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Introduction

In the Hollywood space opera *Star Trek VI: The Undiscovered Country* (1991), Captain Kirk and Doctor McCoy stand trial on a charge of assassination in a criminal justice system that is literally alien to them. In short order, they are found guilty and receive the harshest sentence: transportation to an asteroid, with life imprisonment down the underground mines. In the cyberpunk film *The Matrix* (1999), by contrast, captivity is not imposed *de jure*. Rather, human beings are in a condition of *de facto* captivity from cradle to grave. By degrees, the protagonist learns that the society he had assumed to be real is, in truth, a computer construct operated by machines with one purpose in mind: to farm humanity's energy in a mass plantation system. A decade later and the dominant science fiction subgenre involved adaptations of superhero comic books. As part of the Batman franchise, for example, *The Dark Knight Rises* (2012) introduced a burly villain figure who bests the caped crusader in a no-frills fistfight. Having done so, he deposits the vanquished Batman down a cavernous shaft, the inhabitants of which have long since accepted their destiny: as far outside the law as they are outside their home societies, what befalls them will be of no concern to anyone.

Genre conventions dictate that heroes must endure their torments for a set period of time, a painful process that involves an inward as well as an outward journey. As Joseph Campbell put it, "[t]he ordeal is a deepening of the problem of the first threshold and the question is still in the balance: Can the ego put itself to death?" (109). Emerging as it does from a mythopoetic reading tradition, the basis of Campbell's question may appear somewhat elusive or absent altogether in the era of Hollywood 'extravaganzas.' Yet its pertinence looks more overarching if one envisages it as applicable to national, regional, or pancultural audiences as much as the on-screen characters they observe. To take a leaf out of Campbell's book, a full confrontation with the self must necessarily involve a confrontation with the past and the putting to death of self-flattery – egotism, if you will – as an act of evasiveness that distracts from the endeavour. Historian and geographer David Lowenthal raised the same point in a letter to *The New York Review of Books*:

“The psychic cost of repressing traumatic memory can be as crippling for nations as for individuals. History is often hard to digest. But it must be swallowed whole to undeceive the present and inform the future” (n.p.).

While it would be a step too far to suggest that a *Star Trek*, *Matrix*, or *Batman* film has had a disinterring agenda on a par with, say, Claude Lanzmann’s documentary *Shoah* (1985), vestigial notions of a penal colony (Australian or Siberian), of a slave economy (American or Caribbean), or a Medieval well (in any European country) emerge in the allusive at least as much as the explicit. Among the contributors to this special themed issue, Nicholas Birns makes a similar point in regard to another form of captivity: “[Japanese American] internment at once lasted for a determinate period but continues to expand in space and dilate in time for as long as the memories of it endure.” To this, one might add that the turn of the 21st century reveals – which is to say, continues – stories of captivity as they cross boundaries of genre, language, medium, and nation. In short, while some of the most egregious forms of captivity have come to an end as an institutional practice, writers and artists are revisiting and re-visioning the phenomena as never before (or offering reminders of those forms of captivity that remain in place).

The contributors to this special issue respectively examine autobiography, documentary film, historical texts, and the novel, more ‘traditional’ primary sources in studies of captivity, one might say, than those that featured in my opening paragraph. But if science fiction films appear circuitous for present purposes, their presence is less a matter of whimsy and more of a preparatory move for introductory content that edges closer to the prescriptive than is customary on such occasions. At the outset, the discerning reader will note that all but one of the articles examine sources that are set during one of the two world wars, while every one of them concerns camp-based forms of captivity. Here as elsewhere, these topics are mutually reinforcing to an extent that the camp appears to emerge *ex nihilo* as a 20th-century phenomenon, leaving unanswered the question of how societies in previous centuries administered – ‘disposed of’ puts it better – large numbers of captives. If this introduction has any purpose, therefore, it must be to provide some sort of background, however brief and incomplete, as a first order of business. To that end and in reverse order of difficulty, the beginnings of immigration detention are in plain view to the historian. It emerges toward the end of the 19th century amid rising concerns over issues of race and/or bodily health, with the inspection station on New York’s Ellis Island remaining, in the anglophone consciousness at least, probably the best-known of its kind to date. Legal studies scholar Daniel Wilsher notes the ideological impetus behind the formation of the stations: “In the rhetoric of international relations, unwanted migration was said to be akin to invasion by foreign powers. The formal state of war, with its enemy/friendly alien divide, was superseded as the important legal and political category” (x).

