

Chapter 5

War-on-terror Femininity and the Sexualised Violence(s) at Abu Ghraib

Introduction

In 2016, while staying in New York City (NYC), I attended Laura Poitras's immersive installation, *Astro Noise*, at the Whitney Museum of American Art. Curated by Jay Sanders, this experience builds upon themes found in Poitras' earlier work documenting life in post-9/11 America. Among other things, the collection addresses: the war on terror, the US drone programme, Guantánamo Bay and themes of occupation and torture (Laura Poitras *Astral Noise*). In one of the video installations of *Astro Noise*, we watch New Yorkers respond to the smoking pit of Ground Zero (the relevance of this will become clear shortly). Despite its critical appraisal, unlike my experience at the 9/11 Memorial and Museum site later that same day, this installation did not leave a lasting impression. At Ground Zero, I watched teenagers take 'selfies' of themselves next to the North and South Pools before asking the adults with them: 'What happened here?', 'What are the pools for?', 'Whose names are these?' While '[t]aking selfies at horror sites, like concentration camps, Ground Zero or disaster-stricken areas, has become a growing trend on social media websites...' (Hodalska, 2017, p. 407) – and can be placed within the broader landscape of dark tourism, which involves travel to sites of tragedy and death – what I witnessed at Ground Zero was not quite the same. For these teenagers, there was a tacit understanding that they were at a memorial site of some sort. However, they were unaware of the exact details. They had not chosen to explicitly engage in dark tourism. In this instance, they appeared to have happened upon a 'horror site'. The details of what, when and who the memorial site was paying tribute to, did not seem to matter. Taking a picture (with a smile on their faces) and being 'seen' at or being superimposed onto history, is what mattered. Whose or what history was less important. Incidentally, the teenagers I observed, continued to take 'selfies' once they had

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learned of the mass death and destruction that had taken place at this site. As Hodalska (2017, p. 416) notes, '[s]elfies taken at places of horror are ghoulish souvenirs, mobile memories'.

These are not the only 'mobile memories' we can associate with 9/11 and the war on terror that followed. As we will see in this chapter, seven US soldiers also used mobile phone cameras to pose with smiling faces; only this time it was to document the sexualised violence and torture of Iraqi prisoners. To be clear, I am not equating teenagers taking 'selfies' at Ground Zero with the behaviour of the American soldiers. What happened at this memorial site, on the 11th September 2001, was the catalyst for the war on terror. On this now historic day, the Islamic terrorist group al-Qaeda hijacked four US passenger planes. Two of the planes were crashed into the North and South towers of The World Trade Centre in NYC. The third crashed into the Pentagon while the fourth crashed into a field. In response to these attacks, the US launched the war on terror. Part of this campaign involved the invasion and occupation of Iraq (see Chapter 2). The sexualised violence and torture committed at Abu Ghraib (a prison in Iraq) falls within this 'war'. What took place at this prison was captured on mobile phone cameras by the soldiers involved. Thirteen years later, mobile memories, in the form of 'selfies' at the Ground Zero memorial site, still form part of the post-9/11 story. It is this that I reflect upon here.

Outline of the Chapter

This chapter provides a gendered analysis of the war on terror. This is a macro-level foreign policy agenda launched by the Bush administration following the 9/11 terrorist attacks. It is not limited to the US. Other nations, most notably the UK, also joined in this global fight against terrorism. As this chapter will focus on a particular enactment of the war on terror – the invasion and occupation of Iraq and the sexualised violence and torture at Abu Ghraib – I will limit the focus to US involvement. As such, at the meso-level, I will examine the US military, as well as militarised femininity. At the micro-level, the chapter will unpack the involvement of female soldiers in the violence(s) that took place. American exceptionalism is at work across all three levels. It is also worth noting that the events at Abu Ghraib took place against the backdrop of the neoliberal agenda discussed in Chapter 2. While these three levels of analysis are dealt with implicitly, the explicit focus of this chapter centres on challenging wartime gender essentialism and ontological constructions of females as always and already innocent victims. Adding to my discussion in the previous chapter – where, in response to the fetishisation of rape and sexual violence, I examined structural forms of GBV – this chapter considers women as perpetrators of the violence(s) of armed conflict.

The chapter begins by outlining the terminology and the analytical frameworks employed throughout the chapter. This is followed by a gendered analysis of the war on terror. The body of the chapter – which addresses the involvement of three women in the sexualised violence and torture at Abu Ghraib – is divided into three main parts. The first section, which draws on Visual Criminology and literature

on photography and war, examines a selection of images of the violence(s) that took place at Abu Ghraib. The categories addressed include gender and sovereign violence; gender, ethics and appropriate responses to images of suffering (specifically the postmodern meme: 'doing a Lynndie'); and finally, the limitations of the Abu Ghraib images. The second section, which draws inspiration from Feminist Criminology, unpacks mainstream media accounts of women's involvement in sexualised violence and torture, paying particular attention to the case of Lynndie England. The main themes explored here are female agency, gender and performance, female sexuality, as well as class and the maternal militarised body. In a reversal of Spivak's infamous quote, referred to in Chapter 3, the images of the tortured and abused male Iraqi bodies suggest that 'brown men needed to be protected from...white [women]' (Holland, 2009, p. 249). If we follow this line of thinking, we are able to revise our understanding of globalisation masculinities (Chapter 2) to consider how femininities feature within this enactment of American foreign policy. The final section unpacks the subversive possibilities of war-on-terror femininity with reference to the conviction that crime is a resource for doing gender. Previous themes, such as western civilising missions, hypermasculinity and the US empire (Chapters 2 and 3), are revisited in this chapter.

Terminology and Analytical Frameworks

In this chapter, I will use the terms sexualised violence and torture to refer to the violence(s) committed at Abu Ghraib.

I outlined Halbmayr's (2010) notion of sexualised violence in Chapter 1. Here, it is employed to understand men's experiences of 'humiliation, intimidation and destruction' (Halbmayr, 2010, p. 30). The US government refused to refer to these acts as torture, choosing instead to refer to them as abuse. Furthermore, attempts were made to distance the US government from the actions of individual soldiers. Nevertheless, I posit that these acts of violence were carried out by men and women who represented the US military; therefore, these acts of interpersonal violence were enacted against the backdrop of the military institution. In other words, this violence emerges from an interpersonal-institutional nexus.

In this chapter, I use the term war-on-terror femininity to enrich our understanding of women's involvement in sexualised violence. It is adapted from Sjoberg and Gentry's (2007, p. 86) notion of militarised femininity. According to their typology, the female soldier is:

[...] brave, but needs the men around her to survive ... She is sexy, but not sexual. She can fight, but the kind of fighting she can do is sanitized: she cannot engage in cruelty or torture. She is never far from her maternal instincts. The ideal-type of militarized femininity expects a woman to be as capable as a male soldier, but as vulnerable as a civilian woman.

While this offers a more generic depiction of the female soldier, my war-on-terror femininity is context specific: it exists within the milieu of American

exceptionalism and the fight against terrorism. Within this articulation, the female soldier is not *expected* to be sexy. She *is* violent, aggressive and can engage in cruelty and torture as part of this wider US geopolitical agenda. This brand of feminism includes the use of sexual violence. While she may be maternal (this will be discussed later), this does not belie her duty to serve her country. She remains subservient to the white male soldier but is not *required* to be as vulnerable as a female civilian. Above all, she is superior to the Iraqi terrorist ‘other’.

As noted above, I will be analysing the (interpersonal-institutional) violence(s) at Abu Ghraib against the backdrop of American exceptionalism. This concept, as defined by Kramer and Michalowski (2011, p. 105),

[...] generally portrays the United States as a nation of exceptional virtue, a moral leader in the world with a unique historic mission to spread universal values such as freedom, democracy, equality...

And with regards to states of exception more broadly, as Aradau and van Munster (2009, p. 688) point out, ‘Guantánamo Bay, Abu Ghraib, extraordinary rendition, migration camps [and] surveillance practices’ are all examples of extraordinary measures that are presented as necessary and justified in the fight against terrorism. This chapter provides a gendered analysis of American exceptionalism.

Three of the seven soldiers involved in the sexualised violence and torture at Abu Ghraib were women: Megan Ambuhl, Lynndie England and Sabrina Harman.¹ In order to analyse their involvement in the war on terror, this chapter draws on the sub-disciplines of Feminist and Visual Criminology to critically examine gender and the sexualised violence committed at Abu Ghraib. What follows is a brief and partial overview of both subjects, starting with Feminist Criminology (for a more detailed account, see Renzetti, 2013).

