echo of that call in their left ear. The call to prayer calibrates the everyday life of practicing Muslims, throughout their time on earth, especially in Muslim majority countries where the *azan* is heard echoing from mosques five times per day. For practicing Muslims living in other contexts, they may rely on a tv channel, a computer program, a daily chart, or download a program on their phone that plays the call to prayer.

Recitation and memorization of the Qur’an are highly prized skills in Islam, (there is an honorific title, *Hafiz*, for someone who has memorized the entire Qur’an and can recite it) and aurality, in terms of the practice of listening, is central. It is very common for faithful Muslims to listen to cassette tapes of Qur’anic recitation and sermons regularly. When a Muslim is dying, family members gather to recite Qur’an, and to remind the dying (and themselves) of

³⁹⁴ Charles Hirschkind. *The Ethical Soundscape: Cassette Sermons and Islamic Counterpublics*. (New York: Columbia University Press, 2006), 9.

the answers to the questions encountered in the barzakh, during the time just after death, so that they might be prepared for the questioning angels, Munkar and Nakeer.

As I was working on a soundscape for the Guantánamo Public Memory Project I pondered whether prior to September 11th, many non-Muslim Americans would have recognized and been somewhat familiar with the call to prayer, as opposed to how many would now, over a decade later. I would ask you to think about how and where your ear became trained to recognize Allahu akbar. God is greatest. How did you learn to associate the sound of the call to prayer with Islam and Muslims? A mosque in your neighborhood or by your work or school? Through newscasts? A documentary about Islam? An action thriller? One of the post nine/eleven shows: 24 or perhaps, Homeland? Do you hear call to prayer in the same way as you hear church bells? Do you experience the call to prayer as beautiful, haunting, strange, benign, or as something foreign, dangerous, ominous? What associations does your mind automatically make? And why does it make those associations? Are the associations in line with your actual beliefs about Islam?

In ethnography, oral history, trauma studies, and work on memory...all of which figure into the work I do, one encounters the term difficult listening. It's a term used in musicology, but with a different meaning.³⁹⁵ There is a public radio

³⁹⁵ Anna Sheftel and Stacey Zembrzycki, Eds. *Oral History off the Record: Toward an Ethnography of Practice*, (New York: Palgrave, 2013).

station called RTRFM in Perth that carries the program Difficult Listening³⁹⁶ that showcases experimental music that can be difficult to appreciate. Difficult listening in the context of my work on Guantánamo and more generally the Global war on terror means listening to the pain of others, hearing stories that ask someone to relive extremely painful raw experiences. And though the pain that the listener might experience is of course asymmetrical to that of the survivor who has lived through the actual events, the listening as a second-hand experience carries its own burdens.

In April 2014, I traveled to Chicago for the Amnesty International conference, Bringing Human Rights Home, and that meant several days of difficult listening from the opening plenary on the state of criminal justice and human rights in the United States and around the world, through to the sessions “Accountability for Torture in Chicago, the United States, and in the World” which featured survivors of torture, and “Ending the Forever War at home and abroad: Surveillance, Drones, Guantánamo and Islamophobia.” I appreciated in particular that the focus was not only on what happens ‘over there,’ so often the

³⁹⁶ From the Difficult Listening Website: “The second half of the 20th century saw significant innovation take place in the realm of avant-garde classical composition. With composers such as John Cage, Karlheinz Stockhausen and Iannis Xenakis taking classical composition into realms that were previously unheard of, the foundations were laid for a tradition of experimental, exploratory and otherwise “difficult” musical forms to develop. Difficult Listening takes in compositions from the legends of new music alongside works by lesser known composers and artists working in a range of styles that push the very barriers of sound creation and composition. Including but not limited to styles such as modernism, early computer music, spectral music, noise, improvisation, drone and ambient music, Difficult Listening provides an important space for sounds that exist well outside of the realms of musical normality.” <http://rtrfm.com.au/shows/difficultlistening/>

case with the United States, nor was it limited to what is done in our name, mine and yours, abroad, but that some of the focus was directed toward the local context, the city of Chicago. The acronym NIMBY or not in my backyard is used to denote a situation when someone is supportive of having-for example-a system of halfway houses, in theory, just not in their neighborhood. I think it also sums up the way Americans think of torture and human rights abuses...that they somehow happen elsewhere and to other people.

Sound figured prominently in the actions and testimonies I heard over the course of that weekend. We began with a Friday march to the Buckingham Fountain at Daley Park. Though we carried signs, we also used our voices, call and response, as several hundred of us marched single file. This action was to recognize the 118 Chicago men who were tortured into signing confessions by John Burge and his officers between 1972 and 1993. Joey Mogul, partner with the People's Law Office, director of DePaul University's civil rights clinic and co-founder of the Chicago Torture Justice Memorial project spoke and introduced her client, Darrell Cannon who would speak later at the session on torture. We heard from the mother of one of the men still imprisoned. Then the names of each of the 118 men was read...a sonic strategy reminiscent of the reading of the names of the dead at the old synagogue in Prague, and the reading that takes place each Thursday at 3pm the Plaza de Mayo, where each name is answered with *presente!* We held a black banner with the name of each of the 118 and moved into position as the name on the sign was read. I think it is interesting to think about what makes the reading aloud of the names so significant and

powerful, and why it is so often a feature of memorial actions. The sound comes from within, and returns through the ear and mind, creating a bodily feedback loop. The name passes through the body and is perhaps instantiated in this way. Remembered in the body and made real in the memory.

For Darrell Cannon, imprisoned for 24 years before having his conviction overturned, because of a confession extracted through torture, the sound of the click of the gun shoved in his mouth by a Chicago policeman haunts and still traumatizes him. The chamber was empty, but the next sound he talks about is the sound of the gun being loaded after the policeman takes a bullet from his pocket and turns away. The verbal slurs that accompany the mock execution...these haunt him.

We heard from prominent Iranian trade unionist and former political prisoner Mansour Ossanlu, who spoke not of the sound, but of the absence of sound, of the silences enforced while he was jailed. That marked his experience.

Myrla Baldonado who was abducted in 1983 during the period of the Marcos dictatorship in the Philippines, because of her involvement with a group promoting the closure of U.S. military bases in her country. She spoke of the dislocating effects of her solitary confinement, and how she lost track of days, and of time, and of her self. She recounts that she asked for a book, something that could ground her...in a way, a breaking of silence, which is not exactly nothingness, but when unpunctuated can become akin to nothingness. If silence is punctuated by sound, or sound is punctuated by silence the silence is bounded, but in the case of imposed silence, in a space where time is similarly

unpunctuated and unmarked, it can become as tortuous and unrelenting as a sound weapon.

Another facet of the disorientations of sound at Guantanamo came during a hallway conversation with Lieutenant Colonel Sterling R. Thomas. Thomas is the lead military defense counsel for Ali Abdul Aziz Ali, a defendant in a current Guantánamo military commission, and Abdul Zahir, prisoner 753, an Afghan citizen who has been detained by the United States without trial since 2002. Thomas related that there is a sound delay from the courtroom to the rooms where families and reporters watch through the glass, so that those listening experience a delay, one can see the lips moving, but the sound comes later. Jane Hamlin's court sketches of the tribunals sometimes highlight the glass, and other times erase it, but are drawn through the double-glazed soundproof glass.³⁹⁷ Many people find they need to close their eyes because the disconnect between the visual and aural is too disruptive to properly process, like a dubbed film out of sync. I would meet Colonel Sterling again in 2017 when he testified at the North Carolina Commission of Inquiry on Torture in Raleigh.

Though many journalists fly in for a one-time media trip or for a particular case, some like Carol Rosenberg of the *Miami Herald* and courtroom artist Janet Hamlin become fixtures, part of some inner community. Rosenberg wrote the forward for Hamlin's book of sketches. She writes of the difficulties imposed on the journalists, who are punished for their interest and commitment. She remembers the early days of the assignment, when reporters were offered

³⁹⁷ Janet Hamlin, *Sketching Guantánamo: Court Sketches of the Military Tribunals 2006-2013*, (Seattle: Fantagraphics, 2013), 68-69 and back matter.

officers' guest quarters. That soon shifted to the tents within the huge long abandoned airplane hangars of Camp Justice. Rosenberg writes that the tents "are powered by screeching generators so inhospitable that the guards assigned to keep watch on the media refused to stay there, "where the military chills reporters' drinking water in a portable morgue meant to fly the dead home from war."³⁹⁸

³⁹⁸ Carol Rosenberg, "Forward" in Janet Hamlin, *Sketching Guantánamo: Court Sketches of the Military Tribunals 2006-2013*, (Seattle: Fantagraphic, 2013), 8.

CHAPTER 6

AL BARZAKH

And I, Shahid, only am escaped to tell thee—

*God sobs in my arms. Call me Ishmael tonight.*³⁹⁹

Al Barzakh is the between, the veil, the liminal, the space that traps or separates. At the most concrete level, it is the space between this life and the next. Key to any discussion of the captives of Guantanamo Bay and their attitudes toward preservations of life, acceptance of death, and self-sacrifice, is an emphasis on maintaining the dignity of their difference from one another, as individual human beings. Though all nominally Muslim, at the time of their initial confinement, at least one man, David Hicks, fell away from Islam while at Guantanamo, and there may be others. I use the rather effete term ‘fell away’ because I do not read in his account, a rejection, so much as an exhaustion of spirit, or perhaps better, an exhaustion of inclination toward belief, not specifically related to Islam, a religion to which he had converted, and in whose dreams have been read a possible return.

Next, the extremely varied background of the men-boys, in some cases- makes a read of general attitudes and their derivation a problematic endeavor. Of the original 779 prisoners held, there were diverse places of origin: Afghanistan, Algeria, Australia, Azerbaijan, Bahrain, Bangladesh, Belgium, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Canada, Chad, China, Denmark, Egypt, Ethiopia, France, Gaza,

³⁹⁹ Agha Shahid Ali. “Tonight” in *Call me Ishmael Tonight: A Book of Ghazals*. New York: W.W. Norton, 2003.

Germany, Indonesia, Iran, Iraq, Jordan, Kazakhstan, Kenya, Kuwait, Lebanon, Libya, Malaysia, Maldives, Mauritania, Morocco, Pakistan, Qatar, Russia, Saudi Arabia, Somalia, Spain, Sudan, Syria, Sweden, Tajikistan, Tanzania, Tunisia, Turkey, Turkmenistan, Uganda, United Arab Emirates, United Kingdom, United States, Uzbekistan, West Bank, Yemen dozens of countries plus two occupied territories (Gaza and the West Bank).⁴⁰⁰ Imagine the complexity of belongings in this imagined community. This meant dozens of languages and many different worldviews and experiences that cannot be collapsed into a particular mindset, certainly not Arab, and not Islamic; neither the first nor the second exist. It is possible to listen to what the men themselves have disclosed explicitly, or through implication, and to try to identify what streams of Islamic traditions they may be sourcing.

This dystopic and imagined community brought together through force and dislocation—linked at some bare minimum through Qur’anic text— of Roy’s “de-territorialized Islam,” creates the conditions in which men were exposed to multiple and diverse understandings, and differences in practice.⁴⁰¹ Olivier posits that the de-territorialization of Islam, that is, “the growing number of Muslims living in Western non-Muslim countries” can be linked to “specific forms of religiosity, from radical neo-fundamentalism to a renewal of spirituality or an

⁴⁰⁰ I created the alphabetical list for ease of reference, but drew the info from the NYTimes database which also lists the number of those who have been held captive, by country. <http://projects.nytimes.com/guantanamo/detainees/by-country>

⁴⁰¹ The term imagined community is a re-purposing of Benedict Anderson’s concept. Olivier Roy. *Globalized Islam: The Search for a New Ummah*. (New York: Columbia, 2004), 3.

insistence on Islam as a system of value and ethics.”⁴⁰² What Roy points to is that living outside an affirming context and community puts the onus for interpreting and practicing more squarely on the individual, while at the same time the individual is surrounded and informed by alternate understandings and norms, and-perhaps-flowing more easily between spaces without a stabilizing community. The young Moroccan arriving in France or the United States must consider the question of what it means to be Muslim, and how to go about living as a Muslim, in a way that he was not called on to think about it while living in Midelt or Boumia, or Rabat, for that matter. This was somewhat the case at Guantánamo, as the prisoners were brought into contact with other modes of practice.