If warfare as an idea informed the rise of immigration detention, the link is more apparent still in the case of forms of captivity that emerged during war

as an actuality. As far as internment and prisoner-of-war camps are concerned, the necessity is not to prove the point but to isolate which war(s) served as an inaugural moment. Granting that an earlier instance may yet emerge in the historical records, one finds a likely first for internment in 1803, a year when every British male civilian who happened to be in France and aged between eighteen and sixty was interned at Napoleon's command (Lewis 20–23). This was something new, and yet the development could not have shocked every one of them, for in their lifetimes the host country's political structure had reshaped the military structures and vice-versa. *L'Armée révolutionnaire française* now fielded a figure largely unknown to the forces of other European powers: the citizen soldier, conscripted by a government that he or others like him had put in place through revolution and/or elections (or a promise to hold the latter at some future date) and whose motivation to defend that entity was correspondingly high. As far as the French authorities were concerned, if the civilians of their revolutionary state were *ex post facto* citizens who had a stake in supporting their government, the same might hold for foreign nationals who were domiciled in France when hostilities broke out. Hence the need for internment. Hence too a realisation on the part of national governments later in the century that, if conscription of citizen soldiers was the new rule, this legal right came with a governmental responsibility to know who would qualify as citizens and who would not. Identity cards and immigration stations were part of that political imperative.

The obligation that nation states had to their citizens extended to their welfare once they fell into the hands of the enemy. Meeting this obligation meant developing universal standards for the benefit of every soldier, including commoners, along with the passing of international laws that could hold nation states to account. In the Late Middle Ages, to be sure, some progress had been made to end the slaughtering, mutilating, and enslaving of prisoners, practices that had held as a general rule for as long as anyone could recall. Today's historians disagree as to whether a shift toward ransoming as a preferred alternative occurred as a result of Christian doctrines, a desire to accumulate capital (to cover the costs of castle building and upkeep, for example), or through the influence of ransom cultures already present in the Byzantine and Muslim worlds (Ambühl 1–2). What is clear is that individual captivity was seldom the concern of sovereigns or governments because any soldier who fell into captivity had responsibility for resolving it himself. Ransoming was the means of doing so, a culture that lasted through until and, indeed, had some influence upon the successive multilateral Geneva Conventions (MacMillan 229).

The rise of the nation state meant that responsibility for the welfare or hardship of POWs and internees could be laid at the door of a government by default, and yet this did not mean that the physical apparatus of captivity in its optimal form was available from the outset. Before the purpose-built camp was realisable, its constituent features had first to move from conception through to commercial viability. Historian Matthew Stibbe's eponymous study of civilian internment during the First World

War does a fine job of setting out these introductory moments, each of which was individually necessary and yet insufficient on its own. It began with the invention of barbed wire in 1867, the wide placement of which rendered traditional prison designs redundant, at least for captives taken during wartime (it also cut down on the number of guards necessary to prevent prisoners escaping). By the turn-of-the-century, other material component had been developed as well, notably canned goods that could supply prisoners' dietary needs; efficient railway and steamship networks that made long-distance transportation an easier and more cost-effective prospect; automatic firearms, reducing the need for individual guards still further; and searchlights, used by both sides in a military application during the Russo-Japanese War of 1904–1905, but having expediency as a tool for night-time guard duty in the future (Stibbe 8–9). It only remained for the parts to come together in a whole.

The liberties enjoyed by citizens implied loyalty to the state in its role as guarantor and protector. Nonetheless, French officials had been aware that counterrevolutionaries among their own citizenry were hostile to this compact and so, as a precautionary measure, they placed such individuals under surveillance. Precedents such as this meant that internment of one's own citizens as well as those of the enemy was always a possibility, though in the half century leading up to the First World War there was widespread uncertainty on the matter (Kenney 6). When it came, of course, the war did away with noncommittal positions at state level, substituting instead systems of organisation that regularised industrial slaughter on the battlefield, along with the captivity of POWs or internees off it. Not coincidentally, one finds a convergence of these topics in the literary record. Thus the narrator of French author Louis-Ferdinand Céline's novel *Journey to the End of the Night* (1932) [*Voyage au bout de la nuit*], on arriving at the Western Front, states:

