Contents

SCREENING TORTURE

Screening Torture

AN INTRODUCTION

Michael Flynn and Fabiola F. Salek

Marathon Man was released in 1976. Its protagonist, Thomas "Babe" Ryan (Dustin Hoffman), is a Columbia graduate student majoring in history and a committed runner. His father was an esteemed professor at Columbia who got caught up in the McCarthy hearings and committed suicide when Babe and his brother, Henry (aka "Doc") (Roy Scheider), were young. Babe believes that his brother is an oil executive, but he is actually an agent who works for a secret government agency. Doc visits Babe in New York knowing that Dr. Christian Szell (Laurence Olivier), an ex-Nazi dentist who worked in the concentration camps and has been hiding in Uruguay, is coming to New York to pick up a valuable cache of diamonds. The agency Doc works for is headed by Peter Janeway (William Devane) who, unbeknownst to Doc, is a double agent working with Szell to get him to inform on other Nazi war criminals. Babe strikes up a relationship with a German woman, Elsa Oppel (Marthe Keller), who has worked as a courier for Szell, but Babe has no idea of this. Doc meets Szell in a night meeting and Szell critically wounds him with a spring blade concealed in his coat sleeve. Doc makes it back to Babe's apartment where he dies in Babe's arms.

Thinking that Doc confided something to Babe as he died (though he didn't), Szell's henchmen kidnap Babe and set him up to be tortured by Szell, who wants him to confess. Janeway believes that Doc didn't reveal anything to Babe. The henchmen tie Babe—who knows that Szell will try and hurt him—to a chair. Szell repeatedly asks, "Is it safe?" Babe is confused by the question and first answers, "Yes, it's safe," and then says, "No, it's not safe, it's dangerous." Szell then inserts a dental device into an existing cavity in Babe's mouth, causing him great pain. Szell brings him back into the

room and says that he is "disappointed with your silence," and then tortures him again by drilling into a healthy tooth. There is no doubt that Szell is an old sadist who is revisiting techniques he used on Jews in the concentration camps. The audience feels a great deal of empathy for Babe and none for Szell, who expresses contempt for human decency. Torturing Babe is a senseless act (unless Szell wants to revisit his past project of domination); the confession Szell wants is from someone who knows next to nothing about the matter at hand, and is a pawn in a game that is well beyond him. Using his running skills, Babe escapes from Szell's warehouse, ends up killing Janeway, and apprehends Szell after he has obtained the diamonds from a safety-deposit vault at a bank. He then takes his prisoner to the Central Park reservoir, where Szell falls down the stairs and accidentally stabs himself with his spring blade.

Man on Fire was released in 2004. Its protagonist, John Creasy (Denzel Washington), is a former CIA assassin and torturer who worked to put down leftist insurgencies in the name of patriotism. With time he becomes horrified by his murderous and destructive acts and becomes an alcoholic, suicidal drifter, moving from place to place in search of redemption and death. He decides to visit an old CIA partner, Rayburn (Christopher Walken), in Mexico, and Rayburn, sensing his despair, urges him to become a bodyguard for a seemingly wealthy half-Mexican, half-American family. The young girl of the family, Pita (Dakota Fanning), shows Creasy "that it was all right to live again," and they develop a loving relationship that is far deeper than she has with her feckless parents. Pita is kidnapped by rogue cops working for a professional kidnapper called "the Voice," and after a botched ransom exchange everyone assumes that Pita has been killed. Creasy is seriously wounded during the kidnapping and refuses to return to the United States to obtain the medical care that could help him. Instead he vows to kill anyone associated with the kidnapping and engages in a vigilante campaign in which he tortures and kills his enemies. He becomes an "artist of death," at last able to "paint his masterpiece."

He first tortures a crooked cop who was involved in the kidnapping. This torture scene lasts over six-and-a-half minutes, and in it the victim literally swims in his own blood, yet few in the audience feel any sympathy or empathy for the cop; he is an immoral man whose only delight lies in his prowess for destructiveness and death—and when Creasy kills him after torturing him the audience experiences a sense of expiation. The audience feels much more empathy for the torturer, and his plan to go after all of those involved with Pita's death makes him a hero, someone who will restore social order

to a society stricken with criminality. Although torture is the "clumsiest"[1] way to extract information—paid or unpaid informants impart far more reliable information—in the post–September 11 era torture has been given magical qualities. Torture victims are thought to rarely confabulate, and instead name names and give locations and dates with an empirical accuracy that is hardly seen in actuality. The torture ends in a confession that ends up breaking open the case and reinforces the notion that torture and sacrifice will yield the desired results. In the course of his crusade Creasy discovers that Pita has not been killed and arranges to exchange himself for her—and he dies a martyr in the kidnapper's car.