Feminist Criminology

Feminist Criminology has demonstrated that gender, alongside other intersecting factors such as age, race, class, ethnicity and sexual orientation, is central to understanding criminal offending, victimisation and experiences of/treatment by the Criminal Justice System. While Feminist Criminology can be divided into different strands – liberal, Marxist, radical, postmodern and black feminist thought – for my purposes here, reference to the broad aims of Feminist Criminology will suffice.

Over the years, feminists have sought to highlight the inadequacies and fallacies of much criminological work pertaining to the criminal and/or deviant behaviour of women. The general tenet of their argument is that women have either been overlooked within the literature or, when included, have been misrepresented or presented in distorted and negative ways, and/or depicted in terms of sexist stereotypes based upon their supposed biological (Lombroso & Ferrero,

¹The male soldiers were Javal Davis, Ivan Frederick, Charles Graner and Jeremy Sivits.

1893/2004) and psychological (Kanopka, 1966) nature. In sum, their criticisms of mainstream criminology centre around three main issues: excluding, marginalising and distorting (mis-representing) women (Banwell, 2007). Since the 1980s, inquiries (both theoretical and empirical) into the relationship between feminism, gender and crime have flourished. Chesney-Lind (2006) and Cook (2016) provide a more thorough review of this work than is possible here.

In the twenty-first century, Feminist Criminology interrogates the relationship between patriarchy and female offending (Parker & Reckenwald, 2008). It continues to unpack intersecting inequalities in the lives of criminal women and girls (see Burgess-Proctor, 2006; Button & Worthen, 2014; Erez, Adelman, & Gregory, 2009; Potter, 2006). It also examines the blurred boundaries between females' victimisation, their offending behaviour (Banwell, 2010; Peters, 2006; Wesely, 2006) and their treatment within the Criminal Justice System (Franklin, 2008; Pollack, 2007). Feminist criminology has also broadened its analysis to address 'transnational dimensions of crime' (Henne & Shah, 2016, p. 4; see also Henne & Torshynski, 2013; Kim & Merlo, 2014).

Questions of how agency, choice and victimisation feature in the lives of women and girls caught up in the Criminal Justice System, alongside the broader structural, institutional, political and economic constraints that inform these lived-experiences – in sum, their pathways into crime – remain key concerns for the discipline. Finally, from a methodological point of view, feminist criminology embraces the reflexive tradition and draws upon a range of methodological tools in pursuit of this agenda (Burman, Batchelor, & Brown, 2001; Henne & Shah, 2016; Mason & Stubbs, 2010). Having outlined the basic tenets of Feminist Criminology, let us move on to consider Visual Criminology.

Visual Criminology

In recent years, Criminology has become concerned with the visual (for a review of this work, see Brown, 2014; Carrabine, 2011, 2012; Henne & Shah, 2016; Young, 2014; see also *The Handbook of Visual Criminology* edited by Brown & Carrabine, 2017 and the special edition of *Theoretical Criminology*, 2014). The goal of this work is to understand 'how crime and punishment are represented visually' (Henne & Shah, 2016, p. 6). Criminologists have argued that the study of visuality as a formation of social power is capable of producing specific visions of hierarchical systems such as race, gender and sexuality (Brown, 2014; Brown & Carrabine, 2017). That said, Visual Criminology is not limited to the visual. It is also interested in the material reality of people's lives, paying attention to 'affective and sensory' elements (Brown, 2017).

Using a variety of methods to document and analyse visual representations of crime and punishment – including photodocumentary, photo-ethnography, data visualisations, graffiti and dark tourism (see Brown, 2017) – visual criminologists, as Brown (2017) notes, push the boundaries of conventional crime and media studies to interrogate the role of the image more thoroughly. Images may be produced by the researcher or, as is more common, researchers analyse existing visual materials (Pauwels, 2017).

From the beginnings of the discipline, criminologists have used images in their analyses of crime and criminality. Ranging from Lombroso's biological determinism (and the use of photographic evidence to identify criminals, see Finn, 2017), to the ethnographic work of the Chicago School (and Cultural Criminology more broadly), as well as Foucauldian analyses of sovereign punishment (and critical work on Criminal Justice responses to crime), scholars have engaged with visual representations of crime across spatial, social, cultural and political planes (see Brown, 2017; Carney, 2017; Ferrell, 2017; Finn, 2017).

The outline provided above speaks to the more generic elements of Visual Criminology. For the remainder of this section, I will focus on specific elements that align with the focus of this chapter: gender, American exceptionalism and the war on terror. Certain scholars have acknowledged the importance of the relationship between visuality, empire and the State, particularly in relation to colonial and imperial practices (see Mirzoeff, 2011; Schept, 2016; see also Marchant, 2019). Simply put, visuality (in this context) – as highlighted in the Introduction – is not intrinsically visual but takes on a narrative form. It involves, to paraphrase Schept (2016), the creation, representation and normalisation of State power (I will return to this shortly). For Schept (2016), however, the use of the image in the production of State power has not taken centre stage within Visual Criminology. That said, Visual Criminology has explored the relationship '...between aesthetics and ideologies...optics and politics' and whether or not visuality 'achieve[s] recognizability and legibility' (Brown & Carrabine, 2017). Allied to this, Visual Criminology is interested in unpacking the ethical, normative and moral consequences of looking and seeing (Brown & Carrabine, 2017; Gies, 2017).

Now that I have outlined the general principles of Feminist and Visual Criminology, let us move on to unpack women's role(s) within the war on terror.

Gender and the War on Terror

For some criminologists, the US-led war on terror is an example of American exceptionalism (Aradau & van Munster, 2009; Rothe & Muzatti, 2004).² What is missing is a gendered analysis of this 'extraordinary' fight against terrorism. Militarised masculinities play a key role in US empire building. With reference to the (interpersonal-institutional) violence(s) at Abu Ghraib, I want to examine how war-on-terror femininity might also form part of this neo-imperialistic story. What follows then, is an exploration of the war on terror through a gendered lens.

Three narratives emerge when we consider women and the war on terror:

1. The woman in need of rescue and protection (reads as the generic 'third-world' Muslim woman; see Mohanty, 1988).
2. The woman in danger: militarised femininity and the ideal female soldier.
3. The fallen woman: female perpetrators of sexualised violence.

²For a discussion of these issues in relation to the British State, see Mythen and Walklate 2006 & 2008.

The first two 'stories' will be addressed briefly here while the remainder of the chapter interrogates the third narrative.

1. The 'Third-world' Muslim Woman in Need of Rescue and Protection

In both Iraq and Afghanistan, US intervention was justified on the grounds that both missions were part of a broader campaign to rescue and liberate Muslim women from 'barbaric' Islamic regimes (Holland, 2009; Khan, 2014; Nayak, 2006; Riley, 2013; Shepherd, 2006; Sjoberg, 2006a; Stabile & Kumar, 2005; Steans, 2008; Tétreault, 2006).

In the Introduction, I talked about western efforts to instil gender equality in Afghanistan. Part of this mission involves the liberation of Afghan women. The mutilated face of Bibi Aisha on the front cover of *Time Magazine* in July 2010 is a perfect illustration of western civilising missions. The image is graphic. We see a hole where the nose has been cut off. The headline reads: 'what happens if we leave Afghanistan'. In the article that follows, written by Aryan Baker (a news reporter for Pakistan and Afghanistan, Heck & Schlag, 2012), we learn that Bibi Aisha was an 18-year-old Afghan woman who ran away from her husband and his family who, under orders from the Taliban, cut off her nose and sliced her ears. Bibi was rescued by US forces in Afghanistan and was taken to the US to receive reconstructive surgery (Heck & Schlag, 2013; Khan, 2014). This narrative, as Khan (2014, p.102) notes:

[...] leads to a logical conclusion: NATO and the United States should stay in Afghanistan to continue to rescue women from the Taliban who want to brutalise them. Logically, [w]estern forces are set up as saviors of the Afghan woman. (see also Rasul & McDowell, 2010)

The violence involved in US interventions in the middle-east is obscured. Here, drawing on Schept (2016, p. 5), we return to the relationship between visibility, empire and the State:

Visibility, then, is the mechanism by which the quotidian violence underwriting authority is made illegible and un-seeable... [it masks] the inherent violence of [S]tates in a vocabulary that leaves intact the very logics, infrastructures and institutions necessary for the violence to occur in the first place.

