(RE)IMAG(IN)ING EVIL:
ETHICS IN THE FACE OF THE SUFFERING OTHER

by

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Abstract

This thesis examines representations of evil through the rhetorical figure of the face and its dissemination through mainstream and alternative media. I am interested in the extent to which representations of alterity contribute to, and make possible, a sustained War on/of Terror. Furthermore, I am interested in how these figures of alterity are apprehended in their suffering. As Judith Butler points out, the ability to suffer is what marks one as human. She asks "[w]hat is real?...If violence is done against those who are unreal, then, from the perspective of violence, it fails to injure or negate those lives since those lives are already negated" (*Precarious Life* 33). My project questions who is left out of dominant constructions of what constitutes the human, and examines how the encounter with a suffering body reconstitutes the "evil other" as human. Specifically, I will focus on the images of torture inflicted on prisoners at Abu Ghraib and the online execution video of Saddam Hussein. While the desire to protect and maintain the life of the innocent other is becoming an increasingly allocated social norm, I am interested in what such applications of responsibility or responsiveness might mean for those who are not allocated similar forms of protection. In other words, how do we present the relationship between culpability and precariousness and what might be the implications of re-inscribing figures such as Saddam Hussein with fragility? This thesis questions what is permitted to be seen as a suffering body in the context of the War on Terror and how dominant frameworks of representation foreclose the recognition of suffering in particular bodies.

Table of Contents

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Dedication

To all the nameless and faceless

victims of the War on Terror whose suffering

continues to go unrecognized.

1   Introduction

The other comes first, asking for an answer. But the one who arrives has already been preceded by something else, some thing unavailable and indecipherable, which provokes the question. In this scene, the questions at the front ask us about the things that matter today, and tonight...about the aporias of interpellation and crossing, the name and the password, knowledge and power, the shifting time and space of the political, the life of the king and the democratic intervention, the imminence of the ghost and the surprising arrival of the other. But they happen, for us, at night – and they expose the politics and ethics of our responsibilities as, first and last, a matter of risk.
Thomas Keenan, Fables of Responsibility

What would it mean, in the face of violence, to refuse to return it?
Judith Butler, Giving an Account of Oneself

In November 2004, NBC journalist Kevin Sites was embedded with the American

Third Battalion First Marine Regiment in Fallujah, Iraq. The mission was to take control

of Fallujah back from the insurgents who had been running the city for the previous eight

months. Following the marines into a mosque that had been the site of a gun battle the

day before, Sites recalls watching the soldiers survey the casualties on the floor. One

man, a member of the Iraqi police, is injured but still breathing. Through his camera lens,

Sites captures the unit's lance corporal accusing the man of "faking" dead. The Marine

raises his M-16 and fires a round into the injured mans head. Sites describes: "His skull

and brains splatter against the dirty white wall he was lying against [and] after firing the

shot, the Marine…turns on his heels and walks away".[1] Sites and NBC choose to censor

the video and only air until just before the rifle is fired. As Sites reflects, "[w]e didn't

trust the American public enough to let them see the video in its entire context. Instead

[the censored version] added to their confusion…[by] not honestly evaluating the visual

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[1] Kevin Sites, *In the Hot Zone: One Man, One Year, Twenty Wars* (Toronto: Harper, 2007), 13.

evidence that this shooting was both cavalier and without provocation".[2] Even without the release of the entire video, Sites faced political backlash, media intimidation and death threats from the public. The entirety of the footage was later released, not as part of a mainstream broadcast but, rather, on Sites personal website. The journalist would come to regret censoring the video for American media: "Later, I would consider how sadly we failed the public in our responsibility to them, that it was not our government or military that censored us in this story; we, the American media, did it ourselves".[3]

The War on Terror has now entered its tenth year and September 11, 2011 will mark a full decade since four commercial airliners were hijacked and flown into the World Trade Center, the Pentagon and a field in rural Pennsylvania. Now, it is almost impossible to distinguish the actual event of the terrorist attacks from the countless mediations of a spectacle best known as simply "9/11". According to Marc Redfield, "[t]his dissolve of the event into its mediation…is what drives commentary on 9/11 to such fantastic excess…[T]his excess manifests itself as a simple repudiation: the spectrality of the event becomes a clash of civilizations".[4] My thesis contends that the War on Terror is a war of images and I am interested in the extent to which this war is made possible and sustained by representations of otherness. Specifically, I examine representations of evil through the rhetorical figure of the face and its dissemination through mainstream and alternative media and in how figures of alterity are apprehended in their suffering. As Judith Butler points out, the ability to suffer is what marks one as human. She asks "[w]hat is real?...If violence is done against those who are unreal, then,

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[2] Ibid., 18.
[3] Ibid., 22.
[4] Marc Redfield, *The Rhetoric of Terror: Reflections on 9/11 and the War on Terror* (New York: Fordham UP, 2009), 45.

from the perspective of violence, it fails to injure or negate those lives since those lives are already negated".[5] The purpose of this thesis is to interrogate what is recognized as suffering and what is not within dominant frameworks of representation. This project questions who is left out of dominant constructions of what constitutes the human, and examines how a recognition of suffering reconstitutes the "evil other" as human. It asks: What is permitted to be seen as a suffering body in the context of the War on Terror and how do dominant frameworks foreclose the recognition of suffering in particular bodies?

This thesis interrogates whether and how engaging with images of violence against cultural others might enable new ways of seeing when "evil" is apprehended in a moment of suffering. In the War on Terror, representational violence and physical violence are linked; it is the representational power of dehumanizing images that allow for physical violence to be inflicted on specifically Muslim populations. Injury against bodies that are both nameless and faceless fails to be seen as violence and is seen as necessary in the overall efforts of the battle against terrorism. Dominant rhetoric that paints the War on Terror as a necessary battle to combat international terrorism fails to recognize the volume of civilian casualties that have occurred as a result. The organization Iraq Body Count, "an ongoing human security project which maintains and updates the world's largest public database of violent civilian deaths",[6] estimates that the conflict in Iraq has resulted in between 99,000 and 110,000 civilian casualties since the invasion of 2003. The names of these victims are, for the most part, not recorded in mainstream media and, if mentioned, are overshadowed by positive reports of American involvement in Iraq. In

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[5] Judith Butler, *Precarious Life: The Powers of Mourning and Violence* (New York: Verso, 2004), 33.

[6] Iraq Body Count. http://www.iraqbodycount.org/

3

Afghanistan, where reports of civilian deaths are difficult to track, recent data suggests that Afghan casualties are on the rise.[7] As David Holloway points out, "[t]he idea of a war on terror was itself a representation of events, a rhetorical construction, a series of stories about 9/11 and about America's place in the world".[8] It is via media representation that civilian deaths fail to be seen as human losses while the illusion of stability and events such as the capture and execution of Osama Bin Laden and Saddam Hussein are seen as military triumphs.

Through an analysis of the rhetorical construction of evil and its dissemination through the figure of the face in particular, this thesis aims to make clear the extent to which the assessment of humanity is based on the recognition of suffering. I seek to challenge not only dominant representations of Muslim alterity but also the ways in which the War on Terror perpetuates a hostile visual imagination in order to sustain its efforts. That is, figures that are constructed as iconically evil are also seen as incapable of experiencing injury. Culturally, this thesis seeks to understand the visual as a way of making events intelligible via the strategic organization of information. The War on Terror, in particular, has a scopic regime[9] which determines what images will and will not be permissible in the dominant visual field. Methodologically, the project engages

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[7] Simon Rogers, "Afghanistan civilian casualties: year by year, month by month" 10August 2010. http://www.guardian.co.uk/news/datablog/2010/aug/10/afghanistan-civilian-casualties-statistics. This data report, provided by the *Guardian* records a 31% increase in civilian casualties in the first six months of 2010. While the report is quick to claim "the Taliban's increasing use of homemade bombs and political assassinations has been responsible" it does admit that civilian casualties often go undocumented. As Rogers notes, these figures are "not very visible on the UNAMA site and are not updated regularly in a visible way".

[8] David Holloway, *Cultures of the War on Terror: Empire, Ideology, and the Remaking of 9/11* (Montreal: McGill-Queens UP, 2008), 4.

[9] In postmodernity, the scopic regime reflects the ways in which we interact with visual images more than ever before. Often, the image stands in the place of what is real, enabling the real to be manipulated or virtualized. Now, as Gillian Rose argues, "it is no longer possible to make a distinction between the real and the unreal; images [have] become detached from any certain relation to a real world with the result that we now live in a scopic regime dominated by simulations, or simulacra" (4).

with a number of questions regarding the visual discourse of the War on Terror. What, for example, is the interpretive framework by which we consider someone to be human or not human? Furthermore, how does the rhetoric of evil, and specifically the dissemination of this rhetoric through the figure of the face, determine who we consider human and who we do not? What are the parameters by which we consider a figure capable or incapable of suffering and, by extension, how do we confront/respond to suffering when the "victim" is someone who has been constructed as "evil"? This project examines a number of images of violence as a means of responding to these questions and in order to extend a critical methodology for interpreting the visual mediation of the War on Terror so that "we might be answerable for what we learn how to see".[10] Just as the construction of images is never innocent, neither is the response to them. This methodology understands that images have serious political and cultural praxis and recognizes the social conditions that produce particular visual artifacts.

Specifically, I will focus on the images of torture inflicted on prisoners at Abu Ghraib and the online execution video of Saddam Hussein. My rationale for selecting the photos of prisoner abuse and the online video of Hussein's execution as examples is twofold. First, both are well-known events with much media discussion and both the Muslim "insurgent" and Hussein have often been the subject of mainstream representations that subscribe to a rhetoric of "evil". Second, while we, as viewers or spectators, are increasingly privy to images of "others" as fragile and injurable, it is unusual to be confronted with the suffering of those who have been so rigorously constructed as figures of terror or monstrosity. Butler suggests that our responsibility is to

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[10] Donna Haraway, *Simians, Cyborgs, and Women: The Reinvention of Nature* (London: Free Association Books, 1991), 190.

contest the frames that determine who is and who is not human and that the "ongoing task of human rights [is] to reconceive the human when it finds that its putative universality does not have universal reach".[11] Through these examples, the following chapters take up Butler's challenge and offer the possibility that through a primary encounter with the face of the other at the moment of death or suffering, the abject is reconceived as precariously human. What this reveals, particularly when humanization occurs in a figure previously constructed as evil, is the extent to which dominant representations of otherness are constructed and based on dominant notions of what it means to be human.

This thesis is comprised of three main chapters following this introduction. Chapter Two provides historical and theoretical context for thinking about the dehumanization of enemies. It specifically examines the face of evil as the primary medium by which representations of evil are disseminated by reviewing common archetypes of evil such as the monster, ghoul, skeleton (as harbinger of death) and animal. The chapter also provides an analysis of Muslim alterity, both in its historical or Orientalist manifestations and in relation to the War on Terror and the construction of Muslim others as abject bodies and faceless terrors. Chapter Three questions how the suffering other is presented at Abu Ghraib and argues that the images depicting prisoner torture expose the realities of detainee abuse but are ultimately a dehumanizing portrayal of otherness. I contend that representation is directly related to violence. The processes by which we determine one to be human (and worthy of life) or not (ungrievable) is a representational process and, as a result, the release of Abu Ghraib photos – while exposing the classed, racialized and sexualized nature of abuse – fails to humanize or recognize suffering bodies within

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[11] Butler, *Precarious*, 91.

dominant visual frameworks. Chapter Four examines the mobile phone video of Saddam Hussein's execution as an example of humanization made possible by the face-to-face encounter with his death. The chapter contrasts the dominant, heavily mediated and dehumanizing representations of Hussein that have been reproduced in mainstream media since 1990 with the raw footage of his execution to suggest that, contrary to popular and mainstream constrictions of evil and monstrosity, Hussein is indeed a human figure capable of pain and suffering.

Before engaging with the face of evil and the dehumanization of Muslim others in the War on Terror, however, a few clarifications must be made. This thesis may, at times, read as an explicit critique of the actions and policies of George W. Bush and his administration, particularly in my discussion of both practical and rhetorical responses in the aftermath of 9/11. While there are certainly critiques to be made (and the ones here are by no means exhaustive), it is important to note that there are larger issues of discourse with even larger histories that continue to reproduce themselves within Barack Obama's presidency, Stephen Harper's Conservative Canadian government and the public imagination in general. In other words, the discourse that posits the other as less than human is by no means confined to the Bush Administration. Political rhetoric may have moved away from positing the War on Terror as a "crusade" against evil, but as we move further away from the event of 9/11 and our knowledge of it becomes increasingly mediated by images, the iconography of evil remains a distinguishing contribution to our assessment of who is and who is not considered human in the ongoing reality of violent political conflict.

How, then, do images of the other in positions of suffering enable a new way of seeing and thinking about the War on Terror and violence against Muslim others? This thesis contends that there are victims of the War on Terror who we have never and will never meet to whom we are responsible. Kwame Appiah suggests that this responsibility – what he calls cosmopolitanism – has two components. He suggests first that "we have obligations to others, obligations that stretch beyond those to whom we are related by the ties of kith and kind, or even the more formal ties of a shared citizenship [and second] that we take seriously the value not just of human life but of particular human lives, which means taking an interest in the practices and beliefs that lend them significance".[12] Importantly, these obligations do not necessarily pertain to the physical. Surely we should aspire to deal with conflict in ways that are not physically violent but what this thesis asks, first and foremost, is that we strive to recognize the suffering of the other even when the dominant frameworks in which that other is presented seek to foreclose such recognition. In Donna Haraway's words, the thesis asks that "we might become answerable for what we learn how to see"[13] and that we come to understand the levels of violence that occur, not only on the battlefield and at Ground Zero but also through a failure to recognize a suffering body. In particular, this thesis advocates recognition towards those who are not normally afforded rights of human security and protection and even towards those who, by all conventional measures, are not deserving as such. As Redfield notes, "[t]o affirm eirenic cosmopolitanism is to affirm that we are more vulnerable that we know and that we are haunted by voices, faces and vulnerabilities that

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[12] Kwame Anthony Appiah, *Cosmopolitanism: Ethics in a World of Strangers* (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 2006), xv.
[13] Donna Haraway, 190.

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elude not only all documentation or border controls but indeed all recompense or acknowledgement. That is why they lay claim to us".[14] As Redfield infers, it is precisely because these figure are denied names and face, denied, in other words, humanization, that they demand a response other than violence. In a war so saturated with images, this means challenging whose deaths are seen as violence and whose are not, interrogating the frameworks that create and subsequently house images of suffering and coming to terms with the rhetorical power of images to alter the course of human conflict.

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[14] Redfield, *The Rhetoric*, 10.

2   The Construction of Evil and Demonization of Islam

In order to establish a historical and theoretical framework for my comparative analysis of the frameworks that either foreclose or highlight human suffering, this chapter will provide critical context to discussions surrounding the photographs of prisoner abuse at Abu Ghraib and the mobile phone execution video of Saddam Hussein. First, it will contextualize the figure of the face as the primary medium for the distribution of a rhetoric of evil. Second, this chapter will provide a brief history of recent representations of evil through the analysis of visual images that recur through news media and popular culture. More specifically, I will look at the representational structures and practices of interpretation that determine particular figures to be "evil" and others not. Finally, this chapter will situate contemporary constructions of Muslim alterity within a long trajectory of othering with roots in the eighteenth century that posits Islam as a threat to the West. As Edward Said notes in *Orientalism*, Arabs were thought of as "camel-riding, terroristic, hook-nosed, venal lechers" and it is the West's prerogative to own the non-white world because "'it' is not as human as 'we' are".[15] I will consider both the mythologies constructed around individual figures and the general demonization of Islam that can be found in early mythologies of evil and also traced to the contemporary political moment. This chapter offers, then, an examination of discourses of otherness, particularly those surrounding the Muslim other, that have made a rhetoric of evil so useful to the War on Terror. What makes "evil" so volatile a type of otherness is its circulation within Judeo-Christian frameworks that posit evil as an inhuman threat marked for destruction.

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[15] Edward Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Vintage, 1976), 108.

While this chapter will discuss the demonization of figures such as Osama Bin Laden and Saddam Hussein in relation to new modes of othering that largely inhabit spaces of media and technology, the "face of evil", a rhetorical designation designed to elicit fear and suspicion, has long since dominated discourses about religious, political and cultural others and has shaped the course of various international conflicts. Although the discursive framework by which Muslim others come to be feared relies on hundreds of years of latent Orientalism, the abundance of and immediacy with which these representations of otherness are currently disseminated is a relatively new phenomenon. Contemporary rhetoric surrounding otherness, enabled in particular by the prevalence of digital photography and video, continues to rely on the construction of particular enemies and, in interrogating the current relationship between violence, dehumanization and the War on Terror, it is necessary to contextualize the "face of evil", and to whom it currently applies, to evaluate what interpretive practices are involved in determining figures to be human or not. This chapter considers the construction of evil, and its relation to both national and individual identity, and will examine how particular twentieth century figures of evil, such as Adolf Hitler, inform current conceptions of Saddam Hussein and, in general, the Muslim other as menacing figures to be feared, yet simultaneous icons of inhumanity and abjection.

2.1   The Face of Evil

Through an analysis of the rhetorical construction of evil and its dissemination through the figure of the face in particular, this thesis aims to make clear the extent to which political decisions about war and interrogation are closely linked to the workings

of the visual as a process of mediation by which the War on Terror is understood. Constructions of the enemy provide not only a justification for violence but also a respite from the unfavourable aspects of ourselves. As Sam Keen notes, "[i]n all propaganda, the face of the enemy is designed to provide a focus for our hatred. He is the other. The outsider. The alien. He is not human. If we can only kill him, we will be rid of all within and without ourselves that is evil".[16] While Keen's thesis is perhaps over-generalizes what should be a discussion of complex and shifting notions of evil, when examining a particular kind of construction of evil – that is, Muslim otherness – the foreign and undesirable are pushed to the periphery and rendered inhuman and incapable of even death in some cases. When taken literally, the physical face becomes a platform upon which the many conventions of evil are staged.

A number of themes specific to the face recur in the visual archive of evil. Pertaining to the face in particular, figures of evil are often pictured as bloodthirsty, impure, skeletal, ghoulish and animalistic. The enemy, as a devourer of humanity, is commonly portrayed poised to consume his victim, with blood dripping from his mouth. The menacing rapist, particularly in WWII propaganda, is the Jewish man who seduces Aryan women, the black man who carries "unsatiable lust" for white women and the fearsome Japanese, threatening the purity of American virgins.[17] The skeletal threat is even more unearthly, and manifests as an apocalyptic figure who lurks among the undead. Keen notes that by visualizing the enemy as death we are able to kill with a clean conscience and "[a]lthough we also deal in death, we are not to blame because we are

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[16] Sam Keen, *Faces of the Enemy* (San Francisco, Harper Collins, 1986), 16.
[17] Ibid., 58.

forced to defend ourselves against an enemy who is the incarnation of death".[18] The figure of the ghoul may take on a human form but is often portrayed with unbalanced features, such as bulging eyes, missing flesh, exposed facial muscles or bones, unkempt hair and green skin. These figures recur throughout the twentieth century and in a variety of media, whether children's cartoons, political comics, mainstream news media or blockbuster film. While Keen's study focuses specifically on propaganda images, his typology of the face in particular is useful in interrogating how some figures come to be recognized as human and others not.

More general conventions of evil also contribute to a rhetoric of otherness that seeks to distinguish self from other. Carefully constructed mythologies of the barbarian, the monster, the Devil and the alien serve to reinforce the Self. Difference is to be feared and made abject and, as a result, Western thought "has generally discriminated against the Other in favour of the Same".[19] In Christian rhetoric, evil comes to be defined as the absence of good and these non-human figures represent the "utmost of abjection" as they are seen as corpses, "without God and outside science".[20] Thus, as Jennifer Geddes argues in her study on evil after the Holocaust, "[t]he evildoer who is a monster is removed from us, placed in a category outside of the human; for if evildoers are demonic monsters, they can be accounted for by jettisoning them from the category of "human beings," from the "we."".[21] For Judith Butler, dehumanization affects who and how we grieve when lives are lost. Some deaths remain ungrievable, particularly when those who have been killed were never considered to have valid lives: "[v]iolence against those

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[18] Ibid., 65.
[19] Richard Kearney, *Strangers Gods and Monsters* (New York, Routledge, 2003), 66.
[20] Julia Kristeva, *Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection* (New York: Columbia UP, 1982), 4.
[21] Jennifer Geddes, "Banal Evil and Useless Knowledge: Hannah Arendt and Charlotte Delbo on Evil after the Holocaust," *Hypatia*, Vol. 18, (1), (Winter, 2003), 106.

who are already not quite living, that is, living in a state of suspension between life and death, leaves a mark that is no mark".[22] As Butler infers, those who are pushed to the periphery of what is human cannot be considered worthy of grief.

The specific conventions of evil and, in particular, the ways in which evil is assessed and represented via facial features are crucial to an understanding of how a rhetoric of evil operates. Evil, in its most broad and conventional interpretation, has no reason and performs without purpose. As Terry Eagleton notes, "[t]he less sense it makes, the more evil it is. Evil has no relations to anything beyond itself, such as a cause".[23] Evil, in both its physical and psychological manifestations, has no end; it cannot be bought, negotiated with, placated or redeemed. Evil is an inhuman threat that cannot be extinguished yet gives continual reason why it must. In defining evil, it is in fact the broadness of the term that has proven to be so useful in distinguishing enemies from allies. Actual evil, which, according to Immanuel Kant is a "radical" wickedness for the sake of wickedness, is rare.[24] The term, however, as Eagleton points out is used "cavalierly"[25] and it is precisely via the mutability of the definition of evil that the word becomes so easily attached to particular figures in both Christian and secular rhetoric and so easily appropriated in times of conflict and as part of the War on Terror in particular.