Screening Torture addresses the representation of torture in film and television. Torture scenes have proliferated in most genres of film over the past decade, and the period has given birth to a new mutation, the "torture-porn" flick. These films—*Hostel*, *Saw*, and *Wolf Cree*k are examples—differ from older horror films by virtue of their "high production value" and the fact that they feature "explicit scenes of torture and mutilation"[2] that are highly sexualized. David Edelstein, coiner of the term, states, "I am baffled by how far this stuff goes and why Americans seem so nuts these days about torture."[3] These films aren't the sole culprits; scenes of torture have been placed in comedies, dramas, and especially action films for little discernable reason other than audiences' excitement and delight. Some of the mainstream American films that feature torture scenes include *Man on Fire* (2004), *The Passion of the Christ* (2004), *Mr. and Mrs. Smith* (2005), *Syriana* (2005), *Casino Royale* (2006), *The Good Shepherd* (2006), *V for Vendetta* (2006), *The Bourne Ultimatum* (2007), *In the Valley of Elah* (2007), *Rendition* (2007), *Shoot 'Em Up* (2007), *Body of Lies* (2008), *The Dark Knight* (2008), *Taken* (2008), *Inglourious Basterds* (2009), *Public Enemies* (2009), *The Expendables* (2010), *Salt* (2010), and *Unthinkable* (2010). As A. H. Hamrah states, "The ingeniously imagined punishment devices in these movies, along with their chummy torture chamber repartee and quick recovery from pain and abuse, aren't so much about the fear of torture as they are about the joy of it—and its necessity."[4] Other than *In the Valley of Elah*, *Rendition*, and two documentaries, *Taxi to the Dark Side* (2007) and *The Ghosts of Abu Ghraib* (2008), the exceptions to this trend have been foreign films: *The Last King of Scotland* (2006), *The Lives of Others* (2006), *Pan's Labyrinth* (2006), *Hunger* (2008), *Mesrine: Killer Instinct* (2008), and *La Soga* (2009). Torture in these films is devoid of redeeming qualities, and no defense of it is

mounted; torture is represented as an exercise in "brutal senselessness"[5] by authoritarian regimes or institutions.

While recognizing the increasing number of films featuring torture scenes, it is also important to note that many well-known pre–September 11 films address the issue of torture. Some of the more recognized films, outside the horror/slasher genre, include: *Rome, Open City* (1945), *The Battle of Algiers* (1966), *The Good, the Bad and the Ugly* (1966), *A Clockwork Orange* (1971), *Dirty Harry* (1971), *Midnight Express* (1978), *First Blood* (1982) (and all the subsequent *Rambo* films), *Missing* (1982), *1984* (1984), *Mississippi Burning* (1988), *The Siege* (1988) (notable for its antitorture message), *Reservoir Dogs* (1992), *Death and the Maiden* (1994), *Garaje Olimpo* (1999), and *3 Kings* (1999). The depiction of torture in these films is quite variable; in some of the films the torture scenes are graphic (some would argue that they verge on the pornographic), in other films the depiction is quite ephemeral and incomplete, and in still others torture is represented only through the characters' verbal recounting of past experiences. In most of these films torture is not presented as a spectacle, and the torturer is depicted as a desperate, depraved, and brutal individual; the viewer is more likely to identify with the victim than with the torturer (the exceptions here are *Dirty Harry* and *Mississippi Burning*).

It is difficult to overestimate the draw of film. Film has consistently gained in viewership and "has been one of the most important kingdoms of our century."[6] Its appeal has widened with capitalism's growing influence,[7] and the schooled and unschooled, elite and impoverished, "care about movies, await them, respond to them, talk about them . . . are grateful for some of them."[8] Films also have an instructional power that should not be underestimated: "people learn to kiss, to talk, to live, according to the shadows they make."[9] People watch films to feel pleasure, to be entertained, and to think, but also because films "elicit" certain emotions.[10] Many male film theorists have devalued this aspect of film because feeling has been consigned to femininity and bathos, and have favored instead the more abstract realms of ideology and aesthetics—as if these qualities could be estranged from emotion. They have also made the mistake of believing that emotion is divorced from an intellectual appreciation of film.[11]

Films are profoundly influenced by and implicated in the cultural, political, and historical conditions of their time. In order to be relevant they must simultaneously reflect, contest, or undermine the dominant ideological currents of the era of their making.[12] Films are a way "articulating the

world."[13] The filmmaker is continually involved in making decisions regarding the means of representation, sequencing, proportion, and duration of events as well as subject matter, intensity, and vividness. Despite the efforts of many academic film theorists to reduce film to the play of images, film is a pluralistic medium, one that contains music, dialogue, sound, and narrative. It is a medium "that can take and assimilate more."[14] As with other forms of art and entertainment, films have to have one foot in the real; a successful film has to actuate conscious and unconscious meanings. Filmmakers (even documentarians) are not simply interested in recording reality; they enter a project with the desire to "artistically refigure reality,"[15] to expand the filmgoer's understanding of existence and its predicaments. As V. F. Perkins argues, it would be absurd to claim that films are "like life," but the special magic of the moving image, dialogue, story, sound, and music can "impress us as being more lifelike than any other form of narrative."[16] The dilemmas faced by protagonists have a far greater intensity than is usually faced in everyday life, and the world represented by the filmmaker is "more shaped."[17]