In the previous chapter, I talked about *sighting* and *citing* women. Unlike the image of President Trump signing the anti-abortion Executive Order, where woman is absent, in this picture the woman is present. Bibi is both *sighted* and *cited*. However, she is still marginalised. Her story is not simply about fighting gender injustice; about the violence enacted upon her, its (geo)political scope is greater than this: victory in the battle against the evil forces of Islamic terrorism. This agenda is based on ethnocentric and orientalist ideas about women, Islam and

the middle-east. Orientalism, as coined by Said (1979), is based upon ontological and epistemological distinctions between the 'orient' and the 'occident', where the west dominates, restructures and has authority over this threatening, dangerous, mysterious 'Other'. For Said (1979, p. 300), orientalism is the systematic attempt to distinguish 'between the West, which is rational, developed, humane, superior, and the Orient, which is aberrant, undeveloped, inferior'. Furthermore, the Orient is considered as a 'hotbed of terrorism, ignorance, poverty, oppression, racism and misogyny' (Nayak, 2006, p. 46).

To explore this case in more detail, I turn to Walklate's (2017) work on the power of the visual to communicate ideas about victimhood and suffering (see also Gies 2017 who discusses mediating suffering in relation to staged imagery of killing and torture).

In the chapter *Mediated Suffering*, Walklate (2017) draws on three images to discuss the concepts of 'pain, horror and resilience'. The first is an image of a woman running towards a funeral procession. The funeral is for her cousin who died in Afghanistan. This is reviewed under the subheading *Pain?* This is followed by the image of a woman in Norway covered in blood following the attacks by Anders Breivik in 2011. This section is entitled *Horror?* The final image, dissected under the title *Resilience?*, is of a march in Paris in response to the Charlie Hebdo attacks. The image features a banner with 'Not Afraid' written on it. Walklate (2017) argues that all three, produced in the aftermath of 9/11, 'carry the marks of that moment in time in how they have been mediated and responded to'. Through her analysis, we see how suffering is '...reshaped, commodified, and packaged for its public and didactic salience' (McEvoy & Jamieson, 2007, p. 425 as cited in Walklate, 2017).

To this canon of post 9/11 images, we can add the photo of Bibi Aisha. I argue that the image of Bibi Aisha offers a 'mediated' illustration of pain and horror vis-à-vis the generic 'third-world-woman'. In this example, the orchestration of female suffering was used by the US administration to sell the war on terror to the American people. As Stabile and Kumar (2005, p. 778) note:

As long as women are not permitted to speak for themselves, they provide the perfect grounds for an elaborate ventriloquist act, in which they serve as the passive vehicle for the representation of U.S interests.

As an illustration of how gender can serve American exceptionalism, Bibi Aisha is only one example of the various ways in which women were used to justify this global campaign (see Stabile & Kumar, 2005; Steans, 2008 for a more detailed analysis).

2. *The Woman in Danger*

The next narrative I want to draw upon is a variation of the first. However, in this instance, the woman in danger was a US soldier deployed in Iraq. Her name was Jessica Lynch. News stories reported that 19-year-old Lynch had 'gone down

fighting', that she had been injured in battle and then sexually violated in captivity (Sjoberg, 2007, p. 86). However, this was a fabricated story (by the Pentagon) of capture, detention and sexual violation. The reality was far more banal: Lynch's gun had malfunctioned. She did not 'go down fighting'. Her injuries were not battle-related. She was not captured *per se*; rather she willingly surrendered. She was held but received medical care (Bragg, 2003 as cited in Sjoberg, 2007; see also Lobasz, 2008; Mason, 2005).

After nine days, US soldiers rescued Lynch from the Iraqi hospital where she was being held (Lobasz, 2008). Lynch was portrayed as helpless, as needing male soldiers to rescue her (Sjoberg, 2007). As Lobasz (2008, p. 319 emphasis in the original) notes:

[...] Lynch was represented not only as a woman in need of rescuing, but as a *virtuous and good* woman in need of rescuing. Depicted as an innocent small-town girl who wanted nothing more than to teach kindergarten...Lynch both needed and deserved to be rescued.

While the story of Bibi Aisha was used to legitimise the continued presence of US forces in Afghanistan, it can be argued that the fabricated rescue mission of Jessica Lynch formed part of US efforts to revitalise support for the war on terror in Iraq. Like with Bibi Aisha, Lynch's story was central to the war on terror narrative. Conversely, our final 'story', concerning women's involvement in sexualised violence and torture, did very little to justify the invasion and occupation of Iraq. In fact, this comparison – between victim and perpetrator in the form of Lynch and England – has formed the basis of numerous academic articles on the subject of women's role in the US military (see Howard III & Prividera, 2008; Lobasz, 2008; Mason, 2005; Sjoberg, 2007). Here, as captured in the title of Lobasz's (2008) article, *The woman in peril* (Lynch) is compared with '*the ruined woman*' (England). Lynch embodies women's normative role within the US military, while England represents the subversion of it.

3. Abu Ghraib and Female Perpetrators of Sexualised Violence

In April 2004, *60 Minutes II*, a CBS American news programme, broadcast a breaking report detailing the sexual abuse and torture of Iraqi prisoners by US soldiers at Abu Ghraib (Howard III & Prividera 2008; Murphy, 2007). The show released images of hooded naked detainees being piled on top of one another to form a pyramid, while other images depicted forced simulated sexual acts (Holland, 2009). Later, in May 2004, Seymore Hersh also reported on the story in *The New Yorker*. This was followed by published photographs of the violence(s) in the *The New York Times*, *Newsweek* and *The Washington Post* (Tucker & Triantafyllos, 2008). US soldiers, over the course of three months, took an estimated 1,800 photographs of the sexual abuse and torture of Iraqi detainees (Murphy, 2007; Richter-Montpetit, 2007).

Hersh's article in *The New Yorker*, *Torture at Abu Ghraib*, was based on the classified report by Major General Antonio Taguba (Holland, 2009). And although,

as Sjöberg (2007) notes, there were eight official investigations into the sexualised violence and torture, only those written by General Taguba in 2004 and by Major General George Fay in 2005 are in the public domain. Among the acts of physical, mental and sexual abuse listed in the Taguba (2004, pp. 16–17) report are: the use of military dogs to intimidate detainees; various acts of physical violence, including jumping on prisoners' feet; forcing prisoners to pose in sexually explicit positions for the camera; forced nakedness, forced masturbation and 'forcing naked male detainees to wear women's underwear'; the sodomising of a detainee; and 'threatening male detainees with rape'. This is corroborated by Fay and Jones (2005) who also found that military personnel engaged in the improper use of isolation.

Seven US military soldiers – the seven 'rotten apples' (named earlier) – were found guilty of various violations of the Uniform Code of Military Justice (UCMJ), including numerous counts of dereliction of duty, as well as the maltreatment of prisoners between May 2004 and September 2005 (Caldwell & Mestrovic, 2008, p. 276). No senior officers within the US military were charged or tried for their crimes (Howard III & Prividera, 2008, p. 288). Janis Karpinski, the female general in charge of Abu Ghraib, was 'formally admonished and quietly suspended' (Hersh, 2004). For my purposes here, I will provide details of the three women who were involved as well as Charles Graner, the supposed ringleader of the violence(s) and England's boyfriend at the time of the scandal.

In 2004, Megan Ambuhl, following a plea deal, pleaded guilty to a single charge of dereliction of duty. She was dismissed from the army and did not serve any prison time (CNN, 2013). In 2005, Sabrina Harman was demoted and sent to prison for her role in the sexualised violence and torture at Abu Ghraib. Following her sentence, she received a bad conduct discharge from the army (CNN, 2013). In the same year, as part of a pretrial agreement, Lynndie England pleaded guilty for her involvement, while claiming that she did not understand that her actions were wrong. This resulted in a mistrial. During her second trial, England was found guilty of 'four counts of maltreating detainees, one count of conspiracy and one count of committing an indecent act' (CNN, 2013). She received a three-year prison sentence but was released after serving half of this time. Charles Graner was sentenced to 10 years in prison. He also received a dishonourable discharge from the army (CNN, 2013).