The rhetoric of evil has been directed towards various enemies, whether addressing the Devil himself - the opposite of God in Christian narratives -, animal-like monsters or more human figures of malevolence. While the Devil figure has always served as a more abstract way of distancing evil from the Self, historically it was following the

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[22] Butler, *Precarious*, 36.
[23] Terry Eagleton, *On Evil* (New Haven, Yale UP, 2010), 3.
[24] In Eagleton, *On Evil*, 95.
[25] Ibid.

Enlightenment that human figures supplanted the monstrous as figures of the abject.[26]

Monsters, however, were not entirely banished during the Age of Reason: "[r]ather than disappearing…the monsters simply reappeared elsewhere; they fled from the Enlightenment's illuminated spaces into the dark shadows it cast".[27] Richard Devetak notes that the figure of the monster has always been vital to establishing the borders of humanity: "Monsters help to reinforce boundaries between self and other, civilization and barbarism, good and evil".[28] An assault on these boundaries requires decisive action to counter the breech. Monsters' "defiance of borders is taken as a threat demanding measures to reinforce the borders between the human and inhuman, to defend the civilized against the barbaric, and to uphold good in the face of evil".[29] During the Age of Reason, monsters continued to lurk but developed increasingly human characteristics that enabled them to walk among us. Formerly in the shadows, at the borders of humanity, monsters began to develop human faces and were found in a variety of situations. Whether referenced within gothic, colonial, or Christian narratives, all were jettisoned from the category of what was called "civilized" but still shared corporeal characteristics with the "living". These more human monsters became well-recognized, particularly in the latter half of the twentieth century with the growing capabilities of digital video and photography.

A number of "evils" have surfaced over the last century, and while not all are figures of Muslim alterity they are rendered inhuman by similar processes of abjection. Like monsters and the dead, these figures cannot be entirely extinguished. Instead, they

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[26] Kearney, *Strangers*, 117.
[27] Richard Devetak, "The Gothic Scene of international relations: ghosts, monsters, terror and the sublime after September 11," *Review of International Studies* 31 (2005): 623.
[28] Devetak, "The Gothic," 624.
[29] Ibid., 624.

are "death infecting life…something rejected from which one does not part".[30] Hitler, of

course, is the twentieth century's example of evil *par excellence*. As Keen points out,

"Hitler was such a perfect devil incarnate, a paragon of evil, that we have been using him

ever since to vilify our enemies".[31] Importantly, Hitler is an iconic figure without

stereotypical demonic imagery and signifies a shift in mythologies of evil back to a more

recognizable, although no less terrible, form. As Devetak observes, "[i]t would be no

exaggeration to say that since the Second World War Hitler has displaced the Devil as the

personification of evil".[32] As a result, every tyrant and brutal despot since has been

studied in comparison to Hitler's scale of evil. What makes comparisons to Hitler

particularly interesting are not literal similarities but rather the representational potential

of creating pseudo-Hitlers in more contemporary conflicts. Human perpetrators of

conflict are made to be a threat on the basis of their comparison to Hitler, regardless of

whether their crimes mirror the level of atrocities committed by Nazi Germany. Thus,

every monstrosity "is measured against Hitler's example"[33] and, no longer bound by the

shadowy form of the Devil, evil in the twentieth century embraces its human form and

presents a more terrible and tangible threat.

Not only does evil arrive in human form during the twentieth century, but each

successive "face of evil" is seen as a new manifestation of the last. While the last fifty

years have seen a host of infamous human leaders including, but certainly not limited to,

Hitler, Stalin, Fidel Castro, Pol Pot, Milosevic, Kim Jong-Il, Osama Bin Laden and

Saddam Hussein, discussions surrounding these figures often allude to more historical,

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[30] Kristeva, *Powers*, 4.
[31] Keen, *Faces*, 13.
[32] Devetak, *The Gothic*, 634.
[33] Ibid.

and less physical, ghosts, demons and supernatural villains. That is, while these figures

are all identifiably human, the attempt is made to locate them within more monstrous,

pre-Enlightenment narratives suggesting again the permeability of the term "evil" as it is

applied to various forms of otherness, monstrous, spectral or otherwise. Kearney suggests

that figures such as Bin Laden have "many prototypes, stretching back to the very

beginning of time".[34] One such prototype is the specter, whose almost human (but not

quite) form reminds us that any trace of what once was alive is now gone. The figure of

the ghost is common in the rhetoric of international conflict. As Marc Redfield notes,

following the Cold War, the specter of communism gave way to the ghostly unknown of

the Muslim Other.[35] Both Communism and Islam, it should be noted, have been

represented as threats en masse, as opposed to the individual evil spurned by Hitler and

Hussein. While discussions of Communism are useful in highlighting the function of

spectral terror, this is not to conflate the representation of a Communist evil with the

construction of a singular evil in someone such as Saddam Hussein. While the

Communist movement, for example, is represented in more infectious terms, spreading

like a disease, the individual figure of Hitler represents the absolute magnitude of evil

that could operate within one person. He is the personification of the extent of evil within

Nazi Germany. The process by which certain evils come to be known as individual and

others known more as a conceptual threat highlights the ways in which both

individualizing and abstracting evil can be useful to a rhetoric of terror. Moreover, it

allows for a conflict such as the War on Terror to be fought on two fronts, against the evil

tyranny of individual figures such as Hussein as well as against the spread of a perceived

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[34] Kearney, *Strangers*, 115.
[35] Redfield, *The Rhetoric,* 8.

Islamic fundamentalism. Much like the communist specter, the ghostly Muslim Other lurks in shadows and has spurred "various forms and acts of violence against an enemy who was understood to be fearsome precisely *as* a specter".[36] For example, the Gulf War was fought as if the ghost of Hitler had appeared and it was his ghost being fought, not Hussein. To a certain extent, the invasion of Iraq in 2003 began with references to Hitler's ghost as well. Devetak notes that "[t]he debate over whether or not to invade Iraq in 2003 reprised the same choice faced by Chamberlain at Munich: war or dishonour".[37] 2003, however, was different than 1991 in that Hussein soon became a ghost in his own right and comparisons to Hitler became unnecessary. Regardless, whether seen as the ghost of a former tyrant or a new specter capable of extreme terror himself, the creation of this particular figure allows for an identifiable but not quite human target against whom violence is justified.

The figure of the ghost becomes particularly cogent when it is attached to the spectrality of an event such as 9/11. As the event itself becomes, in a way, *more* than the event through its endless mediations, the perpetrators of that event become dislodged from materiality as well. As ghosts they infiltrate schools, neighborhoods and workplaces and, as a result, the face of evil often has no face at all. Of course, the figure of the ghost is predominantly the product of dominant Western media and is meant to arouse fear in those who understand 9/11 only through its mediations and only as a spectacle. For those directly related to acts of terror, whether it be victims of the Trade Center attacks or so-called "collateral damage" in Iraq and Afghanistan, the terror of ghost-like figures is displaced from spectrality and firmly lodged in the real. Still, the War on Terror relies on

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[36] Ibid., 7.
[37] Devetak, *The Gothic*, 634.

the construction of ghosts to sustain its efforts and finds much success in exploiting this figure through what is an excess of images focusing on the spectacle of 9/11.

The specter of the Muslim Other, in particular, is not new and the Middle East has long been a target of fear and suspicion. Historically, the demonization of Islam can be traced as far back as the Crusades although Bernard Lewis claims that Islam began causing conflict for Christians as early as its advent in the seventh century.[38] Tomaz Mastnak notes that the Crusades helped to form Western spiritual identity by constructing Islam as the target of a Holy War. Suggesting that the crusades were fueled by the promise of violence rather than the promise of conversion, Mastnak claims that "an essential moment in the articulation of self-awareness of the Christian commonwealth was the construction of the Muslim enemy".[39] The West has been using the East to define itself ever since. In the eighteenth century, when travel to the Middle East became common for purposes other than religion, travel accounts, literatures and geographies that focus on the so-called "Orient" maintained the notion of the Muslim other as alternately fearsome and desirable; that is, the very essence of abject. While the Muslim Other has long been constructed as abject and peripheral in relation to Western ideas about "civilization" representations of this otherness have become increasingly monstrous in the last decade. In fact, as Kearny notes, 9/11 attackers were referred to as "many-headed beasts whose tentacles were threatening to violate every secure space in the nation".[40] Importantly, these designations of evil, while they make broad generalizations about the nature of Islam, are distributed in terms of who is "for us" and who is "against us". As

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[38] Bernard Lewis, "The Roots of Muslim Rage," *The Atlantic Online* (September 1990): 3.
[39] In Mahmood Mamdani, *Good Muslim, Bad Muslim: America, the Cold War, and the Roots of Terror* (New York, Pantheon Books, 2004), 25.
[40] Kearney, *Strangers*, 112.

Mahmood Mamdani points out, "[j]udgments on 'good' or 'bad' refer to Muslim political identities, not to cultural or religious ones".[41] It is not so much Islam as it is political allegiance that determines guilt. Thus, Muslims who align themselves with the cause and course of the War on Terror, while never considered equal to its white, Western leaders, are not seen in Western media as "evil".

Evil itself, therefore, serves a political rather than a moral or religious purpose and its rhetoric is meant to incite both panic and vigilance. Every patriot has a duty to respond. As George Bush declared in his National Cathedral Speech on September 14, 2001, "our responsibility to history is already clear: to answer these attacks and rid the world of evil".[42] Like Devetak, Kearney argues that 9/11 reinforced the idea of the monster to public consciousness. Importantly, this idea was not new; rather it was sparked by the latest catalyst in a long history of the demonization of Islam. After all, only a monster could be capable of such attacks. Yet Kearney suggests: "[w]hat monsters reveal to us is nothing less than our craving to put a face on a phobia".[43] Monsters, in their cultural and political work, do even more than Kearney describes. The face that comes to represent phobias is a mask that prevents us from engaging with the humanity of the Other and turns human lives into figures of irredeemable abjection. The Eastern "face of evil", as part of the rhetoric of the War on Terror, has primarily been constructed around individual figures such as Osama Bin Laden and Saddam Hussein as well as in general around figures that represent the perception of a fundamental Islam.

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[41] Mamdani, *Good Muslim*, 15.
[42] George W. Bush, "The National Security Strategy of the United States," *New York Times*, September 20, 2002, http://www.mtholyoke.edu/acad/intrel/bush/doctrine.htm.
[43] Kearney, *Strangers*, 112.

2.1.1   Osama Bin Laden

Within two weeks of the attack on the World Trade Center, FBI authorities concluded that Al Qaeda was responsible for the act of terror. A September 27, 2001 FBI press release includes photos of nineteen suspected hijackers said to have connections to the Al Qaeda network and its leader, Osama Bin Laden.[44] Media responded to the suspicion surrounding Bin Laden by assuming his guilt. *Time Magazine* released its October 1, 2001 issue with Bin Laden on the cover with the headline: "TARGET: Bin Laden".[45] In that issue, the article "Osama's Trail: Soft Evidence" by Amanda Ripley and Elaine Shannon admits that forensic proof is lacking and "[c]lear links are almost impossible to find in shady terrorist networks designed to have none".[46] This is not to suggest that Bin Laden was not responsible; rather, it is to point out that within a few weeks of the attack, with no physical evidence, Bin Laden's face was already being used as a symbol of international terror and evil. It was his eyes watching, his grainy visage on camera and his face alone, almost disembodied with the absence of any limbs, that was used to promote the fear of terrorist attack. These images, easily accessible online and on newsstands, reflect a consistent theme of representation of Bin Laden in American media. The images differ in their message and composition but all portray a similar image of Bin Laden himself. When the image is read for what is *absent* the purposes of these representations are made clear. Indeed, in the portrayal of Bin Laden as an evil threat, his history with the United States, particularly during the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan

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[44] Federal Bureau of Investigation, "The FBI Releases 19 Photographs of Individuals Believed to be the Hijackers of the Four Airliners that Crashed on September 11, 2001," U.S. Department of Justice, http://www.fbi.gov/news/pressrel/press-releases/the-fbi-releases-19-photographs-of-individuals-believed-to-be-the-hijackers.

[45] "TARGET: Bin Laden," *Time Magazine*, October 1, 2001, http://www.time.com/time/magazine/0,9263,7601011001,00.html?internalid=AC.

[46] Amanda Ripley and Elaine Shannon, "Osama's Trail: Soft Evidence," *Time Magazine*, October 1, 2001.

(when Communism was a larger threat than Islam), is eclipsed. Indeed, as Norm Dixon

points out in his article for the *Green Left*, during Ronald Reagan's presidency, the Soviet

Union was the "evil empire" and Washington offered support to the Afghan mujaheddin

in order to combat the Soviet presence in Afghanistan.[47]

Later *Time* covers portray Bin Laden in a series of frightening and increasingly

monstrous images. It is clear that the emerging fight against global terrorism needed a

"face of evil" to motivate support for what could be a lengthy search for the perpetrators

of 9/11 as the United States, the leader of the crusade against terrorism, simultaneously

sought to exonerate itself from a long history of state-sponsored terror. As such, these

early magazine covers are a revealing example of how images of evil have justified the

ongoing, and protracted War on Terror. For instance, the November 12, 2001 cover of

Time shows Bin Laden in black and white, looking out over a globe.[48] While Bin Laden

is not necessarily portrayed using conventional symbols of evil (he has no horns or smoke

rising around him), the visual message suggests he has an inhuman capacity to watch

specifically the Western Hemisphere and all those who inhabit it while he plans his

attacks. In this image, Bin Laden is set apart form the globe, as outside its borders, and is

thus represented as unearthly. The image is a perfect example of how evil can be

constructed visually with little or no additional context. This cover image has a striking

resemblance to a propaganda poster featuring Ayatollah Khomeini in which Khomeini

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[47] Dixon, Norm, "How the CIA created Osama bin Laden," *Green Left*, September 19, 2001, http://www.greenleft.org.au/node/24198. As Dixon notes, Bin Laden arrived in Afghanistan in 1980 where he "specialised in recruiting, financing and training the mujaheddin" who were armed by the CIA. To answer the question of why Bin Laden was allowed so much freedom to train what would form the basis on the Taliban in later years, Dixon quotes Jimmy Carter's National Security Advisor, Zbigniew Brzezinski: "What was more important in the world view of history? The Taliban or the fall of the Soviet Empire? A few stirred up Muslims or the liberation of Central Europe and the end of the Cold War?"
[48] "Inside Al-Qaeda: Bin Laden's Web of Terror," *Time Magazine*, November 12, 2001, http://www.time.com/time/magazine/0,9263,7601011112,00.html?internalid=AC.

looks out over his presumed victims, lying prostrate in the sand.[49] The implications of such imagery are intentional: no one on earth is safe from him. Future covers of *Time* subscribe to a similar visual iconography of evil but become increasingly spectral in their representation. The November 25, 2002 cover features an almost transparent Bin Laden, fading into an all-white background under the title "Why Can't we Catch Him?".[50] Such ghostly imagery draws attention to Bin Laden's presence as a spectral terror who cannot be caught because he is neither living nor dead. He is recognizable, yet distant. Like the images before, only his head is shown; there is no body to accompany his ghostly face. He cannot be assimilated into what the viewer understands nor is he entirely divorced from familiarity; he is, at the same time, inside and outside, desirable as the perfect target for 9/11 but also abject as a repugnant icon of terror. He is an imminent but simultaneously immaterial threat. In image, Bin Laden is "an elusive incorporeal presence [and] combine[s] monstrosity with invisibility and ghostliness".[51] Bin Laden is still evil but, more terrifyingly, an evil that cannot be found and, therefore, cannot be destroyed.

Bin Laden's death adds an additional layer of complexity when considering the ways in which his image is disseminated in mainstream Western media. While the reports make certain mention of his death, the narratives focus on the role of the Navy Seals, the details of the location where Bin Laden was hiding and the reactions of people

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[49] In Keen, *Faces*, 36. In this image, only the top half of Khomeini's cracked, green face is visible glaring out over the sand. Both eyes are black; however, the Star of David appears in his left as he surveys the trail of bodies lying prostrate before his gaze. The figures in the sand, presumably hostages, reflect the artists intent to draw attention to Khomeini's role in the hostage crisis, turning a political event into a battle between the forces of good and evil.

[50] "Why Can't We Catch Him?," *Time Magazine*, November 25, 2002, http://www.time.com/time/magazine/0,9263,7601021125,00.html?internalid=AC.

[51] Devetak, *The Gothic*, 636.

worldwide. On MSNBC's *Today Show*, host Meredith Vieira reads through a selection of newspaper headlines. The *New York Times* reads: "Bin Laden killed by U.S. Forces in Pakistan, Obama says, declaring justice has been done".[52] The *New York Post*'s headline is more colloquial: "GOT HIM: Vengeance at Last, US nails the bastard".[53] Vieira's final headline choice is the *Daily News* which confirms dominant notions of Bin Laden's inhuman otherness. It simply reads: "ROT IN HELL".[54] Old footage of Bin Laden is shown but the viewer is not privy to any images related to his death. The *Today Show* accounts for this by citing Islamic law which declares a body must be buried within twenty-four hours. Yet it is still significant that viewers do not see Bin Laden's dead body. Cutting to footage of President Obama's address, MSNBC's commentary declares that killing Bin Laden is "a testament to the greatness of our country"[55]. That a nation's greatness comes from taking a human life is not questioned.

While Vieira reports from the *Today Show* studio, her co-anchor, Matt Lauer reports in from Ground Zero. His placement at the site of the Trade Center attacks, the interspersed archived images from 9/11 and the way in which the killing of Bin laden is described as an act of sterile military precision all serve to reinforce that Bin Laden does not count as a valid human life. By highlighting American losses at the World Trade Center, Bin Laden's death fails to be recognized as a comparable loss, or even as a loss at all. His death is, in fact, a victory. While images of Bin Laden can be used to vilify him, they cannot be used to humanize within dominant frameworks. This is not to exonerate

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[52] "US forces hunt down, kill Osama bin Laden", *MSNBC*, MAY 2, 2011, http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/42852700/ns/world_news-death_of_bin_laden/t/us-forces-kill-osama-bin-laden-pakistan/.
[53] Ibid.
[54] Ibid.
[55] Ibid.

his crimes or diminish the tragedy of the thousands of lives lost on September 11th, 2001

but, rather, to emphasize the ways in which the construction of particular bodies as

inhuman or evil forecloses the recognition of suffering in those bodies. In the *Today*

Show's report on Bin Laden's death, there is no description of the injury done to his

body. The viewer is told that his death was the result of a gun battle but no details are

given as to where or how many times he was hit. Any discussion of something that might

lead us to visualize this man in a more fragile human form is avoided. He remains distant,

spectral and inhuman.

2.1.2   Saddam Hussein

While Osama Bin Laden is a spectral threat, hiding in shadows and referenced

primarily in relation to 9/11, Saddam Hussein is constructed as a more tangible monster

who has long dominated the rhetoric of those who seek to intervene in Middle Eastern

affairs. While Chapter Four will discuss the usefulness of Hussein's purported yet

unproven involvement in 9/11 as a significant justification for the 2003 invasion of Iraq,

Hussein has been represented as a monster in popular consciousness for some time. The

evil of Saddam Hussein surfaced in 1990 right when the danger from other enemies had

subsided. With the threat of the Cold War receding, those seeking a new enemy found

one easily in Hussein. Keen suggests that Hussein fulfilled our expectations as the ideal

monster figure:

> If we play with the notion that political rhetoric about war is a kind of
> fairy tale for adults, it almost seems as if Saddam Hussein came riding in on
> his black charger just in the nick of time to save us from painful self-

extermination. Here was a world-class enemy, a neo-Hitler, a less-than-

human monster who had used poison gas against his own people and had

invaded Kuwait and deposed its 'legitimate' rulers.[56]

While a rhetoric of evil is built upon an image of the other as an apparition of terror, it is

also mobilized via the construction of a bloody, ruthless and demonic other. Writing ten

years after the first Gulf War, but just prior to 9/11, journalist Tony Karon writes that

generating American support for the invasion of Iraq was dependent upon invoking "the

idea of the Butcher of Baghdad on the march, terrorizing his neighbors".[57] Visual

imagery at the time of the Gulf War furthered this demonization of Hussein. While Karon

had no idea about the events that would soon unfold, his thesis is eerily applicable to the

demonization of Hussein *after* 9/11 and is important in establishing a trajectory of

dehumanization that, as I will argue in Chapter Four, is dramatically challenged by the

video footage of his execution.

Saddam Hussein's political persona has been built visually both within Iraq and

internationally. Daniel Chirot cites Hussein's Iraqi regime as being one of the most

personalized in the world and Hussein's image was prominent on the nightly news, the

front page of newspapers and massive billboard structures in public.[58] In North America,

Hussein dominated mainstream media during the first Gulf War. These representations

emerged in two distinct ways, one designed to elicit fear and the other as a form of

parody. *Time's* August 5th, 1991 cover, for example shows Hussein's face engulfed by

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[56] Keen, *Faces*, 8.
[57] Tony Karon, "Ten Years After: Who Won the Gulf War?," *Time Magazine*, January 16, 2001,
http://www.time.com/time/columnist/karon/article/0,9565,95352,00.html.
[58] Daniel Chirot, *Modern Tyrants*, (Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1994), 303.

the smoke and flame of the Kuwait oil fires.[59] While the Gulf War ended in February of

1991, this cover references Hussein's staying power as Iraqi dictator and uses imagery

reminiscent of the smoke and fires of hell to remind readers that an evil threat still lurks.