We attend films because they expose us to characters that we don't encounter in our daily lives, places we will never visit, and situations that are foreign to us; films expose us to that which is "beyond our real life experience."[18] When viewing films we never forget that we are watching a work created for our pleasure or entertainment—we also experience it as "a world."[19] When viewing a film in a theater the viewer has much less control that when contemplating a photograph or reading a novel—this is not true for film that demands our "continuous attention."[20]

Until recently, the basis of film was photographic, although film was never a simple assembling of photographic images; it always has involved editing and sound and other qualities.[21] The scene in a photograph invokes a contemplative turn of mind, but the scene in a film possesses an "existential momentum" that demands to be experienced and "inhabited."[22] Photographs, unlike films, don't tell stories, and the story in a film has an immediacy that is unmatched. Cinema projects an intentional world in which the motives and subjectivity of the characters are identifiable. Film is experienced in an intuitive, erotic, subjective, embodied manner, and perhaps more than any other medium "beautifully and gracefully mingles with our minds."[23] It also has the capacity to make "us feel like eye-witnesses of the events which it portrays."[24] This presents a problem in films and television shows where torture is represented, because the accepted "iconography"[25] of torture is misleading.

Shortly after the attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon, members of the Bush administration set to work crafting a policy that would make torture their "secret weapon in the War on Terror."[26] They took this action knowing full well that the prohibition against torture was the cornerstone of the international rule of law and in complete disregard of the fact the United States was a signatory of all the treaties banning torture. They also did so knowing that confessions obtained through torture were usually false. They delegated the task of redefining torture to a group of young attorneys, ideologically committed to a form of extreme neoconservatism. These attorneys believed that victory in this war would necessitate fighting on the "dark side"[27] and sought to make illegal detentions, rendition, torture, and political murder legal. They were a paranoid[28] group who believed that the existing principles governing the rules of war and the treatment of prisoners were "quaint"; they favored "war without limits."[29]

The U.S. use of torture began long before this redefinition project was completed, before the "death-worlds"[30] of Guantánamo and Abu Ghraib were established. U.S. servicemen in Afghanistan tortured their prisoners long before memos on torture were vetted by the secretary of defense and the attorney general, and many times they were guided by television shows and movies they watched before being deployed.[31] With the establishment of the offshore prisons at Bagram Air Force Base, Guantánamo, and Abu Ghraib, torture became routinized, and the number of victims grew exponentially. The torturers at Guantánamo regularly watched the television series *24*, a show in which torture produces confessions that otherwise would not be made. Diane Beaver felt that this show "encouraged" the interrogators "to see themselves as being on the frontline—and to go further than they otherwise might."[32] The torture and defilement at these locations was highly sexualized—witness the Abu Ghraib photographs. Photographs of suffering are usually "documents of protest: they show us what happens when we unmake the world."[33] The Abu Ghraib photographs were not, quite obviously, exercises in protest. The photographs raised almost no "moral outrage"[34] at the site, and the claim made by the photographers/war criminals that they were simply documenting the torture and defilement were quite specious—many of the acts were performed for the camera. These torture and harsh interrogation methods were countenanced at Guantánamo and Abu Ghraib by Major General Geoffrey Miller and additionally at Abu Ghraib by General Ricardo Sanchez, but this didn't mean that the women and men were "neutral"[35] regarding torture. They derived much pleasure from the torture and abuse they inflicted. Many

of the torture scenes depicted in the Abu Ghraib photographs could have been directly lifted from Pasolini's film *Salò*.

Torture is usually a man's pursuit. For most men Western masculinity is based on the principle of domination: men must be able to "dominate some men and all women."[36] Intelligence officers and military personnel are socialized to think of themselves as warriors, individuals dedicated to protecting national security, and their integrity is tied to their ability to dispense violence particularly against those perceived as enemies. At Guantánamo 20 percent of the interrogators were women, and they regularly sexually tormented the detainees in hopes of "severing their relationship with God."[37] Female interrogators wiped fake menstrual blood on a detainee (which made him feel dirty and prevented him from praying), rubbed their breasts against the prisoners' backs and mocked their erections, roughly grabbed the prisoners' genitals, threatened them with rape, and often interrogated Muslims who were forced to wear bikinis, lingerie, and thong underwear. But the methods they employed weren't solely confined to these sexual hijinks; they also defiled the Qur'an, banged the detainee's heads on tables, and bent back the thumbs of several detainees.[38] Much criticism has been aimed at the enlisted female "bad apples," but women high in the chain of command also condoned torture and abuse, including Lieutenant Colonel Diane Beaver, Captain Carolyn Wood, Brigadier General Janis Karpinski, and Major General Barbara Fast.