In Guantanamo, the military holds a spare understanding of what Islam is and how it is practiced, that could be summed up in the first hour of a poorly conceived Intro to Islam class. The understandings such as there were, could be and were turned against the prisoners. Yet it is in that space, in dire conditions, that these men who hailed from such varied backgrounds had to cobble together a way to draw on that which connected them, and to reconcile-or not-their divides.

Strangely enough, this colliding of understandings is something which happens also during pilgrimage, both informal, as when a young Muslim takes to the road and travels between mosques and territories, a time-honored tradition, not so different from a gap year, and the fifth pillar of hajj. It can happen also, in

⁴⁰² Roy, 5.

dreams and death, and here the Islamic concept of Barzakh becomes a useful metaphor. In his “A Season in Mecca,” Hamoudi offers that Hajj is not simply pilgrimage, but rather “a journey to an ultimate destination” that one travels “to move along the traces.”⁴⁰³ When Hamoudi contemplates the ihram, the un-sewn white cloth he will don before he circumambulates the kaaba, it is as a shroud.⁴⁰⁴

Al-Barzakh [البرزخ] is a term used to describe the time/space between death and the final judgment. It implies a barrier, indeed that is how Asad translates it, and is sometime described as a veil. Barzakh is mentioned three times in the Qur’an, twice in Suras attributed to the Meccan period-as opposed to the later verses from Medina- while the third is noted as Asad, as “period uncertain,” though he allows it is assigned to the Meccan period by most scholars.

In Surah 23, Ayat 99-100, Al-Mu’minun [The Believers] from the Meccan period, “As for those who will not believe in the life to come, they go on lying to themselves until when death approaches any of them, he prays: O my sustainer! Let me return, let me return [to life], so that I might act righteously in whatever I have failed [aforetime]. Nay it is but a [meaningless] word that he utters: for behind those [who leave the world] there is a barrier [of death] until the Day when all will be raised from the dead!”⁴⁰⁵

⁴⁰³ Abdellah Hammoudi, *A Season in Mecca: Narrative of a Pilgrimage*. (New York: Hill and Wang, 2006): 6.

⁴⁰⁴ Hammoudi, 13 and 43.

⁴⁰⁵ Asad, 590. Unless otherwise noted, I will draw from Muhammad Asad’s *The Message of the Qur’an*. Asad is Talal Asad’s father, a scholar in his own right. Though I own and refer to A. J. Arberry’s *The Qur’an Interpreted*, M.A.S Abdel Haleem’s *The Qur’an*, Ahmed’s Ali’s *The Qur’an*, N. J. Dawood’s *The Koran*, and

When Mamdouh Habib writes, “sometimes I thought I was dead and being punished for my sins,” and goes on to describe a hazy state and disorientation, and “voices speaking in different languages,” it is not a reach to think he may have understood himself as suspended in al-barzakh.⁴⁰⁶ Habib writes of displacement: “My spirit, I felt, was elsewhere; what they were hurting was just meat.”⁴⁰⁷ Shortly before his release, after being told many times that his wife and children were dead, Habib is told that his wife is alive and that he may speak to her. He does not believe it is she on the other end of the line, and he becomes the questioner, asking her to recall details of their life together. He asks her if she remembers the “Stallone movie, Lock up?” When she confirms that she does, he says “This is how I am now.” With that he details the guard punching him hard in the head and telling Habib “Shut up...if you repeat this again, you won’t continue.” Habib’s response is that he does not “want to continue anyway.”⁴⁰⁸

As situated in the narrative, it can be read with a doubleness. Habib does not care if he continues the conversation with a wife in whose living existence he no longer believes, and Habib does not care if *he* continues. Talebi asks, “What does it really mean to speak about the inevitability of death if it has already

Rashad Khalifa’s *Quran: The Final Testament*, Asad’s interpretation, though a large and bulky tome, is the version that offers page by page dual translation (as does Ahmed Ali’s) but also transliteration. The paper is fine, the font is clear, the margins and spacing generous, and the transliteration and annotations offers additional reading support.

⁴⁰⁶ Mamdouh Habib, *My Story: The Tale of a Terrorist who Wasn’t*. (Melbourne: Scribe, 2008), 152.

⁴⁰⁷ Habib, 202.

⁴⁰⁸ Habib, 217.

overtaken the subject? Why this utter annihilation?”⁴⁰⁹ This reluctance to speak to those on the other side of the barrier is expressed by other former captives, and it is not clear if they fear they are dead to others, if others are dead to them, or if they are dead to themselves, or in the haze of barzakh. When after three years of imprisonment at Guantanamo, two in solitary confinement, Begg is asked if there are any family members he would like to call he records his response thus, “My family,’I thought. ‘Just like that, after three years of not hearing their voices, or seeing their faces...’ I couldn’t control my emotions, tears rolled down my face. ‘No, thank you.’”⁴¹⁰ When I read this for the first time, it made no sense to me at all, now after years of reading these accounts and others in conversation with other literatures, it makes all too painful sense.

When German national, Murat Kurnaz, a child of Turkish guest workers, was picked up in Pakistan, before his transport to Kandahar and eventually Guantanamo, he asked for, and some days later received a Qur’an. He “had read once that people can go insane if they spend too much time in solitary confinement...[he] needed something to occupy [his] mind.”⁴¹¹ Kurnaz describes a “beautiful moment” as he receives the book and opens it to the page of the sixth surah, “In the Name of God, the Mercy-giving, the Merciful! Praise be to God,

⁴⁰⁹ Shahla Talebi, “Who is Behind the Name?: A Story of Violence, Loss, and Melancholic Survival in Post-Revolutionary Iran.” *Journal of Middle East Women’s Studies* Vol. 7 no. 1 (Winter 2011): 58.

⁴¹⁰ Begg, 358.

⁴¹¹ Murat Kurnaz, *Five Years of My Life: An Innocent Man in Guantanamo*. (New York: Palgrave, 2008), 38.

Who created the Heaven and Earth and granted darkness and light! Yet those who disbelieve make other things equal to their Lord. He is the One Who has created you (all) from clay; then fixed a term. A deadline [for the day of judgment] has been set by Him.”⁴¹² Of the flight to Kandahar, after the ritual of transport and beating Kurnaz says “it was clear to me that I might die. I didn’t want to die, but in my situation it seemed like the easier option. Better...I thought above all about my mother. I hoped at least she would find out how I died....I prepared myself for my death.”⁴¹³ Kurnaz did not die on that flight, but in Kandahr, he was beaten, hoisted and hung with his arms behind, and subject to drowning. Kurnaz writes, “in Islam, there is an idea that anyone who is forced to suffer a death by drowning will be given a great reward in the afterlife because it’s a difficult way to die. I tried to think about that, while they held my held under water. Drowning is a horrible way to die.”⁴¹⁴ In the hangar, awaiting transport to Guantanamo, Kurnaz connected with a Turkish man, Nuri, and recounts that he said “‘Now we are going back to where we came from.’ Allah, he said, had created us from earth, and the earth was where we would return.”⁴¹⁵ Kurnaz writes of spiders and snakes, but also, frogs, iguanas, and hummingbirds which visited him in his cage.⁴¹⁶ It is during a half conscious state that a scorpion crawls across

⁴¹² Kurnaz, 39.

⁴¹³ Kurnaz, 49.

⁴¹⁴ Kurnaz, 72.

⁴¹⁵ Kurnaz, 102.

⁴¹⁶ Kurnaz, 112-114.

his hand; he had been imagining or dreaming that it was the touch of his mother, who “often used to wake me up by tickling me.”⁴¹⁷

Kurnaz was one of the men who went on hunger strike in response to the desecration of the Qur’an at Guantanamo. Kurnaz says he was aware of the incident not because he witnessed it, but because he heard “wild screams,” and then “wailing,” and that a prisoner tried to hang himself that night; this was a repeat incident of desecration, and after the first time, the prisoners had vowed to commit suicide if it happened again. That, Kurnaz, remembers was “how the new hunger strike began. The news was passed from block to block. We knew almost everyone would take part.”⁴¹⁸

Moazzam Begg, a British man born to South Asian parents, and educated at King David Primary Jewish Day School in Birmingham, has written an erudite indictment of his time in captivity, capturing racial notes that require further space in another paper. He notes, “it is considered a sin in Islam to despair, but in Bagram, during the worst days of May 2002, I had been unable to hold my despair at bay. Her in Guantanamo, in this steel cage with its mesh sides, steel roof and floor, steel bed, steel toilet, all inside a white, new-looking brightly lit room, I felt despair returning as I took in my surroundings for the first time.” He

⁴¹⁷ Kurnaz, 113.

⁴¹⁸ Kurnaz, 189.

would be alone in that space for two years, “never allowed to see another prisoner.”⁴¹⁹

Begg speaks about the difficulties of living as a Muslim in the U.K., and then about his time in Afghanistan. “Some of my ancestors are buried in Afghanistan. I dressed like the Afghans, I prayed in their mosques, I speak a language most of them understand, and I felt sympathy for them that went beyond a simple humanitarian one. These people have suffered immensely—not just from wars your country has supported, but also from natural disaster.” I wanted to live in an Islamic state—one that was free from the corruption and despotism of the rest of the Muslim world.”⁴²⁰ Begg, like Kurnaz read, studied and memorized Qur’an, but noted that “memorizing the Qur’an had its limits.” He was pleased that “there was literature that I loved, nineteenth century classics like Dickens’ Bleak House, A Tale of Two Cities and David Copperfield; Emily Bronte’s Wuthering Heights and Dostoevsky’s The Brothers Karamazov.”⁴²¹

Begg recounts his time in solitary gave him time to contemplate the life he had lived: “I thought I knew so much. I had seen my mother die when I was only six, my sister when I was eleven, and one of my closest friends when I was twenty-one. I’d seen corpses in Bosnia and Afghanistan—I knew about death. I was not scared of it, but I was afraid of my judgment in the ultimate court of the

⁴¹⁹ Moazzam Begg, *Enemy Combatant: My Imprisonment at Guantanamo, Bagram and Kandahar*. (New York: New Press, 2006),194-95.

⁴²⁰ Begg, 214.

⁴²¹ Begg, 218.

Hereafter. So I had embarked on a journey that would help secure my fate in the afterlife, by helping the poor and oppressed amongst the people I related to most: Muslims.”⁴²²

A psychiatrist at Guantanamo is sent to speak with Begg, after he has what he describes as “an uncontrollable anxiety attack.” Begg describes how the psychiatrist tries to discuss coping mechanisms drawn from “the experiences of survivors of Belsen and Auschwitz....look at the Auschwitz survivors, or at Nelson Mandela...Have you read the book of Job in the Bible?”⁴²³ Begg, whose son is named Ayub, after Job, is incensed. The psychiatrist admits he’s never read Mandela’s *Long Walk to Freedom*. Begg pointedly asks: “How many times have I asked for another Muslim to speak to, or even an US Army Muslim Chaplain? And they give me a psychiatrist that talks of a religion he doesn’t believe in, quoting from books he’s never read.”⁴²⁴

During the first Ramadan in which he was housed with other prisoners, after two years in solitary confinement, Begg notes that everyone fasted, with the exception of David Hicks. “That Ramadan was absolutely unique. It was probably one of the best ones I have ever spent in my life. Despite the extreme circumstances we were all sharing, the cheerfulness and spirit of everybody was unforgettable, and is hard to communicate to anyone who did not live it.”⁴²⁵ For

⁴²² Begg, 234.