In another, yet much different, comparison to the devil, Hussein is parodied in the

animated film *South Park: Bigger, Longer and Uncut* (1999), which includes a scene of

Hussein in bed with the devil himself. The construction of Saddam Hussein as Satan's

gay lover causes not only a dis-identification but a dehumanization as well. The parodic

representation of Hussein as sexually virile and homosexual perpetuates the myth of an

obsessed and errant Muslim sexuality. Such an example might remain in the realm of

parody were they not so similar to more serious discussions of Hussein's sexual behavior

that also focus his deviance from dominant Western norms, as is the case in Paul William

Roberts' accounts of the misogyny and rape carried out by Hussein and his sons.[60] In

either representation, whether portrayed as sexual predator or as a feminized caricature

submitting to Satan's sexual whims, Hussein is found outside normative conceptions of

both humanity, masculinity and heterosexuality. This representational preoccupation with

Muslim sexuality is a central tenet of Orientalism and will become especially significant

in the following chapter, where I examine prisoner abuse at Abu Ghraib as emblematic of

Western anxieties about otherness. While the viewer may seek to distance him or herself

from either of these characterizations on a moral level, it could also be argued that a dis-

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[59] "Was it Worth it?," *Time Magazine*, August 5, 1991,
http://www.time.com/time/covers/0,16641,19910805,00.html.
[60] Paul William Roberts, *The demonic comedy : some detours in the Baghdad of Saddam Hussein*, (New York : Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1998). Roberts, a writer, journalist ,and scholar of Jewish and Arabic history, who has written on both Iraq wars, describes the process of gaining an interview with Saddam Hussein and, in particular, his reaction to accounts of the sexual crimes committed by the Hussein family. Roberts describes Hussein as "missing part and a part as crucial as a head or limbs- probably the part we used to call the 'soul'…[which] imploded under the weight of its own darkness" (Roberts 97).

identification with this kind of evil is intended to preserve the stability of the self, in particular, a heteronormative self that is continually challenged by the presence of the other, making the construction of "evil" an important reflection of men's and women's concerns about themselves.[61] Joseph Tuman, whose study focuses on the rhetoric used to communicate terror suggests that such representations appeal to a viewers desire for conflict. Print and broadcast media, he argues, are better received when individuals and ideas are "pitted against one another, creating an illusion of balanced reporting but really generating conflict in order to make the story more compelling. In this way, news media take a cue from entertainment media".[62] In the case of representations of Hussein, the conflict is between what is considered normative and what is constructed as aberrant behavior. Thus, parodic representations of the 'face of evil', while they depart from mainstream, hegemonic provocations of fear and anxiety produced by images such as Hussein's *Time* covers, still tend to produce a disassociation between the viewer and the image.

In addition to being constructed as a devil, Saddam Hussein is also represented as a specter in Gulf War media rhetoric. Again, this is achieved both through actual media images and more imaginative imagery. Hussein was often referred to as "Hitler's ghost" during the Persian Gulf War, a comparison that is alluded to in early images from 2003 as well. For example, the May 7, 1945 cover of *Time* portrays the disembodied head of Adolf Hitler covered with a red 'X', presumably dripping with blood.[63] The April 21, 2003 cover of *Time* uses almost identical imagery; however, in this case, it is Hussein's

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[61] Keen, *Faces*, 111.
[62] Joseph Tuman, *Communicating Terror: The Rhetorical Dimensions of Terrorism* (Thousand Oaks: Sage, 2003), 119.
[63] *Time Magazine*, May 7, 1945, http://www.time.com/time/covers/0,16641,19450507,00.html.

head that is easily recognizable beneath the bloody 'X'.[64] Closer inspection of these images reveals more similarities. Both resemble, in some way, the spectral image of Osama Bin Laden in *Time* and the absence of a body in these images leads the viewer to focus on the face. While the face is angled towards the viewer, the eyes are not; Hitler and Hussein both exist to be observed but their gaze does not quite meet our own. These identical covers not only reproduce the popular belief that Saddam Hussein is a comparable threat to Hitler; they also suggest that both tyrants share a phantom likeness. However, Hussein's face, in black and white and occupying a larger portion of the frame than Hitler, suggests that Hussein has performed evils that are beyond comparison. That is, he has achieved spectral recognition as a living and breathing tyrant for, while Hitler's *Time* cover was released just after his death in April 1945, Hussein's cover comes three years *before* his death, marking him as a ghost prior to his actual execution. His pale face floats disembodied in the frame. While Hitler may indeed be the example of evil in the twentieth century, *par excellence,* it is Hussein who has become the most notable monster, and new standard of comparison, in the twenty-first.

Following 9/11, Hussein's image has continually been built around the figure of the monster with some important differences. To begin, while he is still seen as a spectral threat, particularly since his actual death in 2006, he is rarely compared to Hitler's ghost. Since 9/11, Hussein has become "evil" enough on his own and does not need constant comparison to Hitler to be considered an inhuman villain. In his testimony to the Chilcot inquiry, Tony Blair makes reference to both Hussein's evil nature and the vast threat he

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[64] *Time Magazine*, April 21, 2003, http://www.time.com/time/covers/0,16641,20030421,00.html.

posed: "I believe he was a monster, that he threatened not just the region but the world".[65]

Yet, despite continually alluding to Hussein as a face of evil, since the invasion of Iraq in 2003, the Iraqi dictator has also been the subject of humiliating media attention. Far from representing Hussein as a defiant monster, his capture revealed an alternative, yet often no more humanizing, side of the dictator. For example, when describing the conditions in which American forces found Hussein, Major General Raymond Odierno notes he was "caught like a rat" in a hole.[66] Video footage following his capture shows the deposed leader looking bewildered as he undergoes an examination of his hair and teeth.[67] In both cases, Hussein, while not referred to in monstrous or spectral terms, is stripped of humanity via a comparison with an animal known for its filth. Only in brief glimpses are we given access to a fragile and weakened man before he is returned to his more "evil" and familiar form. Still, in these glimpses it is possible to see that there may be more than one face to the tyrant. Chapter Four will take up the provocative images of Hussein following his capture in more detail as a way of interrogating the regimes of representation that determine which face of Hussein is permitted visibility and which is hidden from public view.

Posthumously, Hussein continues to invoke associations with devils, monsters and ghosts. While Hussein's face has been used to represent evil, other imagery that constructs him as a monster or devil relies on Hussein's physical presence in Iraq and

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[65] Rosa Prince and James Kirkup, "Iraq inquiry: Tony Blair had no regrets over toppling Saddam Hussein," *The Telegraph*, January 29, 2010, http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/middleeast/iraq/7104893/Iraq-inquiry-Tony-Blair-had-no-regrets-over-toppling-Saddam-Hussein.html.

[66] "Saddam 'caught like a rat' in a hole," *CNN*, December 15, 2003, http://articles.cnn.com/2003-12-14/world/sprj.irq.saddam.operation_1_saddam-hussein-travel-in-large-entourages-operation-red-dawn?_s=PM:WORLD.

[67] History Uncut, "Saddam Hussein Captured", *History.com,* http://www.history.com/videos/history-uncut-saddam-hussein-captured - history-uncut-saddam-hussein-captured.

invokes, in particular, gothic architectural conventions. Richard Devetak notes that the gothic narrative that posits a spectral threat has re-emerged since 9/11 and is part of an American rhetorical genre dating back to Edgar Allen Poe and Nathaniel Hawthorne. For Devetak, "[t]he gothic scenes evoked by Bush as much as Poe involve monsters and ghosts in tenebrous atmospheres that generate fear and anxiety, where terror is a pervasive tormentor of the senses".[68] For example, Devetak notes that, as monster of his domain, Hussein "presided over a mansion of gloom".[69] This allusion pays gothic tribute to Poe's "The Fall of the House of Usher", in which the narrator encounters the mansion of Roderick Usher and a first glimpse is overtaken by "a sense of insufferable gloom".[70] Hussein's residential life is represented as 'underworldly' and, combined with the presence of the 'red house' a Ba'athist party headquarters cum torture facility, invokes images of a haunted house. With multiple palaces scattered amongst many compounds, one can never be certain if the "ghost" is home.

Online forums support Hussein's image as a spectral terror and, while not used here as a reliable or even widely accessed news source, demonstrate the lengths to which representations of Hussein dominate popular media. The website *Freaking News*, for example, hosts a Photoshop contest where participants are challenged to "Photoshop Saddam Hussein's ghost in any way you like".[71] Contributions include a ghoulish looking Hussein, with a fiery crown blowing smoke on Iranian President Mahmoud Amadinejad

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[68] Devetak, *The Gothic*, 621.
[69] Devetak, *The Gothic*, 634.
[70] Edgar Allen Poe, "The Fall of the House of Usher," *The Fall of the House of Usher and Other Writings* (London, Penguin Books, 1986), 90.
[71] Freaking News, "Saddam Hussein Ghost Pictures," Freaking News, http://www.freakingnews.com/Saddam-Hussein-Ghost-Pictures--1280.asp.

and a spectral Hussein at a Baghdad movie theater being fought by George W. Bush in costume as one of the famed filmic "Ghostbusters".

In these images, the spectral Hussein has nothing to do with Hitler but, rather, has become his own ghost. Both of the images speak to a specific historical moment and are linked to contemporary political events rather than past conflicts with Hussein. The image of George Bush "busting" Hussein is significant in its use of both popular and political iconography. It pays homage to the popular *Ghostbusters* franchise while prominently displaying Hussein's noose, a political symbol of violence. The entire scene takes place outside a Baghdad movie theater suggesting that Hussein's interactions with the West, much like his interaction with the Devil in *South Park*, exist as a mode of entertainment with both Bush and Hussein acting off of a script designed for a Western audience who will understand such references. However, it is the image of Hussein and Amadinejad that, while still providing some measure of entertainment, is particularly indicative of Hussein's role in contemporary *political* affairs. Here, Hussein becomes the ghost to whom others are compared. Just as Hussein was once the ghost of Hitler, tyrants such as Amadinejad are now seen as the ghost of Saddam Hussein. The noose, while still present is now held around Amadinejad's neck while Hussein blows smoke and wears a fiery crown, presumably earned via his reign in Hell. In both images, Hussein is again denied a body. While these images are constructed by amateurs and are circulated outside mainstream distribution channels, their focus on spectrality and disembodiment conforms to the same visual rhetorical strategies as publications such as *Time*. The presence of such imagery both before *and* after Hussein's death marks the moment of his execution as a

unique departure from a conventional rhetoric of evil surrounding Hussein for in this video, the body returns in a fragile and injured state.

2.1.3   Other Faces of Evil in the War on Terror

In addition to the marking of Osama Bin Laden and Saddam Hussein as specific icons of evil in the War on Terror, other figures of Muslim alterity also come to signify the usefulness of a rhetoric of evil. Indeed, less recognizable faces of evil make up a significant portion of the discourse surrounding both the actual and supposed perpetrators of 9/11. Certainly not all members of Islam are constructed as "evil" or as terrorists, yet Islam has nonetheless become the target of the War on Terror. It seems that latent colonial and Orientalist tropes continues to paint the Muslim world with fear and suspicion and these genealogies have become more pronounced since the 9/11 attacks. Devetak notes that, "[s]ince September 11…the gothic scene has become a much more prominent discursive feature of international relations".[72] George Bush's declaration of a "crusade" against terrorism, following the 9/11 attacks invokes a long trajectory of monstrous Muslim otherness that is not limited to well-known tyrants and figures of international conflict. In fact, much of the rhetoric of the War on Terror relies on the possibility that unidentified terrorists are lurking within North America. In her book, *Casting Out*, Sherene Razack writes about the racial profiling used to determine potential terror suspects. She argues that the Canadian *Immigration Act* allows for the detention of individuals whose life history and origins determine that they are capable of committing

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[72] Devetak, *The Gothic*, 622.

terrorist acts. For Razack, this is a suspension of due process rights and sets a dangerous precedent. She suggests:

> [w]hen race thinking, the belief in the division of humanity into those prone to violence and those who are not according to descent, is accompanied by the idea that there must be two different, hierarchical legal regimes for each, and when we begin to grow accustomed to places without law and to people to whom the rule of law does not apply, we enter the terrifying world of the colonies and the concentration camp.[73]

Razack's study reveals the extent to which racial profiling and the long-standing suspicion of Muslim otherness is inherent in both cultural and juridical frameworks. By virtue of their appearance, Muslim individuals have, in novelist Laila Halaby's words, "nothing and everything" to do with terrorism.[74] The suspension of rights on suspicion of terror reinforces dominant constructions of Muslim alterity in the War on Terror and prevents alternative perspectives from entering popular consciousness.

Media has a crucial role to play in directing popular assessment of potential terror suspects and the representation of white perpetrators is vastly different than the representation of cultural others. There are indeed white suspects of terrorism. Timothy McVeigh, after all was the army veteran responsible for the Oklahoma City bombing. Unlike suspects in the Trade Center attacks and 9/11 hijackings, however, McVeigh's guilt is understood to be an anomaly, a tragic but unusual blemish on an otherwise spotless collective performance of white, American citizenship. As Razack notes, "whites

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[73] Sherene Razack, *Casting Out: The Eviction of Muslims from Western Law and Politics* (Toronto, University of Toronto Press, 2008), 28.
[74] Laila Halaby, *Once In a Promised Land* (Boston, Beacon Press, 2007), viii.

remain individuals while Arabs and Muslims are understood only as a group with the group characteristic of violence".[75] The tendency to see Muslim violence as emblematic of Eastern culture is not limited to post-9/11 responses to terrorism. Because of the long tradition of associating Muslim alterity with indiscriminate violence, Islam becomes easily naturalized as an evil threat and breeding ground for terror following 9/11. Other reasons for targeting Islamic states, such as the desire for access to their rich oil stores, are consistently underemphasized. Further, despite violent conflict happening worldwide, American aggressions are seldom, if ever, painted as acts of terror. Then, and still, discussions about the roots of terrorism tend to focus on psychological and pathological factors rather than social or political causes. Caricatures of terrorists draw on Orientalist discourses of abnormality and pre-modern backwardness which find their way into media and even academic debate via what Razack refers to as "tabloid realism". According to Razack, this method of information sharing offers "a simplified version of reality, proof, as it were, of a civilized world menaced by a barbarian Other…it is not surprising that tabloid realism achieves its coherence through an appeal to the visual".[76] The construction of Muslim others as monsters is crucial to establishing legitimacy for the State's extra-juridical methods of interrogation, incarceration and even torture. Indeed, as Razack points out, "[w]ithout monster terrorists, states of exception would not be justified and states would confront the threat of terrorism *within* the law".[77] It is tabloid realism and its ability to strip Muslim suspects of terror of humanity that creates the conditions under which torture is permissible.

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[75] Razack, *Casting*, 33.
[76] Ibid., 48.
[77] Ibid., 50.

In Fall 2009, FOX News included a segment on a new threat to American security. This news report hinted that the United States was not safe from further attacks. The face behind this new threat was Adnan El Shukrijumah, who was purported to be the next Mohamed Atta, the alleged mastermind of the 9/11 attacks. Various strategies are used in this news piece that strip Shukrijumah of humanity. For example, in FOX's coverage, Shukrijumah is not referred to by his given name, but by a nickname, "Jafar the pilot", and is only shown briefly in still photos. Meanwhile, news correspondents explain that waterboarding techniques were used to elicit Shukrijumah's true identity while the screen text reads "Mohamed Atta's Successor: Working on nuclear attack against the U.S?".[78] The placement of this text is not accidental. At the moment when interrogation techniques reach their most inhumane, the reminder that this man is plotting an imminent attack, specifically a nuclear attack, provides the viewer assurance that this man is not deserving of normal human protection within either legal or humanist frameworks. The torturous act of waterboarding, thus, is rendered insignificant compared to the threat of impending attack and comes to be viewed as a necessary action to protect American citizens from imminent nuclear threat. Shukrijumah is not shown enduring the suffering that waterboarding would inflict. In fact, according to the news segment, the only outcome of the waterboarding is his successful identification and there is no suggestion that waterboarding causes any kind of injury or emotional trauma.[79] He is not afforded a

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[78] "Jafar the Pilot: Experts identify 'new' Mohamed Atta", *Fox News*, December 22, 2009, http://video.foxnews.com/v/3940129/jafar-the-pilot/.

[79] Christopher Hitchens, "Believe Me, It's Torture," *Vanity Fair*, August 2008, http://www.vanityfair.com/politics/features/2008/08/hitchens200808.
In his article for *Vanity Fair*, Christopher Hitchens describes waterboarding as more than a simulated drowning. When you are waterboarded, according to Hitchens, "you are drowning". Hitchens voluntarily subjected himself to waterboarding and did so in good health and with the assurance that the effects could be halted at any moment by a pre-arranged signal. Even with these safeguards, Hitchens was made to sign a

voice or a name and no proof is offered to determine his actual culpability. He is a

monster who can harm but not be harmed. In short, mainstream network media only

allows certain lives to be known in their culpability and not in their precariousness. While

FOX is not necessarily representative of all American mainstream media the

dehumanization of terror suspects and the focus on suspects' guilt rather than the injury

done to their bodies is not unique to any singular network. What then, does the erasure of

injury suggest about how violence against terror suspects is perceived? Surely the

physical evidence of torture remains on the body after the interrogation has ended yet

somehow, via existing patterns of Orientalism and othering, this violence becomes

naturalized as not only necessary but not even violence at all since violence can only be

done to bodies that fall into a particular category of human.

Like the racial profiling inherent in the Canadian *Immigration Act*, torture policy in

the United States permits similar states of exception that allow for the imprisonment of

individuals suspected of terror. Jay S. Baybee's January 22, 2002 report prepared for

Alberto Gonzales, Counsel to the President, and William J. Haynes II, General Counsel

of the Department of Defense, regarding the interrogation of terror suspects makes

alarming conclusions concerning the application of international treaties and federal laws

to detainees suspected of belonging to terrorist networks. According to the report,

"neither the federal War Crimes Act nor the Geneva Conventions would apply to the

detention conditions of al Qaeda prisoners…the President has the plenary constitutional

power to suspend our treaty obligations toward Afghanistan during the period of

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contract acknowledging that these "measures may fail and even if they work properly they may not prevent
Hitchens from experiencing serious injury or death". Hitchens concluded that, even based on his limited
and controlled experience of waterboarding, it does constitute a form of torture.

conflict".[80] Similarly, John Ashcroft's memo to President George Bush on February 1, 2002 confirms that Afghanistan is not covered by the Geneva Convention because it is considered a "failed state".[81] More than arresting and detaining individuals suspected of terror, American run facilities are exempt from reproach when using harm to elicit information or confessions. An official request for approval of interrogation techniques at Abu Ghraib in November 2003 reveals the racial divide between lives worth protecting and lives not afforded protection. In one request for interrogation, during the description of proposed interrogation – methods of which include sleep deprivation, barking dogs, strip searches and "stress positions" – the Syrian male suspect is referred to only as the "detainee". These methods of interrogation are justified in the request as potentially saving "countless lives of American soldiers".[82] The designation of "detainee", suggests culpability despite proof and limits human identification with the prisoner. "Detainee" stands out in stark contrast to the "countless lives" that will be saved. Here, American soldiers are represented as worthy lives, while the detainee is represented as less than human in order to justify the proposed interrogation techniques. What the use of "detainee" reveals is not simply the refusal to count incarcerated lives as living (indeed, this practice is not limited to the War on Terror and prisons around the world operate under similar discourses) but the extent to which the racial profiling of detainees compounds an already dehumanized process. While subjects incarcerated in American

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[80] Jay s. Baybee, "Application of International Treaties and Federal Laws to Detainees Suspected of Terror," *Torture Papers: The Road to Abu Ghraib,* Eds. Karen J Greenberg and Joshua L. Dratel (New York, Cambridge University Press, 2005), 116.

[81] John Ashcroft, Memo, *Torture Papers: The Road to Abu Ghraib,* Eds. Karen J Greenberg and Joshua L. Dratel (New York, Cambridge University Press, 2005), 126.

[82] "Request for Interrogation," *Torture Papers: The Road to Abu Ghraib,* Eds. Karen J Greenberg and Joshua L. Dratel (New York, Cambridge University Press, 2005), 467.

prisons are stripped of lives worth living, the suggestion that they once had worthy lives

from which livability could indeed be stripped is in contrast to the majority of detainees

in the War on Terror who, prior to their incarceration and despite having jobs and

families were never considered as occupying a "livable" life, or inhabiting a grievable

body.