The United States is hardly singular in its acceptance of torture. More than one-half of the signatories to the treaties banning torture countenance the practice. Old-fashioned brutal torture, including methods that maim and leave scars, is still practiced in some countries, but it has been replaced, particularly in democracies, with "clean torture."[39] These methods, intended to escape detection by human rights groups, are no less painful, but leave no signs of the torturer's brutality. Punishment is one way the state becomes "evident."[40] Torture is one form of punishment that regimes, both authoritarian and liberal, employ. The state must be careful in its decisions regarding whom and what to punish; its power should not be used arbitrarily, and any punishment must be dispensed in the "name of a value and ideal."[41] The ideal proposed by the Bush administration was that torturing al-Qaeda and Taliban operatives would "protect American lives." Despite the claims of Dick Cheney, the intelligence produced by the torture of prisoners at Abu Ghraib, Guantánamo (where the worst of the worst[42] were detained), and the CIA's black sites was negligible.

Torture is rarely a public event anymore, and when it was it didn't lack for spectators. In the contemporary world torture takes place in prison camps that are surrounded by razor wire and armed guards. The crimes committed by intelligence officers and their adjuncts are usually invisible to the public, at least until a released prisoner testifies to his or her maltreatment. Representations of torture both "revile" and "titillate" the "imagination";[43] the scene of an individual held captive and being tortured both seduces and disgusts the viewer. This is why many have turned to novelists, poets, painters, sculptors, and filmmakers to make sense of the practice; for these figures torture has exerted a "dark fascination."[44] Beginning with the Greek comic playwrights, the public has always relied on artists to represent the suffering of the victim, the reasoning of the judges and leaders who order the torture, and the torturer's emotional and patriotic motives. In early Greek, Roman, and Renaissance sculpture and painting, the pain of the torture victim was aestheticized, eroticized, and rationalized (this equation was later reversed by Goya, Picasso, Shahn, and Golub).[45] Torture was frequent in medieval mystery plays and was the source of "pleasure" for the audience—"we cannot insist upon this emphatically enough: if people hadn't liked torture, they could not have tolerated the sight of it."[46] We now rely on film and television shows to represent the interpersonal dynamics of the torture chamber. Most of these films and shows present torture as melodrama, though in reality it has none of the attributes of melodrama.

Not all classes of people are equally torturable; a certain selection takes place. In ancient Greece the slaves and foreigners were the torturable classes, and in Rome the *humiliores*.[47] Then it was the Christians, the criminals, apostates, witches, and freethinkers. In the first half of the twentieth century the Jews and Stalin's scapegoats were the "designated victims";[48] during the Cold War, according to Graham Greene, the torturable classes expanded to include the "poor of Latin America, Central Europe and the Orient"—Catholics have always been "more torturable than Protestants."[49] Greene's book *Our Man in Havana* was published in 1958, long before the rise of a new "torturable class," the Muslims. Public intellectuals have written about the effectiveness of torture on this population, often invoking the "ticking time-bomb" scenario. In many films Muslims are depicted as religious or political fanatics immune to standard interrogation practices. The procedures that get Christians, Jews, and Hindus to spill their secrets, their violent plans, are simply a fool's errand with Muslims. They maintain their defiant silence even when subjected to moderate violence; it is only extended and brutal torture than makes them confess.

The tortured individual, powerless and dependent, often worries that the torturer will kill him or her (*Garaje Olimpo*, *Reservoir Dogs*, *The Good Shepherd*, *Taken*). The torturer intends the infliction of pain in the name of deriving a confession, and knows that bodily pain always has a psychological consequence, that it is traumatic, and that the victims will be haunted by it for the rest of their lives. As Maurice Merleau-Ponty argues, body and mind possess an intimacy that is undeniable—"I am aware of the world through the medium of my body."[50] The mind's higher functions, including perception, cognition, memory, and wanting, are "anchored in the body,"[51] and when one undergoes torture (or any other traumatic event) these capacities are significantly altered. The torturer knows that destruction of the body will result in the "annihilating negation"[52] of consciousness and the abrogation of the soul. The survivor of trauma is one who has, physically or psychologically, been in proximity to death; "a survivor is one who has encountered, been exposed to, or witnessed death and has himself or herself remained alive."[53] Traumatized individuals are not able to completely take in the traumatic experience; they undergo a process of "psychic numbing"[54] as a way to protect themselves against the death anxiety and helplessness occasioned by the traumatic experience. Those who suffer psychic numbing lose the capacity to feel with the intensity and passion they were capable of before the traumatic event. Psychic numbing is a "necessary psychological defense" and is adaptive in that it allows the individual to "avoid psychological death,"[55] but if uninterrupted it can lead to despair and depression. Trauma brings up the "issue of death and the crises of life,"[56] and many traumatized people feel immobilized by the predicaments and conflicts life puts before them, so withdrawal and isolation often become the preferred mode of being. The traumatized person can no longer see the world as a place where decency reigns, where there are natural barriers against humiliation and degradation, where one can trust that people will abstain from deriving satisfaction, even fulfillment, from the infliction of pain. Jean Améry argues that "at the first blow," the tortured person "loses something we will perhaps temporarily call 'trust in the world,' "[57] and that this loss is irreparable. In the aftermath of the traumatic experience the individual feels "invaded" by the event, and it becomes a "dominating feature "of the person's "interior landscape";[58] consequently, the traumatized person feels entrapped by what has happened and is often demoralized.