How pleasant it would be in a cosy little cell, I said to myself, where the bullets couldn't get in. Where they never got in! I knew of one that was ready and waiting, all sunny and warm! I saw it in my dreams, the prison of Saint-Germain to be exact, right near the forest. I knew it well, I'd often passed that way. How a man changes! I was a child in those days, and that prison frightened me. (10)

The passage describes a stage through which the mind passes under combat conditions and is not, on any reasonable level of enquiry, a defence of incarceration as a desirable condition in which to find oneself. Its efficacy lies in the obvious: while captive and soldier were separable categories in the modern era, the two world wars would place both figures under such extreme conditions that each could long to be in the Other's shoes with only the barest trace of irony.

The process of a soldier passing in and out of captivity is of signal importance to the first article in this collection, which examines Algerian author Mohammed Bencherif's novel *Ahmed Ben Mostapha, goumier* (1920). Anna Branach-Kallas begins her analysis with the important point that the captivity of colonial soldiers

in the First World War has been neglected as a research topic by American and European scholars, as well as scholars in the postcolonial world, albeit for different reasons. As it emerges in her study, Bencherif's novel takes the captivity experience as an opportunity, of sorts, wherein the French, German, and Ottoman forms of colonialism undergo consideration on the part of the protagonist. At different points, Branach-Kallas uses history to inform Bencherif's narrative, or vice-versa, in a methodology that one might term 'the historical approach.' Martin Löschnigg's article is a neat follow-on insofar as his too examines an underappreciated episode of captivity, specifically the Second World War internment of Austrian, German, and Italian refugees in a camp on the Isle of Man. However, whereas Bencherif's novel envisaged the camp as analogous to a colony, Löschnigg's primary text (Norbert Gstrein's 1999 novel *Die englischen Jahre*) sees it as more of a window into the postwar societies of Germany and Austria. Using a close reading method, Löschnigg asks how novelists simultaneously comment on wartime events even as their narratives suggest that memory is vulnerable to manipulation and falsification.

George Melnyk's article shifts the focus onto filmic material, breathing new life into a familiar question: how have filmmakers homogenised or essentialised the subjectivities of Canadians and/or Japanese Canadians? By focusing on the ways in which the Second World War internment of Japanese Canadians has been (mis)represented in documentaries, Melnyk gives attention to changing media technologies over a period of some seventy years, with particular attention to the development of colour cinematography as well as animation. This article sits well alongside Nicholas Birns' piece, insofar as the latter is likewise concerned with the internment of ethnic Japanese civilians, albeit in the United States rather than Canada. Taking Gene Oishi's novel *Fox Drum Bebop* (2014) as a primary text, Birns focuses on the ways in which the author uses jazz music to metaphorise and/or aestheticise the process of 'thinking through' the internment experience during the postwar years. The article lays out the factors that have brought change to internment literature, of which the ageing process experienced by a single author is an underexplored factor in previous scholarship. Of additional interest are the moments in which Oishi's narrative juxtaposes his protagonist's perspective on minority experiences with those of other minority communities, including 'Okies,' Latinos, and a Native American chief.

The three articles that follow constitute an unintended sequence of studies that switch our focus to Australia: respectively, as a site of German Australian internment during the First World War; as the country in which a Second World War POW experience under the Japanese gets recollected; and as the organising authority behind an island-based form of immigration detention. The first article, by Gerhard Fischer, stands out for being an historical study instead of a literature or film studies piece, one that makes a point of listing the official reasons for interning German Australians and critiquing each in turn. Of these, an imagined future Australia under German rule reveals the extent to which wartime fears had

permeated the upper echelons of power in the Commonwealth Government (the other justification drew upon worries that the ethnic German community would attempt an uprising). As an additional point, Fischer suggests that insecurity of a psychological nature was a factor in itself: “Small country syndrome thus played a role, too: the fear of the insignificant colonial outpost at the periphery of the British Empire to be ‘overlooked’ in world affairs.” Reading Fischer’s study, one is reminded of historian Sue Rosen’s *Scorched Earth* (2017), a study of the war plans that the Commonwealth Government asked states to draw up in early 1942 to deny prospective Japanese invaders Australian resources. Needless to say, the threat to Australia posed by the Empire of Japan was far greater in proximity and magnitude than that of the German Empire during the First World War. As Rosen remarks, “[g]iven the stunning speed of Japanese advances, failing to prepare for an invasion would have been foolish. That belief was reinforced when Japan seized the British naval bastion of Singapore in February 1942, sinking two British warships and capturing 118,000 British, Indian and Australian troops” (xv).