The treatment of Shukrijumah and ongoing demonization of the Muslim Other

reveals a disturbing trend of dehumanization inherent in the War on Terror in which

humanity is allocated via an inequitable set of criteria. Accordingly, Butler contests the

attempts of those such as Samuel Huntington[83] that seek to divide the East and Islam

from the West according to civilizational norms. She argues that "[t]he term and practice

of 'civilization' work to produce the human differentially by offering a culturally limited

norm for what the human is supposed to be".[84] If such figures are determined to be

inhuman, what then are they? According to Butler, they are the "spectrally human…made

to live and die within that extra-human and extra-juridical sphere of life".[85] Political

violence committed in the name of a War on Terror thus goes unnoticed and the suffering

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[83] Samuel Huntington, "The Clash of Civilizations," *Foreign Affairs*, Summer 1993.
    http://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/48950/samuel-p-huntington/the-clash-of-civilizations.
Huntington's 1993 hypothesis that future conflicts will be divided along lines of East and West remains a
dominant trend in contemporary politics. His persistence in separating people along civilizational norms is
problematic in two major ways. First, Huntington fails to consider hybridity, diaspora and other forms of
transculturation as defying the dualism of East and West. Secondly, his insistence that "more virulent"
forms of conflict between The West and Islam are likely as well as his claim that "Islam has bloody
borders" perpetuates ideas of not only the inevitability of conflict but also the notion that Muslim
populations are inherently violent. Similarly, in "The Roots of Muslim Rage" (1990), Bernard Lewis argues
that Western imperialism, colonialism and racism are not suitable enough reasons for Muslim opposition to
the United States. Instead, he pre-dates Huntington's thesis by suggesting that the Muslim and Western
worlds have always been in conflict and that fundamentalism is an Islamic tradition. Despite his
acknowledgement of the "dignity and courtesy" of the "humblest peasant", Lewis still suggests a violent
anger always hidden under the surface: "in moments of upheaval and disruption, when the deeper passions
are stirred, this dignity and courtesy toward others can give way to an explosive mixture of rage and
hatred" (8).
[84] Butler, *Precarious*, 91.
[85] Ibid.

of victims is hidden while information and images conferring his or her guilt is highlighted. If such suffering was to be made visual, "[f]ew would fail to notice the growing common ground between the perpetrators of 9/11 and the official response to it called 'the war on terror'".[86] The dehumanization of Muslim others, particularly detainees, via both legal and rhetorical frameworks, is dramatically visible in the violence inflicted at Guantanamo and Abu Ghraib prisons, at which the violent disavowal of the prisoners' humanity rationalizes torture as an acceptable punishment in the War on Terror. Not only are they not protected from violence but they are actively marked for elimination. While the violence of the prisoners is exposed in the now infamous images taken at Abu Ghraib, their suffering is not recognized as such and they are denied this recognition by processes that already and always mark them for death. That we must, in many cases, look outside the frame to imagine their suffering while their abject otherness is presented as a given is reason enough to pause and consider, in this next chapter, how the victims of Abu Ghraib continue to be dehumanized by the photographs depicting their abuse.

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[86] Mamdani, *Good Muslim*, 230.

3   Representing Violence and Suffering at Abu Ghraib

This chapter examines the photographs of prisoner abuse taken at Abu Ghraib[87] in
order to offer an analysis of the images that evaluates their potential to humanize the
suffering of detainees in the War on Terror. As such, this chapter will perform two main
tasks: First, I will provide a way into discussions regarding the human suffering of
Saddam Hussein by examining the suffering experienced by others deemed "evil" in the
War on Terror. By concluding that the images foreclose the recognition of human
suffering, I will establish that the frameworks that allow suffering to become visible are
absent in the Abu Ghraib archive whereas they are present in the execution video of
Saddam Hussein. Second, this chapter will offer a new interrogation of Abu Ghraib that,
while supporting arguments that the torture of prisoners was raced, classed and
sexualized, also suggests that the images of abuse display an evacuation of the human
and *suffering* body. In this way, the images taken at Abu Ghraib must be thought of as
dehumanizing, more akin to pornography and snuff film, and they do little to alter the
dominant assessment of Muslim others in the War on Terror. While the images are seen
as disturbing within dominant frameworks of understanding, it is because they are seen as
distasteful or embarrassing and not because they are recognized as revealing human
suffering. They are violent and they expose violence but in their viewing it is the
shocking qualities of the image, the sexuality, bodily fluids and smiling faces of the
prison guards, that are emphasized rather than the precarious humanity of the detainees.
They fail to humanize because the subjects are not seen as human according to dominant

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[87] http://www.salon.com/news/abu_ghraib/2006/03/14/introduction
The *Salon.com* archive contains a collection of 279 images taken at Abu Ghraib that were a part of the
American military's internal investigation into abuse at the prison.

norms of race, class and sexuality. Thus, the problem is not that they did not suffer abuse but, rather, that suffering is allocated according to a hierarchy of the human. It is not the occurrence of suffering that I seek to challenge here but the extent to which suffering can be recognized. The battered and humiliated bodies of the detainees, therefore, while admittedly the result of abuse or violence are not seen as communicating suffering, particularly when held up to the suffering that occurred in real and lived human victims of 9/11, for instance. In order for one to recognize suffering in a particular life, that life must first be regarded as one worth living.

Ultimately, despite the political and human rights concern following the release of the images, the photographs are subject to normative frames of representation that mask human suffering, regardless of the real violence that was inflicted. For the purposes of this thesis, the term "suffering" refers generally to both physical pain and mental distress which are bound in experiences that structure relationships between victim and perpetrator and between sufferers and those who view representations of suffering. The purpose of this thesis is not to designate what is suffering and what is not but to explore what is *seen* and *understood* as suffering and what is not. Therefore, even if real suffering is taking place in the photographs, the frameworks in which they appear preclude it from being recognized as suffering. This chapter questions the visual and discursive frameworks that highlight the suffering of certain bodies and not others. In other words, why is it that pain and torture is perceived as real and abhorrent when practiced against some but minimized and justified against others?

Perhaps one of the most visually startling examples of violence in the name of the War on Terror can be found in the public revelation incidences of prisoner abuse at Abu

Ghraib. Discourses of othering, particularly in relation to the evil and nameless terrorist, as discussed in Chapter Two, have contributed to techniques of interrogation that justify a dehumanization that rationalizes violence against cultural and racial others. While the event of Abu Ghraib certainly reveals deep Orientalist traditions of othering, the photographs of prisoner abuse themselves can be understood as only minimally destabilizing discourses of Muslim alterity. While the digital images of torture challenge mythologies of a demonic and monstrous Islam through their depiction of human rights abuse perpetrated by American military personnel against Muslims, they do little to mitigate the perpetual construction of a deviant and abject Muslim sexuality. Moreover, although the Abu Ghraib images provoked shock and outrage when publicly released in early 2004, with some even calling for the resignation of Donald Rumsfeld[88], such outrage has no effect in dominant views of Muslim otherness, for the images are still subject to normative frames of representation that predetermine the presence of the human. Indeed, *Newsweek*'s push for accountability in its May 6, 2004 issue cites the causes of the Abu Ghraib abuse to be "errors and indiscipline", a vague source of violence that focuses on the actions of the guards rather than the injured bodies of the prisoners.[89] The article demands Rumsfeld step down not because the torture was inflicted on human lives that feel pain as acutely as American citizens but because "[t]he pictures of abuse, especially the one on our cover of the hooded man wired as if for electrocution, stand an awful chance of becoming iconic images that could haunt

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[88] Bill Emmott, "Resign Rumsfeld", *The Economist,* May 6, 2004.
http://www.economist.com/node/2647493?story_id=E1_NGQSQJP.
According to Emmott, responsibility for the events of Abu Ghraib must be taken at the top, namely by then Secretary of Defense, Donald Rumsfeld.
[89] Ibid.

America for years to come".[90] When Rumsfeld himself, in his official apology before the

Senate Armed Services Committee, claims, "I feel horrible…[the torture at Abu Ghraib]

was inconsistent with the values of our nation"[91], he situates the event of prison abuse as

an anomaly that is in no way indicative of American foreign policy in the War on Terror.

Like the *Newsweek* article, Rumsfeld's apology focuses on the damage done to American

identity and expresses no remorse for the injury done to real human lives. This chapter

suggests that prisoner torture is *not* an anomaly but is, rather, emblematic of dominant

attitudes towards Muslim others and that the photographic documentation of torture

raises important questions about who is permitted a body capable of suffering. I examine

the potential of these image from Abu Ghraib to communicate human suffering and the

extent to which the visibility of suffering impacts dominant discourses concerning

violence and (de)humanization in the War on Terror.

3.1 Imaging Otherness

The visual representation of violence, torture and conflict is certainly not new;

however, there is an important distinction to be made between photojournalism and

images that are recorded as a form of trophy or source of pleasure. Leaving aside the long

history of communicating battles via pictures and symbols, artists have been painting

scenes from war and violent political events for centuries. Since the advent of

photography, photojournalism has been interpreted as a more "authentic" representation

of events: "What photographers were claiming was that photographs were able to depict

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[90] Ibid.
[91] "Iraq prisoner abuse 'un-American,' says Rumsfeld", *The Washington Times*, May 7, 2004.
http://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2004/may/7/20040507-115901-6736r/

the same subjects as paintings, and with greater truthfulness".[92] Within the sub-genre of

conflict photography, images have existed as a mode of both revelation (exposing

international human rights abuse) and as an assertion of superiority (establishing the

"West" as a beacon of humanity). Human suffering has long compelled both amateur and

professional photographers to communicate atrocity to the masses from a privileged

vantage point. As Susan Sontag notes in *On Photography*, "[s]ocial misery has inspired

the comfortably-off with the urge to take pictures, the gentlest of predations, in order to

document a hidden reality, that is, a reality hidden from them".[93] The role of the

photographer, despite attempts at unbiased journalistic integrity and objectivity, is

complicated when capturing subjects of conflict. As a form of documentation, images

participate in a visual economy that not only privileges certain images over others, but

also permits both the author and viewer of the image ownership over the image's subject:

"Even those photographs which speak so laceratingly of a specific historical moment also

give us vicarious possession of their subjects under the aspect of a kind of eternity: the

beautiful".[94] The more "beautiful" and more composed the image is, the greater the desire

to possess it.

Conventional images of conflict, particularly when suffering is involved, also offer

a form of catharsis[95]; rather than prompting critical reflection, images often allow us to

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[92] Peter Robertson, "More than Meets the Eye," *Words in Common: Essays on Language, Culture, and Society*, Ed. Gillian Thomas (Don Mills: Addison-Wesley, 1999), 288.

[93] Susan Sontag, *On Photography* (New York, Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1977), p. 55.

[94] Ibid., 109.

[95] Aristotle, *Poetics*, Ed. Gerald Else, (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1967).
For Aristotle, catharsis and tragedy are inextricably linked. As Gerald Else notes in his introduction to Aristotle's *Poetics*, "[t]he arousing of pity and fear is an integral part of the work of tragedy" (6-7). Catharsis, then, for Aristotle is a "purification of whatever is 'filthy' or 'polluted' in the *pathos*, the tragic act" (Else in Aristotle 98). Aristotle's definitions of tragedy and catharsis have significant implications for the viewing of conflict photography because, as spectators, we want the tragedy but not the filth. Catharsis allows us the pleasure of the image without the unsettling nature of the actual event or site of tragedy itself.

forgo response entirely. Or, as Sontag argues, "[a]s much as they create sympathy,

photographs cut sympathy, distance the emotions. Photography's realism creates a

confusion about the real which is (in the long run) analgesis morally as well as (both in

the long and in the short run) sensorially stimulating".[96] Rather than demand action from

the viewer, photographs allow for a vicarious identification with conflict that we can

experience from the safety of our homes. The photographs, in Sontag's words, are thus a

means of "making 'real' (or 'more real') matters that the privileged and the merely safe

might prefer to ignore".[97] The photographer is expected to present an unbiased and

unobstructed view of events. As Sontag suggests in *Regarding the Pain of Others*, "[w]e

want the photographer to be a spy in the house of love and of death, and those being

photographed to be unaware of the camera, 'off guard'".[98] Indeed, there seems to be a

preoccupation in conflict photography with catching the subject unaware, as though that

might present a more accurate depiction of "reality". According to Sontag, photographs

of this "reality" elicit feelings of both pity and disgust which often cease once the image

is out of view. These feelings prevent a more critical interpretation of the image,

particularly in regards to suffering. Yet these immediate feelings "should not distract you

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Catharsis, in short, gives us distance and allows access to what is beautiful in tragedy without having to experience the tragedy itself. According to Aristotle,

> [t]ragedy, then, is a process of imitating an action which has serious consequences; is complete and possesses magnitude; by means of language which has been made sensuously attractive, with each of its varieties found separately in the parts; enacted by persons themselves and not presented through narrative; through a course of pity and fear completing the purification of tragic acts which have these emotional characteristics. (25)

Images of conflict fulfill Aristotle's definition of tragedy. They are complete in the sense that the event itself has already taken place before the image is viewed or circulated. Moreover, conflict images clearly possess magnitude, either in their compositional structure or the implications of the events they depict. Indeed, they are "sensuously attractive" and produce both pity and fear.

[96] Ibid., 110.

[97] Susan Sontag, *Regarding the Pain of Others* (New York, Picador, 2003), 7.

[98] Ibid., 55.

from asking what pictures, whose cruelties, whose deaths are *not* being shown".[99] While Sontag indicates that the images which communicate suffering may foreclose the suffering of some in favour of others, her framework focuses on a very particular form of representation. That is, she documents the potential of journalistic war images to communicate the suffering of presumably *innocent* bodies. This framework, while useful in terms of its assessment of the role of the photographer is limited when it comes to the images taken at Abu Ghraib, in which the subjects are neither unaware nor presumed innocent. Moreover, unlike the images Sontag describes, which are documented by a presumably neutral outsider, the photographer at Abu Ghraib is an active participant on the scene that the camera depicts.

3.2   Framing Abu Ghraib

Rather than subscribing to journalistic norms typical of the war reportage Sontag describes, the Abu Ghraib photographs operate within several other visual frameworks, occurring simultaneously, that have important implications when examining how the suffering of Muslim detainees is represented. First, the images from Abu Ghraib depict a *staged* event and, whether picturing the forced performance of the prisoners or the enthusiastic behavior of the guards, the photographs document an overtly scripted act – that is, beyond social norms and expectations – rather than expose an impromptu violence. Second, the images subscribe more closely to the conventions of violent pornography and snuff "entertainment" than they do conventional journalism in that the photographer is actively involved in perpetrating violence and the camera perpetuates

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[99] Ibid., 14.

violence as much as it records it. Thus, while traditional conflict photography attempts to arouse feelings of pity and compassion, the Abu Ghraib photographs, as staged enactments of torture that resemble pornography and snuff, foreclose compassion and do little to humanize the suffering of others. This particular framing of violence at Abu Ghraib then, as specifically staged for the camera, is important in examining the representation of the suffering of Muslim detainees.

Judith Butler argues that the ways in which figures are presented or, quite literally, framed determines our responsiveness.[100] Images of suffering, when viewed outside dominant frameworks, have the potential to alert the viewer to the precariousness of the life of the other in at least three ways. First, images can question the assumption that responsibility for violence is limited to those who directly cause it. Second, images of suffering can communicate a demand – a hailing of sorts – that leaves one unable to turn away. Finally, images such as those taken at Abu Ghraib can reveal how our own humanity is conditioned by a relationship of responsibility towards others. When considering the possibilities for what images of violence *can* do, the ability of the images from Abu Ghraib to humanize suffering becomes complicated, for while the photographs of prisoner torture may alert us to human rights abuse in the name of a War on Terror, they do less to alter our assessment of Muslim bodies as abject others. The photos are potentially still framed in a way that highlights the deviance of the Muslim prisoners as well as the guards. As a result, the images become a significant contribution to an expanding rhetoric of terror that posits the Muslim other as a nameless and faceless terrorist. Utilizing the theories of the philosopher Emmanuel Levinas, Butler reasons "if

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[100] Judith Butler, *Frames of War* (New York, Verso, 2009), 62.

it is the face of the other that demands from us an ethical response, then it would seem

that the norms that would allocate who is and is not human arrive in visual form".[101] Who

we designate as deserving human rights and who is left out of that protection is

determined by pre-existing norms and assumptions about what counts as human life.

Images, thus, participate in this process of determining human from not, often by

supposing an objective truth or visual "proof". According to Butler, "the regime of truth

offers a framework for the scene of recognition, delineating who will qualify as a subject

of recognition and offering available norms for the act of recognition".[102] What Abu

Ghraib offers is a particularly complex space for thinking about the representation of

suffering for, while the images themselves are mediated (they are, in fact, staged), the

interrogation is not. Despite the actual occurrence of abuse during prisoner interrogation,

the images themselves operate under this "regime of truth". Their depiction of Muslim

bodies, whether they reinforce or challenge this regime, are in relation to the visual

framework set for any particular circumstance; in this case, the site of violence and extra-

juridical space that is Abu Ghraib prison and every framework set outside the space of

the prison that conditions how the images are received.

3.2.1   Staging Violence

For Elaine Scarry, the expression of pain allows the suffering of the other to

become real. Yet what if the pain must be imagined? While the detainees at Abu Ghraib

were indeed subject to pain at some point, their suffering is elided in the presentation on

the image. Because the framework of the photograph is one of performance, the real pain

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[101] Ibid., 77.
[102] Judith Butler, *Giving an Account of Oneself* (New York, Fordham, 2005), 22.

and torture are overlooked. This is not to suggest that prisoners were not indeed subject to painful, humiliating and torturous interrogation, in which they certainly suffered but, rather, to point out that what the photographer chose to depict is a scripted enactment of pain that may or may not have actually happened as it is pictured. While the narrative of pain, "enables pain to enter in a realm of shared discourse that is wider [and] more social",[103] the narrative of most of the Abu Ghraib images is one of staged performance. While the performance of the prisoner is indeed forced, it nonetheless renders any actual pain, and any possibility for humanization, invisible by drawing the viewers attention towards blood, feces and nakedness and away from the suffering human. Scarry reflects on the relationship between pain, visibility and humanity. Her study

> is about the way other persons become visible to us, or cease to be visible to us. It is about the way we make ourselves (and the originally interior facts of sentience) available to one another through verbal and material artifacts, as it is also about the way the derealization of artifacts may assist in taking away another person's visibility.[104]

The images presented in the second half of this chapter reflect precisely the condition that Scarry warns against. They illustrate a derealized staging of physical violence that likely took place but has been erased. The images of Muslim bodies at Abu Ghraib fail to return the other to materiality and raise questions about how the body itself figures in discourses of evil. Who, in the War on Terror, is permitted to have a body that can be harmed, disfigured or extinguished? Torture "bestows visibility on the structure and enormity of what is usually private and incommunicable, contained within the boundaries of the

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[103] Scarry, *The Body*, 9.
[104] Ibid., 22.

sufferer's body".[105] By releasing photographs that stage the suffering of othered bodies,

the real violence inflicted upon these bodies is made invisible in the sense that, in

viewing the images, the violence of the camera is displaced by the resulting photograph.

The role of the camera is seen as reflecting rather than framing and is indeed

orchestrating the events, for one must ask if this particular kind of humiliating torture

would have occurred without the presence of the camera. Here, the guards do not perform

the torture; rather, the camera and act of photography becomes the torturer as a weapon

of humiliation. While this humiliation is certainly a form of suffering it is not understood

as suffering if the victim is assumed to be sexually deviant and racially inferior. To be

sure, the detainees at Abu Ghraib can and did indeed suffer so why is that suffering not

recognized? As this thesis argues, only some are permitted to have bodies capable of

suffering within dominant frameworks of what it means to be human. The rhetorical

strategies that designate particular bodies as "evil" are the same strategies at work here

and because these photos have been released within this rhetorical framework, they fail to

be recognized as depicting suffering for their subjects are still seen as less than human.

In addition to subscribing to normative frameworks of the human and performing a

rhetorical function in discourses on terror, as a mode of address photographs make

language visible. They communicate precisely what cannot be spoken or what is

impossible to communicate in a moment of torture, for example. Scarry notes: "Whatever

pain achieves, it achieves in part through its unsharability, and it ensures this

unsharability through its resistance to language".[106] While the gravity of pain is perhaps

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[105] Ibid., 27.
[106] Elaine Scarry, *The Body in Pain The Making and Unmaking of the World* (New York, Oxford University Press, 1985), 4.

made real *through* its incommunicability, images such as those that emerged from Abu Ghraib convey torture in ways language cannot. However, the images reveal only the *staging* of suffering or its aftermath. In other words, while images can communicate beyond the limits of language, what they communicate in the case of Abu Ghraib is not necessarily humanizing. Returning to Levinas, for a moment, we might recognize the possibility that the other need not require a face or a language to communicate pain. The body does speak in alternate ways and the "face" of the other is not the literal human face; rather, it is a rhetorical figure, the name given to absolute alterity. The face is both the vulnerability and the communicability of otherness and, thus, can "speak" via the back, a profile, a limb or even in the complete absence of these things altogether. While Karen Engle suggests that as an anatomical structure, "the face carries the weight of presence; it is a marker of identity, an event of Being perceived as more or less readable by observable eyes" a trace of being remains even in the absence of the literal face.[107] While we might otherwise read images of tortured bodies as communicating suffering, understanding that the Abu Ghraib images present a *staged* event limits the transitive effect the Levinasian figure of the face might have. The face (back, limb, profile) in the Abu Ghraib images is stripped of its vulnerability. It is alterity without being absolute. It is a face manipulated specifically for a camera's lens and thus while these images contain a trace of the human, that trace is obscured by a social matrix that prefigures these particular lives as invalid.

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[107] Karen Engle, "The Face of a Terrorist," *Seeing Ghosts: 9/11 and the visual imagination* (Montreal: McGill-Queens UP, 2009), 84.

3.2.2   Pornography and Snuff

Sontag's framework for reading images of suffering is limited when considering the purpose of the Abu Ghraib images. The photographs taken by guards at the prison were not intended to expose the violence of detainee torture to the world; rather, they were taken for the enjoyment of the guards and a circle of friends, family and acquaintances. The images therefore operate more as snuff photos for those who are entertained by the consumption of visual violence. The visual ties between the Abu Ghraib images and violent pornography contribute to the images work in dehumanizing the prisoners rather than in exposing detainee suffering by directing so much attention to the pornographic aspect of the photos. In fact, as Carmine Sarracino and Kevin Scott note, the issue of pornography was often raised by major news outlets when discussing who was to "blame" for the events of Abu Ghraib.[108] However, the problem with associating the Abu Ghraib images with pornography is that mainstream porn is largely considered a form of *consensual* entertainment which does not reflect the reality that the acts depicted in the photos were forced or coerced. As Sarracino and Scott argue, "[d]escribing the photos as porn condemned them at the same time that it placed the acts they document in the realm of the merely distasteful rather than of war crimes".[109] Thus, while the images are seen as detestable, their familiarity with pornography detracts from the actual violence that took place. Yet why is it that when we see a naked body we assume the distastefully sexual or pornographic? Surely the naked body is the pinnacle of corporeal vulnerability, yet in

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[108] Carmine Sarracino and Kevin Scott, "The Nexus of Porn and Violence: Abu Ghraib and Beyond", *The Porning of America: The Rise of Porn Culture, What it Means and Where We Go From Here* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2008), 138. Sarracino and Scott note that the issue of pornography was a focal point in discussions about Abu Ghraib in major publications such as the *New York Times*, *Christian Science Monitor* and *National Review* and on CBS News and Salon.com.
[109] Ibid., 138-139.

these images nakedness implies pornography and not precariousness. Another aspect of pornography revealed in the Abu Ghraib photographs is its function to undermine specific cultural sensitivities about sex and sexuality. At Abu Ghraib, sex and the depiction of sexual acts operated as a threat that was particularly useful in interrogating Muslim men who were seen as "vulnerable to sexual humiliation".[110] Thus, pornography was no so much a result of the torture at Abu Ghraib as it was embedded in the violence itself.

