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Act violations in 1913, in a flagrantly biased trial) (124). Though Grieveson details some fascinating consequences of the Sims Act (one enterprising distributor attempted to project a Johnson fight film across the Canadian border to be rephotographed in the U.S., though his plan to cross state borders in this manner and thus evade the law were thwarted in court!), he rightly emphasizes its most important legacy to film censorship, in the articulation of the commerce theory of cinema.

In his conclusion, Grieveson goes on to show how the *Mutual Film Corporation v. Ohio* case first centered on property rights, but switched gears to a freedom of speech emphasis as it percolated up through the court system to the Supreme Court. The 1915 decision, then, merely finalized a conceptualization of cinema that had already been internalized by the film industry in its efforts to avoid censorship, though it guaranteed the long-term institutionalization of that framework. The film industry would ultimately win First Amendment protection in 1952, but even after that it would continue churning out de-politicized drivel for the most part. *Policing Cinema* expands our understanding of how that drivel came to dominate American cinema, and how nativist and racist agendas informed the classical Hollywood regime. Lee Grieveson has done film studies a service with the book, and it deserves a wide readership.

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Alfred W McCoy. *A Question of Torture: CIA Interrogation, from the Cold War to the War on Terror*. (American Empire Project) New York: Henry Holt and Company. 2006. Pp. 290. \$15.00.

As the Iraq War unfolded in American television, I remember conservative pundits wondering about America's suitability for dealing with terrorists given the fact that a democratic nation such as the United States was by definition incapacitated to carry on, let alone possess the know-how, to conduct the dirty business of interrogation and torture thought necessary to obtain information on networks of terror. In his book on torture, Alfred W. McCoy traces the roots of modern techniques of interrogation, so problematically revealed in the revelations surrounding the Abu Ghraib prison scandal, to Cold War fears of communism and CIA responses to perceived Soviet innovations and discoveries in torture and interrogation. What resulted years later was a new paradigm in the history of torture: the possibility of destroying an individual's

sense of self by attacking his sense of identity. The newfound emphasis on consciousness led to a system of interrogation that, leaving no marks on the body, left no traces of its history.

McCoy, a professor of History at the University of Wisconsin-Madison and the author of the controversial *The Politics of Heroin: CIA Complicity in the Global Drug Trade* published in 1991, argues that Cold War fears of communist mind control led the U.S. government to undertake projects whose goal was to understand mechanisms of mass persuasion and the effects of coercion on an individual's self in order to "crack the code of human consciousness." The most notorious one, the MKUltra, exemplified how the second component—the effects of coercion on human consciousness—became the key factor in undercover work. It identified three key behavioral components important for psychological torture: sensory deprivation as its conceptual core, self-inflicted pain, and the belief that any individual was capable of torturing others. (p. 32)

The seminal *Kubark Counterintelligence Manual* distilled these findings in 1963 and became the basis of the agency's training program for the next decade until shut down by Congress in the 1970s. Yet its influence extended further than just a mere decade, since, as McCoy argues, "for the next forty years, [it] would define the agency's interrogation methods and training programs throughout the Third World." (p. 50) Initially, the CIA's psychological paradigm rested on a "two-phased method": a mix of sensory disorientation and self-inflicted pain made advantageous than mere coercion because it did not leave the usual physical signs of torture. By dispensing with crude physical techniques, the new methods made the pain seem self-inflicted. Thus the torture techniques displayed at Abu Grahیب Prison, for example, involving "stress positions" and water torture, were evolutions of a basic paradigm set by American during the Cold War.