In Chapter 1, I talked about the tendency to argue that perpetrators of excessive and brutal violence dehumanise their victims prior to carrying out their acts of violence. Accounts of the sexualised violence at Abu Ghraib are no exception. A number of writers have argued that the sexualised violence and torture at Abu Ghraib was enacted upon dehumanised victims (Apel, 2005; Spens, 2014). My position on this remains the same: dehumanisation was not a precursor to this violence. What happened to the detainees at Abu Ghraib may have dehumanised them, *after the fact*, but this violence was not enacted upon dehumanised bodies. It was inflicted upon bodies that were identified and marked as enemies of the State. Bodies that 'required' punishment as part of a western civilising mission. In the context of Abu Ghraib, moving beyond dehumanisation allows us to appreciate the racial (and by extension, ethnocentric and orientalist), political and gendered meanings and motivations behind this sexualised violence (see also Richter-Montpetit, 2007; Tétreault, 2006).

Images of Sexualised Violence and Torture at Abu Ghraib

I opened this chapter with a discussion about teenagers smiling and taking 'selfies' at Ground Zero. Following on from this, the images that I have chosen to analyse include England and Harman smiling for the camera as they pose in front of abused and exposed Iraqi men (see Figs. 1, 2, 4 & 5). I have also included the somewhat paradoxical image of Harman treating an injured soldier. On the one hand, Harman is performing the normative feminine role of caring. On the other hand, she is grinning and posing, with a thumbs-up, in front of a naked man who has been bitten by a military dog (see Fig. 5). There are no published images of Megan Ambuhl, and apart from the details regarding her dismissal from the army, there is no real focus on her involvement, other than the fact that she was one of the three women who engaged in acts of sexualised violence.

Before we unpack the individual images in detail, I want to consider Foucault's work on sovereign violence and how this applies when women are at the forefront of the analysis.

In his chapter, *How Does the Photograph Punish?*, Phil Carney draws on Foucault's work on sovereign punitive violence where ceremonial/spectacular punishment is enacted upon the body of the criminal by the State (see Foucault, 1977). He focuses in particular, on Foucault's reference to the punitive act of marking in the form of branding, scarring and flogging. Here, Foucault distinguished between a 'real' and a 'virtual' marking of the body. The former leaves a visible mark on the physical, anatomical body, while the latter is a mark upon a person's status. Here, the individual's social, symbolic body is humiliated and shamed. In both cases, the person is '...marked by an element of memory and recognition' (Foucault, 1972-3/2015, p. 7). Here, we might think of the serial number tattooed onto the bodies of Jews in the concentration camps during the Holocaust as both an actual and a virtual mark.

The bite mark, seen in the final image in this collection, speaks to Foucault's notion of actual marking. In this photograph, there is a visible, material imprint of the violence that was inflicted. In terms of virtual marking, as noted above, male detainees – as part of the catalogue of violence(s) at Abu Ghraib – were forced to wear pink underwear on their heads. In this instance, their bodies were virtually and symbolically marked. Their humiliation and shame were captured in a photograph and then shared for others to consume their degradation. In this second example, these men have been emasculated and feminised by this act of sexualised violence. As Halbmayr (2010, p. 30) notes, this affects a person's 'physical, emotional and spiritual' status.

In the examples Foucault (1977) refers to, while we might question the *nature* of the violence inflicted upon the subject, we are less inclined to question the *legitimacy* of the State's right to inflict such violence. In other words, we do not question the sovereign authority of the State to punish these particular individuals. This does not translate to the situation in Abu Ghraib. Based on the well-rehearsed arguments that this was an illegal invasion; constituting a State crime (Kramer & Michalowski, 2005, 2011; Whyte, 2007), we might question the sovereign authority of the US and the sexualised violence and torture committed

against these detainees. Here, it will be useful to return to American exceptionalism and the war on terror. It has been argued that in this context the normal rules of war did not apply. Given that detainees at Abu Ghraib were presented as persons under control and not prisoners of war (POW), it was argued that the third Geneva Convention (that offers protection to POW) did not apply (Caldwell & Mestrovic, 2008). Nevertheless, I still want to interrogate these spectacles of State violence; especially given the involvement of women and the departure from traditional representations of this type of violence. As Caldwell (2012, p. 70) notes:

In a modernist patriarchal society... 'sovereign' is associated with masculinity such that power is aligned with the masculine symbolic or phallic power, as this is the ultimate measure for self-determination.

Against this backdrop, how do we theorise women's involvement in this State violence?

In terms of locating the individual agency and responsibility of the three women involved in this sexualised violence and torture, Richter-Montpetit (2007, p. 39) believes that these actions followed a pre-constructed 'heterosexed, racialised and gendered script' that can be placed within the broader 'war on terror' campaign. In other words, these women (and indeed the men) were simply props. They did not make 'individual' decisions to engage in this violence. They were part of the larger US war machinery. For Richter-Montpetit, *Operation Iraqi Freedom* was a colonial endeavour. The racialised violence enacted by US soldiers on Iraqi detainees were 'acts of colonial violence rooted in the desire to enact "Whiteness"' (Richter-Montpetit, 2007, p. 45). Caldwell (2012) comes to a similar conclusion in her book *Fallgirls: Gender and the Framing of Torture at Abu Ghraib*. The book, as the title suggests, presents the women as scapegoats. As Caldwell (2012, pp. 102–103 emphasis in the original) argues: the '...female soldiers were *used* for the humiliation of Iraqi male prisoners ... and were *framed* as objects complying with male organized torture scenarios'. Others (see Gronnvoll, 2017; Sjoberg, 2007), however, have argued that the women played a specific role: to feminise and emasculate the enemy. As Sjoberg states (2007, p. 95):

Sexual abuse of Iraqi men by American women communicates (whether it was intended to or not) a disdain for Iraqi masculinities so strong that subordinated American femininities are the appropriate tool for their humiliation.

Using these insights as my point of departure, I will now provide my own interpretation of women's involvement in sovereign violence.

What Is the Appropriate Response to These Images?

In Fig. 1, England has a cigarette in her mouth and is smiling for the camera. In keeping with my discussion of taking 'selfies' at memorial sites, this is a more



Fig. 1. Lynndie England Either Doing the ‘Thumbs-up’ Gesture or Signalling That She Is Holding a Pistol Aimed at the Penis of the Hooded Naked Iraqi Detainee at Abu Ghraib (en.wikipedia.org, 2003).

playful image of Lynndie compared with the infamous picture of her with the detainee on a leash. My decision to use the term ‘playful’ to describe England in this image will become apparent when we discuss the phenomenon of ‘doing a Lynndie’ in due course. This first image will be unpacked in relation to gender, ethics and appropriate responses to suffering and violence.

Writers have expressed concern about the inability of images to move people, both in general, but specifically in relation to the photos that were taken at Abu Ghraib (Butler, 2007; Carrabine, 2011; Kennedy & Patrick, 2014; Sontag, 1979, 2003). In her book *On Photography*, Sontag declared that images of suffering and violence had lost their ability to alarm (Sontag, 1979). In her next book, *Regarding the Pain of Others*, published in 2003, Sontag concedes that habitual viewing of horrifying images does not always result in compassion fatigue. Others have raised similar concerns to those raised by Sontag in her earlier work. Bulter (2007), for example, in her article, *The Digitalization of Evil*, grapples with ideas about what is grievable, which lives matter and whose lives are represented in the aftermath of war. With reference to Abu Ghraib, Butler tries to understand the process by which these images and their distribution were normalised. Her argument is that the so-called enemy, depicted in these images, was ‘...not idiosyncratic, but shared, so widely shared, it seems, that there was hardly a thought that something might be amiss here’ (Butler, 2007, p. 958). Furthermore, the images, Butler argues, came to be perceived as banal because they were catalogued alongside the soldiers’ ‘holiday’ photos:

In these instances, it would seem that the photos are part of a record of everyday life, and that everyday life has to be understood

in this context as consisting in a certain sequential interchangeability of such images. (Butler, 2007, p. 960)

In this context then, the actions of these soldiers are normalised and not regarded as ‘morally alarming’ (Butler, 2007). Here, the exceptional becomes the quotidian.