According to David Kerekes and David Slater, "snuff films depict the killing of a human being…perpetrated for the medium of film and circulated amongst a jaded few for the purpose of entertainment".[111] While the abuse at Abu Ghraib does not necessarily take the form of a film, it does depict torture and abuse for the purposes of entertainment. More specifically, the act of recording abuse at Abu Ghraib combines both snuff and pornography, creating what Sarracino and Scott recognize as torture porn or "gorno" a crude combination of "gore" and "pornography". Different than mainstream pornography, torture porn does not require consent; indeed, it relies on the absence of consent as a way of controlling the victim. Many common conventions of snuff film are found in the images taken at Abu Ghraib. Bondage and torture, standing on or urinating on victims, violent rape and leashes and strangulation are all present in the Abu Ghraib archive. Sarracino and Scott, in their study on the intersections between porn, reality and violence, provide detailed account of the prevalence of websites linking sexual abuse, physical torture and the Middle East, suggesting that there is a significant market for

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[110] Ibid., 40.
[111] David Kerekes and David Slater, *Killing for Culture: An Illustrated History of Death Film* (Creation Books: San Francisco, 1994), 7.

images and video depicting violent pornography in the context of the War on Terror. In their assessment, "simulated violence and actual violence are not only appealing separately, but for certain viewers gain in appeal when brought together, side by side, so that one can easily go from one to the other and back again".[112] In the Abu Ghraib images, the simulated violence constitutes actual violence, even if their degradation and humiliation is not recognized as suffering, in that the prisoners are the subject and not the actors. The images of torture at Abu Ghraib also reveal aspects of snuff in terms of their engagement with abject bodies. Specifically, this intersection between snuff, pornography and the abject is illustrated through the highlighting of bodily fluids. As Kristeva describes: "A wound with blood and pus, or the sickly, acrid smell of sweat, of decay…[t]hese bodily fluids, this defilement, this shit are what life withstands, hardly and with difficulty, on the part of death".[113] In many of the images from Abu Ghraib, the presence of these markers of the abject are undeniable: prisoners covered in mud and feces, puddles of urine around shackled feet and blood stains on the floor. By reducing victims to their bodily fluids, as is common in snuff films, the Abu Ghraib images deny the properties of life and jettison the prisoners from the human into the abject.

Sherene Razack argues that the violence at Abu Ghraib must be understood as involving interlocking processes of race, class and sexuality. Clearly, the violence at Abu Ghraib is sexualized, in addition to being classed and racialized and one cannot be divorced from the others. At Abu Ghraib, sexuality becomes a further mechanism through which American superiority is achieved. As Jasbir Puar notes, detainee abuse "needs to be contextualized within a range of other practices and discourses…that

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[112] Ibid., 154.
[113] Kristeva, *Powers,* 3.

pivotally lasso sexuality in the deployment of U.S. nationalism, patriotism, and increasingly, empire".[114] Discourses surrounding sexuality and the Middle East are not new. It is via the structures of Orientalism, through which intimate sexuality and violence are connected with colonial and imperial agendas that sexualized violence can occur. In Orientalist discourses, sexuality is often related to violence via constructions of sexual excess and pleasure. However, as Puar points out:

> [a]lthough in Orientalism, Said charges that the Occident sought out the illicit sex found in the Orient in order to liberate itself from its own performance of the repressive hypothesis, in the case of Abu Ghraib, conversely, it is the repression of the Arab prisoners that is highlighted in order to efface the rampant hypersexual excesses of the U.S. prison guards.[115]

As Puar suggests, the extreme violence of the prison guards disappears in the construction of Muslim bodies as sites of aberrant sexuality. Thus, Richter-Montpetit's query, "how can we account for the highly sexualized character of many of the 'abuses'?"[116] is answered. Sherene Razack clarifies: "it is through the sexual that racial power is violently articulated".[117] Sexual violence at Abu Ghraib is not an extraordinary event but, rather, operates well within discourses of alterity and sexuality that have been re-circulating since the eighteenth century. Sexuality, as a mechanism of abjecting Eastern bodies, is used to justify particular forms of interrogation at Abu Ghraib and is part of a "tradition of Orientalism that fetishizes and feminizes the sexuality of subject

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[114] Puar, "Abu Ghraib," 533.
[115] Ibid., 527.
[116] Richter-Montpetit, "Empire," 39.
[117] Razack, "White Supremacy," 345.

peoples as part of a strategy of domination".[118] At Abu Ghraib, sexual torture and

interrogation furthers discourses of the abject Muslim body while attempting to remove

all humanity form the tortured subject. Moreover, as Razack notes, "[s]exualized violence

accomplishes the eviction from humanity, and it does so as an eviction from

masculinity".[119] Thus, the abuse of prisoners is sexualized not only to offend Muslim

sensibilities about women but also to turn detainees into feminized caricatures.

While the conditions that enable sexualized prisoner abuse comprise part of the

event of Abu Ghraib, the actual photographs themselves must be considered in terms of

both their reinforcement and simultaneous challenge to violent forms of othering.

Furthermore, the photographs of torture at Abu Ghraib must be understood as different

than traditional conflict photography which Sontag uses as her framework for thinking

about the representation of suffering. While many of these images alert viewers to the

presence of detained bodies and resort to conventional aesthetic techniques that elicit pity

rather than humanization, their purpose is not the same. The images from Abu Ghraib

were never meant to circulate in the press or general public, nor were they taken to

highlight the plight of prisoners. On the contrary, they were taken for personal reasons,

circulated among acquaintances and fellow soldiers and functioned to commemorate

rather than expose the event of prisoner torture. With this in mind, Sontag's analysis of

conflict images takes on new meaning. As Sontag notes, "[i]t seems that the appetite for

pictures showing bodies in pain is as keen, almost, as the desire for ones that show bodies

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[118] Mary Ann Tétreault, "The Sexual Politics of Abu Ghraib: Hegemony, Spectacle, and the Global War on Terror," *NWSA Journal* 18 (2006), 34.
[119] Razack, "White Supremacy," 353.

naked".[120] What this suggests is that the visual imaging of torture, for example, subscribes to aesthetic techniques more closely aligned with pornography than journalism. It is photography in the pursuit of pleasure and entertainment and for the purposes of conferring power on those orchestrating the scene. As viewers we expect a certain journalistic anonymity to preserve the reality of the image. Interestingly, however, Abu Ghraib shatters such conventions of traditional conflict photography by including American prison guards within the frame. Rather than being removed from the event taking place, these soldiers have become part of the event. The photographer is no longer a "fly on the wall" observing human tragedy. At Abu Ghraib, the photographers are staging tragedy and not only revealing but actively *creating* the conditions for the photograph. The photographs of torture at Abu Ghraib reveal that the imaging of suffering, particularly when soldiers *are* included in the frame in this way, reinforces the otherness and lack of agency of Muslim detainees. While the images depict abuse, they reinforce a hierarchy of the human through which the torture is recognized as abuse but not as suffering and thereby showcases deviance rather than humanity.

3.3   The Visibility of the Suffering Other at Abu Ghraib

The images of torture reveal the ways in which humanity is differentially distributed via representations of suffering. Often images afford some victims a measure of humanity and privacy while withholding the same courtesy from others. For example, as Sontag notes, "American casualties [have] appeared in a number of news-magazines, always prone or shrouded or with faces turned away. This is a dignity not thought

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[120] Sontag, *Regarding*, 41.

necessary to afford to others".[121] Of course, it is rare to see images of American casualties at all in mainstream coverage and when we do, they are given names and referred to as victims rather than nameless "collateral damage". This courtesy is certainly not extended to Muslim detainees. In this way, the photographs of abuse at Abu Ghraib do little to challenge traditional photographic or civilizational norms. Indeed, while many of the Abu Ghraib images depict prisoners obscured by hoods, the rest of their battered and naked bodies are on display. For the perpetrators of violence, the photographs serve as a tangible reminder of their dominance. Indeed, as Sontag points out, photographs do more than record, they "objectify: they turn an event or a person into something that can be possessed".[122] In the digital age, images do much more. Because of the Internet, the abuse is archived and remembered, not as an event in which torture took place, but as an event in which torture continues to be experienced by victims and witnessed by all those who see the reproduced images. While this may provide an alternative framework to violence in the War on Terror, in that the reproduction of images continues to draw attention to the abuse of human rights, it also presents the event as one still moment in time and space rather than a prolonged and ongoing abuse of rights for a number of years in multiple detention facilities. Sontag suggests: "The problem is not that people remember through photographs, but that they remember *only* the photographs".[123] The prisoner abuse at Abu Ghraib needs to be contextualized in terms of the larger issues of violence, interrogation and racism that have occurred throughout the course of the War on Terror.

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[121] Ibid., 70.
[122] Ibid., 81.
[123] Ibid., 89, emphasis added.

Images of prisoner abuse also reinforce racial and sexual hierarchies by presenting the victims of torture, although obviously suffering, as victims who still depart from heteronormativity. While they represent the other as having a capacity to suffer, the images still do so in a way that reinforces their ongoing deviance and it is that deviance, not the suffering, that is remembered. In his paper on the performance of sexual torture, Nicolas Mirzoeff notes, "[i]n the Abu Ghraib photographs, sodomy was visualized as embodied spectacle, a mass of alterity that confirmed the long-standing sense of the "Oriental" as deviant".[124] In this case, "Oriental" refers to the contemporary Middle Eastern, Muslim man. Perpetually constructed as perverse, the Middle Eastern man, despite the violence inflicted upon his body, still becomes the source of displeasure. Or, as Puar claims, "perversity is still localized to the body of the queer Muslim terrorist, insistently deferred to those outside the U.S. perimeter of supposed normality".[125] The acts of sodomy and homosexuality depicted in the photos are met with disgust, not because they are forced acts — although certainly some of the disgust stems from the horror that American soldiers could do such a thing — but rather because such acts depart from conceptions about heteronormative Western sexuality. Regardless, the suffering of the detainees is again overlooked and it is *deviance* that comes to characterize what is *normal* Muslim sexuality. Puar notes, "[t]his interpretation of sexual norms in the "Middle East"-repressed, but with perversity bubbling just underneath the surface-is part of centuries-long Orientalist traditions, an Orientalist phantasmatic that

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[124] Nicolas Mirzoeff, "Invisible Empire: Visual Culture, Embodied Spectacle, and Abu Ghraib," *Radical History Review* 95 (Spring 2006), 21.
[125] Puar, "Abu Ghraib," 533.

certainly informed the photographs of the torture at Abu Ghraib".[126] As a result, the

sexual deviance of Muslim detainees is highlighted while the actual physical violence

done to the body is erased leading to "the eventual disowning of the injury so that its

attributes can be transferred elsewhere, as they cannot if they are permitted to cling to the

original site of the wound, the human body".[127] Significantly, it is the staging of

perversity and not actual sexual acts that allow the detainees to be seen as sexually

deviant. Their deviance is constructed, not through real acts of sodomy or homosexuality

but, rather, through the actions and careful arrangements orchestrated by the prison

guards. The image itself, therefore, is meant to highlight deviance and erase suffering

and, again, while the images reveal evidence of abuse and humiliation, they do not allow

the victims to be seen as suffering. Butler argues that a critical reading on these images

means to "consider the way in which suffering is presented to us and how that

presentation affects our responsiveness"[128] In a way, the shocking nature of the images

works against their potential to humanize as, in their viewing, the humanity of the victim

is eclipsed by the explicit content of the photograph. By focusing on the sexual elements

of tortured bodies, the injury is lost and what remains clinging to the body is abject

sexuality not worthy of humanization or protection from violence.

3.4 Reading the Abu Ghraib Archive

The visual archive of Abu Ghraib includes hundred of photographs of United States

soldiers – Charles Graner, Lynndie England and others – and reveals a multitude of

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[126] Ibid., 524.
[127] Scarry, *The Body*, 64.
[128] Butler, *Frames*, 63.

abuses. These include but are not limited to, sexual abuse and humiliation, electrical torture, dog attacks, sleep deprivation, stress inducing positions, subjection to chemicals and bodily fluids and beating leading to severe injury and even death.[129] Images of these offenses, recorded by guards at the prison, came to the attention of the American military at the beginning of 2004, when Specialist Joseph Darby handed over photographic evidence of the abuse to the military's Criminal Investigation Command (CID).[130] While the photos first appeared to the public several months later via CBS News and the *New Yorker*, *Salon Magazine* hosts an online archive where 279 of the images are stored and painstakingly organized with the times, dates and details of abuse uncovered by the CID's investigation.

One such image, according to CID's records, was taken at 9:33pm on November 14, 2003. It depicts a prisoner's robe, lying on the floor and splattered with blood, while a trail of blood leads away from the garment and out of the frame. Other images appear on the edges of the frame such as shoes and some other clothing items that bear traces of the human that once occupied them but is now suspiciously absent. Another image reveals a significant presence of blood on the prison floor. The way it pools in some areas and is smudged in others suggests that a violent struggle took place. The CID records this image as being taken at 11:27pm on December 12, 2003. The camouflaged backpack (presumably a soldier's) and white rubber glove indicate that at least one person, at some point, occupied this frame as well. The title of the collection of images of which this one is a part, "Working Dogs", suggests that this blood may be the result of a canine attack.

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[129] "The Abu Ghraib Files", *Salon.com*, March 14, 2006.
http://www.salon.com/news/the_abu_ghraib_files/index.html.
[130] Ibid.

Again, however, the human presence is missing leading one to question of both images: whose blood has been spilled here?

While photographs masquerade as supposed snapshots of truth, they leave out as many truths as they attempt to represent. As Sontag notes, whether decisions are made by the photographer, or an editor, "it is always the image that someone chose; to photograph is to frame, and to frame is to exclude".[131] While the blood in these images clearly indicates the presence of some form of violence, the human element of that violence has been removed. Indeed, the human subject has been completely erased, as has the suffering body. While the photo acts as "evidence" in the CID's investigation, it is not evidence of *human* suffering, making the subject of that violence (and source of the blood) not specifically human. What was once a scene of torture and suffering is now framed as an act that took place at some time and against some body. The absence of the suffering body renders the victim of violence unintelligible and thus the image is not read as signaling human suffering. Butler writes of the conditions upon which some figures become "readable" as human, and others not:

> If my face is readable at all, it becomes so only by entering into a visual
> frame that conditions its readability…if one is to respond ethically to a
> human face, there must first be a frame for the human, one that can include
> any number of variations as ready instances. But given how contested the
> visual representation of the 'human' is, it would appear that our capacity to

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[131] Sontag, *Regarding*, 46.

respond to a face as a human face is conditioned and mediated by frames of reference that are variably humanizing and dehumanizing".[132]

In these images, the human face or body is conspicuously absent and thereby unreadable. At the same time, however, these images reveal the permanence of suffering and the stains of a violence that do not easily wash away. On the one hand, the images foreclose suffering by failing to represent the violence and after effects of violence as human. However, they also potentially question the notion that the suffering represented in the photograph cannot be "real" suffering if the subject of suffering is absent or not recognized as human.

In another image from Abu Ghraib prison, a shackled detainee stands before a smiling prison guard who is holding a baton. This image depicts Staff Sergeant Ivan Fredrick and an unknown detainee and was taken at 11:25 pm on November 12, 2003.[133] The prisoner's back is to the camera, yet the brown substance that covers him, a combination of mud and feces according to the CID report, and his outstretched arms suggest pain, humiliation and fear of violence, should he fail to comply with the orders of the guard and his baton. Moreover, the iconography of the prisoner's pose subscribes to Christian notions of the suffering Christ. Much like the story of Christ's journey to the cross, the Abu Ghraib scene is one of ritualistic and humiliating violence. Yet this resemblance is complex in that as the prisoner takes the position of the Christian world's example of suffering *par excellence*, his humanization is supported by the dominantly held belief that Christ was an *innocent* sufferer whose killing was encouraged by a mob

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[132] Butler, *Giving*, 29.
[133] "The Abu Ghraib Files", *Salon.com*, March 14, 2006.
http://www.salon.com/news/abu_ghraib/2006/03/14/chapter_9/slideshow.html.

of spectators. Thus the image offers the potential humanization of the detainee in two ways. First, its likening to the iconography of the cross exposes the Abu Ghraib violence as violence for the sake of the spectator and by doing so reconstructs the Christian scene as one born of a desire to watch the suffering of an innocent other. Second, the Abu Ghraib image suggests a possible subversive act on the part of the detainee as he stretches out his arms in what is perhaps a mocking acceptance of his fate just as Christ accepted his. However, while the pausing of this ritual of humiliation and the layers of Christian similitude may represent a moment of suffering, physical or mental, or humanizing subversion, it is not understood as such within a dominant framework that highlights the nakedness, mud and feces over the suffering human. The image provides evidence that abuse occurred and identifies the perpetrator of that abuse but the result of the abuse is embarrassment, scandal and even violence which would all constitute suffering were the image framed in such a way as to make suffering more visible. In this way, the image does little to represent suffering even though the presence of the image is disturbing and impeachable. This is not an image that exposes the face of absolute alterity or Christ-like innocence. It is a trophy photo, taken of, and for, the guard who stands smiling for the camera's lens.

The way in which images such as this have been circulated through the media also reflects a focus on the startling nature of the images rather than the shock of the human suffering that occurred. Rather than feel compassion for this suffering body, the viewer is turned away from the image and its shocking elements. As a result, the suffering of the victim at Abu Ghraib is again erased and the image becomes an example of the misdeeds of a few guards and is in no way indicative of the overall treatment of detainees in the

War on Terror. The first news network to present the images, in fact, presents this violence as an unusual occurrence in an otherwise responsible mission, a notion that is supported by the shocking content of the photographs for surely this visually explicit abuse is uncommon. For example, in its coverage of the prisoner abuse CBS's Dan Rather interviews Brigadier General Mark Kimmitt who expresses distaste over the actions of the guards at Abu Ghraib but is quick to redeem the military in general. He assures Rather and the viewers: "This is not representative of the 150,000 soldiers that are over here…don't judge your army based on the actions of a few".[134] While the General is willing to acknowledge that abuse took place, he is careful not to admit that any detainees suffered during the interrogations. Moreover, by exposing the images, CBS supports its claim that this violence was an anomaly for, surely, an event this shocking could only occur once. Highlighting this particular event allows all the other incidences of prisoner abuse, of which there is no visual record, to stay hidden.

The Abu Ghraib images also reveal the extent to which the othering of detainees in the War on Terror is embedded in dominant ideas about class, race and sexuality. The photos distinguish between prisoner and guard. While their exposure to public scrutiny, reveals incidences of abuse, it does not challenge these mutually reinforcing systems of othering. For example, in an image taken at 3:19am on October 17, 2003, Staff Sergeant Ivan Fredrick sits comfortably while a prisoner hunches over at the waist, clothed only in a pair of dirty shorts.[135] Frederick lounges in a plastic lawn chair, a piece of furniture more suitably found at the beach than in a prison. While the photo suggests evidence of

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[134] Leung, Rebecca, "Abuse Of Iraqi POWs By GIs Probed", *60 Minutes*. April 28, 2004.
http://www.cbsnews.com/stories/2004/04/27/60II/main614063_page2.shtml?tag=contentMain;contentBody
[135] "The Abu Ghraib Files", *Salon.com*, March 14, 2006.
http://www.salon.com/news/abu_ghraib/2006/03/14/chapter_1/slideshow.html

sleep deprivation and forced stress positions, it depicts the calm and clean demeanor of the guard rather than his capacity for violence. Thus, any violence done to this prisoner's body is erased while the codes of class difference mark the bodies as distinct.

Class tensions, while not explicit, underwrite much of the violence at Abu Ghraib. Razack's analysis is important, as it examines how multiple processes of othering, including class, come into being simultaneously. These systems "give content" to each other[136] and "operate on a psychic level through sexual desire and fear".[137] Capitalism and class division is written into our consciousness as North American citizens and is developed, in particular, in terms of how we see ourselves in relation to other parts of the world. As a result, according to Razack, "the violence at Abu Ghraib and Guantanamo is an enactment of a global script in which white nations view themselves as assisting the Third World into modernity".[138] Whiteness, of course, is its own form of class and, as Razack points out, the soldiers who participated in the torture, although from mixed class backgrounds, sought to establish their economic superiority in addition to racial superiority. Even those from working class backgrounds acted "as individuals interpellated into the project of marking the colour line and coming to know themselves as citizens of empire through these practices".[139] Many of the images from Abu Ghraib reveal class tensions. In most of the photographs, the absence of clothing and poor hygiene of the prisoners stands out in stark contrast to the uniformed and well-groomed guards. Moreover, many images reveal the apparent leisurely pace of the torture and

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[136] Sherene, Razack, "How is White Supremacy Embodied? Sexualized Racial Violence at Abu Ghraib," *Canadian Journal of Women and the Law* 17 (2005): 343.
[137] Ibid., 345.
[138] Ibid.
[139] Ibid. 346.

nonchalant attitudes of the soldiers who smile, sit comfortably and stay warm while detainees are forced to stand or crouch in awkward positions. By participating in torture, these individuals come to recognize themselves as part of the capitalist military assemblage. While Razack's assessment of class violence at Abu Ghraib is useful in understanding the multiple systems of othering that come into being through prisoner abuse, it is significant that this image reveals issues of class but not actual violence. The class tensions in the photo, in fact, work to underwrite the presence of violence at the prison by drawing the viewer's attention to markers of class difference and not violence.