⁴²³ Begg, 242.

⁴²⁴ Begg, 242.

⁴²⁵ Begg, 297.

Begg, the highlight was Taraweeh, a long congregational prayer, prayed only during Ramadan.

It is through Begg's writing that I came to know of Uthman and his ability to read dreams. Uthman and Begg disagreed on many topics, though both considered themselves as practicing the 'salafi' (early) way, regarding "some of the Sufi mystical doctrine as heretical" and spent hours in theological debates.⁴²⁶ Begg enjoyed the debates, but was annoyed by the dream reading, and he interpreted the plethora of that the prisoners remembered and wanted interpreted to them sleeping "too bloody much."⁴²⁷ Here, Uthman corrects him, "No, no, no, it's not that, it's because of the situation and people want to see things, and thoughts come into their subconscious." Even David Hicks wanted his dreams read by Uthman, though he had fallen away from Islam, he was interested in Uthman's ability. His dreams were read as good omens, and signaled that Hicks "would eventually return to the fold."⁴²⁸ Amira Mittermaier writes of the raw materials of dreaming in a section on recycled images. Shaykh Hanafi, a reader of dreams, who was one of her interlocuters had spoken to her about this, "if you have a TV, then the world is open to you. You see the news and so on. All of that affects your dreams."⁴²⁹

⁴²⁶ Begg, 331.

⁴²⁷ Begg, 312.

⁴²⁸ Begg, 313.

⁴²⁹ Amira Mittermaier, *Dreams that Matter: Egyptian Landscapes of the Imagination*. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2011), 216.

Amira Mittermaier takes up the dream-stories of her interlocutors, as a way to “open critical spaces and possibilities,” not as “protective blankets of false consciousness,” but rather “because they insert the dreamer into a wider network of symbolic debts, relationships, and meanings. They place the dreamer in relation to the Divine...calling attention to in-betweenness and interrelationality instead.”⁴³⁰ Mittermaier is curious about the ability of the dead to speak through dreams. It seems some Egyptians write letters to the now dead Shaykh Hanafi. She wonders aloud to the imam of the mosque near Hanfi’s tomb/shrine, how he might respond. “Do people see him in their dreams?” The Imam dismisses the possibility, “Al-Imam al-Shafi is dead,” he said, “so how could anyone still see him?”⁴³¹ Mittermaier presses, “So he’s dead, but he’s still around, isn’t he? He’s still in the barzakh.” The imam agrees, but does not concede the possibility of communication from beyond the grave. He considers the popular practice of leaving letters for the dead Shaykh, backwards; the letters are collected and burnt, however he does scan some periodically to get a “sense of people’s worries and concerns, which he then addresses in his Friday sermons.”⁴³² What do people think when they hear the concern that left at the shrine addressed at Friday prayers...why that the Shaykh came to the Imam in dream and conveyed their

⁴³⁰ Mittermaier, 3.

⁴³¹ Mittermaier, 35.

⁴³² Mittermaier, 38.

concerns, I suppose. And perhaps he did. At any rate, somehow the Imam has taken to reading the letters.

Mittermaier notes, “the Others that address, compel, and move my interlocutors include invisible beings, the dead, the Prophet, the saints, and what Derrida calls the “wholly other,” the Divine. The kinds of imagined communities that figure in my interlocutors’ stories exceed the secular imagined community of the nation-state.”⁴³³ Indeed, Smith and Haddad read Khalifa’s discussion of the dead in conversation with Ibn Qayyim, to mean that spirits continue in the barzakh, but in “different locales.”⁴³⁴ Khalifa says “The body is a cage and the spirit is incarcerated in it. In the barzakh the spirit is free to go and socialize with others, experiencing both pleasure and pain.”⁴³⁵ This is key to understanding the connection of death and dreams and the freedom implicated in both, and the recognition of living, as Hammoudi writes “a life that always knew it was over.”⁴³⁶ Agamben expresses this in a chilling register in terms of the condition of the camp as “an absolute biopolitical space...in which human life transcends every assignable biopolitical identity” with death becoming “a simple epiphenomenon.”⁴³⁷ Also as “the exemplary places of modern bio-politics.”⁴³⁸ And

⁴³³ Mittermaier, 5.

⁴³⁴ Jane Idleman Smith and Yvonne Yazbeck Haddad, *The Islamic Understanding of Death and Resurrection*. (New York: Oxford, 2002): 103.

⁴³⁵ Smith and Haddad, 103.

⁴³⁶ Hammoudi, 282.

⁴³⁷ Giorgio Agamben, *Remnants of Auschwitz*. (New York: Zone, 2002): 86.

this day's hunger strikers, and our military's tubing and feeding chairs are very much present.

“Sleep is the brother of Death,” Ash-Sha’rani writes, and as Constance Padwick points out, the concept is present in morning and prayers that thank “God who has returned to me my spirit.”⁴³⁹ Padwick asks, “then what of dreams?...Can these be experiences of the spirit only?”⁴⁴⁰ If we return to pilgrimage, in the company of dreams, we can consider al-miraj, or the night journey as corollary to the freedom of the barzakh. In Majd ad-Din Baghdadi’s “Treatise on Journeying” from the 13th century, in which he encourages the actual traversing of terrain, as a mode of learning and discovery, “while he was in the domain of the heart, his learning from the attributes of the outer world led to the manifestation of the spiritual light. When he reached the spirit, the mysteries of spiritual manifestation led to the manifestation of the Truth.”⁴⁴¹ The physical and spiritual journey are co-incidental and contiguous.

Stefania Pandolfo calls for attention to a continuum that she sketches with the figure of the suicide bomber as one end point, “the Islamist phenomenon and its radical vanguards,” but she insists we find at the “other side of this

⁴³⁸ Giorgio Agamben, *Homo Sacer* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998), 4.

⁴³⁹ Constance Padwick, *Muslim Devotions: A Study of Prayer Manuals in Common Use*. (Oxford: OneWorld, 1986), 273.

⁴⁴⁰ Padwick, 274.

⁴⁴¹ Majd ad-Din Baghdadi, “Treatise on Journeying.” In *Windows on the House of Islam: Muslim Sources on Spirituality and Religious Life*, John Renard, Ed. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998), 308.

interpretive divide the ‘return’ of religion and spirituality (and the realization of their enduring presence),” and that this requires a parrhesiac “for an understanding of subjectivity , alterity, politics, and hermeneutics that is no longer grounded in the Enlightenment prejudice against religion, nor in the theories of secularization that predicted the disappearance of religion in the process of rationalization understood as the essence of liberal modernity.”⁴⁴²

Surah twenty-five, Al-Furqan [the Standard of True and False] from the Meccan period, mentions barzakh in ayat 53, “And He it is who has given freedom of movement to the two great bodies of water—the one sweet and thirst-allaying, and the other salty and bitter—and yet has wrought between them a barrier and a forbidding ban.”⁴⁴³

Finally in Surah 55, Ar-Rahman [The Most Gracious] barzakh is mentioned a third time in ayat 19-20, “He has given freedom to the two great bodies of water, so that they might meet: [yet] between them is a barrier which they may not transgress.”⁴⁴⁴

⁴⁴² And here Pandolfo is speaking with Asad, 1993; Habermas, 1985; and Vattimo, 2000. Stefania Pandolfo, “The Burning: Finitude and the politico-theological imagination of illegal migration.” *Anthropological Theory* 7 (2007), 331.

⁴⁴³ Asad, 631.

⁴⁴⁴ Asad, 938.

CHAPTER 7

SALVAGE

Now Thomas, one of the twelve [. . .] was not with them when Jesus came. [. . .]. But he said to them, 'Unless I see in his hands the print of the nails, and place my finger in the mark of the nails, and place my hand in his side, I will not believe.

John 20.24-29

It once meant the rescue of goods spilled overboard during shipwreck. Salvage implies the rescue of something consigned to trash or to the sea depths. An act of rescue, or even, redemption. But it is also the used up, the depreciated, the consigned, the stuff of trash. In economics, there is a term for the worth of something after depreciation, the “salvage, scrap, or residual value.” The prisoners at Guantánamo, most of whom were actually purchased, depreciated in worth when it was determined that they were mistaken for someone else with the same name, or though involved in ground fighting were not ‘high value.’ Still, the symbolic value held. The CIA would bring conspicuous “high value” detainees to Guantánamo in 2006, but this was a masquerade of justification ex post facto. So the depreciated prisoner bodies, like the refuse of shipping containers would be repurposed. If the original intent was to extract cryptic information, the new approach would be purely ideological. Many of the Guantánamo prison guards were taken to the site of the Twin Towers before deploying; others were trained with videos that connected the site to the prisoners. But with the advent of the Military Commission trials of the nine/eleven five prisoners at Guantánamo, the Twin Towers came to the base.

Pieces (relics) of the Twin Towers have been purposely circulated around the country and around the world.⁴⁴⁵ While much of the metal retrieved from the Twin Towers was quickly sold as scrap metal to India and China, nearly 2,000 pieces of steel and over 600 other artifacts were held in airplane hangar Seventeen at JFK International Airport to be distributed for memorial projects. The Port Authority of New York and New Jersey had jurisdiction over the debris. From 2010 through 2016, individuals and groups could apply for and upon approval receive a piece of steel or other debris recovered from the Twin Towers. These twisted pieces of metal were sent to all fifty states, and to a number of overseas bases (and some international museums and governments) as religiously inflected nails that created the wounds of America's martyrdom, rebirth, and *raison d'être*.⁴⁴⁶ It is as if the map of US Empire was nailed through and reliably secured through these markers. And the pieces (and the blood of empire, and some believe, the DNA of the dead) were circulated with ideological purpose-most were distributed through the dependably patriotic channels of Fire and Police departments, the State Department, U.S. Customs and Border Patrol offices, FEMA offices, Elks Lodges, Boy Scout Troops, and military bases.⁴⁴⁷ Each

⁴⁴⁵ Michael D. Regan. "What Happened to the remnants of the World Trade Center?" *PBS Newshour*. September 10, 2016.
<https://www.pbs.org/newshour/nation/happened-remnants-world-trade-center>

⁴⁴⁶ World Trade Center, (Website) "Port Authority Concludes Successful Program to Distribute 9/11 World Trade Center Artifacts," August 11, 2016.
http://www.panynj.gov/WTCPROGRESS/press_releasesItem.cfm?headLine_id=2490

piece of steel is a placeholder for a wound that needs to be revered, stroked, and fetishized. Joseph W. Pfeifer spoke about the meaning of the relics, “The 9/11 steel, whether small or large, represents the 343 firefighters who were lost, as well as all victims of terrorism throughout the world. Not only do these artifacts help us to never forget, but it also represents our hope for an end to terrorism.”⁴⁴⁸ The hope Pfeifer speaks to is encoded in his job description, Chief of Counterterrorism and Emergency Preparedness for the FDNY. His counterpart, Port Authority Superintendent of Police Michael Fedorko, also spoke to the significance of the pieces and the program, “This highly successful effort has allowed communities throughout the world to keep alive the memory of the heroic acts and ultimate sacrifices made by our police force, other law enforcement agencies and firefighters who lost their lives that day.”⁴⁴⁹ The reification of the police and firefighters and relative absence of mention of the others in the building, gestures toward a system that elevates uniformed bodies working for the state over civilian bodies. Embedded in both messages is a sacralization of security and security forces. Firefighters are overwhelmingly

⁴⁴⁷ Susan Edelman, “The Last Remaining Relics of 9/11 will be given away by March,” *New York Post*, December 13, 2015. <https://nypost.com/2015/12/13/the-last-remaining-relics-of-911-will-be-given-away-by-march/>

⁴⁴⁸ World Trade Center, (Website) “Port Authority Concludes Successful Program to Distribute 9/11 World Trade Center Artifacts,” August 11, 2016. http://www.panynj.gov/WTCPROGRESS/press_releasesItem.cfm?headLine_id=2490