It is a common argument that repeated viewings of images of war, violence and atrocity, eventually lead to compassion fatigue (Kennedy & Patrick, 2014). When the images of the sexualised violence and torture at Abu Ghraib surfaced in 2004, various newspapers expressed their shock and horror at what had taken place, particularly given the involvement of women (see Åhäll, 2017). But do these images still have the same impact? I always provide students with a trigger warning when teaching on this subject. I also do the same when presenting at conferences. In fact, in December 2018, I presented a paper at *The Evil Women* conference in Vienna. The title of my paper was *The feminine-as-monstrous: Using the whore narrative to unpack representations of militarized femininity gone awry*. As per my usual practice, I forewarned the audience that I would be showing violent images. In this particular presentation, I was showing images of Lynndie England and Sabrina Harman. No one in the audience seemed concerned. In fact, the person who presented after me (with no visual cues) received more outrage for his teaching practices than I did for showing images of sexualised violence and torture. Is this compassion fatigue or do images of female violence no longer shock us? Carrabine’s (2011, p. 19) work on this is instructive. He reminds us that images of suffering and violence are deeply embedded in human storytelling therefore, “‘human outrage’ is not the “‘natural response’” to images of torture’. Furthermore, such images have to be placed within the broader cultural context. While for some, this means addressing the consumption of violent pornography and video games within American culture (see Sontag, 2004), the cultural context I am interested in is the war on terror, which created simplistic binaries between good and bad; rescuers/liberators versus dictators/extremists. Perhaps for some, the violence that we see in these images can be regarded as a just and necessary response to the threat posed by ‘dangerous terrorists’. This is compatible with the rhetoric of American exceptionalism. Recall the image of Bibi Aisha. Although her story relates to Afghanistan, a similar rhetoric (the protection of women) was applied to the case of Iraq. Maybe for some, the men in these images are a synecdoche for men in the middle-east. The kind of men who cut off women’s noses.

Perhaps due to some, or all of these reasons, the images of Abu Ghraib did not shock as much or, as universally, as one would assume.³ This may also

³In his book, *The Abu Ghraib Effect* (2007), Stephen Eisenman provides evidence to support the notion that the images did not cause as much outrage as one might have expected. First, despite the four investigations into what happened at Abu Ghraib, as noted earlier, only a few charges and convictions followed. Second, US congress received as little as 12 hours of sworn testimony concerning the violence(s) at

explain why they have been appropriated and recontextualised in numerous ways (Carrabine, 2011, p. 25). Some of these reimagining's have offered critical analyses of this violence (see Carrabine for a discussion of Phil Toledano's 2008 virtual exhibition), while others fall short. The most obvious example being the 'doing a Lyncdie' phenomenon. This involves posing like England, as captured in the image above, and taking a photograph. According to Hristova (2013), 827 photos of the 'Lyncdie pose' were uploaded to the British blog, *Bad Gas*, following the release of the Abu Ghraib images in May 2004. Most of the submitted photos are, Hristova (2013) argues, mundane; taken in the context of people's everyday lives. These are the instructions for visitors to the site:

1. Find a victim who deserves to be 'Lyncdied'.
2. Make sure you have a friend nearby with a camera ready to capture the 'Lyncdie'.
3. Stick a cigarette (or pen) in your mouth and allow it to hang slightly below the horizontal.
4. Face the camera, tilt your upper body slightly forward but lean back on your right leg.
5. Make a hitchhiking gesture with your right hand and extend your right arm so that it's in roughly the same position as if you were holding a rifle.
6. Keeping your left arm slightly bent, point in the direction of the victim and smile (Know Your Meme, Lyncdie England Pose, n.d.).

The gesture is also included in the Urban Dictionary as: 'the act of pointing and laughing at an unaware victim while holding a cigarette half-cocked in your mouth and being photographed. Much like Lyncdie England' (as cited in Hristova, 2013, p. 431).

Let us unpack this phenomenon in more detail with reference to semiotics, postmodernism and the uses of memes. For our purposes here, a brief overview of these subjects is provided.

The Lyncdie England Pose as Postmodern Meme

The term meme, from the Greek *mīmēma*, meaning that which is imitated (Grundlingh, 2018), was coined by Richard Dawkins in his 1976 book *The Selfish Gene* (Boudana, Frosh, & Cohen, 2017; Cannizarro, 2016; Grundlingh, 2018; Krsteva, Donev, & Iliev, 2018; Marchant, 2019; Milner, 2012). Internet memes, to paraphrase Huntington (2013), are considered a subversive form of communication within participatory media culture (see also Gradinaru, 2018). As everyday artefacts, memes recycle, mimic and parody popular culture (Kuipers, 2005 as cited in Huntington, 2013; Marchant, 2019). They also appropriate and transform cultural texts (Milner, 2012). Milner (2012, p. iii) defines internet memes

Abu Ghraib. Third, candidates did not discuss the images during the 2004 Presidential election campaign. And finally, George W. Bush was re-elected.

as ‘amateur media artefacts, extensively remixed and recirculated by different participants on social media networks’. Also, in the words of Krsteva et al. (2018, p. 136):

[M]emes can be viewed as postmodern hybrid creations combining the visual and the written modes of expression. They make use of different artistic forms, genres, modes and techniques. The visual and the written parts form one unit often using radical parody, irony, kitsch, quotations and other stylistic devices. The result is a new media item of rich semiotic content, a metaphor ready to be seen by more media consumer than ever before.

A number of scholars have used ideas from semiotics to examine the use and meaning of memes (Cannizarro, 2016; Grundlingh, 2018; see also Gradinaru, 2018). Semiotics is interested in unpacking the meaning attached to cultural objects and how that meaning is conveyed through signs. Signs contain the signifier, the physical form, as well as the signified, the concept (Hall, 1997 as cited in Huntington, 2013; see also Gradinaru, 2018). Within postmodern thinking, the relationship between signifier and signified is viewed as arbitrary (Gradinaru, 2018). For writers such as Lacan, Barthes and Derrida, the meanings of signs are fluid, ‘...signs do not need to be fixed in any particular signified, the “free play” of signifiers being the only authentic semiotic movement’ (Gradinaru, 2018, p. 295). While Gradinaru (2018, p. 304) bases her discussion on GIFs, we can apply her thinking to memes to posit that memes change the meaning of the initial sign, modifying the signification and transforming ‘the originals into floating signifiers’ (Gradinaru, 2018, p. 304). Or, as articulated by Boudana et al. (2017, p. 1226), ‘the signifiers are disconnected from their historical signifieds and reassigned according to the users’ will and wit’.

Boudana et al. (2017, p. 1212) unpack the use of postmodern memes in relation to iconic photographs. For them, iconic images consist of three traits:

(a) the recognition of these photos by a large public, (b) their repetition and recycling across media platforms, and (c) their broad social and moral significance, beyond the referential meaning of the originally reported event.

In their research, they review 34 different memes of the iconic photograph *The Napalm Girl*, taken by Nick Ut in 1972. This image depicts children fleeing the Napalm attack during the Vietnam War. In terms of the various appropriations of this photograph, in the form of memes, the authors note:

[T]hese appropriations reveal a fundamental paradox: the more a photograph is recycled, the more it may influence the public – yet the more the original referential context may be lost in the process. (Boudana et al., 2017, p. 1214)

In terms of appropriations, there are two types: ‘politically oriented’ or ‘pop-culture-oriented’ (Shifman, 2013, p. 372 as cited in Boudana et al., 2017, p. 1225). The former, on the whole, are sardonic, while the latter, are more humorous (Boudana et al., 2017). While some memes aim to revolt and subvert, others can be viewed as ‘a solipsistic, self-referential, closed...and ultimately dysfunctional approach to community that accepts offending others as a normal part of everyday experience’ (Kien, 2013, p. 560 as cited in Boudana et al., 2017, p. 1227).