The subsequent fall of the Dutch East Indies, which added to the number of Australian soldiers in Japanese captivity, forms the initial backdrop of Richard Flanagan’s novel *The Narrow Road to the Deep North* (2013), although the forced labour to which POWs were put on the Burma-Siam Railway is the principal locus of captivity. Rūta Šlapkauskaitė’s article deploys the critical models of trauma theorist Cathy Caruth and of philosophers Giorgio Agamben and Michel Foucault to explore issues of witnessing and the traumatised body in Flanagan’s narrative. Latterly, her article also takes in the importance of religious symbolism as another reading strategy (in particular, imagery of the Holy Communion, liturgy more generally, and martyrdom), unwittingly following in the footsteps of Roger Bourke’s study of Christian imagery in Far East POW writings (Bourke 30). The final article in the series provides a brief history of Australia’s immigration detention system over a twenty-year span, contextualising a reading of Behrouz Boochani’s autobiography *No Friend but the Mountains* (2018). As in Šlapkauskaitė’s study, Janet M. Wilson has recourse to the biopolitics of Michel Foucault, though she also draws inspiration from Boochani’s narrative on its own terms, as well as from the notion of a “Kyriarchal system” (a term coined by Boochani’s Iranian translator). Wilson’s article differs from the others not only in its focus on immigration detention, but also in the different set of research questions that are embedded therein: how does the content of literary works written in conditions of incarceration differ from those written in conditions of freedom?; how do prison writings come to the attention of academicians?; and how, in turn, might the ‘place’ of published works within a national conversation affect the view that prisoners or detainees have of themselves (Westall 4)?

The articles that follow this introduction address texts that discuss or portray systems of captivity located in Australia, Burma-Siam, Canada, Germany, Great Britain, Switzerland, the Pacific, and the United States, respectively. While some

readers might be taken aback by the absence of articles on Communist Chinese, Fascist Italian, Nazi German, or Soviet camp narratives, nonetheless the wide geographical and experiential scope of the topics contains an appropriate spirit of research inclusiveness. If there is a missing element among them, it is not, in my judgement, an extermination camp or gulag camp depiction, but rather a primary source authored by a female writer – or, failing that, an extended focus on a female character – whose presence could then join a field of primary sources that, in her absence, tilts toward androcentrism (though George Melnyk’s inclusion of documentaries directed by Jeanette Lerman and Jari Osborne, along with Joy Kogawa’s augmented-reality narrative, restores a degree of balance). One does not have to look far for candidate authors or for literary material that argues the salience of gender in the data-gathering and analytic process. Memorably, Argentine-Chilean-American playwright Ariel Dorfman’s play *Death and the Maiden* (1991) presents the audience with a married couple who discuss the salience of a truth commission for a country that has recently emerged from dictatorship. As a survivor of political imprisonment and torture under that same regime, the wife is interested in her husband’s role and, in particular, the administrative boundaries qua gender boundaries of the commission’s remit:

PAULINA. This Commission you’re named to. Doesn’t it only investigate cases that ended in death?

GERARDO. It’s appointed to investigate human rights violations that ended in death or the presumption of death, yes.

PAULINA. Only the most serious cases?

GERARDO. The idea is that if we can throw light on the worst crimes, other abuses will also come to light.