⁴⁴⁹ World Trade Center, (Website) “Port Authority Concludes Successful Program to Distribute 9/11 World Trade Center Artifacts,” August 11, 2016. http://www.panynj.gov/WTCPROGRESS/press_releasesItem.cfm?headLine_id=2490

white and male, more than 80% in each category.⁴⁵⁰ 80% of police officers are male, and nearly 80% are white.⁴⁵¹ Men make up over 80% of active U.S. military. The military is more racially diverse than police and fire departments nationally; about 60 percent white.⁴⁵² This belies the lack of representation of minorities through the ranks-the higher the rank examined the lower the presence of minorities and women.⁴⁵³

"When those buildings came down, everybody and everything in its path was either pulverized or vaporized off the face of the earth,' said John Hodge of the Stephen Siller Tunnels to Towers Foundation, named for his cousin, a New York firefighter killed on 9/11." Hodge believes that the genetic material of the dead was fused with the steel. "That's where the DNA is. Neither my cousin or anybody else from Squad 1 was ever found, but it's in that steel."⁴⁵⁴ Most of the steel recovered from the World Trade Center was swiftly dispatched to India and China. "We firmly believe that these pieces contain, each and every one of them,

⁴⁵⁰ "Firefighters," DataUSA Deloitte. <https://datausa.io/profile/soc/332011/>

⁴⁵¹ "Police Officers," DataUSA Deloitte. <https://datausa.io/profile/soc/333050/>

⁴⁵² Kim Parker, Anthony Cilluffo, and Renee Stepler, "6 Facts about the U.S. Military and its Changing Demographics," *Pew Research Center*, April 13, 2017. <http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2017/04/13/6-facts-about-the-u-s-military-and-its-changing-demographics/>

⁴⁵³ "Total Force Military Demographics Report," Department of Defense. <http://diversity.defense.gov/LinkClick.aspx?fileticket=gxMVqhkaHh8%3D&portalid=51>

⁴⁵⁴ Adam Geller, "After 15 Years, Last Artifacts of 9/11 have been given away," *Orlando Sentinel*. September 10, 2016. <http://www.orlandosentinel.com/news/911-anniversary/os-last-9-11-given-away-20160910-story.html>

all of those lost souls who were never found,' said John Hodge, CEO of the Tunnel to Tower Foundation."⁴⁵⁵ An article in *Fortune Magazine* notes, "it is now possible to touch a piece of September 11 during a Roman Catholic Mass in Port St. Lucie, Florida, while standing in the shadows of Colorado's San Juan mountains, or in a park honoring animals in Meaford, Ontario."⁴⁵⁶

The intimate connection with the Ground Zero site, through pilgrimage before deployment to Guantánamo.⁴⁵⁷ Peter Gardella reads Ground Zero and its surrounds as "an unusually complex holy place."⁴⁵⁸ Steel beams and columns have become relics shipped to all 50 states, and abroad to at least 8 countries.

"They are the relics of the destruction and they have the same power in the same way as medieval relics that have the power of the saints,' said Harriet Senie, a professor of art history at the City University of New York and author of *Memorials to Shattered Myths: Vietnam to 9/11*."⁴⁵⁹

⁴⁵⁵ Edgar Sandoval and Larry McShane, "Last Three Artifacts from 9/11 World Trade Center Terror Attack Removed from JFK Airport Hangar," *New York Daily News*. July 19, 2016.

<http://www.nydailynews.com/new-york/artifacts-9-11-attacks-removed-jfk-airport-article-1.2717669>

⁴⁵⁶ "The Last Artifacts of 9/11 have been given away," *Fortune*. September 10, 2016. <http://fortune.com/2016/09/10/last-911-artifacts-given-away/>

⁴⁵⁷ Terry Holdbrooks, *Traitor?*

⁴⁵⁸ Peter Gardella, *American Civil Religion: What Americans Hold Sacred*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 356.

⁴⁵⁹ "The Last Artifacts of 9/11 have been given away," *Fortune*. September 10, 2016. <http://fortune.com/2016/09/10/last-911-artifacts-given-away/>

John Vigiano is a Marine veteran, a former National Guardsman, and a retired New York City Fire Department captain whose two sons died on September 11, 2001. John Vigiano was a firefighter and his younger brother Joseph was a police officer. Both of the men responded to the emergency scene at the World Trade Center.⁴⁶⁰ More than a decade after the attack, John contacted officials at Guantánamo. He would be traveling to Guantánamo to attend the Military Commission hearings with his grandson James and other family members, and he wanted to bring steel pieces of the Twin Towers for the MCSFCO and JTF forces at Guantánamo.⁴⁶¹



⁴⁶⁰ “Firefighter Father Recalls Losing sons on 9/11,” StoryCorps. *NPR*. <https://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=112676905>

⁴⁶¹ “World Trade Center Gift,” DoD Fire News, *YouTube*. April 4, 2016. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iNR-IP9FhLY>

Figure 5. Photo credit: Pfc. Lauren Ogburn Cleared for public use⁴⁶²

When Vigiano contacted officials at Guantánamo about the possibility of sending them a piece of the steel, he was taken aback by the response. Vigiano said he did not intend for this gesture to the JTF and the MCSFCO to turn into a formal event: “When we talked about this, it was just ‘can I send them a piece of steel...Well, you guys got into it big time.’”⁴⁶³

Some of the guard units who first served at Guantánamo were taken to the site of the World Trade Center before they flew to Guantánamo. Other units were shown videos that likewise linked the attacks of 9/11 directly to the men being held at Guantánamo. Albert Melise described this in an interview with Peter Collins.⁴⁶⁴ Albert Melise was a reservist living in Massachusetts when his unit was deployed to Guantánamo. He was sent to Fort Dix, New Jersey where there were “fake camps set up” so that the unit could train for procedures they would be expected to perform at Guantanamo, but were also taken to rooms to watch videos that he called “a brainwashing technique to get you hyped up when you get

⁴⁶² “Commemorative 9/11 Shadowbox,” Photo. Pfc. Lauren Ogburn. Joint Task Force Guantánamo.
<http://www.jtfgtmo.southcom.mil/News/Photos/igphoto/2001691183/>

⁴⁶³ Ian Withrow, “Story of Service: Burden of Steel, Legacy of Honor,” Feb. 25, 2016.
<https://www.dvidshub.net/news/190154/story-service-burden-steel-legacy-honor>

⁴⁶⁴ “Wisconsin 14” Sen. Fred Risser on the Class War Showdown in Madison; 2 Former Gitmo Guards Talk About Their Experiences and the Price They Pay for Them,” The Peter Collins Show (Podcast) Interview with Brandon Neely and Albert Melise. <http://www.peterbcollins.com/2011/02/28/wisconsin-14-sen-fred-risser-on-the-class-war-showdown-in-madison-2-former-gitmo-guard-talk-about-their-experiences-and-the-price-they-pay-for-them/>

there...so you would hate them” and loud music and images of planes flying into the Twin Towers segueing to images of Bin Laden’s face.⁴⁶⁵ These videos sound similar to the “Let the Bodies hit the Floor” music video compilation discussed in Chapter four.

Now relics of the Twin Towers would be ceremonially received and installed at Guantánamo. Like Helena bringing her son Constantine thorns from passion crown, nails of the crucifixion, and a piece of the cross to Rome in the Fourth Century, the pieces of the Twin Towers are invested with symbolic purchase, relics of the passion of empire. And the materiality of the steel and other relics, many placed so that they could be touched is powerful. The significance of the steel is not about the individuals whose lives were lost, but about the justification of ongoing war. The victims are nearly always connected to notions of sacrifice, freedom, and defense. They can never rest simply as victims, nor as individuals, and certainly not as immigrants and strangers.

Relics of the World Trade center have been distributed to all 50 states and to U.S. military bases around the world. This is in addition to the international memorials, many of which are located at military bases. Not all memorials feature the steel relics. The Bagram Airfield Memorial Mural at Bagram Air Force in Parvan is particularly striking, as it is painted on a 20 foot tall concrete ‘blast’ wall that “connects attack on Twin Towers to war in Afghanistan, in particular A-

⁴⁶⁵ Ibid, minute 32.

10 gun runs.”⁴⁶⁶ “We will never forget” is written in white script across the blue sky while “Superiority” is prominently stamped below the design of an air force fighter jet. The twin towers appear on the left hand side of the mural burning, but still standing.⁴⁶⁷

The more than 250 attendees at the 2016 9/11 memorial service at the Naval Station chapel at Guantánamo opened with the National anthem and closed by singing “God Bless America.”⁴⁶⁸ After the national anthem, there was an invocation and the laying of a wreath. Army Private First Class Lauren Ogburn writes “the room went silent as U.S. Coast Guard Chief Petty Officer Joe Ryan, a JTF GTMO Trooper and former New York City Police Department detective sergeant, shared his first-hand account of the 9/11 Twin Towers attack.”⁴⁶⁹ The senior chaplain, US Navy Cmdr. Macgregor McClellan weighed in to say that it is important to honor the lives of those who died, adding, “I think that it is

⁴⁶⁶ Memorial Mapping: Transnational 9/11 Monuments University of Notre Dame <http://www.memorialmapping.com/memorials/bagram-airfield-memorial-mural>

⁴⁶⁷ Richard Johnson, “F-16s, Apaches and Warthogs, oh My,” *The Washington Post*. September 28, 2014. https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/drawing-dc-together/wp/2014/09/28/f-16s-apaches-and-warthogs-oh-my/?utm_term=.3f075acbo0ec

⁴⁶⁸ Lauren Ogburn, “Guantánamo Remembers 9/11,” Joint Task Force Guantánamo, September 16, 2016. <http://www.jtfgtmo.southcom.mil/News/Articles/Article/1063526/guantanamo-remembers-911/>

⁴⁶⁹ Lauren Ogburn, “Guantánamo Remembers 9/11,” Joint Task Force Guantánamo, September 16, 2016. <http://www.jtfgtmo.southcom.mil/News/Articles/Article/1063526/guantanamo-remembers-911/>

appropriate that we do this because the JTF is here partly because of 9/11.”⁴⁷⁰ He continued, “by the grace of God we became the United States of America and by the grace of God we will protect our liberties as citizens or residents of the United States of America – protect them from those who want to destroy our ideology and erase our liberties.”⁴⁷¹ The story of the *nine/eleven* commemoration which ends on page 13 of the Guantánamo newsletter is followed directly by a message reprinted from the *Warrior’s Bible*, “How should a Warrior Pray?” Retired Colonel Scott McChrystal, (brother of Stanley McChrystal) former senior military chaplain at West Point, and his wife Judy run Warrior Spirit publications with journalist Scott Harrup. *The Warrior’s Bible*, published by Warrior Spirit publications, “is specifically designed to help the military community (warriors, family, and friends) understand and apply the timeless truths of God’s Word to daily life. From cover to cover, this Bible speaks in language that connects with military people about things that really matter.”⁴⁷²

In a 2008 commemoration for *nine/eleven*, Navy Command Master Chief LeVault said, “In Guantánamo every day is a 9/11 Memorial Day. We, like those

⁴⁷⁰ Lauren Ogburn, “Guantánamo Remembers 9/11,” Joint Task Force Guantánamo, September 16, 2016. <http://www.jtfgtmo.southcom.mil/News/Articles/Article/1063526/guantanamo-remembers-911/>

⁴⁷¹ Vaughn R. Larson, “Remembering the Day,” *The Wire* 30, no. 4 (2008): 11,13. <https://www.dvidshub.net/publication/issues/4202>

⁴⁷² “The Warriors Bible,” *Warrior Spirit Publications*. <https://warriorspiritpublications.com/products/the-warriors-bible>

in Iraq or Afghanistan, need no prompting on any day of the year to remember why our nation is at war and the importance of this date.”⁴⁷³