Améry, an essayist and Holocaust survivor, cautions against "exaggeration" when "speaking about torture," and also writes that "torture is the most horrible event a human being can retain in himself."[59] Améry also

emphasized the permanence of torture's destructiveness: "Whoever was tortured stays tortured. Torture is ineradicably burned into him, even when no clinically objective traces can be found."[60] The psychological state of most torture survivors is very precarious; they struggle with despair and depression, social withdrawal, psychic numbing and death anxiety, sleep disturbances, and a pervading sense of mortification. Their sense of self is usually very fragmented; torture survivors often actively consider suicide, and they consider themselves to be broken. In many of the films made before and after September 11, these consequences are not shown; torture has no lasting psychological effects and can even strengthen an individual's character and resolve. In the *Rambo* and *Lethal Weapon* films the protagonists' intensity and retaliatory power increases after being tortured, in *Body of Lies* torture cures Leonardo DiCaprio's character of his romantic and professional ambivalences, and in *V for Vendetta* the Natalie Portman character recovers her parents' revolutionary fervor after being tortured.

Many contemporary films and television shows support the myth that torture leads to truthful confessions (*24*, *Man on Fire*, *Taken*); that the individual suffering the torturer's ministrations will, after a period of resistance, always confess; and that this confession will disclose details and actualities unobtainable in any other fashion. This forced confession always takes place within the context of "a power relationship" in which the torturer "requires the confessing" and offers salvation or death that will end the suffering.[61] The films perpetuate a fantasy that physical punishment will result in the victim confessing to diabolical conspiracies aimed at the state. It is not surprising that these films were so popular during a time of neoconservative ascendancy, given that political movement's autocratic contempt for "rights and the individual."[62] The obsession with confession also manifests a deep insecurity regarding the competence of national security agents, particularly those in the intelligence services. Coerced confessions are usually false, something that Frederick the Great of Prussia realized long before the writings of Voltaire and Beccaria.[63] Moreover, as Peter Brooks contends, "There is something unstable and unreliable about the speech-act of confession, about its meaning and motives."[64] Films that disclose the lie about the torture-truth hermeneutic include *The Dark Knight*, *Marathon Man*, and *Unthinkable*.

"Almost anyone looking at the *physical* act of torture would be immediately appalled and repulsed by the torturers."[65] Yet in many contemporary American films and television shows the torturer is represented as a messianic figure, or at least a serious man, whose administration of "world-

destroying"[66] pain is righteous and even necessary (*Inglourious Basterds*, *Man On Fire, Taken*, *Unthinkable*, *V for Vendetta*). The torture victim's bodily pain is represented as an essential and beneficial quality, intrinsic to the restoration of social and political order, the saving of "innocent" lives. In many of these films torture is a spectacle in which the filmgoer empathizes with the torturer, not the victim. The torturer is transformed from a war criminal into a benevolent "outlaw," one willing to transcend the law to save civilization.

The torturers in these films are often troubled men, suicidal or drug-addicted, but they rarely seem disquieted by the torture they inflict. In many cases they seem to be amplified by it, such that the pain felt by the victim boosts the torturer's "growing sense of self."[67] This contradicts most social science and anecdotal accounts. Merle Pribbenow, a former CIA agent, states, "One of my main objections to torture is what it does to the guys who actually inflict the torture. It does bad things."[68] Some of these "bad things" include constant anxiety, sleep disturbances, paranoia, and alcoholism or drug addiction. In the presence of women these characters are frequently withdrawn and juvenile, and often sexually inert. They are vital only in the presence of men, with whom they laugh, tease, and cavort. Perhaps this shouldn't be a surprise; torture is a practice that intends the negation of the other, and the torturer's contempt for any decent "contract,"[69] including the rule of law, is well established. The torturer derives great pleasure from engaging in actions that eradicate the feminine and elevate "the father who is beyond all laws."[70]

In many of the action films the protagonists operate without physical or ethical limits. In *Unthinkable* the "private contractor" torturer (who is working for the CIA), H., says to the FBI agent, "He has to believe I have no limits." Given this disregard for limits, it isn't surprising that scenes of torture are becoming more popular, and a new technique is needed to show the protagonists' dominating power. Practices of punishment are closely associated with cultural values:[71] in America the consensus is that rehabilitation is a failed approach and that criminals and terrorists, actual or perceived, must be dealt with harshly, and film audiences often enjoy watching "bad guys" being maimed and sacrificed. Many American filmmakers believe that displays of graphic violence and torture make their films more tantalizing, so they feature scenes in which victims disgorge pints of blood or undergo dismemberment—the audience winces and cringes and often applauds, not realizing the banality of the scene they have just internalized.