PAULINA. Only the most serious? (9)

Paulina’s repeated question, freighted with implication, alerts the audience – though perhaps not her husband – to the ways in which an institutionalised form of repression that does violence to women’s bodies can give way to an institutionalised form of enquiry that has no immediate stake in that history. Studied or not, indifference of this sort continues to find its way into war and/or captivity-themed research, official forms of documentation, and everyday social behaviours.¹ In his memoir *Hitch-22* (2010), Christopher Hitchens recalls a journey he undertook to Buenos Aires in which he learned something of the tortures that had been inflicted on imprisoned women during the military junta. Having reached saturation point, Hitchens then journeyed into the hinterland for some well-earned diversions, only to find that his mind could not match the swift geographical transition of his body: “Yet even this was spoiled for me: my hosts did their own slaughtering and the smell of drying blood from the abattoir became too much for some reason (I actually went “off” steak for a few years after this trip)” (197).²

An equally unsuccessful instance of forced evasiveness comes across in my introductory paragraph on science fiction films, which focused on four male characters and then framed the depictions using an equally male-oriented reading method. While I do not regret the selection or the passing observations they occasioned, their limits are as evident as those within Gerardo's truth commission. Having now indicted myself of the same tendencies that Dorfman's dialogue alludes to, it would be impolitic of me to suggest that readers will encounter an impediment in the reading of this current issue of *Anglica*. There is no impediment. All seven articles are complete in themselves and, collectively, they do as good a job as any of showcasing the literary and filmic sources available to researchers today. In point of fact, an introduction to an essay collection published in 2007 noted a shift away from the once common and now all-but-defunct – or perhaps only perfunctory – idea of war and/or captivity as impossible to narrate, toward a situation in which the challenge involves source selection more than acquisition (Hogan and Marín Dòmine 15). Spoiled for choice, as it were, by a formidable book pile already at their elbow, scholars might well ask why they should add to its height merely because a given author happens to be a woman. A cynic might even assert, however unadvisedly, that a fair number of male-authored textual passages inform women's experiences of captivity as well as they do men's or, at any rate, that their acknowledgement of the equality of epistemological value contained within women's testimonies opens up the possibility of fresh conversations to a similar degree. A 'framing moment' for such conversations is perceptible in the climax of African American fiction writer Charles Chesnutt's short story "The Wife of His Youth" (1898), in which the well-to-do protagonist, Mr. Ryder, introduces to African American high society the wife whom he left in the South when he fled slavery as a much younger man. This woman's arrival serves as a debut in more than one sense, requiring of Mr. Ryder the honesty and bravery to bring her back into his world (64–65).

Aside from noting that *Death and the Maiden* and "The Wife of His Youth" show a sensitivity to the (gendered) politics of memory not always found in other male-authored primary texts on captivity, there are a number of objections to the assumption I have advanced. To begin with, there is the issue of which primary texts are 'the most serious' for – which is to say, deserving of – university curricula or scholarly endeavours. As should readily be apparent, the question is not intended as an exercise in (futile) hierarchisation on my part, but rather to acknowledge that a hierarchy already exists, born of the admittedly predominant (but not universal) instances of all-male captivity in the history of the late modern era, and buoyed, in turn, by the male-authored testimonies that derive therefrom. Allowing that classic male-authored captivity narratives in various linguistic or national traditions are of acknowledged literary quality and tell of captivity experiences that repay scholarly attention many times over, enquiries into which identities are included or excluded – either in the narratives or in scholarship or

pedagogical practice – are easily foreclosed. After all, of the six million Jews who perished in the Nazi Holocaust, roughly two-thirds were men, a dimension that is borne out in the literary record of survivors. Yet it is also the case that one of the best-known nonfiction accounts is Anne Frank's *The Diary of a Young Girl* [*Het Achterhuis*], published in the original Dutch in 1947 and in English translation in 1952. To read, research, or teach the Nazi Holocaust as a 'male experience' would therefore be accurate in the statistical sense, but it would also reproduce ideological erasures that, unintended though they may be, are no less disconcerting for all that. A mythopoetic instantiation of the point comes across in the opening of Anna Reading's *The Social Inheritance of the Holocaust* (2002), in which she recalls the Book of Genesis and its description of Lot's wife disobeying God's commandment not to observe the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah. Given that God allows Abraham to observe the scene, even as Lot's wife is turned to stone for her infraction, the double-standard in their roles is suggestive of the values that have come to facilitate or prohibit women's witnessing and/or testimony (Reading 1–2). One need not add that the petrification of women who follow in the footsteps of Lot's wife can take place, metaphorically speaking, not only when they dare to testify to what has taken place elsewhere, but also to what has been done to them personally (Agger 7). As trauma theorist Kalí Tal succinctly puts it, "[t]he story of the raped female body is quite literally assumed to be 'unspeakable'" (155), though in the most extreme cases, as when sexual violence is not incidental but constitutes a principal and publicly visible component of a genocide, a complete silencing of the topic may be impossible (Derderian 6–7).