In the memoirs, testimonies interviews, and poems of former prisoners, there is a particular refrain that speaks to the idea they held of the United States. Often, it was not hatred or distrust, quite the opposite. Time and again, the narrative recounted is of hope, a belief that once in U.S. chain of custody, they would be treated humanely. And just as importantly, that there would be a reliable system of justice. In many cases, when describing the first meeting with U.S. authorities, there is a strong element of expectation that things would be sorted out. This was matched by the naiveté of the guards and other personnel who by and large accepted the characterization of the prisoners as fact. And understandably so; they were programmed to view the detainees as uniformly dangerous, even murderous. The U.S. government has developed a system of “Triaging Images” into categories to sort the photos of detainees abused in U.S. custody in Iraq and Afghanistan:

- Category A: Will require explanation; Egregious, iconic, dramatic.
- Category B: Likely to require explanation; injury or humiliation.
- Category C: May require explanation; injury without context.⁴⁷⁴

⁴⁷³ “Remembering the Day” *The Wire: A JTF Journal* 30, no. 4 (2008): 11, 13. <https://www.dvidshub.net/publication/issues/4202>

⁴⁷⁴ From 14F0252 DOC 01 Detainee Photos Final Response Doc-2 (page 3) obtained via FOIA requests, see: <https://news.vice.com/article/after-10-years-of-stalling-the-pentagon-just-released-200-photos-related-to-detainee-abuse> and <https://www.scribd.com/document/238677145/14F0252-DOC-01-Detainee-Photos-Final-Response-Doc-2>

Staging ground

Guantánamo as staging ground is symbolically powerful, mapping onto the early imperial adventures and cold war struggles.⁴⁷⁵ The base operates on land seized from Cuba. Both the Columbian Exposition and the site at Guantánamo served as projects that religious historian Jonathan P. Herzog reads as “sacralization.” By this term, he means “the reendowment of religion with perceived political, social, economic, or intellectual value on the societal level,” and he argues “this is often the product of deliberate action.”⁴⁷⁶ Herzog argues that there are historical expediencies and political agendas that give rise to such actions. The U.S. base at Guantánamo has always be a useful site for conjuring-it conjured infantilized Cubans after independence, HIV plagued Haitians in the 80s, but in the 21st century the project was more ambitious. Guantánamo would be the site to conjure, to co-constitute, ideal civic-religious bodies and their negative silhouettes for popular consumption.

Paul Christopher Johnson draws careful distinction between the organic and instrumental strands of civil religion in the mobilization of popular support for the war in Iraq. The kitsch responses identified by Marita Sturken in response to 9-11, i.e. World Trade Center teddy bears, bumper stickers that claimed

⁴⁷⁵ See Jonathan P. Herzog, *The Spiritual Industrial Complex: America’s Religious Battle against Communism*.

⁴⁷⁶ Jonathan P. Herzog, *The Spiritual Industrial Complex: America’s Religious Battle against Communism. Notes to Pages 11-20, 221*. See also, Rodney Stark and Roger Fink, *Acts of Faith: Explaining the Human Side of Religion* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000), 193-217.

perpetual remembrance, and flag memorabilia of every kind were expressions of the former, mourning expressed through organic civil religion. On the evening of 9/11 members of Congress gathered on the steps of the Capitol and sang. Bruce Lincoln draws attention to “the broader resurgence of popular piety, as marked by displacement of the national anthem with the strains of “God Bless America.”⁴⁷⁷ Cheryl Kaskowitz argues that the song “became a ritualized response to the tragedy that would reverberate for years.”⁴⁷⁸

Indeed, the song did take on a valence that connected it to nine/eleven for some. Montgomery Granger recalls that he kept his composure during an event marking the one-year anniversary in 2002. He had recently returned home from his deployment, and describes fighting off tears many times, but when “Celine Dion sang ‘God Bless America’ on the radio...I could no longer control myself. My chin shook and my lips quivered uncontrollably. Tears fell as I sobbed, trying not to.”⁴⁷⁹ Daniel Rodriguez retired NYPD officer sang “God Bless America” in a performance described as “heart-wrenching” at a ceremony to mark the removal of the last three pieces of salvaged steel from the hangar seventeen at JFK International Airport.⁴⁸⁰ The song was also used during interrogations as

⁴⁷⁷ Bruce Lincoln, *Holy Terrors: Thinking about Religion after September 11*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005), 29.

⁴⁷⁸ Cheryl Kaskowitz, *God Bless America: The Surprising History of an Iconic Song*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 100.

⁴⁷⁹ Montgomery Granger, *Saving Grace at Guantánamo Bay: A Memoir of a Citizen Warrior*, (Durham, CT: Strategic Book Publishing, 2010), 198.

recorded in the SECRET ORCON interrogation log, during a session where a birthday hat was placed on a prisoners head and a birthday cake placed in front of him, presumably to mock him, and then the interrogators sang *God Bless America*.⁴⁸¹ This was the tenth day the prisoner had been subjected to 20 hours per day interrogation. Each day, the prisoner was questioned by three separate shifts of interrogators.

In the *Spiritual-Industrial Complex: America's Religious Battle Against Communism*, we can read today's religious right's language as an echo. "Our nation was founded by a Christian people, based on Christian principles and if we desire to continue our freedom and way of life we must do all we can to halt the attacks of the enemy upon our nation and way of life" thundered Pastor James M. Beasley of the Arcadia Union Church in 1962 as he argued for the removal of the newly translated book, *The Last Temptation of Christ* from the local library in Arcadia, California. ⁴⁸² If the book remained, Chairman of the Arcadia Council of Protest Churches, H. Warren Anderson warned it "would indicate to many a gross failure of an organized community to regulate one of its public institutions...Patriotism could be vilified, religious [sic] ridiculed, pornography

⁴⁸⁰ Edgar Sandoval and Larry McShane, "Last Three Artifacts from 9/11 World Trade Center Terror Attack Removed from JFK Airport Hangar," *New York Daily News*. July 19, 2016.

<http://www.nydailynews.com/new-york/artifacts-9-11-attacks-removed-jfk-airport-article-1.2717669>

⁴⁸¹ SECRET ORCON Interrogation Log, Detainee 063

<http://content.time.com/time/2006/log/log.pdf>

⁴⁸² *The Spiritual Industrial Complex: America's Religious Battle Against Communism*. Loc 3956.

glorified and socialism or communism encouraged.”⁴⁸³ Moral order would be unraveled, and all hell would break loose.

Freud speaks to the connection between ceremonials, anxiety, and the sacred, “the special conscientiousness with which it” (the ceremony) “is carried out and the anxiety which follows upon its neglect stamp the ceremonial as a ‘sacred act’.”⁴⁸⁴ Murat Kurnaz observed this about U.S. soldiers: “The ones I encountered are terrified of pain. They’re terrified of every little scratch, bacteria, and illness. They’re like little girls, I’d say. If you examine Americans closely, you realize this—no matter how big or powerful they are. But in movies, they’re always the heroes.”⁴⁸⁵

American bravado, especially military bravado is part of the mythos of the United States reinforced throughout daily life, more so in military communities. Graham Greene’s *Ministry of Fear* invoked by Paul Virillo. Does this fit? On the creation of the dangerous enemy, and the management of fear. Those deployed to Guantánamo require the worst of the worst terrorist narrative for their own ego, sense of heroism, encounter with danger, and creation of purpose.

⁴⁸³ *The Spiritual Industrial Complex: America’s Religious Battle Against Communism*. Loc. 4008.

⁴⁸⁴ Sigmund Freud, “Obsessive Actions and Religious Practices,” *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, Volume IX (1906-1908), 118.

<https://naomijanowitz.faculty.ucdavis.edu/wp-content/uploads/sites/183/2016/01/FreudObsessiveActs.pdf>

⁴⁸⁵ Murat Kurnaz, *Five Years of My Life: An Innocent Man in Guantánamo*. (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2008), 92.

Not unimportant is the justification for what they are participating in at the prison.

“I asked General Kelly whether President Obama’s comments have affected the morale of the troops on the ground. ‘One of the great things about being in the U.S. military is you don’t have to worry about that kind of stuff. You just do what you are told,’ he explained. ‘My troops know they are doing a noble thing here, because our country sent us here to do this. Our country wouldn’t send us anywhere to do something that wasn’t noble, honorable and legal.’”⁴⁸⁶

Dramas of War, Being, and the Body

Numerous social dramas have been staged at Guantánamo, and ‘viewed’ by the world. Victor Turner explains social dramas as “a sequence of social interactions of a conflictive, competitive, or agonistic type.”⁴⁸⁷ A social drama is the sum of its ordered parts: breach, crisis, redress, and reintegration.⁴⁸⁸ Various kinds of torture that happened at Guantánamo caused breaches: music torture, waterboarding, and force-feeding of hunger strikers through the use of naso-gastric tubes. Social dramas begin with a transgression that causes a division. Publics are captivated, positions are taken, and there is significant emotional and

⁴⁸⁶ Luke Hansen, “Morality and Morale: The Experience of U.S. Soldiers Inside Guantánamo Bay,” *America: The Jesuit Review*, May 19, 2014. <http://www.americamagazine.org/issue/morality-and-morale>

⁴⁸⁷ Victor Turner, *The Anthropology of Performance*, (New York: PAJ Publications, 1988), 33.

⁴⁸⁸ Victor Turner, *Dramas, Fields, and Metaphors: Symbolic Action in Human Society*, (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1974), 37-41.

moral investment in choosing sides. At some point, work toward repair begins. If resolution is not possible the breach between hardened positions remains.⁴⁸⁹ Or there is resigned capitulation. The breach and the struggle may continue, but the power dynamic is askew, the positions asymmetrical. In the aftermath of the drama, attitudinal shifts occur. In the 2002 memo approving enhanced interrogation techniques, Donald Rumsfeld signed his name, and scrawled a qualifying note just below his signature, “However, I stand for 8-10 hours per day, why is [sic] stands limited to 4 hours?”⁴⁹⁰ The arrow to the note below his signature assuaged the conscience of conservatives when he mocked concerns about enhanced interrogation techniques, joking that at his age, he routinely was on his feet for long hours, and that he did not think it constituted torture. With this discursive move, he sought to flatten opposition to torture by denying its practice, effectively stating that there can be no opposition to that which is not happening.

Guantánamo exists in part as a site to restructure U.S. conscience through dramatic tellings. This is a critical part of the work that has been done, and continues to be done. The scripts are written by the U.S. military-intelligence community and reinforced through corporate media. There are challenges to the official versions of events, though the distribution channels that refute the narratives are not those most easily accessed. In fact, alternative sources tend to

⁴⁸⁹ See Elizabeth Bell, “Dramas and Cultural Performance: All the President’s Women,” *Liminalities: A Journal of Performance Theory* 2 (1) 2006.

⁴⁹⁰ <http://nsarchive.gwu.edu/torturingdemocracy/documents/20021127-1.pdf>

be for those who self-select. Fear continues to be used as a disciplinary tool. The possibility of another attack looms large in the psyche as a counterweight to arguments for humane treatment of those who stand charged and await trial and for the release of those prisoners who have never been charged.

A common, though not universal, refrain of those held at Guantánamo was their early confidence in the values espoused by the United States; they expected to be treated well, and were likewise confident that their cases would be sorted out expeditiously. This demonstrates the power of constructed ideals, and the lack of transparency about the brutality of carceral systems within the United States. The institutional framework insinuates a benign efficiency, masking the slow violence of long imprisonment, the day-to-day brutality of solitary confinement, geographic displacement, abuse by guards and other prisoners, and the great difficulties faced by prisoners upon release.