Based on the criteria outlined by Boudana et al. (2017), the photograph of Lyncie England, shown in Fig. 1, can be categorised as iconic. The ‘doing a Lyncie’ meme falls under pop-culture-oriented appropriation. To explore this postmodern phenomenon, I visited the *Know Your Meme* website and looked up ‘the Lyncie England Pose’. The site includes background information on the ‘doing a Lyncie’ pose, as well as the instructions that were posted on *Bad Gas*. It also includes details of how the phenomenon spread, the original photograph of Lyncie (as shown in Fig. 1), as well as some brief information about her involvement in the sexualised violence and torture at Abu Ghraib. Details of her sentencing are also provided. What I find most problematic is the ‘notable examples’ that are included of people ‘doing a Lyncie’. In total, there are hundreds of thousands of posted images, however, I have limited my analysis to the ones included in the ‘notable examples’ section. Of the six that are included one stands out in particular. It is of a young boy doing the pose, pointing at an overweight woman sat opposite him in a chair. He appears to have a pencil in place of the cigarette. It is not clear why he is smiling sardonically at the woman. Perhaps he is mocking her for being overweight. Whatever the reason, the woman looks back at him with disdain. In keeping with the original image, the boy is smiling. Unlike in the original, where the men’s faces are obscured by the hoods they have been made to wear, we see the woman’s response to the boy’s mocking pose. It is not clear why this woman/victim ‘deserves to be Lyncied’. Regardless of the appropriation, if the boy is indeed mocking this woman due to her size, this is problematic in and of itself. The fact that this is a parody of sexualised violence and torture adds to the discomfort this image elicits.

The sign in this case is the object of the photograph. In the original photograph, the image of Lyncie England pointing at the naked Iraqi prisoners is the signifier. The signified is American exceptionalism and the war on terror. I believe that ‘the original referential context’ of this image – the use of sexualised violence and torture as part of the war on terror – is lost in these mimetic performances. While the uncoupling of signifier and signified within postmodern signs can, in some cases, challenge and disrupt in ways that are positive, this is not the case with the ‘doing a Lyncie’ meme.

I would like to make one final comment on this image and the ‘doing a Lyncie’ phenomenon. To do so, I will return to where I started the chapter: dark tourism and taking selfies at memorial sites.

Dark Tourism and Taking Selfies at Memorial Sites

Based on the Urban Dictionary definition, what is missing from these re-enactments (i.e. the Lyncie pose) is the intersubjective meaning behind the violence in the

original image. To reiterate, the violence(s) witnessed in the images at Abu Ghraib, were enacted upon discursively constructed (as opposed to dehumanised) bodies; where racial, gendered and political meanings were inscribed prior to, and post, these acts of sexualised violence. Reminiscent of my argument about sexualised violence against Jewish women presented in Chapter 1, there is an intersubjective dynamic to this violence. Both the victim (the racially inferior terrorist ‘other’) and the perpetrator (the white knight of the US empire) are consumers of this political economy of violence. It is hard to imagine how these broader narratives surrounding the original Lynndie pose are captured in these re-enactments/performances. The question for me is: in what way, if any, is ‘doing a Lynndie’ similar to what I witnessed at Ground Zero? The answer, I believe, is that both involve superimposing individuals onto key moments in American geopolitical history. In both cases, the specific context and meaning of the original events are lost in these frivolous retellings. And yet herein lies the paradox. Both examples – ‘doing a Lynndie’, talking selfies at Ground Zero – involve actions that are at once ahistorical (apolitical even), while simultaneously existing within, and responding to, a specific moment in history: the 2001 terrorist attacks. Now we will move on to consider the second image in this collection.

Masculinities, Femininities and the War on Terror

In previous chapters (Chapters 2 and 3), I have talked about globalisation masculinities. These include: masculinities of conquest and settlement, masculinities of empire and masculinities of postcolonialism and neoliberalism (Connell, 1998, 2005). Masculinities of empire, postcolonialism and neoliberalism were



Fig. 2. James Graner and Sabrina Harman Pose Behind a Pyramid of Naked Iraqi Detainees at Abu Ghraib (en.wikipedia.org., 2003–2004).

applied to the invasion of Iraq. Furthermore, I argued that this intervention was informed by a hyper-masculine agenda to re-masculinise the US after 9/11 (see Chapter 3). Paradoxically, in the context of the invasion of Iraq, this hyper-masculine campaign relied upon war-on-terror femininity in the form of Ambuhl, Harman and England. It is this paradox I wish to unpack. I will do so with reference to Connell's (2005) hierarchy of masculinities framework. Readers will recall from Chapter 2 Connell's (2005) four types of masculinity: hegemonic, complicit, marginalised and subordinate. As the most dominant form of masculinity, hegemonic masculinity is positioned above the others. Complicit, marginal (those unable to meet the requirements of hegemonic masculinity) and subordinated masculinities (those prevented from achieving hegemonic masculinity) are always positioned below hegemonic masculinity. Within this hierarchy, femininities are also placed below masculinities. As Connell and Messerschmidt (2005, p. 848) articulate: '[g]ender is always relational, and patterns of masculinity are socially defined in contradistinction from some model (whether real or imaginary) of femininity'. Indeed, hegemonic masculinity was formulated alongside hegemonic femininity. The latter was then renamed 'emphasised femininity' to denote the asymmetrical relationship between masculinities and femininities (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005).

Below (see Fig. 3.) I offer a visualisation of this gender hierarchy.

Drawing on this visual representation of the gender hierarchy, my notion of war-on-terror femininity, and Sjoberg's (2007) ideas about subordinated femininities and inferior masculinities, we can map the image of Graner and Harman (see Fig. 2.) onto this pyramid and reformulate this illustration of the gender hierarchy in the following way:

At the top of the pyramid, we have Graner, arms folded, relaxed, playful, representing the patriarch and hegemonic masculinity. Then we have Sabrina. She is both literally and figuratively placed below him. She represents emphasised femininity which, in this context, is reimagined as war-on-terror femininity. This femininity is above subordinated and inferior masculinities, which are positioned at the bottom of the hierarchy and represented by the hooded men. This photo,

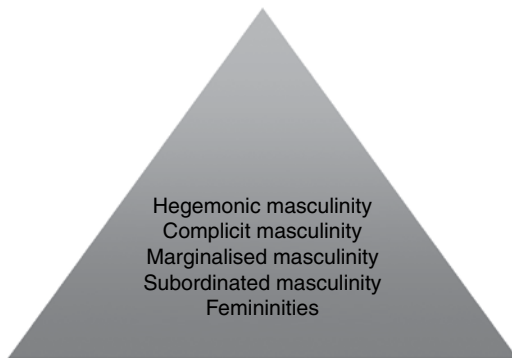


Fig. 3. Visual Representation of Connell's (2005) Gender Hierarchy.

viewed in this way, at once reproduces Connell's gender hierarchy while, at the same time, challenges it. Unlike in the illustration of the gender hierarchy – where women are always and already inferior to all types of masculinity – in Figure 2, Sabrina is positioned above inferior Iraqi men. However, she remains subordinate to the white, western man. What we see here is a temporary, context specific enactment of hypermasculinity that – within the contours of American exceptionalism – relies upon war-on-terror femininity.

Who Was the Real Sabrina Harman?

In her book, *The Cruel Radiance: Photography and Political Violence*, Linfield (2012) asks: '[w]hy are photographs so good at making us see cruelty?' Her answer is '...because photographs bring home the reality of physical suffering with a literalness and an irrefutability that neither literature nor painting can claim' (Linfield, 2012, p. 39 emphasis in the original). This is particularly true when, as argued earlier, the bodies being looked at are subjected to real and virtual marking. Or, indeed, when images of violence and torture have been 'carefully choreographed with the visual experience of viewers in mind' (Gies, 2017). As Gies (2017) explains, '[t]he audience encoded within the images occupies the position of helpless onlookers, but it is also assigned an instrumental role in the degradation of victims'.

And yet for some, the photos of sexualised violence and torture at Abu Ghraib do not tell the whole story. Philip Gourevitch (writer), in collaboration with



Fig. 4. Sabrina Harman Giving the 'Thumbs-up' While Smiling Over the Dead Body of Manadel al-Jamadi Who Died During Interrogation at Abu Ghraib. His Body Bag Has Been Opened So Graner and Harman Can Take Photos of Themselves (wikimedia.commons.org, 2003a).



Fig. 5. Sabrina Harman Gesturing a ‘Thumps-up’ While Stitching a Wounded Detainee Who ‘Has Been Bitten by a Military Dog’ at Abu Ghraib (wikimedia.commons.org, 2003b).

filmmaker Errol Morris, created the documentary *Standard Operating Procedure* (2008). Gourevitch believed that in order to get a fuller picture of what happened at Abu Ghraib we need to speak to the perpetrators. In this section, I will draw on an interview transcript with Sabrina Harman, as well as other pictures of Harman in relation to the war on terror, to see if these offer a more comprehensive portrait of her and her involvement in what occurred at Abu Ghraib.