If the prospective erasure of women's narratives has tended to gender the victims of captivity as male more often than not, the corollary also applies in the imagination and depiction of camp guards as necessarily male in turn. This conceit appears to be common across time, space, and national cultures, sowing a general unpreparedness in scholarly and nonscholarly circles for those moments in which female guards or torturers cease being a hypothetical and take on an embodied form. The matter is not helped by characters such as Caravaggio in Michael Ondaatje's novel *The English Patient* (1992), who glosses over the fact that it was a woman nurse who amputated his thumbs as an act of torture, saying simply: "She was an innocent, knew nothing about me, my name or nationality or what I may have done" (59). Then too, there exists a certain subgenre in Holocaust writing that takes the spectre of female guards and torturers as an opportunity for textual pornography (Heinemann 33). A better outcome than either of these is found in the quiet matter-of-factness and unflinching focus American author Susan Jacoby brings to her scholarly book *Wild Justice* (1983), which begins with an account of Hermine Ryan's appearance before a court of the United States Immigration and Naturalization Service in 1972. Up until then, Mrs. Ryan had been a German war bride living in New York City, one of more than twenty thousand who had immigrated to the United States in the postwar years (she had proceeded by way of Canada). Some thirty years previously, however, she

was known to prisoners in the Maidanek concentration and extermination camp as the ‘stomping mare’ for the physical violence to which she was prone (Jacoby 2). While Ryan’s service as an SS camp guard granted her the status of a genuine peculiarity, it would have been a step too far to have called her unique (Kremer 187). In the early 1970s, however, she appeared very much so and it was possible to take the defendant’s immigration status and trial in West Germany as evidence of an essential foreignness (extradition slipping all too easily into exculpation of the United States for having sheltered her for almost a decade). The same was not possible when news broke in 2004 of the abuses that had taken place in the Abu Ghraib prison in Iraq. Responding that same year, author Barbara Ehrenreich wrote a piece for the *Los Angeles Times*, subsequently reprinted, in which she drew strong lessons: “What we have learned from Abu Ghraib, once and for all, is that a uterus is not a substitute for a conscience” (4).

Just as a production of Dorfman’s play might take a post-dictatorship milieu other than Chile’s as a setting, so Ehrenreich’s observation transcends the Occupation of Iraq as a spatial and temporal context. At this point, it is necessary to emphasise that both writers have drawn an essentially similar conclusion, namely that women’s experiences as guards or prisoners are underrepresented in a field of knowledge formed and curated by patriarchal assumptions. The only caveat to this is that whereas Ehrenreich’s dismissal of female anatomy as a nonfactor is effective where discussions of guards like Hermine Ryan (née Braunsteiner) and Lynndie England are concerned, the same is not the case when it comes to female prisoners. On the contrary, Holocaust testimonies from Jewish women survivors contain significant concerns about amenorrhea, childbirth, pregnancy, and rape (Goldenberg 82; Waxman 673), topics that do not fit easily into the standard male-dominated narratives of the Holocaust (Sinnreich 3–4); and there are accounts of German SS officers in Belarus humiliating Jewish women by inviting local policemen to watch the women undress prior to the latter’s execution. As Regina Mühlhäuser notes, “the fact that the Germans brought in local guards particularly to watch women (and not men) being shot suggests that this was a deliberate act of male community-building which was achieved through the humiliation, torture and murder of women” (77).

Relations of power between the sexes make difficult the imagination of a reverse scenario to the one Mühlhäuser describes, and yet one can further extend Ehrenreich’s statement to observe that, in certain circumstances, female guards and/or female collaborators can instrumentalise the uterus of female captives as both a justification for and a means to intensify the suffering of captivity. In the world of fiction writing, Margaret Atwood’s depiction of the future society of Gilead in her dystopian novel *The Handmaid’s Tale* (1985) is arguably the best-known instantiation of this possibility. As one study notes, “the result of the micro-stratification in Gilead is the evolution of a new form of misogyny, not as we usually think of it, as men’s hatred of women, but as women’s hatred of women” (Callaway 49). Crucially, the site of the handmaids’ captivity is not camp or a prison, but