German soldiers captured on the battlefield during WWII may have been vilified, but they retained their status as fellow human beings. Those clearly uniformed bodies were held sorted out quickly into categories of the more and the less culpable. They were not considered too dangerous to be housed in the United States, they not categorized as the worst of the worst, and were even romanticized in young adult fiction still widely taught in American schools as in the case of Bette Greene's award winning "Summer of My German Soldier."⁴⁹¹ The Muslim body was/is portrayed and treated as more suspect, more dangerous than

⁴⁹¹ Bette Greene, *The Summer of My German Soldier*, (New York: Bantam, 1973).

the body of the German soldier, who the book's narrative explains is merely a foot-soldier who wants to return to Germany to be a healer, not a Nazi.

The Uighurs prisoners are all now dispersed, but the release of innocent prisoners does not end their ordeal. Once ordered released, the United States must find a country that will accept them. The Uighurs cannot return to China.⁴⁹² They fled an untenable situation, eight years ago, and it would not be safe for them to return. They are not welcome in the United States, though surely this would be the barest token offering of remorse. All have been cleared, and now they must be transported to an accepting state. Five of the Uighurs have been resettled in Albania, where there is a Sunni Muslim minority, but no Uighur community, save themselves. A 2009 New York Times article inexplicably described the resettling of several Uighurs in Bermuda, a British territory, as though the men had won the lottery, "four Uighur Muslim men basked in their new-found freedom here, grateful for the handshakes many residents had offered and marveling at the serene beauty of this tidy, postcard island."⁴⁹³ The years of unlawful imprisonment are glossed as a mere blip on the road to paradise. Some of the remaining thirteen men will be moved to another tidy postcard island, that of Palau, a tiny and isolated sovereign state in the Pacific. A few will head to Switzerland. These men were dropped into various disparate geographies with no consideration of their desire. They cannot return to their country of origin;

⁴⁹² Eric Eckholm. Out of Guantanamo, Uighurs Bask in Bermuda. *New York Times*. June 14, 2009. Pg. A-4. Retrieved from: <http://www.nytimes.com/2009/06/15/world/americas/15uighur.html>

⁴⁹³ Ibid.

they are marked for imprisonment and death. Many countries, including the United States, refused them entry. They are legitimate refugees, but their identity is forged with their status as former detainees of Guantánamo Bay and therefore as Muslims tarnished by peripheral violence. There are no apologies or reparations that can correct or morally right the abuses that occurred, and neither are forthcoming from the United States government or its military. “It is something the lawyer, Laurence Boisson de Chasourne warned us about: ‘Emergency does not produce laws because laws come from the normal political process.’ I think this statement is essential. The law of the fastest is the source of the law of the strongest. These days, laws are under a permanent state of emergency.”⁴⁹⁴

⁴⁹⁴ Paul Virillo, *The Administration of Fear*. (Los Angeles: Semiotext(e), 92.

CHAPTER 8

BAD DUDES AND IDEOLOGICAL PRODUCTION

From the early stages of research, I thought about the prison in light of the earlier shackling of Muslims in the Americas, examining the discourse that justifies racism and the use of the body, for economic and expiatory means. The idea was this: two occasions in the Americas have witnessed the shackling and transport of Muslims across the Atlantic, the first on a fleet of slave ships, and the second on a small specially fitted fleet of CIA owned civilian planes—as it turns out, one of the front companies that maintained the planes and supplied the pilots, Aero Contractors, operated in North Carolina, where I lived during the 2017/2018 academic year. In both cases, human beings were captured and sold by those with little interest in their humanity, but with a perverse interest in their flesh. In both cases, those captured may have been caught up in local fighting and politics. They were captured, sold, beaten, shackled, and herded or dragged onto transports that would carry them a world away from family, traditions, and communities. Moazzam Begg’s realization that the same company in his hometown in the UK that once sold slave collars, made the shackles he wore at Guantánamo.⁴⁹⁵ For most, this becomes a permanent separation. Those enslaved were part of an imperial economic enterprise; those imprisoned at Guantánamo were also caught up in an imperial enterprise—they became stand-ins for those

⁴⁹⁵ Audrey Gillan, UK Firm Picketed over Guantánamo ‘torture’ shackles,” *The Guardian*. Sept. 8. 2005.

<https://www.theguardian.com/uk/2005/sep/09/guantanamo.usa>

who attacked the United States on September 11, 2001, and part of the narrative structuring the symbolic order.⁴⁹⁶

Those brown Muslim bodies purchased “over there” in strange threatening territories, were labeled terrorists, the worst of the worst, and served several purposes, real or imagined. Their imprisonment made the United States safer, their torture implied power over their bodies and access to information, and the threat posed by these terrorists afforded the government unprecedented power. In a piece for *Racism Review*, Sharene Razack reminds, “torture is also about empire...Long ago, Michael Taussig pinpointed the racial divide that lies at the heart of the contest that is imagined as one of savagery over civility...Terror, he reminded us, is the mediator of colonial hegemony par excellence.”⁴⁹⁷ Razack presses this, arguing, “the identity claim that I am superior and I can imprint my power on your body is the line that connects terror to torture.”⁴⁹⁸

Guantánamo, the prison camp, exists to produce a mythology. The co-constituting of two kinds of bodies and subjectivities: that of the clean-shaven, white, patriotic military Christian defending American values at all cost against the dark, hairy, wild-eyed Muslim terrorist that seeks to annihilate all that is ‘holy.’ The narrative creates and recreates a stark binary between the civilized and

⁴⁹⁶ Though the CIA would bring Khalid Sheikh Muhammad to Guantánamo in 2006 with a few other CIA detainees

⁴⁹⁷ Sherene Razack, “Racism, Empire and Torture, Part I” *Racism Review* (Professor Joe Feagin’s moderated blog) retrieved from <http://www.racismreview.com/blog/2009/05/22/racism-and-torture/#more-2187> last accessed 14 May 2010.

⁴⁹⁸ Ibid.

the depraved, the defenders of a wounded nation, and the animalistic meta-predators who would wound again, given the opportunity. “Today, our fellow citizens, our way of life, our very freedom came under attack in a series of deliberate and deadly terrorist acts,” George Bush told Americans after nine/eleven.⁴⁹⁹ He explained, “America was targeted for attack because we're the brightest beacon for freedom and opportunity in the world. And no one will keep that light from shining.”⁵⁰⁰

While the site of the World Trade Center is now a memorial and museum, the narrative claims made there are about victims and heroes. The great wound, the trauma that produces anxiety and must be stroked, is distributed throughout the country and the world in the form of relics from the metal debris recovered from the Twin Towers. Guantánamo provides the ongoing retributive site, that also stabilizes a narrative that supports the U.S. Global War on Terror. The name has become synonymous with invoking the social death of anyone who offends political, religious, or ideological sensibilities. Lock her up! Lock him up! Lock them up! Guantánamo is a site linked to disappearance of rights and bodies indefinitely. Guantanamo also provided a segue for the policy shift to drone strikes. The prison established the possibility for permanent social death of individuals, and opened the fissures to allow extra-judicial killings through

⁴⁹⁹ George W. Bush, “Address to the Nation on 9/11,” (Speech transcript) *American Rhetoric*, September 11, 2001. <http://www.americanrhetoric.com/speeches/gwbush911addresstothetation.htm>

⁵⁰⁰ Ibid.

executive order. The slippage is visible in the powers distributed throughout the security state with the establishment of the Department of Homeland Security, the cabinet department that oversees TSA, ICE, and many other agencies formed post nine/eleven.

Each step has involved thinking through the discourse of the nation state, the fragility of those without definitive belonging, and the ambiguousness of the categories and laws created by the state to pursue matters of self-interest. I thought about the 779 prisoners (collectively and in many cases individually) recorded to have been officially held at Guantánamo: they were brown or black skinned (with the sole exception of David Hicks), male, Muslim, plucked from a particular geography, unprotected by connection to family, community, nation-state, religion, or international law. Held at the mercy of a country that prides itself as a bastion of human rights. In one sense, these boys and men were world citizens, literally caught up in the fallout of an event that generated global aftershocks, yet in another sense; they were not citizens in any meaningful way, not at all. Each story I read is unique, but there is a power in the collective narrative that tells the story of the new international, the global citizen at his most precarious, in possession of documents that number him, date him, track him and speak to his identity, connect him to some sovereign state and legal status, and then fail him utterly and miserably. The prisoners have disparate origins hailing from China, Sudan, Pakistan, Afghanistan, Turkey, Germany, Canada, Yemen, Saudi Arabia, the United Kingdom, Uzbekistan, Tunisia, Tajikistan, Syria, Somalia, Russia, Libya, Iraq, Kazakhstan, Algeria, Bahrain,

Bangladesh, Bosnia, Egypt, Jordan, Australia, and Iran, but their status as citizens did not afford them protections. We form communities and make agreements at the local, state, national and international level, because it behooves us to do so, because we share space and seek the comfort and security of law and order, but when self-interest takes an individual or nation-state outside the bounds of these agreements, especially when this nation, the United States, shatters its own mythology so decisively, the entire world becomes less safe and less humane.

Guantánamo 2.0

A spring 2017 headline from the Southern Poverty Law Center, warns “Hate Groups Increase for Second Consecutive Year as Trump Electrifies the Radical Right.”⁵⁰¹ I conceptualized this chapter in the wake of the November 2016 presidential election. Many of us who work on Guantánamo, or related issues of the Global War on Terror, militarism, torture, and carcerality were closely tracking the campaign discourse surrounding the prison. After eight years of the Obama administration, a new president would bring shifts, or at the very least, a review of standing policies. During his first campaign, Obama had pledged to close the prison, and as one of his first official acts in office issued an Executive Order in January 2009 directing the CIA to shut the prison within one year. At

⁵⁰¹ “Hate Groups Increase for Second Consecutive Year as Trump Electrifies the Radical Right,” *Southern Poverty Law Center*, February 15, 2017. <https://www.splcenter.org/news/2017/02/15/hate-groups-increase-second-consecutive-year-trump-electrifies-radical-right>

the end of his second term eight years later, 41 prisoners remained, 15 cleared for release. None have been released since Trump took office more than a year ago.

Much of the 21st century has felt anachronistic. Time feels out of joint. How can this-or that-be happening in the 21st century? But this would be to rarify a sentiment that was penned circa 1600 about a Danish kingdom, uttered by its prince. “The time is out of joint,” Derrida invokes Hamlet, to haunt us with Marx.⁵⁰² Or to remind us that we-and our times-are haunted by Marx, and to posit the reasons we should be. Derrida insisted on pushing language to its breaking point to demonstrate the inadequacies, but did he see the escalation toward the shattering of representation into fakery and mockery of any semblance of truth at all?

We and our times are dislocated. Maybe it is ever so. Ever it is so, maybe. Language takes us out of joint. It can dis/locate the places and events of our political time. It distances us from what is signified. We are firmly part of Galeano’s *Upside Down World*, as the shock doctrine Naomi Klein identified is increasingly applied in the Northern Hemisphere. The chickens come home to roost, said Ali. We are in the *Looking Glass World* of Lewis Carroll, and the rippled simultaneity of *Fringe*. More, we are trapped in Calderon’s *La Vida es Sueno*-Life is a Dream. Life is but a dream, sweetheart, sh-boom, sh-boom. Representations of absurdity bubble up through the dis-joint, seep through the cracks, and pour through the breakage of stabilizing illusions about truth and representation. *Black Mirror* shows us the negating abyss doubling our endless

⁵⁰² Jacques Derrida, *Specters of Marx*.

non-reflection taking us into the realm of “techno paranoia,” which is nothing if not truth telling.⁵⁰³

The prisoners at Guantánamo are doing time. Have done time. Although unlike most prisoners, that time is not defined. They are just doing it. In the joint. On the rock. In the big house. The castle. The farm. These are words that distance. GTMO. Gitmo. What does Guantánamo mean in this disjointed time? And how might it be used going forward? And how do we locate ourselves within the future signaled? We can ask, what is being said? What signs are being deployed? What framework are the signs operating within? Who is the receptive audience? What narratives are being told and to what end?