In films made prior to 2001 the torturer was usually a fascist, a depraved outlaw, a rogue cop or serviceman, or a madman. Over the last decade the torturers have been counterterrorism agents, CIA or former CIA agents, and even Batman is one—when superheroes and agents sworn to uphold the Constitution are torturers, the ethical and professional rot is profound. Many American films and television shows promote the fiction of "efficient, selective, professional torture,"[72] even when the torture results in false confessions. Some of these films and television shows clearly legitimize torture, endowing it with an effectiveness it does not possess.[73] In other films the message is opaque, but few American films made over the last decade openly condemn the practice. These films transmit the concept that torture can be absorbed by a civil society, that the consequences for the victims, the perpetrators, and the system are insignificant. As Lawrence Weschler argues, this is a dangerous precedent: " 'There are all kinds of things wrong with torture,' Gaspari told me, 'but one of the main ones is that it poisons the system. For one thing, a sort of gangrene sets in. . . . The agencies working extralegally inevitably start behaving illegally as well. . . . This leads to a terrible indiscipline and institutional instability.' "[74]

Writing about film is a complex and difficult endeavor. Film, as a medium, is elusive and often escapes the author because of its motion and its unfolding and revelatory nature—"its materiality cannot be grasped."[75] We asked film scholars (Chris Berry, Elizabeth Goldberg, Livia Alexander) and academics whose primary area of research is not film—sociologists, political scientists, historians, American studies scholars, and psychologists—to join us for what should be an interesting conversation on the representation of torture in cinema and television.

In these inconsistent times writing about torture invites disputation, and interpreting cinematic torture scenes can be an effort in soliciting resistance. We didn't invite people who favor torture, because we didn't want to collaborate with the project of state terror. When writing about torture it is obvious that some articles will invite controversy, but it is our position that to invite neutrality is to court indifference. The opinions of our authors reflect their own personal judgments and are not indicative of the editors' points of view.

In part I, "Torture and the Implications of Masculinity," David Danzig argues in "Countering the Jack Bauer Effect: An Examination of How to Limit the Influence of TV's Most Popular, and Most Brutal, Hero" that the torture techniques and effectiveness of the hero of *24* are admired and

sometimes emulated by American soldiers. He also discusses a documentary he coproduced, *Primetime Torture*, that debunks the effectiveness of the practice. Torture is present in many of Mel Gibson's films, and many critics have argued that his films promote torture. In her chapter addressing *The Passion of the Christ*, *Braveheart*, and *Apocalypto*, Lee Quinby argues that Gibson's films don't condone torture, that torture is an act that cruel and despotic leaders perpetrate on their citizens, and that these films "condemn the use of torture." The male characters in these films are victims of torture, a torture that often ends in sacrifice, and the suffering that they endure grants them a purified and patriarchal masculinity that invites honor. Michael Flynn and Fabiola Salek address three action films: *Taken*, *Man on Fire*, and *Unthinkable*. All three contain a variant of the ticking time-bomb scenario, and in each the protagonist employs torture to get the terrorist, or organized crime member, to confess.

In part II, "Torture and the Sadomasochistic Impulse," Chris Berry's treatment of *Lust, Caution* highlights the connection between torture and sexuality in Chinese filmmaking, and he also discusses the differences in the American and Chinese receptions of the film. The film was a sensation in China and not in America, in part because of the sadomasochistic sex scenes between the torturer, Mr. Yee, and the woman who is planning his assassination, Wong Chia-Chih. Berry locates *Lust, Caution* in the context of other earlier Chinese films that depict the "direct representation of torture and bodily torment on screen." In light of the revival of torture during the global war on terror, Carolyn Strange argues for a reexamination of *A Clockwork Orange* and makes a case for its continued relevance. She argues that the film operates as "art against torture" and that it indicts state terror. In her article she addresses the Ludovico Technique—which was used to domesticate Alex—and uses it as an example of techniques employed by the state (including drug therapy) to "control the deviant, the criminal, and the mentally ill." In "Beyond Susan Sontag: The Seduction of Psychological Torture" Alfred W. McCoy provides a history of the CIA's use of psychological and physical torture. He also reflects on the unreleased photographs from Abu Ghraib and the sexual nature of the abuse and humiliation inflicted on detainees there. His analysis discloses the erotic, even sadomasochistic, dimensions of torture and the manner in which they are "advertised" in contemporary film and video games. In "The Art of Photogenic Torture" Phil Carney addresses the films *Psycho* and *Peeping Tom*. Carney interrogates the dynamics of sexual power and desire and how these can lead to murder and torture. In his analysis of both films he proposes that the killers

are people who are capable of living "ordinary" lives and that monstrosity has migrated from "the body to the mind."