residential houses in which married couples exploit the handmaids' reproductive value. While Atwood's narrative falls under the category of fiction writing, her choice of the home as a place of captivity has real-life parallels (Fludernik 532). Here one might recall the comfort women system set up by the Imperial Japanese Army during the Second World War, although there are significant differences also (the women tended to inhabit 'comfort stations'; religious grounds were not used as justification by the IJA; and the system was not intended to support the eradication of an entire people and their culture). At the present time of writing, the plight of Yazidi girls and women captured by Islamic State in 2014 presents a closer approximation to the Atwood scenario. The administrative and physical infrastructure of the Yazidi enslavement is now a matter of public record: "Sites for the transfer, buying or selling of female victims of slavery have been identified in Syria, and specific buildings were referred to as *souk sabaya*, which translates as female captive or slave market. Considered property once bought, these individuals became part of the estate of their owners" (Al-Dayel, Mumford, and Bales 4).

From Mary Rowlandson through to Emmeline Pankhurst and beyond, literature scholars cannot but be aware of the women authors of the late modern era whose testimonies of captivity deserve and receive dedicated study (and that is merely to speak of nonfiction writers in the anglophone tradition). In these closing remarks, however, I shall name just one writer whose work has yet to receive such attention, at least in humanities research publications. Nadia Murad's memoir *The Last Girl* (2017) does not dwell on the sexual services her successive owners demanded of her, sparing the reader's modesty with a humanity that the men of ISIS never showed. Even so, the episodes of captivity that she does narrate call to mind Elaine Scarry's warning that, if the topic of torture is too extreme for most people to contemplate, the practice of overlooking the topic risks leaving the perpetrators themselves undiscussed and uncriticised (60). But there is more than one way to read this book. If nothing else, it serves as a testimony of the large-scale planning required to maintain an officially sanctioned system of slavery, as well as the ways in which a regime can instrumentalise the female slave's body:

Yazidi girls were considered infidels, and according to the militants' interpretation of the Koran, raping a slave is not a sin. We would entice new recruits to join the ranks of the militants and be passed around as a reward for loyalty and good behavior. Everyone on the bus was destined for that fate. We were no longer human beings – we were sabaya. (Murad and Krajewski 123)

Despite their desperate circumstances and the hysteria into which many of them fall, enslaved women do not remain uncomprehending of their place within the regime's administrative architecture, nor do they fail to note that those civilians who are not on the caliphate's payroll accommodate the *sabaya* system in their neighbourhoods with no apparent discomfort (Murad and Krajewski 109–110). If

the banality of this individual and organisational behaviour strikes the informed reader as somehow familiar, it is not too difficult to imagine how Murad's text might become part of course syllabi or, indeed, a topic for special journal issues.

Notes

1. The practice of state institutions giving deliberately scant attention to the evidence or testimony of women who have survived sex abuse may have particular salience to those historical periods in which a nation is governed by – or just moving out of – dictatorship, but its presence in the world's oldest democracies reveals that autocracy is by no means a precondition. As a case in point, British political commentator Douglas Murray has noted the phenomenon in regard to the plight of non-Muslim children who came forward in Oxfordshire between 2004 and 2012, seeking help after Muslim gangs had enslaved and trafficked them in that county. As Murray put it, “when these gang-rape cases came to court they did so in spite of local police, councillors and care-workers, many of whom were discovered to have failed to report such crimes involving immigrant gangs for fear of accusations of ‘racism.’ The media followed suit, filling their reports with euphemisms as though trying to avoid helping the public to draw any conclusions” (29).
2. The ‘visceral’ reaction Christopher Hitchens underwent when presented with meat by his gaucho hosts is but one example of writing that draws a link between the prevalence of meat in present-day diets and acts of atrocity and/or the Nazi Holocaust. Most recently, American novelist Jonathan Safran Foer has explored the comparison in considerable detail, albeit less from an aesthetic and more from an environmental perspective. Recollecting his Jewish grandmother's decision to leave her life in a Polish village before the Nazis arrived, Safran sees in her decision an act of self-preservation at once inexplicable, hopeful, and yet beyond him when it comes to making life choices that might at least mitigate the destruction of climate change (23).

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