In *Language and Symbolic Power*, in a chapter on authorized language, which is infinitely mirrored by authorizing language, Pierre Bourdieu cautions that it is only in “abstract and artificial” circumstances “that symbolic exchanges are reduced to relations of pure communication and that the message exhausts the content of the communication.”⁵⁰⁴ Language signals. And language of the powerful has the capacity to distribute and direct power in particular kinds of ways, ah, yes, but also to appropriate, accumulate, and seize power.

As a candidate, Trump was vocal on Guantánamo and on the practice of torture, but there was always implicit foreshadowing about authoritarianism more broadly: At a rally in Sparks, Nevada, in February of 2016, Trump declared, “This morning, I watched President Obama talking about Gitmo, right,

⁵⁰³ Again with the language of darkness.

⁵⁰⁴ Pierre Bourdieu, *Language and Symbolic Power*, 107.

Guantanamo Bay, which by the way, which by the way, we are keeping open. Which we are keeping open ... and we're gonna load it up with some bad dudes, believe me, we're gonna load it up."⁵⁰⁵

The term 'bad dudes' preceded and tracked with Trump's comments during the third presidential debate about 'bad hombres,' the language he used to talk about undocumented Mexicans and other Central Americans in the United States. He made his views on torture plain. In February of 2016, during a rally in South Carolina, Trump said, "Don't tell me it doesn't work—torture works. Okay folks? Believe me, it works, okay?"⁵⁰⁶ That same month, when asked if he would approve torture, he responded, "I would absolutely authorize something beyond waterboarding."⁵⁰⁷ Later, in June of 2016, during a radio interview, Trump stated that, "To stay safe, we are going to have to do things that are unthinkable, almost."⁵⁰⁸ Almost. So we are going to do things that we are almost incapable of

⁵⁰⁵ David Welna, "Trump has vowed to fill Guantánamo with 'some bad dudes'—but who? All Things Considered, November 14, 2016. <http://www.npr.org/sections/parallels/2016/11/14/502007304/trump-has-vowed-to-fill-guantanamo-with-some-bad-dudes-but-who>

⁵⁰⁶ Jenna Johnson, "Donald Trump on Waterboarding: 'Torture Works,'" *The Washington Post*, February 17, 2016. https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/post-politics/wp/2016/02/17/donald-trump-on-waterboarding-torture-works/?utm_term=.bbd90e5292ca

⁵⁰⁷ Jenna Johnson, "Donald Trump on Waterboarding: 'Torture Works,'" *The Washington Post*, February 17, 2016. https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/post-politics/wp/2016/02/17/donald-trump-on-waterboarding-torture-works/?utm_term=.bbd90e5292ca

⁵⁰⁸ Kim Bellware, "Mike Pence Refuses to Rule out Torture in a Trump Administration," *The Huffington Post*, November 20, 2016. https://www.huffingtonpost.com/entry/mike-pence-waterboarding_us_5831e4c4e4b030997bbffaid

imagining, but with a little effort, we can put our imaginative powers to work and find our way to new levels of depravity. And we will be compelled to do these things. We will have to do these things. This language was authorized by the Republican Party, and with Trump's election became the authorizing language of a U.S. President. And his base liked this signaling about how he would authorize torture and fill up Guantánamo. Pew indicates that some 48% of Americans are okay with torture under certain conditions, presumably the '24' framework in which information critical to public safety must be extracted within 24 hours.⁵⁰⁹ The narrative which often accompanies torture is that of immediacy and efficacy, however disingenuous the frame. Gina Haspel, appointed as Deputy Director of the CIA in February of 2017 under Mike Pompeo, was nominated to replace him as director in March of 2018. There were allegations that Haspel directed and participated in the torture of Guantánamo prisoners, running a notorious site, code named "Cat's Eye" in Thailand. Under her direction (or most certainly the CIA's direction) Abu Zubaydah was tortured until near death, and subsequently lost his eye.⁵¹⁰ Declassified CIA cables record that Zubaydah was waterboarded more than 83 times. Haspel ordered the destruction the video evidence of the interrogations. When Pompeo announced Haspel's appointment as Deputy Director, he noted her "uncanny ability to get things done," language which

⁵⁰⁹ Alec Tyson, "Americans Divided in Views of Use of Torture in U.S. Anti-Terror Efforts," *Pew Research Center*, January 26, 2017. <http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2017/01/26/americans-divided-in-views-of-use-of-torture-in-u-s-anti-terror-efforts/>

⁵¹⁰ Pro Publica has retracted the claim that Haspel was there, though not that she ordered the tapes destroyed-keep following.

echoed the descriptions of Richard Zuley and his ability to *get* information and confessions in Chicago and in Guantanamo.⁵¹¹ After the 6,700 page Senate Intelligence report on the Study of the CIA's use of torture, which was only released as a redacted 600 page abstract, this seemed surreal.⁵¹² The joint at the door was unhinged further with those statements and what is promised.

Deleuze returns to this notion of disjointed time with relation to movement, change and conditioning:

As long as time remains on its hinges, it is subordinate to movement: it is the measure of movement, interval or number. This was the view of ancient philosophy. But time out of joint signifies the reversal of the movement-time relationship. It is now movement which is subordinate to time. [. . .] Time is no longer related to the movement which it measures, but movement is related to the time which conditions it.⁵¹³

How are we being conditioned by our times? We have moved toward more favorable view on torture. And by what mechanisms? How did that happen? When we speak of an administration, of course, there is a networked distribution of power. Some of these channels are religious, Evangelical leaders like David Barton of Wallbuilders, Franklin Graham Samaritan's Purse, Tony Perkins,

⁵¹¹ "Gina Haspel Selected to be Deputy Director of CIA," Central Intelligence Agency, February 2, 2017. <https://www.cia.gov/news-information/press-releases-statements/2017-press-releases-statements/gina-haspel-selected-to-be-deputy-director-of-cia.html>

⁵¹² Mark Mazzetti, Matthew Rosenberg, and Charlie Savage, "Trump Administration Returns Copies of Report on C.I.A. Torture to Congress," *New York Times*, June 2, 2017. <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/06/02/us/politics/cia-torture-report-trump.html>

⁵¹³ Deleuze, *Kant's Critical Philosophy*, vii, 1963.

president of the Family Research Network, and Ralph Drollinger of Capitol Ministries who runs bible studies at state capitols, and in DC. From Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, “general recipe for the exercise of power over men: the ‘mind’ as a surface of inscription for power, with semiology as its tool; the submission of bodies through the control of ideas; the analysis of representations as a principle in a politics of bodies that was much more effective than the ritual anatomy of torture and execution.”⁵¹⁴ The bodies of captives have been tortured after 9/11, but the emphasis was not the torture, but the absolute control of the United States over their bodies, and the dissemination of the symbolic order. Foucault is clear that the “overall political issue around the prison” rests “in the steep use of these mechanisms of normalization and the wide-ranging powers which, through the proliferation of new disciplines, they bring with them.”⁵¹⁵ In the case of Guantánamo though, the prison was not about the particular bodies, nor simply about dominating those bodies. It was about the symbolic domination and the powerful narratives that were established through the fixed afterimages.

One thing that was apparent that at least for his base, Trump and his administration are skilled at messaging for them with an Insider/Outsider figuration, signaling back to Bush you are either with us or you are against us, and at not just tilting narrative frames, but inverting frames altogether.

In one sense, Guantánamo produces what Kelly Baker might term an artifact, stable signifiers of American power. The orange uniform has traveled in

⁵¹⁴ Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, 102-103.

⁵¹⁵ Foucault, 306.

the mind's eye through iconic photographs, and the word itself has devoured and consumed all other meanings. It is also an atomized and disseminated sign (presence?) across time and geography. There are two works that speak of the effect produced by Guantánamo and Abu Ghraib, in this sense the after-image suggested by Alan Feldman and of course by the Walter Benjamin's mechanical production and his flaneur taken up by Susan Buck Morss, but with digital speed.

What does it mean to the Trump Administration? How is the specter used? As threat, as promise? As a rejection of human rights' discourse and practice as soft? As a marker of retribution for transgressions against the interests, economic system, and nominal values of the United States? It also functions as a representative geography south of the border, mapping Muslims onto Mexicans, Mexicans collapsing onto Puerto Ricans, broad brushed as dangerous, connects and lends cover/reference to immigration, DACA, wall, Muslim ban, brown and black bodies as less than, and politically disobedient bodies as 'sons of bitches,' and domestic terrorists.

President Trump tweeted: "122 vicious prisoners, released by the Obama Administration from Gitmo, have returned to the battlefield. Just another terrible decision!"⁵¹⁶ This wasn't true, but didn't/doesn't matter. Recidivism is a suspect term when people have not been charged, tried and found guilty in the first place, but have been kidnapped, imprisoned, and tortured. Have they returned to battle,

⁵¹⁶ Twitter, March 7, 2017 (4:04 AM) USA Today, <https://www.usatoday.com/story/news/politics/2017/03/07/donald-trump-house-health-care-bill-guantanamo-bay/98841752/>

or joined a battle. And if they were foot soldiers, cooks, or drivers, and have returned as foot soldiers, is that criminal? Is it surprising?

Who is the audience?

What generates receptivity? Anxiety about modernity, loss of control, inability understand complexity, fear of accelerating present and future, pending disenfranchisement due to demographic changes, fear of change, fear of the soft. Zygmunt Bauman's ideas about the liquidity or fluidity of modernity set against solid forms offers us a paired set of metaphors, that capture much of the tension of the rift. Many of Trump administration voters, and certainly the administration itself are drawn to solid forms, hardness, hyper-masculinity, patriarchal forms, the blue pill must be protected, the male organ hardened, and the womb guarded, against a present in which gender is not a stable category, traditional marriage, there is a desperation to maintain solids, Confederate statues, bedrocks of family values, rituals of civil religion, the obedience of brown and black bodies, the control over female bodies, are tied up with solidifying.

Water and Fire, Flood and Ash

In the slim volume *Poems from Guantánamo: the Detainees Speak*, water is referenced thirty times, variously as sea, tears, weeping, whirlpools, floods, rain, river, waves, well, spring, and stream. There are two 'cup poems' and a

poem that mentions ‘sorrow’s cup,’ which is filled with tears.⁵¹⁷ “Cup Poem 1” and “Cup Poem 2” were composed by Muslim Dost. Dost used his nail to press the words into the small Styrofoam cups that were brought daily as a part of a meal. The cups were removed each day with Dost’s poems pressed into the side. Water is also present through mentions of its absence: dryness, a spring that has no flowers,⁵¹⁸ dust, departing clouds, the emptying of a well of sadness, the island that is defined by the surrounding water, burning fires, thirst, and beaches.

The sea is also indicted for imprisoning them on the island, “you have colluded with our enemies and cruelly guard us.”⁵¹⁹ The prisoners are held in cells, in containers, behind the wire, on an island bound by the sea. There are layers of containment, but the expanse of the sea is the cruel in its dichotomous suggestion of freedom and impasse.

Awareness of the sea is a feature of the prisoner’s writings and testimonies. The water is also a source of danger, for the prisoners in particular, as the hurricanes in the Caribbean have increased in severity and frequency. In 2016, there were airlifts of dependents and animals, and the staff was hunkered down in secure locations, but the prisoners were left to shelter in place.

When Mohamedou Slahi reflects on the hatred he felt directed toward the prisoners in Bagram, from certain guards, he asserts that he “wasn’t ready to be

⁵¹⁷ Moazzam Begg, “Homeward Bound,” in *Poems from Guantánamo: The Detainees Speak*. pg. 30

⁵¹⁸ Dost, “Cup Poem 1” in *Poems from Guantánamo: The Detainees Speak*.