In part III, "Confronting the Legacies of Torture and State Terror," Elizabeth Goldberg analyzes two South African films, *Forgiveness* and *Zulu Love Letter*, and argues that both of them find fault with South Africa's Truth and Reconciliation Commission, particularly its emphasis on the forgiveness of torture. Goldberg is critical of *Forgiveness* but lauds *Zulu Love Letter* for its engagement with the history of apartheid and the consequences of the antiapartheid struggle on familial and communal relationships, as well as its depiction of traumatized individuals. In "Confessing Without Regret: Israeli Soldiers Talk to the Camera" Livia Alexander examines how in the films *One of Us, Waltz with Bashir*, and *Z32*, "confession and forgiveness in Israeli cinema take place outside the official space of state practice and institutional structures. Confession unfolds between individuals and the recording lens of the camera, between the former soldier and filmmaker." These films privilege the predicaments of the Israeli soldier and minimize the suffering of the Palestinian and Lebanese people. The confessions in these films lack any engagement with the direct victim.

In part IV, "Torture and the Shortcomings of Film," Darius Rejali argues that torture is frequently misrepresented in classic and contemporary film. Directors and actors often choose the accepted iconography of torture that won't challenge filmgoers' preconceived notions. In his analysis of *The Battle of Algiers*, Rejali argues that torture didn't have the effectiveness in the "short run" that the director, Gillo Pontecorvo, gave it. Rejali also argues that torture is the least efficient way of obtaining necessary information (though in many films it "makes the man"), and that relying on informants (as the French did in Algeria) is far more reliable. Faisal Devji, in his incisive and erudite chapter, critiques work by Hannah Arendt, Michel Foucault, and Darius Rejali on torture. Devji analyzes the Indian film *Black Friday* and martyrdom videotapes made by Muslim extremists. He argues that when torture becomes visible in media such as film it cannot be represented without throwing into question the integrity of modern institutions. Marnia Lazreg maintains that *The Battle of Algiers* didn't capture the centrality of torture in the French counterinsurgency effort in Algeria. Decisions about the use of torture were made by the French political and military elites. The film *Standard Operating Procedure* minimizes the effects of torture on the Abu Ghraib detainees and doesn't represent the victims' suffering or experience. *Taxi to the Dark Side*, however, discloses the extent of

the United States torture program, elucidates the decisions that made torture a key element in the United States counterinsurgency program in Iraq and Afghanistan, and gives the torture victims a voice. In his chapter Stjepan Mestrovic argues that the documentaries *Standard Operating Procedure* and *The Ghosts of Abu Ghraib* fail to adequately capture the humanity and the dilemmas of victims and perpetrators at Abu Ghraib. These films also avoid framing the abuse and torture as official government policy and focus on the enlisted "bad apples," minimizing the role played by the commanding officers.

NOTES

1. Darius Rejali, *Torture and Democracy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007), 478.
2. David Edelstein, "Now Playing at Your Local Multiplex: Torture Porn," *New York Magazine*, February 6, 2006.
3. Ibid.
4. A. S. Hamrah, "We Love to Torture," *Los Angeles Times*, December 18, 2006.
5. Elaine Scarry, *The Body in Pain: The Making and Unmaking of the World* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985), 29.
6. Dana Polan, "'Above All Else to Make You See': Cinema and the Ideology of Spectacle," *boundary* 2, 11 (Fall 1982): 131.
7. Jonathan Beller, *The Cinematic Mode of Production: Attention Economy and the Society of the Spectacle* (Hanover, NH: Dartmouth College Press, 2006).
8. Stanley Cavell, *The World Viewed*, enlarged edition (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1979), 5.
9. Polan, "'Above All Else to Make You See,'" 131–132.
10. Carl Plantinga, *Moving Viewers: American Film and the Spectator's Experience* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2009), 2.
11. Ibid.
12. Robert Kolker, *A Cinema of Loneliness*, 3rd ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), 13–14.
13. Ibid., xiii.
14. Leo Braudy, *The World in Frame* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002), 10.
15. Daniel Frampton, *Filmosophy* (London: Wallflower, 2006), 4.
16. V. F. Perkins, *Film as Film: Understanding and Judging Movies* (New York: Da Capo, 1972)
17. Ibid.
18. Frampton, *Filmosophy*, 151.
19. Cavell, *The World Viewed*, 168. See also Frampton, *Filmosophy*.
20. Braudy, *The World in a Frame*, 34.