Other images – even ones that do show prisoners in positions of pain – still do little to humanize the detainees at Abu Ghraib. In another photograph, taken at 8:16 pm on October 24, 2003, Private First Class Lynndie England pulls a detainee from his cell using a strap, in what the CID refers to as "an act of intimidation".[140] Testifying to the extent of her involvement in prisoner abuse at Abu Ghraib, England attempts to shift blame to her then fiancé, Charles Graner, who is taking the photo. England claims: "I did not drag or pull on the leash. I simply stood with the strap in my hand".[141] England's statement, while it does not exonerate her from acts of abuse, supports the idea of the photos as staged events and indicates that this particular image was carefully arranged, in this case by Graner, and was not taken in the midst of an act of physical violence.

In addition to revealing the racialized nature of prison abuse, the photographs themselves play a role in establishing racial superiority, giving reason to why the torture was recorded. For Razack, one result of digitally reproducing the torture was to establish

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[140] "Dehumanization", *Salon.com*
http://www.salon.com/news/abu_ghraib/2006/03/14/chapter_2/slideshow.html
[141] Ibid.

a community among the American soldiers. As she notes, "the photos at Abu Ghraib, which were mailed to family and friends, confirmed an imagined community among Americans—one that is profoundly racially structured since it is achieved through the tortured and humiliated bodies of Iraqis and racialized others".[142] For Razack, the images of torture at Abu Ghraib are not unlike the smiling portraits of white men and women surrounding a lynching victim in the American South. By depicting racially othered bodies in contrast to clean-cut and smiling white Americans, both the lynching photographs and Abu Ghraib images dehumanize othered bodies at the same time they highlight the vitality, strength and purity of white bodies who only understand humanity in racial terms. Being part of an imagined white, American community becomes especially complicated for guards such as Lynndie England who, as a result of her American indigenous heritage must work that much harder (in this case, inflicting more violence) in order to better perform whiteness and gain entrance into that superior racial community.[143]

Razack's analysis of the events of Abu Ghraib as classed is crucial in uncovering reasons why the abuse may have taken place but overlooks the issue of the images being staged performances rather than depictions of torture in progress. Razack contends that the violence at Abu Ghraib is bound up in structures of empire and superiority, rather than being the result of soldiers acting out because of extremely stressful circumstances.

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[142] Razack, "White Supremacy," 349.

[143] England's participation in torture at Abu Ghraib also conjures memories of Shidane Abukar Arone, a Somali teenager killed in 1993 by Canadian peacekeepers. Much of the violence upon Arone's body was inflicted by two soldiers in particular, Clayton Matchee and Kyle Brown, both of Cree heritage. As Razack points out in her book on Canadian peacekeeping and the Somalia Affair, "joining the nation…requires that men [and women] actively perform a hegemonic masculinity… that includes engaging in acts of racial domination" (90). This process, what Razack refers to as "outwhiting" makes it easier to individualize violence rather than consider its systemic and structural roots, particularly when the perpetrator is not white.

As Razack points out, the full implications of prisoner torture are overlooked when the event is interpreted as a series of unfortunate circumstances. Indeed, much of the Abu Ghraib scandal has often been described as a singular and unusual event that focuses on the soldiers and not on the detainee. By focusing on the individual perpetrators rather than the suffering of the prisoners the widespread issue of racism and othering in the War on Terror is avoided. In order for such prisoners to exist and for these interrogation methods to continue the scandal needs to be seen as simply that – a scandal that exposes the misdeeds of a few soldiers but does not draw attention to the suffering of the prisoners for such consideration might reveal the abuse to be not an anomaly but, rather, emblematic of the treatment of, and racial attitudes towards, Muslim others. While Abu Ghraib certainly operates within a state of exception, the violence that occurs there has more to do with a need to establish dominant American superiority over the Muslim Other. Indeed, in the images themselves, the guards do not appear to be under stress. On the contrary: they smile, often giving the 'thumbs-up' sign with their arms around each other. Razack notes that the prisoner torture was not a result of soldiers who were overcome by stress but instead a result of soldiers enacting out of deeply embedded hostility towards racial others. As she claims: "what happened at Abu Ghraib had little to do with especially stressful circumstances and more to do with deeply historical processes through which Americans understand themselves as white".[144] While it is true that the violence at Abu Ghraib is embedded in discourses of empire and colonialism, the smiling faces in the images do not necessarily mean that the soldiers were not under stress. The staged nature of the photos suggests that these soldiers were acting for the

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[144] Ibid., 345.

camera perhaps to mask the stress they were under. This is, of course, not an attempt to exonerate their acts. Rather, I mean to suggest that debating whether or not the actions of the prison guards was stress-induced is to avoid the larger issues at work in the prison and through the dissemination of the images. Focusing on the element of stress is problematic in that it overshadows the classed, sexualized and racialized nature of the abuse and, once again, the guards become the real living subjects of the image while the detainee's life (and stress) is overlooked. Indeed, even in *Salon*'s attempt to expose the abuse, the image captions throughout the archive tell us much about the guards but very little, if anything at all, about the prisoners. Clearly, the construction of Muslim detainees as uncivilized allows for them to be treated in extra-juridical ways. As pre-modern subjects, they are not entitled to modern laws that govern the protection of human rights and dignity. As Giorgio Agamben argues, "[t]he violence exercised in the state of exception clearly neither preserves nor simply posits law, but rather conserves it in suspending it and posits it in excepting itself from it".[145] The photographs potentially expose that human rights can indeed be suspended if the prisoners are not considered human in the first place. Yet the dominant frameworks of race, class and sexuality mediate readings of the image. While the photographs may draw attention to issues of dehumanization, they fail to humanize by focusing on the guards as actors in the image and by subscribing to visual regimes that make it difficult to recognize the suffering of others.

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[145] Giorgio Agamben, *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life* (Stanford: Stanford UP, 1998), 64.

3.5 Apprehending the Suffering Other as the Beginning of Ethics

The Abu Ghraib photographs, thus, portray a scene that exposes the violent processes of interrogation in the War on Terror, but the function of the images themselves is not to humanize the suffering of Muslim others. Yet viewing the images of detainee torture, it is difficult to imagine the victims of such violence as being many headed beasts that threaten to infiltrate. What then does this mean for the role of images in rhetorical constructions of evil? As the following chapter will argue, the mobile phone video of Saddam Hussein's execution, perhaps surprisingly, offers a more humanizing representation of a suffering other. While Hussein is more frequently constructed as a figure of evil, the images stemming from the execution video present a human face in ways that the Abu Ghraib photographs do not. The humanizing of Hussein yet ongoing dehumanization of Abu Ghraib prisoners raises significant questions about the function of visual image to reinforce or alter dominant constructions of evil and invites one important query in particular: What might our responsibility be to these images that give us pause to consider the possibility that if a subject is witnessed in a moment of suffering, he or she must be human? While the Abu Ghraib photographs do not humanize the suffering of Muslim detainees, several aspects of responsibility are revealed through what is, in this case, a failure of the image. Images of suffering *should* do a number of things. First, they must call into question the relationship between responsibility and causation and alter the assumption that we are only responsible to those we ourselves harm. Second, images of suffering must communicate the demand of the other; they should hail us, confrontationally and dialogically, and through that hailing leave us unable to turn

away. Finally, images that depict the suffering other have the power to alert us to the ways in which our responsibility to the other conditions our own humanity.

The Abu Ghraib images have and will continue to have the potential to communicate a suffering that functions as a command to respect the life and humanity of those depicted. Yet they ultimately fail to communicate a suffering body to the viewer except to those who can imagine an alternative framework than the one the photographs present. While photographs involve us in the depicted event as witnesses, they should also function as a means of address. In other words, images speak. To regard the photograph is to be open to its address and, as Butler claims, to be responsible to that address:

> If I give an account of myself in response to such a query [of the other], I am implicated in a relation to the other before whom and to whom I speak. Thus, I come into being as a reflexive subject in the context of establishing a narrative account of myself when I am spoken to by someone and prompted to address myself to the one who addresses me.[146]

However, as Butler notes, this call to respond is not so much a request as it is a demand. It is "unwilled and unchosen. It is a way of being acted on prior to the possibility of acting oneself or in one's own name".[147] Responsibility to the other must also be understood as a demand rather than a choice that results from being addressed. The photographs from Abu Ghraib should constitute such an address; however, as a result of their depiction of *staged* sexual deviance and their function as commemorative or

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[146] Butler, *Giving*, 15.
[147] Ibid., 87.

celebratory mementos – that is, they exist *for* the guards and not as journalistic

documentation of abuse – they fail to transmit human suffering. More, they actively

prevent the recognition of humanity and sense of responsibility to those depicted by

denying them the frameworks in which they might appear human.

What then, in the context of this archive of images from Abu Ghraib, is an ethical,

non-violent response to suffering and how is such a response prevented by the particular

framework in which this archive is presented? Most simply put, a non-violent response

means refusing to return (or enable the continuation of) harm, even when faced with it

ourselves. As Fiona Jenkins suggests, a non-violent ethics

> seems to ask primarily that we pause before recourse to violence—a violence
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> that may yet come, but not so quickly nor, therefore, so unreflectively; a
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> violence for which, then, we might better take responsibility, as the
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> contemplated action is more truly ours than the impulsive one, or as a burden
>
> of justification is assumed for what we do.[148]

In the context of the War on Terror, this means resisting retaliation against terrorism even

when it becomes a threat to us and adopting a more reflective approach to considering

how violence is constructed and enabled based on cultural and racial norms. Moreover, it

means recognizing the suffering of others and in that recognition affirming their fragile

humanity when the dominant cultural and racial frameworks seek to deny such an

encounter at every turn.

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[148] Fiona Jenkins, ""Toward a Nonviolent Ethics: Response to Catherine Mills", *differences: A Journal of Feminist Cultural Studies* 18:2 (2007), 158.

An ethical relationship with the other depends upon reconfiguring who we determine to be human and who we do not. It depends upon the realization that for us to be human, the other must be as well. Images therefore, such as those taken at Abu Ghraib prison have a significant role to play in both humanizing and dehumanizing Muslim others in the War on Terror and, when approached critically, become the basis of an ethical response of non-violence toward the Other. As witnesses, this non-violent response constitutes a re-examination of the conditions upon which we consider one to be human or not and a demand for images that allow the suffering other to be seen and heard rather than effaced, as is often the case with the Abu Ghraib images.

The photographs of prisoner abuse at Abu Ghraib perform a number of functions that, at times, contradict each other. While they challenge dominant mythologies of evil, they often reinforce constructions of an aberrant Muslim sexuality. These photographs reveal the potential of visual images to both transmit *and* mask human suffering. The images are certainly disturbing yet – and this is not to question the backlash over interrogation methods that have arisen as a result – it is the abusive actions of the guards and otherness of the prisoners rather than their suffering that is remembered. The Abu Ghraib images may offer a more ambivalent perspective on violence in the War on Terror and expose the extent to which how images are framed condition particular responses. However, they fail to humanize or alter dominant assessments of Muslim others as deviant. As such, the photographs continue call to into question who is covered and who is left out of our protection against violence. Surprisingly, it is not the Abu Ghraib photographs, but the execution video of Saddam Hussein, to which I turn to next, that

offers the most humanizing representation of suffering via a figure previously constructed

as evil and inhumanly other.

4   Apprehending Saddam Hussein as a Figure of Alterity and Suffering

While the images taken at Abu Ghraib reflect the ongoing failure to recognize the

suffering of Muslim others, there is one figure, in particular, that has been denied

humanization in a similar way. Saddam Hussein, while often referred to as a monster or

demon during the first Gulf War, re-emerged, in new and more terrifying ways, as a focus

of the preoccupation with evil following the September 11, 2001 attacks. Yet like the

photographed victims of abuse at Abu Ghraib, more recent images of Hussein's capture

and, in particular, video footage of Hussein's execution provide a more ambivalent figure

than the "face of evil" to which we are accustomed. This chapter will examine the

demonization of Saddam Hussein following September 11th and will contrast those

representations with the mobile phone video of his execution. While many news

networks included the video in their coverage of the execution it is significant that most

stop the video before it reaches the actual moment of hanging. My goal is to chart an

ambivalence that these dominant constructions of Hussein's image do not allow and to

examine the multiple meanings that arise through the production, representation and

dissemination of, and response to footage that is unfiltered by dominant media. While we,

as viewers or spectators, are increasingly privy to images of "others" in peril, it is

unusual to be confronted with the suffering of those with the profile and notoriety of

Saddam Hussein. Therefore, while the desire to protect and maintain the life of the

innocent other is becoming an increasingly allocated social norm, I am interested in what

such applications of responsibility or responsiveness might mean for those, such as

Hussein, who are not so innocent. Although the construction of Hussein as the face of

evil forecloses any recognition of his suffering within dominant frameworks of representation, the leaked execution video restores that recognition.

Viewing the execution footage of Saddam Hussein in its entirety, the viewer is brought "face to face" with human suffering, making it difficult for one to claim that evil does not have a human face. The execution video shatters the image of the inhuman and indestructible tyrant that has been disseminated through mainstream news media. While dominant constructions of Hussein rely on his visual representation as an uninjurable enemy, the mobile phone footage of his execution presents an alternative image that challenges the frameworks that deny the recognition of suffering in particular bodies. The images from the video reveal both the fragility beneath the tyrant and the extent to which his "evil" image has been produced. Moving images "let us know and feel that frailty [and] know and feel at the limits of representation as it is currently cultivated and maintained".[149] Indeed, the figure in the execution video is a stark contrast to dominant constructions of an "evil" Saddam. This thesis contends that the execution video of Hussein not only provides an alternative representation of one previously constructed as evil but also provokes recognition that a human life was lost, even *taken*. This video demands that we respond differently to figures of alterity, even those figures who might indeed be guilty of violence themselves. How, then, do we apprehend this figure of so-called "evil" in a moment of suffering and how might that alter our assessment of who is human and who is not in the context of the War on Terror? In other words, how do we present the relationship between culpability and precariousness and what might be the

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[149] Butler, *Precarious,* 151.

implications of reinscribing such figures with fragility? Viewing the execution, it is possible, regardless of the crimes attributed to him, to see Hussein as vulnerable to violence and suffering; that is, to see him again as human.

4.1   Mythologizing Saddam Hussein as the Ultimate "Face of Evil"

As Chapter Two describes, constructions of Saddam Hussein as an evil tyrant by the United States government and mainstream media in the lead up to the 1991 Persian Gulf war often paid homage to other tyrants, such as Hitler. In addition to being described as both a ghost and a monster, Hussein was continually referred to as inhuman, with no trace of a soul or rational purpose. Following the attacks of September 11th, 2001, mythologies of evil surrounded Hussein once more. These new constructions of fearsome otherness relied on previous associations with figures such as the Devil or monster but found even more terrifying resonance when circulating under the banner of faceless and indiscriminate "terror". In his study, *Cultures of the War on Terror*, David Holloway notes that, unlike previous threats, September 11th soon became something much bigger and more frightening than the actual event itself through the circulation of larger than life narratives about the perpetrators of terror. He writes: "From the very beginning, '9/11' and the 'war on terror' were so appropriated by storytelling and mythmaking that the events themselves became more or less indivisible from their representations, or simulations, in political rhetoric, mass media spectacle and the panopoly of other representational forms that made the events feel pervasive at the time".[150] As a result, figures that are thought to have caused these events (whether they actually have or not)

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[150] Holloway, *Cultures,* 5.

are raised to the same mythic proportions. The general culture of fear surrounding terrorism enables representations of Hussein to evade recognition of his humanity in favour of more supernatural narratives about the nature of his "evil".

As for the spectacle of terror itself, and much like the photographs in the Abu Ghraib scandal, the representation of 9/11 too becomes *more* than the actual event. This is not to suggest that the terrorist attack was a forgettable or inconsequential event but, rather, to argue that the actuality of what took place on September 11th, 2001 is overshadowed by – and quite possibly indistinguishable from – the narratives constructed around it. Indeed, once the event has occurred, all we have are its endless mediations and representations. Film, print media, news footage and the excessive marking of 9/11 as the jumping off point for all things related to terror allows the event to become much larger than the loss of individual lives due to the actions of a select group of hijackers. As Marc Redfield points out, "this excess manifests itself as a simple repudiation: the spectrality of the event becomes a clash of civilizations, a war of monotheisms, or, even more primitively, a para-religious struggle between good and evil, where evil is first abstracted as 'terror' and then personified and given a face".[151] Interestingly, while the abuse at Abu Ghraib operates within discourses of individual pathology (a small group of soldiers committing crimes under extraordinary circumstances), the War on Terror exists as a grand struggle assigning blame wantonly as part of a universal battle between good and evil, a battle made clear through the repetitive use of George Bush's polarizing "with us or against us" rhetoric. Over time, the many events of September 11th, 2001 become

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[151] Redfield, *The Rhetoric*, 45.

emblematic of a struggle that has only two positions and is mythologized as the epic tale of 9/11, a singular yet far-reaching phenomenon.

These mythologies not only elevate "terrorists" and their leaders to mythical proportions, they also seek to establish culpability on the part of some who had little or nothing to do with the attacks themselves. New evils are thus bestowed upon old enemies and it is the narrativazation rather than the actuality of 9/11 that results in the naming of Saddam Hussein as a distant, but likely perpetrator. David Simpson argues that by commemorating 9/11 as a *symbolic* national tragedy, entire nations can be found at fault as well. He suggests, "[t]he representation of the almost 3,000 dead as an icon of America and of the Twin Towers as a synecdoche for the nation surely contributed…to the uncritical linkage of bin Laden's nonnational terrorist movement with Saddam Hussein's otherwise unimplicated Iraq".[152] Indeed, Saddam Hussein's involvement in 9/11 was never substantiated and proved baseless despite widespread opinion that he was in some way responsible. Despite this lack of proof, "the President and senior administration figures repeatedly associated 9/11 with Iraq".[153] Holloway also cites several polls that reflect the popular belief that Hussein was behind the attacks. A Knight Ridder poll in January 2003 found that 44% of Americans believed that "some" or "most" of the hijackers were Iraqi. Moreover, a March 2003 *New York Times* poll revealed that 45% of American believed Hussein, in particular, was "involved" in the attacks while an August

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[152] David Simpson, *9/11: The Culture of Commemoration* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006), 40.
[153] Holloway, *Cultures*, 5.

2003 *Washington Post* poll found that 69% of those surveyed thought Hussein to have involvement in the attacks.[154]

Much of the justification for the invasion of Iraq was based on the premise that Hussein had weapons of mass destruction yet this was ultimately proved to be untrue. In his memoir, *Against all Enemies: Inside America's War on Terror*, Richard A. Clarke, former chief counter-terrorism adviser to the George W. Bush administration, recounts a conversation between himself, Dick Cheney and Colin Powell about how best to deter Hussein from using chemical weapons in Iraq in 2003. Both Powell and Cheney agreed that Hussein did not pose a chemical, biological or nuclear threat, and argued that Hussein would not find such weapons useful in the battlefield.[155] Despite the claim made by two senior officials in the Bush administration that the chance of Hussein using weapons of mass destruction was unlikely, the 2003 invasion of Iraq was promoted as necessary to prevent Hussein from using these weapons on his neighbors or American troops. Hussein, by this point, was so vilified in mainstream media that proof of WMD's was not necessary to find support for war. Yet the constant claims that Hussein possessed WMD's coupled with Hussein's supposed (yet never established) involvement in 9/11 and link to Al Qaeda was enough to condemn him and justify the invasion. Clearly, no evidence is needed in the War on Terror, so long as the target is sufficiently dehumanized because the fight is aimed at the "axis of evil". Two years after the terrorist attacks, Saddam Hussein continued to be represented as an imminent and growing threat. Prior to and during the invasion of Iraq in 2003, the Bush administration made continual reference to 9/11 when claiming intervention in Iraq was necessary to depose Hussein.

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[154] Ibid.

[155] Richard Clarke, *Against all Enemies: Inside America's War on Terror* (Toronto: Free Press, 2004), 162.

Many Americans still believe, years after the attacks and after Hussein's death, that he was in some way responsible for 9/11.[156] For David Simpson, this is "a view continually reinforced by images of falling towers and statements that the war in Iraq is about fighting 'terrorism'".[157] Hussein's representation as an evil terrorist enabled the occupation of Iraq to occur as a response to 9/11 rather than a result of residual grievances from historical quarrels between Hussein and the West.

