

Sydney Terris

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Sexualized Torture in the Abu Ghraib Prison

Following the traumatic 9/11 terrorist attacks targeting major symbols of American culture, the Bush Presidential Administration approved the CIA's use of "enhanced interrogation techniques" in order to restore stability to the Middle East. This euphemism for the U.S. government's unjustified, systematic torture of detainees included subjecting individuals to beatings, binding in contorted stress positions, hooding, deafening noise, sleep deprivation, simulated drowning, waterboarding, extreme confinement, brutalization, and, most importantly, sexual humiliation. To this point, both Ivan Greenberg's *From Surveillance to Torture: The Evolution of U.S. Interrogation Practices during the War on Terror* and Diane Marie Amann's *Abu Ghraib* utilize the Abu Ghraib prison to highlight emasculation through sexually-based torture as a militaristic tactic employed by Western powers to express dominance over a space.

To begin, the use of female torturers to symbolically castrate males in the Abu Ghraib prison, a method explored by Greenberg, precipitated Western expression of authority over Middle Eastern spaces. Centrally, "prisoners were forced to wear women's underwear on their heads while naked and handcuffed. Female guards pretended to smear their menstrual blood on prisoner faces. Detainees were forced to masturbate and engage in simulated sexual acts" intended to "illicit intense feelings of shame and humiliation" associated with feminization (Greenberg 172). At the crux, sexually charged torture methods pervading the Abu Ghraib prison during American occupation emasculated male prisoners through forced sexual submission.

Additionally, in compelling prisoners to express obedience to female guards privileges the agency of Western femininity over that of native masculinity, fundamentally asserting Western dominance over the Iraqi regions surrounding the Abu Ghraib prison. Fundamentally, Western military forces employed sexualized torture in the Abu Ghraib prison, intended to symbolically castrate male prisoners, in order to establish psychological authority over the physical space in which the prison operated.

Continuing, Amann further characterizes sexualized torture methods within the Abu Ghraib prison as a method for emasculating native men to ultimately express Western dominance over Middle Eastern spaces. Essentially, an internal Army report “found that ‘numerous incidents of sadistic, blatant, and wanton criminal abuses were inflicted on several detainees’ at Abu Ghraib; among these were incidents of ... coerced masturbation and other sexual humiliation” aimed at symbolically castrating male prisoners in order to assert Western authority within the region (Amann 2092). That is to say, the Western-occupied Abu Ghraib prison compelled prisoners to engage submissively in sexualized torture in order to recharacterize Middle Eastern male agency as subordinate to Western agency. By feminizing the men previously occupying Iraqi spaces surrounding the prison through sexual humiliation, Western militaries succeeded in feminizing and, therefore, asserting masculine authority over the physical spaces of Iraq. Moreover, by symbolically castrating Iraqi men through sexually charged torture and, consequently, emasculating Iraqi culture in global discourse, Western powers understood as inherently masculine and agency-expressive

established dominance over Middle Eastern spaces surrounding the Abu Ghraib prison.

In conclusion, both Ivan Greenberg's *From Surveillance to Torture: The Evolution of U.S. Interrogation Practices during the War on Terror* and Diane Marie Amann's *Abu Ghraib* delve into the militaristic employment of sexualized torture in the Abu Ghraib prison. Greenberg and Amann each explore forced sexual submission upon male-dominated cultures as an effective method of emasculating a region in order to express dominance over a physical space. At the crux, the symbolic castration of men through torture within the Abu Ghraib prison by military powers characterizes the deliberate deprivation of native male agency as a tactic utilized by Western powers to assert authority over Middle Eastern regions.