In 2013, I wrote a review for the aforementioned book by Caldwell. In my review, I suggested that the book fell short of delivering a more nuanced account of gender and the sexualised violence and torture at Abu Ghraib. I argued: ‘[m]uch like analyses which simply demonize the women involved, the case presented here – that these women were exploited and coerced participants – is every bit as reductionist’ (Banwell, 2013, p. 216). I found the denial of female agency in these acts of violence problematic and concluded my review with the opinion that *Fallgirls* was a misguided attempt to ‘...excuse these women because current gender stereotypes are incompatible with their existence’ (Sjoberg, 2007, p. 96). Here, I want to revisit Caldwell’s book to unpack the final two images in the collection (Figs. 4 & 5).

Under the image of Harman tending to the detainee who has been bitten (see Fig. 5), Caldwell (2012, p. 108) includes the following caption: ‘Harman giving stiches and giving instrumental care’. She also includes, in a sub-section titled *Maternal Sabrina and Friendships*, a number of photos of Harman smiling with Iraqi families in their homes. We also learn that Harman, who cared for some of the prisoners at Abu Ghraib, was described by many as a maternal caregiver. In addition to this supplementary information, Caldwell includes the transcript of her conversation with Harman in 2007 (Caldwell, 2012, pp. 173–174):

Caldwell: In Al Hilla, did you purchase a family mattress and a refrigerator? Why? What did this family mean to you?

Harman: Yes, because she made me...lunch and I wanted to return the favor. They were important to me and I was around them for almost everyday for three months. I don't know, it's hard to explain without coming off as anti-American. They had nothing and were still happy because they had each other. Their situation seemed horrible but they made it work and never complained about it to me. If I got their kids clothes and small toys like a soccer ball they were so happy while kids in the U.S. would be so pissed if they didn't get an Xbox. I don't know, they were just amazing people that I learned a lot from.

Does this knowledge change our reaction to these images of Harman (Fig. 4 & 5); to her involvement generally? To return to Gouervitch, was he correct to suggest that images alone do not tell the whole story? As I said at the outset, with regards to this final image (Fig. 5), the smile and the 'thumbs up' gesture appear incongruous with the care that Harman is providing this detainee. Given her relationship with the Iraqi families, is Caldwell right in her assessment that these women did not 'choose' this violence? Even now, five years after I wrote my review, I find this denial of female agency problematic. I believe it is possible for Harman to occupy both positions: as a caring person (a civilian) who looked out for people in need and as an individual (a soldier) who engaged in sexualised violence and torture. One does not, and should not, negate the other. I believe that my concept of war-on-terror femininity (where violence and torture are prescribed) resolves the paradox of Sabrina Harman, particularly if we accept that Harman *chose* to enact this type of femininity. Finally, despite portrayals of Harman as maternal, this does not (and did not) interfere with her duty to serve her country and play her role in the geopolitics of the war on terror.

The final part of the chapter will draw on Feminist Criminology to explore Lynndie England's involvement in the sexualised violence and torture at Abu Ghraib.

Feminist Criminology and Discursive Representations of Female Violence

As noted earlier, Feminist Criminology is interested in unpacking how agency, choice and victimisation feature within the lives of criminal women. Spanning the national and the transnational, Feminist Criminology addresses interlocking inequalities relating to age, race, class, gender, sexuality and patriarchy, to name but a few. In the spirit of this work, I will now unpack the various accounts of Lynndie England's involvement in the (interpersonal-institutional) violence(s) at Abu Ghraib. I will begin with existing media accounts, before considering the subversive possibilities of war-on-terror femininity.⁴

⁴For a more detailed exploration of women's political violence and their involvement in terrorism, as well as the narratives used to explain their violence(s), see *Mothers*,

Crazy in Love

Demonised, sexualised and, indeed, infantilised, England was believed to have acted under the influence of her then boyfriend, Charles Graner (Lobasz, 2008). For some, this narrative denied her agency and reduced her moral and criminal culpability (Sjoberg, 2007). Interestingly, both the media *and* England relied upon this narrative. In her own words, Lynndie claimed: ‘...he wanted me in the picture, and I was like, “no way”’. And ‘...Graner kept being persistent, “Oh, come on, just take the picture, take the picture”’ (Dateline NBC, 2 October 2005 cited in Howard III & Prividera, 2008, p. 298). And: ‘I was so in love with him that I trusted his decisions and I did whatever he wanted’ (Howard III & Prividera, 2008, p. 299). The idea that England was coerced and manipulated by her boyfriend is an all-too familiar trope within ‘stories of violent women’. However, if we turn to Feminist Criminology, a number of scholars within the discipline have demonstrated how women’s violence can be explained by gender oppression and/or patriarchy, particularly in cases of battered women who kill (see e.g. Banwell, 2010; Dunn & Powell-Williams, 2007; see also Batchelor, 2005). In England’s case, rather than dismiss her claims about Graner simply as a ploy to reduce her culpability, we might argue that she acted under the heteropatriarchal influence of this man, but still exercised her own agency, albeit in a way that was mediated by a number of interlocking oppressions (these are discussed below).

Not-woman

Other media stories focused on Lynndie’s gender or, more accurately, on her distortion of it (see Holland, 2009). Numerous references were made to her tomboyish features and her masculine appearance (Holland, 2009; Tucker & Triantafyllos, 2008). This is how a Washington newspaper described England: ‘[s]he has short-cropped hair, a tight, muscular body and that don’t-mess-with-me-expression’ (as cited in Gronnvoll, 2012, p. 376). As articulated by Holland (2009): ‘[s]he was represented as being inappropriately masculine as well as inappropriately female, a gender abnormality with one foot in each of these seemingly dichotomous categories’. These portrayals are reminiscent of the views of Lombroso and Ferrero who, in their 1893 book, *The Criminal Woman*, argued that the true biological nature of a woman is antithetical to crime. Therefore, the female criminal is not only abnormal, she is biologically like a man. As succinctly put by Hart (1994) in a more recent comment on gender and crime (Hart, 1994, p. 13, as cited in Gilbert, 2002, p. 1293):

Monsters, Whores (Sjoberg & Gentry, 2007) and its follow-up, *Beyond Mothers, Monsters, Whores* (Gentry & Sjoberg, 2015). See also *Women as Wartime Rapists: Beyond Sensation and Stereotypes* (Sjoberg, 2016). Drawing on a range of case studies (the Armenian genocide, the Nazi genocide, the genocides in Rwanda and the former Yugoslavia, as well the DRC) Sjoberg dissects women’s role in sexual violence.

Masculinity theory pursues its circular reasoning by arguing that women are less likely to engage in criminal activity because they are not men. Boys will be boys, say masculinity theorists; and girls will be girls, unless they do become criminals, in which case they are likely to be masculinized women.

Put simply, a woman who is capable of aggression and violence becomes constituted as the masculine woman, the ‘other’ (Gilbert, 2002). Also, as Campbell argues:

Her actions are forced into a masculine model of aggression, judged to be male, and the woman is seen as having violated not just the criminal law but the “natural law” of proper female behavior. (Campbell, 1993, p. 144)

In a similar way to the superficial reading of the woman-as-dupe narrative discussed above, this not-woman characterisation refuses to take women’s violent behaviour seriously. By placing women’s actions outside of their gender, the association of femininity/the feminine with non-violence is reaffirmed. Conversely, my war-on-terror femininity – which accepts that women can be violent and aggressive, while at the same time maternal – disrupts these gender binaries.

Class

In other accounts, the focus was on England’s white working-class background: ‘[a]s the fallen woman, England was not simply to be removed from the military caste but to be (re)placed into the white working-class Appalachian culture from which she originated’ (Howard III & Prividera, 2008, p. 302). Through numerous news sources, we learn that England was poor and grew up in a trailer behind a sheep farm (see Howard III & Prividera, 2008). She is described as an ‘uncivilized hillbilly’, as someone who is backward, ‘other’ and poor (Mason, 2005). Unlike in the case of Jessica Lynch, whose whiteness and Appalachian background were used to describe poor yet determined Americans (Tucker & Triantafyllos, 2008, p. 92), in England’s case these two facts were reformulated and used as evidence of her uncivilised and savage nature (Mason, 2005; see also Lobasz, 2008). In the words of Mason (2005, p. 43):

As representatives of Mountain country life, hillbillies can thus reflect either heroism – bravery and loyalty to traditional ways – or a deviance, sadism and primitivism that is said to fly in the face of modern progress.