When Hussein was captured in 2004, the representations of him changed drastically. No longer was Hussein a danger or a ghost who could not be accounted for. He was still, however, represented as irredeemably and inhumanly other. The December 22, 2004[158] issue of *Time* shows Hussein on its cover, literally captured by the camera lens in a moment of undignified and disheveled weakness, a startling contrast to previous *Time* covers featuring Hussein. The caption reads: "We Got Him!" This is a victorious statement, asserting that yes, indeed, Iraq was invaded for a reason and the guilty target has been brought to his knees. What Hussein is specifically guilty of is erased.[159] Inside,

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[156] Brian Braiker, "Dunce-cap Nation", *Newsweek.com,* September 4, 2007,
http://www.newsweek.com/2007/09/04/dunce-cap-nation.html
[157] Simpson, *9/11*, 17.
[158] "We Got Him!," *Time Magazine*, December 22, 2004,
http://www.time.com/time/covers/0,16641,20031222,00.html.
[159] Significantly, when the time does come for Hussein to be charged, the official indictment is for crimes against humanity, committed against the Iraqi people. The choice to charge Hussein with these specific offenses and not his invasion of Kuwait or crimes committed during the Iran-Iraq War is notable in that the trial stays clear of events that had American involvement. Regardless, the trial has come under intense scrutiny in terms of its legality, legitimacy and its illusions of Iraqi sovereignty. According to the Director of Amnesty International's Middle East and North Africa programme, Malcolm Smart, the trial "was deeply flawed and unfair, due to political interference which undermined the independence of the court and other serious failings." (http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/MDE14/044/2006/en). In addition to AI's critique, Human Rights Watch conducted their own investigation of Hussein's trial and sentencing. Their 97-page report, "Judging Dujail: The First Trial Before the Iraqi High Tribunal," found "serious flaws in the trial, including failures to disclose key evidence to the defense, violations of the defendants' right to question prosecution witnesses, and the presiding judge's demonstrations of bias.
(http://www.hrw.org/en/news/2006/12/29/iraq-saddam-hussein-put-death). Regardless, in mainstream trial reportage, the partiality and legitimacy of the trial is never questioned while Hussein's guilt is determined

the accompanying article suggests that, now located and in custody, Hussein is no longer considered a monster. Written by a number of correspondents in both the United States and Iraq, the article notes "[i]t was a relief to see him made small enough to handcuff because the phantom had become too big, and you can't bring peace to a haunted house".[160] Even with the monster overcome, however, Saddam is still not represented in human terms following his capture and the indignities he suffers are not recognized. Instead, he is described in terms reserved for the lowest life forms. As the December 22 *Time* article suggests, "the palace monster of monuments and torture chambers had been reduced to the life of a bug. His captors picked through his shaggy hair, the raccoon beard. They scraped his throat, checked his teeth. 'Merry Christmas,' said the soldiers to one another, and they lit cigars and took pictures and smiled".[161] As if returning from a hunt, the atmosphere seems electric and celebratory as Hussein's captors, not unlike the prison guards at Abu Ghraib, collect mementos of the occasion. Here Hussein is compared not only to an insect but also to a raccoon, an animal that lives in shadows, carries disease and forages through trash. While the comparisons to raccoons and to bugs, in general, is already dehumanizing, it is one insect in particular that is used more often than others to describe Hussein.

Following his detainment, Hussein is repeatedly referred to specifically as a spider. In various news reports, Hussein is described as being found in a spider hole. "Spider hole", in fact, gained such popularity that it was named one of the top ten phrases of the

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based on events that fall conspicuously outside those in which the United State could possibly be implicated.

[160] Brian Bennett, Michael Ware, Phil Zabriskie, John F. Dickerson, Mark Thompson and Douglas Waller, "Saddam's Capture", *Time Magazine*, December 22, 2004, http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,1006488-1,00.html.

[161] Ibid.

year by the Australian publication *The Weekend*.[162] A spider, often seen as dark and predatory, when used to describe a living person, becomes one of the lowest forms of dehumanization and fits nicely within the rhetoric that paints the Middle Eastern threat as part of a "web of terror". According to *Washington Post* journalist, Libby Copeland, "the phrase [spider hole] conjures the lair of a sneaky, ugly, menacing creature, a thing so dumb and degraded it lives only to kill and be killed. On the food chain, the arachnid is below the dog, the pig and even the rat, the most popular subhuman beings we use to label folks we don't like".[163] Comparing Hussein to a spider renders him worthless and just like the abject bodies at Abu Ghraib, he is already marked for elimination. While the *Post* addresses the metaphor directly in a mainstream publication, it does not challenge it. In fact, further commentary in the *Post* suggests that such comparisons are "an insult to spiders".[164] Clearly, in the minds of American forces in Iraq, Hussein, although no longer a monstrous threat, was still an inhuman creature confined to the dark.

The relative ease and immediacy with which representations of Hussein shifted from spectrally monstrous to contained insect reveals him to be an enemy *par excellence*; the figure of Hussein shifts to accommodate the directives of the war on terror. As Simpson notes:

> the panic at the shapelessness of the enemy-friend legitimates his strong
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> localization as primary enemy in a convenient place whose significations are

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[162] Erin Steuter and Deborah Wills, *At War with Metaphor: Media, Propaganda, and Racism in the War on Terror* (Toronto: Lexington, 2008), 80.
[163] Ibid., 80.
[164] Ibid., 80.

overdetermined by various contingent rationalizations (the need for oil, the spread of democracy, the finishing of the job begun in 1991, and so forth).[165] Via differing but equally dehumanizing representations, Hussein is able to morph into exactly the kind of enemy the War on Terror needs him to be. In life he is an icon of evasive threat and in death becomes a symbol of American power in the Middle East; he is simultaneously domestic tyrant *and* International terrorist. Hussein is perhaps the only enemy already in the Middle East whose history with the United States and present media representations could justify an invasion into Iraqi territory and a new war. Indeed, from the beginning of George W. Bush's presidency, Iraq was a major part of the administration's agenda and a national security threat. Even before 9/11 Iraq "was an idée fixe, a rigid belief, received wisdom, a decision already made and one that no fact or event could derail"[166] Clarke even suggests that a renewed preoccupation with Hussein was the result of a need to "do something big" after 9/11.[167] Thus, Hussein's past crimes were appropriated to construct a present threat that would justify intervention in Iraq. The naming of Hussein as a primary focus in the War on Terror and the urgent call for military action in Iraq based on his presence as an ongoing threat satisfied both those calling for action on 9/11 and those who felt that the United States still had unresolved issues stemming from the 1991 war in the Gulf. Whether portrayed as an evil threat or inhuman spider, Hussein becomes the perfect scapegoat for Western frustrations about the facelessness of terror *and* the perfect example of a Western triumph over evil.

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[165] Simpson, *9/11*, 145.
[166] Clarke, *Against*, 265.
[167] Ibid.

4.2 Representations of Hussein Following his Capture

A close reading of the events following Saddam Hussein's capture reveal a much different, and much more contradictory, figure than the evil monster that justified intervention into Iraq in 2003 in the name of a War on Terror. In addition to the event of his capture, three major moments in the prosecution of Hussein stand out as complex and opposing representations of a tyrant who had only been represented in threatening and inhuman ways up to this point in Western media. Despite the ongoing attempts of mainstream media to vilify Hussein, the events following his capture briefly and inadvertently reveal an alternative to the familiar face of evil that had dominated the visual archive up to this point. They are, however, no more humanizing. While Hussein appears more fragile and wields far less agency, his discomfort and humiliation following capture are not recognized as moments of suffering because they are presented within the larger framework of capturing a wanted criminal. While the inspection of Hussein following his capture and his sentencing illustrate the role of media in determining who is human and who is not in the War on Terror it is the footage of his execution that reveals Hussein to be more than an inhuman figure of evil; in the video he is also a figure capable of suffering.

4.2.1   Inspection of Hussein

Immediately following his capture, Saddam Hussein was taken to Baghdad International Airport where he was subject to military inspection.[168] His teeth were examined, his mouth swabbed to confirm his identity and his head searched for lice. The

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[168] "How Saddam Hussein was captured", *BBC News*, 15 December 2003, http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/3317881.stm.

military released a video documenting Hussein's capture and inspection and the images reveal a dirty and unshaven man who barely resembles the former dictator. *Time's* article describing this scene suggests "[w]hatever posture Saddam takes in whatever tribunal he appears in, he will likely never live down that image of him scruffy, defeated, opening his mouth for the doctor like a good boy".[169] Like the references to Saddam's "spider hole" and animalistic tendencies, these images also serve to reinforce both the shifting nature of Hussein's threat as well as the extent to which images are responsible for allocating humanity. In her chapter on media representations of violence, Birgit Richard notes

> In the case of Saddam the American established pictoral tactics worked well: In the beginning they created the figure of a devilish anti-Christ, which then can be destroyed directly on the body of the enemy. The last key image of Saddam Hussein is an image of a dilapidated, scruffy man, vegetating like an undignified animal in a cave. His body is subjected to the dental examination by an American dentist, presenting him as their property without rights.[170]

As Richard infers, this image of Hussein's capture stands out among the many representations of him following 9/11 as an anomaly. Interestingly, however, Hussein's time as a defeated and weakened man is fleeting. For example, during his examination, the military shaved off his beard. While the media reveled in the images of a disheveled and bewildered man taken from the initial capture, the swiftness with which they trimmed his beard reveals the urgency the military felt to return Hussein to his more familiar and tyrannical form. While most news networks aired the military footage of the capture and

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[169] Bennett et. al.

[170] Birgit Richard, "Pictorial clashes on the medial body of violence: Abu Ghraib, Nick Berg, and John Paul II," *Media Literacy: A Reader* (New York: Peter Lang, 2007), 283.

medical exam, they were quick to return him to the figure of a defiant dictator. Indeed, the NBC Nightly News Special Edition, "Saddam Hussein Captured" aired the following night with reports that Hussein was no longer cooperating with the military.[171] The commentary that immediately follows the pictures of the weakened and bearded Saddam seems to remind viewers that Hussein is still an evil tyrant, despite what the images reveal. The image and commentary seem to work against each other, for while the voiceovers and news text seek to remind viewers that this is the man responsible for terrible crimes against humanity, the image itself makes it difficult to imagine that this weak man could orchestrate such elaborate acts of terror. However, in this case, the media representation of a more fragile Hussein is not intentional. On the contrary, while the accompanying comments admit Hussein's weakness, it is attributed to his more animal characteristics rather than his emerging humanity and subsequent attempts are made to assure viewers of Hussein's evil. Further commentary, therefore, reminds the viewer that Hussein remained uncooperative and unrepentant throughout his interrogation. While the images that emerged from Hussein's capture briefly reveal an alternative and less monstrous face of the former dictator, representations of evil defiance soon return.

4.2.2   Sentencing of Hussein

Mainstream news media coverage of Saddam Hussein's sentencing presents him as a figure of deceit and malice. For example, in CNN's coverage of the sentencing hearing, the defendant is filmed at a downward angle, alone in the frame, and always juxtaposed

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[171] "Saddam Hussein Captured," *NBC Nightly News Special Edition.* December 14, 2003. http://www.bing.com/videos/watch/video/saddam-hussein-captured/6p5g991.

against the CNN logo in the corner. In contrast, the judge is shown directly facing the

viewers and in the center of the frame. The text at the bottom of the screen alternates

between "Hussein guilty of crimes against humanity" and "Saddam Hussein gets death by

hanging".[172] After the sentence of death is revealed, the reporter's voiceover offers a

commentary on the hearing while a split screen places the reporter next to the judge, but

never next to Hussein. Hussein is only shown on his own, waving his hand defiantly at

the judge. While he attempts to tell the court that he is still the leader of Iraq, it is CNN

that clearly emerges as a voice of authority, order and secular justice. Yet even without

this text, or without dialogue, the mise en scène of these frames creates a moral

identification with the judge and a dis-identification with the defiant Hussein. During his

sentencing, it is particularly important that Hussein is not represented in either

exceedingly human or vulnerable terms due to the extent of the consequences he will

endure. Hussein's judgment is death, thus the need to establish guilt while removing any

trace of humanity, rationality or remorse is crucial to establishing the sentence of hanging

as a suitable form of punishment. His death must be recognized as justice and not

suffering.

The events that surround Hussein's trial have been the subject of much debate

because despite being on trial for war crimes, Hussein was not tried at the Hague but,

rather, by an American backed Iraqi court. Regardless, the footage of the verdict of

hanging reveals a still bearded but well-groomed dictator who is defiant until the end.

There is no trace of the disheveled man that was captured in a hole in the ground and any

chance that one could feel compassion or recognize humanity in this face of Hussein is

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[172] "Saddam Hussein Sentenced to Hang," *You Tube*, November 5, 2006,
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eOXaEQcQSKE.

erased. While other perpetrators of crimes against humanity have been tried by the International Criminal Court (and are often afforded more rights through the scrutinized ICC process), it is not beneficial for the War on Terror to afford human rights to this enemy in particular. As Simpson argues, "the history of foreign policy is *not* the history of a concern for human rights; the language of human rights is available when it suits us to employ it for some other purpose".[173] Lest Hussein be given over to an International court, he must be tried in Iraq to justify American involvement in his capture and execution and to rationalize the presence of the American military in Iraq in general. Just as important, however, is the appearance of Iraqi control over the trial to show that Iraq is in a better position (more functional and rational) without Hussein. The trial therefore functions as a spectacle with the purpose of presenting both Hussein and Iraqi justice in a particular way and bears little resemblance to an impartial and legitimate legal process, despite how earnestly it attempts to appear as such. In other words, Hussein's guilty verdict is in place long before the trial begins.

4.2.3   Execution of Hussein

In contrast to the manipulation of the face to construct images of evil in entertainment and news media, the complete mobile phone video of Saddam Hussein's execution (as opposed to the official abbreviated version) presents an image that is still mediated, but in much different and more ambivalent ways. The 'face' presented in this amateur recording is discontinuous with the constructions of "evil" presented by other, more mainstream, media. Instead, these mobile phone images provoke a multitude of

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[173] Simpson, *9/11*, 148.

complex and ambiguous responses. Unlike the images of tyranny and evil, even the parodic ones taken from Hussein's trial and for magazine covers, it is difficult to distance oneself from a man being hanged. Moreover, unlike the images following Hussein's capture that briefly reveal a more vulnerable side to the dictator, after the execution takes place, Hussein is not returned to his defiant self. Rather, he remains silenced and subdued. In mainstream broadcasts covering the execution no images of his broken body are shown. In this absence, he remains an invisible threat. Only when access is gained to the complete video, available outside of mainstream distribution channels, can one see a body that can be harmed.

The execution video of Saddam Hussein begins with a shot looking up the stairs towards the execution platform and waiting noose.[174] While there are many people in the room, all except Hussein are covered by black hoods, obscuring their faces. Hussein's face, by contrast, is illuminated by both floodlights and the occasional flash of a camera. While the camera view is unsteady, it clearly shows the noose being placed around Hussein's head. He offers no resistance and does not speak. As the rope is positioned, voices in the crowd rise excitedly. According to a BBC transcription of the execution, these voices taunt and call out insults, among them, "go to hell".[175] Saddam responds: "Do you consider this bravery?" and begins reciting the Shahada, an Islamic creed.[176] Interestingly, during the exchange, one voice is heard pleading "[p]lease do not. The man is being executed. Please no, I beg you to stop"[177] as though the man behind the voice

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[174] Saddam Hussein Execution, *Spike.com*, December 31, 2006, http://www.spike.com/video/saddam-hussein/2809913.
[175] "Video shows taunts at execution", *BBC.com*, December 31, 2006, http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/6220829.stm
[176] Ibid.
[177] Ibid.

believes it unjust to taunt a man who is about to die. Hussein's prayer is cut off when the trapdoor beneath him opens and he drops until only the taut rope is visible on the platform. Again, the voices rise in the execution chamber. Blurry darkness fills the camera lens temporarily but soon the camera focuses again on Hussein, much closer than before, visible in flashes of light from other cameras. Only his uncovered face and the tightly coiled rope are visible. He is shown briefly, once more in a camera flash, before the footage abruptly concludes.

The official version of Hussein's execution, the one shown on most mainstream news networks, offers limited footage of the hanging. While the leaked video reveals the full hanging, including Hussein's fall below the platform, most network coverage halts the video at the moment the floor opens and shows only the official video released by the Iraqi government. While major news outlets, including the BBC, CNN, and Fox News refer to the leaked video, and even describe it, none of these networks show the footage in its entirety on their website.

News footage has a very purposeful mise en scène that arranges, by no accident, certain items within the frame and assesses, on behalf of the viewer, which lives can be represented as fragile and which cannot. It is important, therefore, particularly in the case of Saddam Hussein that the moment of death is not shown, for if evil can be killed, the fight is over. If it is indeed the case that the war in Iraq was based on removing Hussein from power and removing weapons of mass destruction, in order to rationalize the continued occupation of Iraq, Hussein must remain a threat, even in his death. While the triumph or victory of the killing can be shared, as it was on countless news reports, the visible frailty of the human body at its last moment cannot. Viewers see the noose placed

around his neck in the official video but have no relationship with the actual death that takes place and are not asked to participate by watching the killing. By not viewing the actual death, the viewer remains spectator of a news-worthy event that is still considered tasteful rather than obscene. Surely the viewer watching this footage knows that death is forthcoming but he or she participates only in the victory of the moment and not in the violence. The visual image enables an interaction with a man about to die but not with the death itself. The killing is something that happens at another time, out of the spectator's view and, by extension, out of his or her hands. As Sam Keen notes, "[s]o long as we want to kill from a distance with clean hands, we must refrain from imagining the consequences of our weapons, and must completely eliminate any awareness of the enemy as human".[178] Viewing the official video, the spectator stops watching at the moment Hussein becomes human; that is, in the moment of his death. As a result, his death is temporally and visually removed. Without seeing him die, the viewer can imagine Hussein returning to his more familiar and terrible form, much like he did following his capture. The complete execution footage of Saddam Hussein, however, allows the moment of death to be (literally) suspended long enough for an encounter with his death to take place. In that moment, the fragility of Hussein is exposed. As Butler states, "[t]o respond to the face, to understand its meaning, means to be awake to what is precarious in another life or, rather, the precariousness of life itself".[179] The construction of Hussein in mass media is meant to dehumanize, as well as encourage a dis-identification that allows for violence to be inflicted; however, the unedited mobile phone video allows for a humanization of Hussein that makes his death a difficult one to

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[178] Keen, *Faces*, 86-87.
[179] Ibid., 134.

witness. Yet much like the countless portraits of Osama Bin Laden, Saddam Hussein is meant to be seen as inhuman and the erasure of his final breath and most human moment in official versions of the video allows his execution to be met with feelings of approval, justice and retribution.

What is *not* included in the visual field of the mobile phone video footage is equally as important as what is. In other words, the absence of particular filmic conventions such as blocking, zooming and physical framing allow for a rawer scene to appear. This is particularly true in the case of the full video disseminated online which does not offer a tidy conclusion or newscaster's voiceover to supplement the viewing. For example, in the leaked video, the execution sequence is uninterrupted and unedited. The images are not punctuated by voice-overs or cuts to other shots of Saddam Hussein inflicting violence and tyranny. To summarize, there is no voice that mediates the interaction with Hussein as the Other, and no supplementary image to remind the viewer that the man facing the gallows is the 'face of evil'. The influence of synchronous sound is significant in creating an eerie realism and uncomfortable reaction in the viewer. The sound reminds the viewer that this is not fiction and while the executioners are adhering to some form of procedure (however flawed) they are not following a specific script. Shortly after Hussein falls through the floor, the camera whip pans away from the execution platform and shifts downward. There is no sound from Hussein, only the off camera sounds of the loud and excitable male voices of those who bear immediate and proximal witness to his death. Hussein then appears in a camera flash, accompanied by voices further raised, signaling perhaps the last moments of life. The sound in this video increases the possibility that Hussein could be considered human, feeble and perhaps even, to borrow from Butler,

precarious. No longer the one shouting commands or arguing defiantly with a judge,

Hussein's voice is lost in the crowd and rather than lashing out at his executioners he

becomes the object of others' outbursts. As the executioners and witnesses taunt him,

Hussein responds but it is not in anger. Instead, he prays and by doing so becomes a man

petitioning his God rather than a monster spewing venom. While mainstream

representations have continually portrayed Hussein as argumentative and uncontrollable,

he is made vulnerable in these final moments of his life through his lack of physical and

verbal agency.

　　　　Much like the function of the Iraqi judge, the fact that Hussein's execution was

carried out by an entirely Iraqi group of officials gives the proceedings an air of

legitimacy. While the execution video suggests otherwise – indeed, the video reveals a

haphazard and circus-like atmosphere – the proceedings are intended to provoke

deterrence rather than compassion and non-violence. While the mode of hanging is, on

one hand, a torturous form of execution, the symbol of the rope, and its carefully

mediated distribution through mainstream media serves to send a message to would-be

terrorists and enemies of the West. In some way, this changes the role of the noose itself.

As Elaine Scarry notes, "the object itself is now re-perceived as a wholly different object,

a tool rather than a weapon, and the anticipated action of the object is no longer an act of

'wounding' but an act of 'creating'".[180] By halting the execution video before the

moment of death, the hangman's noose is meant to be viewed, not as a weapon for

destroying life, but as a tool for justice and democracy. Thus, according to Scarry, "in the

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[180] Scarry, *The Body,* 174.

transformation of a weapon into a tool, everything is gained and nothing is lost".[181] However, the full execution video performs much differently and instead of deterring terrorists and proving the triumph of justice, it challenges the assumption that Hussein's life is not recognized as a valid human life and therefore his death is not recognized as a loss of life.

4.3 Apprehending Suffering Via Mobile Phone Video

What happens, then, when we are confronted with an image, particularly a moving image in which a figure previously constructed as evil can be seen as suffering? How do we apprehend these figures when they are presented to us as lives that can experience pain and be extinguished? What happens when the mask is removed and we are brought face to face with the death of the other and the fragility of his human body? Butler writes: "The body implies mortality, vulnerability, agency: the skin and the flesh expose to us the gaze of others, but also to touch, and to violence, and bodies put us at risk of becoming the agency and instrument of all these as well".[182] As Butler suggests, the presence of a body reveals all the things Hussein has been denied in the rhetoric of evil that surrounds him; mortality and vulnerability are rarely attributed to him yet they appear in the footage of his execution, an appearance made possible by the visual encounter with his death.