21. Noël Carroll, *The Philosophy of Motion Pictures* (Malden, Mass.: Blackwell, 2008).
22. Vivian Sobchack, *Carnal Thoughts: Embodiment and Moving Image Culture* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004).
23. Frampton, *Filmosophy,* 9.
24. Perkins, *Film as Film*.
25. See chapter 10 in this book.
26. Alfred W. McCoy, *The Question of Torture: CIA Interrogation, from the Cold War to the War on Terror* (New York: Henry Holt, 2006), 108.
27. Jane Mayer, *The Dark Side: The Inside Story of How the War on Terror Turned Into a War on American Ideals* (New York: Doubleday, 2008).
28. Ibid.
29. Anne Norton, *Leo Strauss and the Politics of the American Empire* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2005).
30. Edith Wyschogrod, *Spirit in Ashes: Hegel, Heidegger, and Man-Made Mass Death* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985).
31. Joshua E. S. Phillips, *None of Us Were Like This Before: American Soldiers and Torture* (New York: Verso, 2010).
32. Phillipe Sands, *Torture Team: Rumsfeld's Memo and the Betrayal of American Values* (New York: Palgrave, 2008), 62.
33. Susie Linfield, *The Cruel Radiance: Photography and Political Violence* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2010), 33.
34. Judith Butler, *Frames of War: When Is Life Grievable?* (New York: Verso, 2009).
35. Leigh Payne, *Unsettling Accounts: Neither Truth nor Reconciliation in Confessions of State Violence* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2007), 16.
36. Martha Huggins, Maria Haroitos-Fatouros, and Philip Zimbardo, *Violence Workers: Police Torturers and Murderers Reconstruct Brazilian Atrocities* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002), 85.
37. Erik Saar, *Inside the Wire: A Military Intelligence Soldier's Eyewitness Account of Life at Guantánamo* (New York: Penguin, 2005), 228.
38. Center for Constitutional Rights, *Report on Torture and Cruel, Inhuman, and Degrading Treatment of Prisoners at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba* (July, 2006), 10.
39. Rejali, *Torture and Democracy*.
40. Keally McBride, *Punishment and Political Order* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2007), 9
41. Ibid., 11.
42. Karen Greenberg, *The Least Worst Place: Guantanamo's First 100 Days* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010).
43. Jody Enders, *The Medieval Theater of Cruelty: Rhetoric, Memory, Violence* (Cornell: Cornell University Press, 1999), 6.
44. J. M. Coetzee, *Doubling the Point: Essays and Interviews* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1992).
45. Stephen Eisenman, *The Abu Ghraib Effect* (London: Reaktion, 2007).

46. Enders, *The Medieval Theater of Cruelty*, 12.
47. Edward Peters, *Torture* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1996).
48. Robert Jay Lifton, *The Broken Connection: On Death and the Continuity of Life* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1980), 323.
49. Graham Greene, *Our Man in Havana* (New York: Penguin, 1958).
50. Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *The Phenomenology of Perception*, 2nd ed. (Routledge, 2002).
51. Taylor Carman, *Merleau-Ponty* (New York: Routledge, 2008).
52. Scarry, *The Body in Pain*, 36.
53. Robert Jay Lifton, *The Future of Immortality and other Essays for a Nuclear* Age (New York: Basic Books, 1987), 235.
54. Ibid., 239.
55. Ibid., 239.
56. Cathy Caruth, *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative, and History* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996).
57. Jean Améry, *At the Mind's Limit: Contemplation by a Survivor of Auschwitz and Its* Realities (New York: Schocken, 1986), 28.
58. Kai Erikson, *A New Species of Trouble: The Human Experience of Modern Disasters* (New York: Norton, 1994), 228.
59. Améry, *At the Mind's Limit*, 22.
60. Ibid., 34.
61. Michael Foucault, *The History of Sexuality*, Vol. 1, *An Introduction* (New York: Vintage, 1990)
62. Norton, *Leo Strauss and the Politics of the American Empire*,
63. John Langbein, *Torture and the Law of Proof: Europe and England in the Ancien Regime* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006).
64. Peter Brooks, *Troubling Confessions: Speaking Guilt in Law and Literature* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000).
65. Scarry, *The Body in Pain*, 35.
66. Ibid., 88
67. Ibid., 36
68. Regali, *Torture and Democracy*, 502.
69. Gilles Deleuze, *Masochism: Coldness and Cruelty* (Cambridge, Mass.: Zone, 1991).
70. Ibid.
71. Philip Smith, *Punishment and Culture* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008).
72. Rejali, *Torture and Democracy*, 478.
73. Ibid.
74. Lawrence Weschler, *A Miracle, A Universe: Settling Accounts with Torturers* (New York: Pantheon, 1990).
75. D. N. Rodowick, *The Virtual Life of Film* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2007), 22.