⁵¹⁹ Abdullah Thani Faris al Anazi, “Ode to the Sea” in *Poems from Guantánamo: The Detainees Speak*. (65).

that drain.” He understood that swallowing the hatred, consuming it, would mean that it would run through him, and perhaps be deposited in him. He did not want to carry the hatred directed toward him and other prisoners. Part of his strategy to avoid becoming an appealing channel for the hatred was to pretend that he did not understand English. In this way he could pretend to ignore messages like “we want you to die slowly,” and prevent the guard from experiencing the pleasure of terrorizing him.⁵²⁰

The messaging is solid, hard, tough, strong, clear, loud, delineated, bound, and posited against the weak, soft, feminine, whisper, fuzzy, unstable. Some of the ways this manifests in discourse are through:

Semiotic signifiers: Code signaling- dog whistling

- SJW social justice warrior as a slur
- Snowflakes (melt into the liquidity) (effeminate, fragile, protected)
- Ingrate (code for uppity)
- Safe Spaces (particularly directed toward academia) anti-intellectual discourse (Set against dangerous spaces like those that police and military occupy- hyper-masculinized)

Athletes taking a knee are also set against those who have been in dangerous spaces- as if some of those kneeling or being killed by the police have not been veterans.

⁵²⁰ Mohamedou Slahi, 17.

Virtue signaling is a term that has also be appropriated. To virtue signal is express in some way your emotional or ethical or moral stance is weak when it comes to human rights. Virtue Signaling is framed as a passive weak response in an either/or of reaction and action, as if one cannot signal a human response of horror, compassion, condemnation, and also act, give funds, render aid, run for office, work, go to school, and be upset when a bomb is dropped on a civilian population, etc.

- Taking a knee
- tweeting,
- marching,
- vigils,
- tea-light candles (soft, feminine) against tiki-torches (hard, masculine)

“I am sad about the devastating hurricane in Puerto Rico,” one might signal with a sad face in response to a Facebook post. “You worthless snowflake-get a job.” “Good for you, the people of Puerto Rico will drink your tears.” These responses cynically charge that one cannot be sad on behalf of the people, and act on their behalf. Or that expressions of sympathy should be derided as weak or meaningless. A virtue signal may also indicate repugnance or anger, “I cannot believe that there has been another mass shooting. When are we going to do something about gun control?”

A dog whistle then, is what, a message that can only be heard by those with an ear attuned to the meaning, or one that has been trained to recognize and identify the message of the whistle.

Pro-fascist:

- Suspect--Burden of proof to demonstrate otherwise when it comes to Mexicans. "Some, I assume, are good people."⁵²¹
- But there are some very fine people among the White Supremacists.
- Military, Police, Sheriffs, automatically good, even when evidence (and courts) prove otherwise (the pardoning of Sheriff Joe, lauding and appointment of Sheriff Clark).

The divisive language of the Trump Era is a performative rhetorical tactic. Trump uses a specific insider/outsider figuration to appeal to his bloc. We are witnessing a tightening circle of authoritarianism, and Muslims as a racialized religious group are one central focus. Trump and his administration exploit what Bourdieu calls "the psychosomatic euphoria caused by the unanimity of adherence and aversion, or on the contrary of the anguish caused by exclusion and excommunication turning the party spirit into a real esprit de corps."⁵²²

When Trump called the players taking a knee on the field, it was polarizing, immediately imposed an insider outsider that reframed a stand about police killings into a marker of patriotism. Trump remarked at a private dinner, "It's really caught on...and I said what millions of Americans were thinking." ⁵²³

⁵²¹ Katie Reilly, "Here are all the times Trump insulted Mexico," *Time*, August 31, 2016. <http://time.com/4473972/donald-trump-mexico-meeting-insult/>

⁵²² Pierre Bourdieu, *Language and Symbolic Power*, Cambridge Harvard UP, 1991.

⁵²³ Jim Acosta and Daniel Diaz, "Trump at Private Dinner on NFL Feud," *CNN*, September 26, 2017.

Using football games as a distributive mechanism for signaling guaranteed coverage. Trump actually demands an embodiment of obedience, telling bodies how to act and perform. He uses those within the network of NFL owners who support him to distribute power over players. It's not about football, and it's not about the flag, but it is for sure about authority, and it is not unconnected to new categories of domestic terrorism, and in that sense not unconnected to Guantánamo.

Sending Mike Pence to the recent game to enact instigate a social drama. This signaling operates as a distributive mechanism of power. So whether someone is standing for the anthem because it would not occur to them to do otherwise, it is a rote performative act, or whether it is deeply meaningful, or whether they are indeed thinking of Trump when standing, he is now connected to the act of standing, to the rules about standing, and of course, and perhaps even more powerfully to the opposite.

When Kapernick took a knee, he was sometimes posited against the kneeling of Tim Tebow after a touchdown. One was good, and the other was bad. More recently, a photograph of Kapernick's taking a knee was juxtaposed with a photograph of Pat Tillman. The president re-tweeted the meme. And though those with knowledge of Tillman's death at the hands of fellow marines, and his positions on the war and free speech offered critiques—it didn't matter.

Franklin Graham, in July of 2015, called for Muslims to be barred from entering the U.S., and to be treated like the Japanese and Germans during WWII,

<https://www.cnn.com/2017/09/26/politics/trump-nfl-comments-mccain-sessions-private-dinner/index.html>

more recently signaled his strong approval of Jerry Jones threat to his players, stating “Well it took long enough, but Jerry Jones finally got it. He told the Dallas Cowboys players yesterday that if they didn’t stand for the anthem and the flag, they could sit for the game. Way to go Jerry! I hope all of the NFL owners will do the same. I guess Vice President Mike Pence walking out of the Colts/49ers game sent a strong message.”⁵²⁴

Graham, who was an advisor to George Bush, has drifted increasingly further right. In the aftermath of the Eric Garner killing, Graham posted, “Listen up, Blacks, Whites, Latinos, and everybody else. Most police shootings can be avoided. It comes down to respect for authority and obedience. Mr. President, this is the message our nation needs to hear, and they need to hear it from you. The Bible says to submit to your leaders and those in authority “because they keep watch over you as those who must give an account.””⁵²⁵ That was directed of course to Barack Obama. Graham is delighted hearing that message deployed by Donald Trump.

Southern Baptist Pastor Robert Jeffress (First Baptist Dallas) a chief Trump liason with the Evangelical community, has said that “these players ought to be thanking god that they live in a country where they’re not only free to earn millions of dollars every year, but they’re also free from the worry of being shot in

⁵²⁴

https://www.facebook.com/FranklinGraham/?hc_ref=ARS45S3HjJzO8BHPheNehYo5ehIx-shRIaHZibDfXoRss5Z9TfR5fXAQRxLzAho_uFw Oct. 9th, 2:34 PM

⁵²⁵ <https://www.facebook.com/FranklinGraham/posts/883361438386705>

the head for taking a knee like they would be if they were in North Korea.”⁵²⁶ Fox and Friends

Tony Perkins is President of the Family Research Council, an organization that has been categorized as a hate group by the Southern Poverty Law Center for the groups anti-LGBTQ literature. On his radio show, *Washington Watch*, Perkins supported and defended Ben Carson’s view that Islam is not protected under, nor compatible with, the Constitution, and that it Islam is more of a comprehensive system than a religion.

A few things have happened:

1. Funds allotted for improvements to the base- could signal readiness to bring new prisoners.
2. Razing of a site of previous torture. This may be to remove all traces of physical evidence. Could signal off site/off shore torture.
3. Current U.S. citizen turned himself in in Iraq, has been held for over a month without his name being released. No access to counsel, no transparency. He has been visited by the Red Cross. ACLU is interested in filing a habeaus corpus petition, but it is unclear whether the courts will accept it without assent from a family member. This has echoes of the Jose Padilla case. The U.S. has been holding a U.S. citizen as an enemy combatant for more than a month now, without naming him, incommunicado, without charge or representation, since

⁵²⁶ Julieta Chiquilla, “Dallas Pastor Robert Jeffress says kneeling NFL players would be shot in the head in North Korea,” *Dallas News*, September 25, 2017. <https://www.dallasnews.com/life/faith/2017/09/25/dallas-pastor-robert-jeffress-says-kneeling-nfl-players-thank-god-shot-head>

September 12, 2018. The ACLU filed a habeus corpus petition since no relatives have come forward to do so on his behalf.⁵²⁷

4. According to a leaked FBI report, “Black Identity Extremist” is listed as a new category of violent threat by the Domestic Terrorism Unit, this is very troubling.⁵²⁸ Does anyone doubt that this targets young Black Lives Matter activists. Could U.S. activists, especially those of color, end up in Guantánamo? (At whose directive?)

Lest you think this too far-fetched, look to the case of the young black activist who was severely assaulted by group of White Supremacists in Charlottesville and who was brought up on charges (thankfully dismissed). Even though there is video of him being assaulted, as well as video of the person who claims he assaulted him, being assaulted by others.

5. The policy toward intervening with hunger striking prisoners, and force feeding via naso-gastric tubes has shifted. The prisoners have noticed and reported a shift, which their lawyers affirm. The prison officials have denied a shift in policy. *New York Times* and Andy Worthington and *Reprieve* have reported on this.

This dissertation is the first iteration of what I hope will be a multi-phase project. In future work, I hope to secure funding to expand this project. In terms

⁵²⁷ Eric Schmitt and Charlie Savage, “American held as ISIS Suspect,” *New York Times*, October 6, 2017.

<https://www.nytimes.com/2017/10/06/world/middleeast/american-isis-suspect-indefinite-detention.html>

⁵²⁸ Sam Levin, “FBI Terrorism Unit says ‘black identity extremists’ pose a violent threat.” *The Guardian*, Oct. 7, 2017.

of the available literature, this will be the first manuscript to consider the role religious practice, identity, and belief played in the relationship between prisoners, and between prisoners and guards. I submit a call for fresh inquiry into the now unexceptional sites of impossibility in the 21st century and our complacent knowledge of their continued existence. Agamben critiques the use of sovereign power noting “at the very moment when it would give lessons in democracy to different traditions and cultures, the political culture of the West does not realize that it has entirely lost its canon,” pointing at the blurring of the separation of executive, legislative and judicial powers, as the executive branch issued emergency decrees, and pressed for extralegal permissions and opinions.⁵²⁹ In addition to Agamben’s ideas of the sovereign and the bare life of the subject, I want to further explore the exploitation of the bare body as a reproducible commodity. I am also interested in pursuing Julie Kristeva’s notions of the subject in motion and in crisis.⁵³⁰ The work offers an emergent and reflective non-narrative that puts witnesses in conversation beyond the interstices and margins of the main, and asks us to listen. When a 525-page document from the Senate Intelligence Committee on Torture serves merely as an abstract for the 6,000 page report, a report that for all its pages is strictly limited in scope, works that speak back to our violent assemblages needs to be heard and soon. I feel the weight of- and a responsibility toward-those who know I am working on this topic, and those who do not, but hope someone out there is.

⁵²⁹ Giorgio Agamben, *State of Exception*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005),18.

⁵³⁰ Julie Kristeva, *Strangers to Ourselves*, (New York: Columbia, 1991), 193.

Of life in a spare cell, Shahla Talebi, writes “You let your imagination fly as far and as high as it can go: your imagination is what you possess and cannot easily be imprisoned; it is your territory of freedom.”⁵³¹ One might apply this to the vault of transgenerational trauma, to point toward mourning and even the possibility of forgiveness, which does not require forgetting. Matustik asks that we grapple with this offering from Derrida: “There is only forgiveness, if there is such a thing, of the un-forgivable.” Yes, I nod my head. He then pulls out the rug, “Yet there is the unforgivable, and even devils know as much.”⁵³² The resounding thunk causes fresh examination. Im/possible, in/deed.

⁵³¹ Shahla Talebi, *Ghosts of Revolution: Rekindled Memories of Imprisonment in Iran*. (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2011), 195.

⁵³² Martin Matustik. *Radical Evil and the Scarcity of Hope*. (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2008), 180.

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