It is significant that the video of Hussein's execution was captured via mobile phone. Unsanctioned and amateurly recorded, this video offers a view of Saddam Hussein that was not intended, and does so via a medium that enables Hussein's

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[181] Ibid., 176.
[182] Ibid., 26.

humiliation and suffering to be broadcast to the world. While the camera operator

certainly imagined a number of implications of recording the execution, he likely never

intended that one would be the potential reinscribing of humanity on a subject previously

constructed as inhuman. The execution video challenges both the monstrous and animal-

like images that have been disseminated through mainstream news media. The mobile

phone video, by virtue of its rapid dissemination and largely unmediated content

unintentionally reveals an alternative representation of Hussein, one that the carefully

constructed and monitored news features that rely on editing and voiceovers to control

how the image is received do not allow. The mobile phone video simultaneously reveals

a more vulnerable Hussein and raises questions about the ways in which images are

constructed via mainstream media. To think critically about the dissemination of images

via mobile phone is to question dominant modes of representation, for when this video is

contrasted with the footage of Hussein's sentencing two opposing 'faces' emerge. During

sentencing, Hussein is shown as insolent, with no respect for law or human life. He

shakes his fist defiantly and voices his condemnation of both the court and its decision.

By contrast, in the execution video he appears as old and frightened; he does not protest

and does not resist. Defiance is replaced by despondence and frustrated but subdued

composure. He speaks, but not with the defiance one is accustomed to. While Hussein

remains relatively calm and passive, it is the executioner and witnesses that put on the

more frenetic display of hysteria.

Another implication of the mobile phone video is that more than providing a rapid

method of dissemination, it provides an ongoing representation of events that still

photography does not. While Susan Sontag writes of the transitive potential of images,

she still finds fault with photography, as it cannot produce the kind of narrative that writing can. Butler echoes Sontag's concerns: "Photographs cannot produce ethical pathos in us…if they do it is only momentarily – we see something atrocious and move on at a moment's notice".[183] This is potentially true of the Abu Ghraib photographs for, while the images are disturbing they offer only a glimpse into the torture of detainees. They offer no before or after, appear for a brief moment in time and disappear just as quickly. While they are available online and can be accessed repeatedly, they do not provide the same detailed narrative that the Hussein execution video offers. When we look at the images of Abu Ghraib we do not see the prisoners flinch nor are we privy to the process by which the image comes to be staged. The physical pain, in many ways, has already happened and thus the images display the aftermath of torture and humiliation but not the actual moment of violence itself. Perhaps then this video does what Sontag and Butler claim images cannot. Moving images provide a narrative that still photos deny and, in the case of Hussein, it is a narrative that mainstream media networks actively work to avoid.

The dissemination of Hussein's image via mobile phone has provoked responses to the execution that are much different than the reactions to images of him as a ghost or evil dictator as presented by *Time*, CNN and Fox News, among others. The polarizing 'face of evil' that has been constructed through news media is disturbed by these mobile phone images and a number of alternative interpretations emerge via online forums such as YouTube, MySpace, Google Video and many more. The website Spike.com[184]

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[183] Butler, *Frames*, 69.
[184] As a division of MTV Entertainment, Spike.com is no stranger to scenes of violence and gore and counts UFC (Ultimate Fighting Championship) and the CSI television franchise among its most popular

provides the complete version of the leaked mobile phone video as well as the official

video documenting the preparations for Hussein's execution. The comments that follow

these videos reflect sentiments that range from satisfaction, to conspiracy and even

compassion. Below the official video that portrays the moments leading up to the

execution user "mike856" writes: "Bush should have gotten the same thing for war

crimes".[185] Another comment from "mastatdogg", however, suggests that Hussein still

evades death: "I want to see the actual dead body. It didn't convince me".[186] While there

are indeed some ambivalent responses to Hussein's death from users watching the

incomplete video on Spike.com, they do not challenge the dominantly held view that

Hussein was evil. However, comments posted after the full video of Hussein's hanging,

while occasionally expressing satisfaction at his death, refer explicitly to Hussein as a

figure of suffering and reveal that it is via an interaction with his actual death that some

viewers come to see him as human rather than evil. For example, "BuilderMan " writes "I

Feel Sorry For Him...How He Died Noone Needs To Die That Wa[y]! [sic]".[187] Other

posters respond with comments such as "this is soooo sad i know he was a bad man but

he should have just got shot or something [sic]" and "[a]n eye for an eye, until the whole

world is blind...".[188] Comments posted to other websites that host the complete video

reflect similar sentiments. One YouTube version of the video includes a comment from

user "marcpreston" who writes: "This is a disgrace that this [is] on youtube. He had

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programs. However, like You-Tube and Google, Spike.com offers user-generated content as well and
allows viewers to upload and comment on videos.
[185] "Saddam Hussein Gets the Noose," *Spike.com*, 30 December 2006.
http://www.spike.com/video/saddam-hussein-gets/2809700.
[186] Ibid.
[187] "Saddam Hussein Execution (full video)," *Spike.com*, 31 December 2006.
http://www.spike.com/video/saddam-hussein/2809913.
[188] Ibid.

nothing to do with 9/11 so don't start with that. This should be taken down, we're all human and although he killed many humans, his death achieved nothing".[189] While this comment has sparked debate within the comment thread below the video, it is the only post that has received a significant number of "thumbs up" hits from other readers. Those who do not like marcpreston's post respond in anger such as one comment from "gobacktoschoolmoron" who attacks the previous poster with the following:

> "Fuck you, liberal maggot. If you don't like it, then don't watch it. You
> fucking liberals all think you have the right to tell others what they can and
> cannot do. Fuck you and the horse you rode in on. Oh and by the way, his
> hanging acheive plenty of satisfaction for millions of people. Now sit down
> and keep quiet, little boy [sic]".[190]

All of these responses, many of which have been posted in the last year, illustrate the ongoing debates surrounding Hussein's humanity. These comments suggest that, despite feelings of satisfaction from some, there has indeed been some recognition of Hussein's humanity and capacity to suffer, a recognition that only seems possible through a primary encounter with his death.

Judging from the range of online responses, it is likely that mainstream news networks would want to avoid posting a video that inspires such debate. However, preserving the stability of the comment field for online video postings is only one reason why the full execution video was not broadcast via mainstream venues. Another result of broadcasting the execution via mobile phone in particular is that the rawness of the image

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[189] "Saddam Hussein's Exec. Video (The Real One)," *YouTube.com*, 18 November 2010, Accessed 4 January 2011, http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Z0dvIHaYV0w&has_verified=1.
[190] Ibid.

more adequately reveals the inhumaneness of hanging. Such images are often seen as too graphic and disturbing to broadcast via mainstream media, as the mode of execution is so visually distressing. Moreover, much like the debate over showing images of torture from Abu Ghraib, allowing Hussein's death to be broadcast could be considered anti-American. By permitting viewers access to a fragile Hussein, networks run the risk of provoking debate regarding the sentence of death itself and the dark and mob-like conditions in which this particular execution was carried out. Similarly, Butler's note regarding Donald Rumsfeld's fear that the Abu Ghraib torture images would "define us as Americans" suggests that such images have a large role in determining national identity.[191] Yet does Rumsfeld's apology for prisoner abuse reveal a desire to end detainee torture or does it merely reflect his fear of Americans being caught with blood on their hands? While prisoner abuse occurs domestically as well, the scandal of Abu Ghraib threatened to destabilize the American project of bringing democracy to the Middle East. Even Colin Powell admitted that the torture scandal had a "terrible impact" on America's international image.[192] Both Powell and Rumsfeld fail to differentiate between the images of torture and the torture itself. Their shame is not that abuse is permitted as a part of interrogation procedure but rather that the abuse was caught on camera.

Mainstream media has often shied away from images of extreme violence, particularly when they portray the wrong party as the suffering one or when such images might damage a nation's reputation while at war. The aversion to images of violence says

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[191] Butler, *Frames*, 72.
[192] Jim Miklaszewski, David Gregory and Alicia Jennings, "Abuse scandal 'terrible' for U.S., Powell concedes," May 17, 2004, *MSNBC.com,* http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/4855930/ns/world_news-mideast/n_africa/.

more about the need for patriotism during war than it does about the value of human lives. It is no surprise then, that when revealing the details of Hussein's execution, most media outlets resort to still photos and commentary. Those that do play the video, of course, only play up until the actual hanging occurs. In these mainstream versions, the narrative ends with Hussein still alive, before any violence is inflicted upon his body and his death is told but never shown.

4.4   Violence

My aim is not to lament the death of Hussein, a man who, if his actions are any indication, did not recognize the precariousness of the other. However, I do seek to contrast the dehumanizing and dis-identifying effects of constructing Hussein as the 'face of evil' in mainstream media with the ambivalent responses produced by the primary confrontation of Hussein's death via mobile phone video. Theories of the face of the other, as utilized by Emmanuel Levinas and Judith Butler, are useful when evaluating the extent to which the video of Hussein's execution represents him as suffering. For Levinas, the face of the other is not the literal human face; rather, it is a rhetorical figure used to signify absolute alterity. The face mediates the relationship between the Self and the other, and it is through the face that the other speaks, leaving one, according to Levinas, "unable to kill".[193] This call not to harm, however, is more than a plea to spare a life; it is to call into question who is covered and who is left out of our protection against violence. Thus the critique of violence in the War on Terror must begin by determining how we affirm or deny "life" itself. The mobile phone video of Hussein's execution at the

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[193] Emmanuel Levinas, "Peace and Proximity," *Basic Philosophical Writings,* Eds. Adriaan T. Peperzak, Simon Critchley and Robert Bernasconi, (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1996), 9.

very least destabilizes the monopoly of truth production in media and at best, awakens one to the precariousness of the other, challenging our assessment of who is and who is not considered human in the War on Terror.

In most print or video, Hussein is personified, not as fragile, or in Butler's words, precarious, but as evil, inhuman and radically other, a construction that remains despite his execution. In most of the imagery that circulates regarding Hussein, even in death, he is seen as a threat. In many ways, the ghostly Hussein has returned. In mainstream accounts, Hussein is the perpetual enemy and in such discourse, lines between "good" and "evil", "human" and not, are distinctly drawn. Similar distinctions are made about the nature of Hussein's death. While he is often described as being executed, rarely is he described as being killed, marking the distinction between a just act of violence and a questionable one. It seems that the demonization of Hussein leading up to his death allows him to be seen as an evil tyrant who was never quite human anyway and, as Butler notes, "specific lives cannot be apprehended as injured or lost if they are not first apprehended as living".[194] Here, Butler draws attention to the epistemological frameworks that make it impossible to consider the loss of a life that was never qualified as living. Mainstream representations, therefore, prevent us from interpreting Hussein's death as a result of *violence.* They make it difficult to accept that he was a life at all, let alone mourn its loss for it is the loss of a life who was never considered human in the first place. Scarry contends that "the structure of war itself will require that injuring be partially eclipsed from view and will invariably bring about that eclipse by one

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[194] Butler, *Frames*, 1.

constellation of motives or another".[195] In other words, in order for the War on Terror and occupation of Iraq to continue, any injury to Hussein must be erased from the vast accumulation of vilifying images that surround him. Instead, his execution is represented as the non-injurous result of something other than violence; that is, the necessary eradication of evil. Just as we do not flinch or feel compassion for the pests we exterminate from our fields and apartment buildings, we are not meant to feel compassion for lives that are not considered as valuable as our own. A mask is thereby constructed that not only denies targets of military aggression a human face, but also effectively masks Western involvement in acts of terror and violence; for instance, the American support of Hussein's regime during the Iran-Iraq War. Thus, personification, "does not always humanize…sometimes [it] performs its own dehumanization".[196] It is, therefore, the way in which the face is presented that determines whether it will be seen as a figure of menace or vulnerability. In the case of Hussein, dominant Western media constructs a mask to effectively *efface* his humanity and it is only in a moment of extreme precariousness – that is, the moment of recognized suffering – that humanity is returned, this time via the face that speaks against the violence it suffers.

What then, are the specific structures of identification offered via the video footage that destabilize dominant representations of Hussein and cause his death to be recognized as a violent one? Moreover, what elements of the face permit the viewer to not only see his death as a moment of suffering but also to challenge this violence as a useful or justified response to contemporary terror? Because the face, for Levinas, is not exclusively the literal human face, a plea for recognition can be heard through a number

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[195] Scarry, *The Body*, 64.
[196] Butler, *Precarious*, 141.

of figures captured within the frame of the mobile phone video. When the literal face of Saddam Hussein is hidden from view, the angle of his neck, arch of his back and the way he swings in and out of shadows demand acknowledgement that a human life is being taken. These moving images call into question the frameworks through which Hussein has been previously conceived and, thus, the violence done to Hussein is not only via his execution. As Butler notes, "[w]e may have to think of different ways that violence can happen: one is precisely *through* the production of the face" that occurs in mainstream constructions of Hussein as alive and uninjurable.[197] Interestingly, it is also through the face that the ethical demand is made to not only preserve life but also recognize that it is indeed a life and a loss of life that is being witnessed. The face of evil that has been carefully mediated and maintained is not the face seen in the execution video. While the face of evil might demand a call for destruction, the face swinging in the dark below the gallows demands a response other than death. As Levinas explains, "[t]hat face facing me, in its expression-in its mortality- summons me, demands me, requires me: as if the invisible death faced by the face of the other…were 'my business'".[198] Indeed, as it swings in an out of the frame and the life drains from it, the face in the video makes a plea that cannot be refused. The face cannot be ignored; it provokes a reaction that is a recognition of suffering and *injury* and not an impassive response to evil. By encountering the face of absolute alterity in Hussein at the moment of his death one need not absolve Hussein of his crimes to recognize that his life is a human one that can be harmed. The moment of death forces viewers to consider that this face, this othered body, is one that can indeed feel pain and is precariously fragile. Hussein fell through a door on

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[197] Butler, *Precarious*, 141.
[198] Levinas, *Alterity*, 24.

the executioner's platform and his neck snapped with an audible crack. He hung in the dark, illuminated by the spectators' camera flashes, for a full ten minutes before the rope was removed from around his neck.[199] He died with his eyes open. The evil tyrant that was constructed as incapable of suffering has suffered, and we are there to see it.

Of course, Hussein's death is one we are all meant to know but not one we are meant to see. By seeing it, "face to face" as it were, viewers come to know this death in a different way. Witnessing Hussein's death is an uncomfortable moment for it causes one to question all of the narratives constructed about him to this point. That Hussein, of all people, can be considered human in the final moments of his life troubles the ways in which humanity is afforded to some and not to others. It calls into question all of the frameworks and social relations that affirm or deny the recognition of suffering in particular bodies. If we can even imagine the suffering of figures such as Hussein it will become much harder to deny the recognition of suffering in unfamiliar others.

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[199] "The Process of Judicial Hanging: Saddam Hussein hanged in Iraq in 2006," *Capital Punishment UK*, n.d., http://www.capitalpunishmentuk.org.

5   Conclusion

As a way of concluding, let us return to 2004 and Kevin Sites in Fallujah, Iraq to ask: How is the representation of suffering in others directly linked to the ways in which humanity is hierarchically allocated? As Sites films the confrontation inside the mosque the lines between human and not, which have become such a significant part of the rhetoric of the War on Terror, are made startling clear. Rifle raised, a marine accuses a wounded man of "faking dead"[200] and by doing so strips him of his humanity by denying him a body that can suffer injury. Although the man is indeed still alive, the marine shoots him anyway and turns and walks away as if nothing happened. Throughout this thesis, I have attempted to argue that the frames which affirm humanity are differentially allocated. That is, while some representations of the human portray those depicted as having real and whole lives, worthy of protection, other representations do not allow the same basic courtesy. These frameworks work to highlight the suffering of some and deny the recognition of suffering in others. Moreover, these frames operate within dominant discourses of race, class and sexuality that work aggressively to obstruct a more critical and questioning interpretation of the visual archive of the War on Terror.

Certain constructions of the face are subject to hierarchical visual economies that privilege particular representations over others. It is via this economic relationship that the figures of international conflict are either given or denied humanization. This project, then, offers the opportunity to interrogate the ways in which we imagine "evil". In the second chapter of this thesis I have argued that the construction of cultural, political and

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[200] Sites, *In the Hot Zone,* 13.

religious others as evil allows them to be seen, not as valid human lives but, rather, as inhuman targets marked for destruction. Not only do the dominant visual frameworks in Western media deny these figures protection from violence, they actively *promote* violence towards them. Yet what makes us human is our ability to not only place ourselves in relation to unknown others, but to be moved on behalf of that other as well, even when we are unsure about what may result. As this thesis makes clear, the demonization of enemies and, in particular, Muslim others, is nothing new and operates within discourses of latent Orientalism and long-standing anxieties about the West's relationship with cultural others.

Demonized and constructed as less than human in mainstream human, these figures (both individual and collective) are rarely seen as targets of violence, despite the harm done to their bodies. In Chapter Three, I argue that the images of torture taken at Abu Ghraib prison are a perfect example of this; the construction of detainees as deviantly and inhumanly other forecloses the recognition of suffering in their bodies. While the images expose the reality of prisoner abuse, they do little to humanize the victims for they are created and circulated within frameworks that have already determined the detainees to be incapable of living whole and real human lives. While, as perhaps distant viewers, we do not physically inflict the pain ourselves, we are complicit in other ways. For example, if we look at the images from Abu Ghraib and see the abject sexuality, do we erase the suffering of the prisoners by subscribing to the heteronormative framework through which the photographs are presented? Butler claims, "[i]n asking whether we caused such suffering, we are being asked by an established authority not only to avow a causal link between our own actions and the suffering that follows but also to take responsibility for

these actions and their effects".[201] This may seem strange, given that both the media and the military have sought to distinguish the acts of torture at Abu Ghraib from the larger fight against terrorism, claiming that the violence was inflicted by a small group of soldiers. It is easy to remove oneself from having anything to do with the event of prisoner abuse. Yet the photographs condition our participation in this event, if not as perpetrators, then as witnesses. Butler notes:

> We are used to thinking that we can be responsible only for that which we have done, that which can be traced to our intentions, our deeds…[but] tethering responsibility to freedom is an error…I am not primarily responsible by virtue of my actions, but by virtue of the relation to the Other that is established at the level of my primary and irreversible susceptibility, my passivity prior to any possibility of action of choice.[202]

As Butler infers, our actions in the event of Abu Ghraib do not affect the measure of our responsibility. Just because we are not responsible for the initial violence, or victims of it, does not mean we are *not* responsible for ending such violence or, at the very least, critiquing the frameworks that allow the violence to be erased from dominant consciousness. In the case of Abu Ghraib, this means challenging the erasure of suffering from the bodies of Muslim prisoners and the ways in which the images are still viewed within normative frames of race and sexuality.

What do we make of the absence of images that allow for the suffering of others to be recognized? Further, how might we respond to suffering when it is recognized but the

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[201] Butler, *Giving*, 10.
[202] Ibid., 88.

110

"victim" is someone who has been constructed as "evil"? Chapter Four takes up the case

of Saddam Hussein, a man convicted of war crimes and sentenced to death by hanging.

For Butler, in order to hear the other we must first acknowledge our shared humanity,

even if we are simultaneously acknowledging their guilt. In her words, "[i]f we forget

that we are related to those we condemn, even those we *must* condemn, then we lose the

chance to be ethically educated or 'addressed' by a consideration of who they are and

what their personhood says about the range of human possibility that exists".[203] If this is

indeed the case, then whether or not a suspect of terror is guilty or not has no bearing on

his or her humanity. Interestingly, Butler notes that for the philosopher Emmanuel

Levinas, "responsibility emerges as a consequence of being subject to the unwilled

address of the other"[204] and that the primary relations of responsibility are not "abusive"

or "terrible".[205] But what if they *are* terrible? What if they are guilty? What if they are, in

fact, by the majority of accounts, *evil*? Can we still have the same relationship? Can we

still be called, unwillingly, into responsibility? According to Butler we can: "Whatever

the Other has done, the other still makes an ethical demand upon me, has a 'face' to

which I am obligated to respond-meaning that I am, as it were, precluded from revenge

by virtue of a relation I never chose".[206] Thus, through no choice of our own, we are

responsible for the violence inflicted upon the other. As for the images themselves, then,

the moment of viewing becomes a moment of address to which we are ethically and

irrevocably bound.

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[203] Ibid., 45.
[204] Ibid., 85.
[205] Ibid., 90.
[206] Ibid., 91.

Where then, do we go from here? While the majority of political rhetoric may have moved slightly away from discourses of "crusade" and the "axis of evil", mainstream media as well as dominant cultural opinion continues to reinforce constructions of Muslim alterity in the War on Terror rather than suggesting alternatives as to how we apprehend cultural others in times of conflict. While images and video disseminated in response to 9/11 and the War on Terror have contributed to both rhetorical and actual violence, they also provide new spaces for thinking about the political work of representation and the potential of images to return us to a more engaged and ethical relationship with cultural others.

Perhaps it is this present moment that offers renewed possibilities of reassessing who is and is not considered human in the War on Terror, particularly through the dissemination of still and moving images. The looming tenth anniversary of the Trade Center attacks raises important questions about how the event of 9/11 will continue to be perceived as we move further away from 2001 and begin sharing our knowledge with a generation who only knows 9/11 by its mediations. Now, ten years into the War on Terror – a war so saturated with images – and with the deaths of both Saddam Hussein and Osama Bin Laden, who will emerge as the new "face of evil" and will we be able to see beyond it? The recognition of suffering and thereby and recognition of the other's humanity, if it can be acknowledged in figures such as these, is a courtesy that cannot be withheld from others subject to pain, humiliation and torture in the War on Terror, and beyond.

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