McCoy explains how the CIA disseminated these techniques around the world for the next forty years through police-training programs first, and, later, through counterinsurgency work with Army teams in both Latin America and Southeast Asia. The most notorious one was the sanguinary covert operation called the Phoenix Program, where American surrogates in Vietnam applied "the most advanced interrogation techniques to the task of destroying the Vietcong's revolutionary underground." (p.64) Phoenix was, in the words of McCoy, "the culmination of the CIA's mind-control project", where 26,369 prisoners were murdered and 81,740 Vietcong "neutralized." (p. 68) By combining physical and psychological techniques, Phoenix provided the blueprint for later operations in South and Central America. The application of these techniques was enhanced later in the Philippines by the exploitation of the social fears of the interrogated as American-trained Philippine "officers

discovered the capacity of sexual humiliation to damage the psyche.” (p. 75) These techniques were exported to Latin America and translated in the CIA’s infamous *Human Resource Exploitation Training Manual* of 1983 in Honduras.

McCoy adds that although during the Reagan administration, Congressional action led to reforms in the Army’s interrogation practices, American acceptance of the Geneva Convention came belatedly and only after the CIA ensured that its psychological paradigm remained untouched. These reservations were preserved in the Clinton administration’s concession to the Reagan-era’s conservative language, legitimating “torture as an open, accepted practice in the U.S. intelligence community.” (pp. 101-102) Yet the War on Terror and the proliferation of non-state actors posed new problems on the CIA’s effectiveness, which had been chosen to lead the War on Terror due to its successful performance during the Cold War. According to McCoy, a series of legal maneuvers in the Bush administration paved the way for the rebirth of the CIA’s Cold War paradigm at the expense of any commitment to the Geneva Convention by the creation of the category of “illegal enemy combatants,” and the reduction of the meaning of torture to the intent to inflict pain. With the door open, the CIA moved in Cuba to probe the cultural and sexual sensitivities of “Arab culture” through the use of female interrogators and dogs.

McCoy’s work is more than a mere exposè of CIA’s tactics. His genealogy of American torture techniques intends to demonstrate the deleterious relationship between torture and democracy. Asserting that the “logic corollary to state-sanctioned is state-sponsored murder,” the author maintains that the recourse to torture undermines democratic values and results in the disintegration of those values that lead men to fight for their nation in the first place. (p. 196) Yet, stressing the necessary relationship between foreign and domestic policy is not McCoy’s only goal. In his final chapter, the author endeavors to refute the notion that torture in fact works. If “torture of the few yields little useful information,” “torture of the many can produce results, but at a prohibitively high cost,” its long-term political consequences eventually undermining the “effort’s larger aims.” (p. 198) McCoy reserves his sympathy for the FBI’s use of “empathy” to gain trust of prisoners during interrogation as a human and useful alternative to the CIA’s techniques.

McCoy’s work reveals that oftentimes complicity of the American scientific community and the efficient yet flexible mechanics of government-military-academic collaboration, demonstrating how the American and Canadian academic world, steeped in the scientific paradigms of Cold War behaviorism, cooperated with the American government’s goals. McCoy’s attributes the innocence of the American public, displayed so blatantly as

the Abu Grahیب scandal unfolded, to the decades long effort to erase from the record CIA involvement in the development of interrogation techniques. McCoy even extends this argument on innocence to President Clinton's conservative position on torture. On the issue of American innocence, McCoy is not entirely convincing. It would not be farfetched to argue in the opposite direction: it is the surrender by the American public of its duty to inquire and maintain itself informed that allowed the CIA in the first place to erase its history of torture, as both the originator of the modern paradigm and the most brutal perpetrator of its creation.

While some might object to McCoy's quasi-journalistic style, the proximity in time of the Abu Grahیب and other scandals related to the Iraq War certainly justifies the eclectic mix of solid academic scholarship and hard detective work. McCoy's work has not only revealed the sordid history of the American torture paradigm, but has, perhaps unknowingly, opened up new avenues for the investigation of American behaviorism, which, in the post-modern belief that identity is socially constructed, took the logical step of investigating the practical ways to destroy its foundations. Whether this set of techniques actually revealed information necessary for the protection of our national security has been answered unequivocally by McCoy in the negative.

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