In a piece on *The War on Poverty in Appalachia*, professor Ronald Eller (2014) reviews the history of politics, poverty and inequality in Appalachia. Often regarded as the symbol of the failure of the War on Poverty, introduced

by President Lyndon Johnson in the 1960s, Appalachia was (and is) associated with the white poor. Eller also explores the racial tensions that emerged from the War on Poverty in Appalachia. Disparaging comments relating to England's Appalachian background are common, and apart from the work reviewed above, few have given serious academic thought to how her poor, working-class, rural upbringing might have informed her decision to join the Army in the first place, as well as her willingness to take part in the violence inflicted upon the bodies of 'brown' terrorist 'others.' From a feminist perspective, Lynndie's age, race, class and gender (or her supposed inappropriate performance of the latter) should not be interpreted in reductive ways that seek to explain her behaviour away, rather, they should be understood as interlocking constraints that informed her decisions. Indeed, an analysis which focuses solely on individualised explanations of women's violence is one which ultimately depoliticises women's experiences and does not attend to, or take into account, the structural constraints which inform their violent behaviour.

Sexuality

Details of England's sexual history and her various sexual partners were revealed as evidence of her deviance and her culpability for her crimes. Mainstream news stories focused on her 'dysfunctional, adulterous sexual relationship with Charles Graner' (Holland, 2009, p. 252). According to Jennifer Wells in the *Toronto Star*: '[g]etting naked, it now appears, was not a shy pursuit for the 21-year-old England. Included in the not-yet-released Abu Ghraib archive ... were videos and still photos of England. Said one senator: "[s]he was having sex with numerous partners. It appeared to be consensual"' (as cited in Gronnvoll, 2017, p. 378). In another news article, we are told that England appeared 'in sexually explicit pictures with other soldiers' and engaged in 'raunchy behavior before and after [her] company journeyed to Iraq' (Gronnvoll, 2017, p. 379). Here, we can apply Sjoberg and Gentry's (2007, 2008) whore narrative, specifically the first category, erotomania. Erotomania is based on the idea that violent women have an insatiable appetite for sex. It is this pathological relationship with sex that causes them to be violent. In my reading of England's sexual history, stories about her sexual behaviour are incidental to, rather than explicable of her violent behaviour.

The Maternal Militarised Body

The final narrative I want to explore is that of the militarised maternal body (see Managhan, 2012). In her book, *Sexing War/Policing Gender: Motherhood, Myth and Women's Political Violence*, Åhäll (2017) argues that stories about violent women's agency are informed by normative constructions of motherhood and maternal reproduction. Women, and their maternal bodies, she argues, are not only judged and valued for their appearance, but also for the actions in which they engage. With specific reference to England, Åhäll argues that revelations that England was pregnant when news of the sexualised violence and torture

surfaced not only underscored the tension between her role as a future mother and her current role as a soldier, but also drew more attention to the fact that *women* had taken part in the violence(s). For some news outlets, England's pregnancy softened her image during her trial:

England arrived at military court this morning, seven months pregnant and dressed in combat fatigues. Nothing like the young woman in these pictures, where she is seen humiliating Iraqi Prisoners. (World News Tonight, 3 August 2004, as cited in Howard III & Prividera, 2008, p. 304)

In her review of news media representations, Åhäll (2007) cites numerous examples where Lynndie is transformed from monster to mother, a woman who is no longer capable of torture and sexual abuse. Implicit in some of these stories is the belief that motherhood is the reason England finally accepts responsibility for her actions. For others, however, her pregnancy and her subsequent status as a mother, rather than providing a recuperative narrative, serve as reminders of her confusing and dangerous sexual/gender identity (Holland, 2009). I will return to this shortly, first let us consider how war-on-terror femininity serves as a recuperative narrative.

Violence as a Resource for Achieving War-on-terror Femininity

Conventional femininity has not been associated with crime or violence therefore, for women and girls, their criminal and/or violent behaviour cannot be regarded as a resource for achieving this type of femininity. However, I would argue that within my construction of war-on-terror femininity, violence can, in this instance, be considered a resource for achieving this type of femininity. For Sjoberg and Gentry (2007, p. 87), women who behave like England and Harman '...have committed a triple transgression: the crime they are accused of, the transgression against traditional notions of femininity, and the transgression against...militarized femininity...'. Conversely, my notion of war-on-terror femininity offers a resolution to the paradox that is violent femininity. War-on-terror femininity does not negate their individual agency, it simply locates their violence within the wider US geopolitical agenda.

Within the discursive representations of England and Sabrina provided and discussed above, both women conform to and defy conventional femininity. With regards to the former, in keeping with traditional ideas about women as passive and weak, England's claim that she took part because Graner told her to and she wanted to impress/please him confirms this stereotype of women (it also underscores gender oppression in a patriarchal society). Likewise, in the photo where Harman tends to an injured detainee, and in her stories about her time with Iraqi families, traditional femininity is upheld. Yet, by virtue of taking part in sexualised violence and torture, both resist these normative expectations. Instead, they perform a subversive femininity: war-on-terror femininity.

Conclusion

Within discussions of militarised femininity, and the war on terror in Iraq, as noted earlier, comparisons between Jessica Lynch and Lynndie England abound (Lobasz, 2008; Sjoberg, 2007; Tucker & Triantafyllos, 2008). I want to close with my own comparative analysis. In 2018, I presented a paper at the European Society of Criminology conference in Sarajevo. During my stay, I attended the Crimes against Humanity Museum. Among many of the images and artefacts was a picture of a pregnant refugee being helped into a migrant boat by a man. This image encapsulates the narrative of 'the woman in need of rescue and protection' outlined at the start of this chapter. Here, I want to contrast this image with the image of a pregnant Lynndie England standing trial for the crimes she committed at Abu Ghraib. As noted above, maternal representations of England received mixed responses. In juxtaposing these two images of the maternal body, vis-à-vis war/armed conflict, I want to highlight that women's relationship to war is not always as its victims; as those in need of protection. Women can be perpetrators too. As perpetrators (in the context of the war on terror) they are not *required* to forsake their gender identities, rather they might interrupt and challenge gender boundaries, thus at once being maternal, caring and violent, and perhaps, most importantly, superior to subordinated masculinities. The irreconcilable image of a maternal body standing trial for sexualised violence forces us to confront the reality that women are in fact violent: the maternal, life-giving body is also a body that inflicts harm and violence. Indeed, in certain contexts, this behaviour is required of women.

Alas, these ideas are not as forthcoming within mainstream accounts of violent women. Whether as victims or perpetrators – be it the generic third-world-woman (Bibi Aisha), the all-American girl next door (Jessica Lynch) or the monstrous feminine (Lynndie England) – women are objectified, fetishised and reduced to two main archetypes: the fallen woman and the woman in need of rescue. Both tropes deny agency. The former suggest that the violent woman is devoid of womanhood (which is, of course, constructed as non-violent), the latter presents women as weak and vulnerable *because* of her womanhood. In order to move beyond these reductive narratives, albeit within the specific context of American exceptionalism, my notion of war-on-terror femininity – which, at once resists, complies with and mediates conventional femininity (and indeed militarised femininity) – offers a way out of this conundrum.

In this chapter, I have challenged hegemonic understandings of gender roles and of the gender hierarchy. Utilising the sub-disciplines of Feminist and Visual Criminology, I have unpacked gender and the war on terror, specifically the sexualised violence and torture at Abu Ghraib. What took place at this prison forms part of the broader narrative of American exceptionalism. In this chapter, I used my concept of war-on-terror femininity to resolve the paradox of women's involvement in this hyper-masculine response to 9/11. In a detailed analysis of four images of women involved in sexualised violence and torture, I have examined the legitimacy of sovereign violence; deliberated over ethics and just responses

to sexualised violence and torture; reimagined conventional understandings of the gender hierarchy, and interrogated the truth-telling capabilities of images. Mainstream media accounts of Lynndie England were reviewed against the basic tenets of Feminist Criminology and war-on-terror femininity was offered as a resolution to reductive explanations of women's violence. Continuing with our challenge to gender essentialism – specifically the assumption that women are always and already the victims within the theatre of war/armed conflict – the final chapter addresses the victimisation of men and boys.