

CONTENTS

Acknowledgments ix

A Note on Transliteration and Spelling xiii

1	Introduction: What's in a Word?	1
2	A Theodicy for Powerlessness: Islamist Discourse and Retaliatory Humiliation	35
3	Spectacles of Sovereignty: ISIS Executions, Visual Rhetoric, and Sovereign Power	80
4	"Our Dignity Is Humiliated": A Phenomenology of Humiliation in the Egyptian Revolution	121
5	Conclusion: Humiliation, Dignity, and Embodiment	186

Bibliography 211

Index 247

1

Introduction

WHAT'S IN A WORD?

[Our citizens] have lived through one international humiliation after another. One after another. We all remember the images of our sailors being forced to their knees by their Iranian captors at gunpoint. . . . Another humiliation came when President Obama drew a red line in Syria and the whole world knew it meant absolutely nothing. In Libya, our consulate, the symbol of American prestige around the globe was brought down in flames. . . . This is the legacy of Hillary Clinton: Death, destruction . . . terrorism and weakness. . . . Americanism, not globalism, will be our credo. As long as we are led by politicians who will not put America first, then we can be assured that other nations will not treat America with respect. The respect that we deserve. . . . [This also requires defeating] the barbarians of ISIS. And we are going to defeat them bad. . . . We're going to win. We're going to win fast. . . . It is time to show the whole world that America is back, bigger and better and stronger than ever before.

[A]fter some minor skirmishes, in which dozens of your soldiers were killed and an American pilot was dragged through the streets of Mogadishu, you left defeated, repelled back, taking your dead, dragging the tails of failure, defeat, and humiliation. Clinton appeared in front of the world threatening to take revenge, but this threat was only a pretext for retreat. God has humiliated you and you withdrew. The extent of your impotence and weakness has become clear. The spectacle of you being defeated in three Islamic cities [Beirut, Aden, and Mogadishu] has brought joy to the heart of every Muslim and "healed the breasts of a believing people."

THESE SALVOS ARE from two of the most infamous public figures in recent decades. The first is an excerpt from Donald Trump's speech at the 2016 Republican National

Convention in Cleveland, Ohio, accepting the nomination as the party's candidate for US President.¹ The second is from Usama bin Laden's 1996 "Declaration of Jihad against the Americans Occupying the Land of the Two Holy Sites," an announcement of war against the United States, the Saudi monarchy, and their allies.²

Aside from great wealth and an infamy rooted in a bizarre blend of violence and entertainment, it's hard to imagine two prominent men with less in common. Bin Laden (1957–2011) was the primary founder and financier of al-Qa'ida (Arabic for "the base"), the fluid network of Islamists linked to attacks on military and civilian targets across the globe, including September 11, 2001, the most destructive attack on American territory since Pearl Harbor. Bin Laden was assassinated by US Special Forces in a 2011 raid on his Pakistan compound, an operation that quickly became the subject of a Hollywood movie.³ Trump (b. 1946) is the New York real estate businessman and TV personality who was elected the forty-fifth and forty-seventh president of the United States. Having campaigned on the slogan "Make America Great Again," Trump's first term in office (2016–20) was marked by greater corruption and abuse of power than any of his predecessors, and he is the only president in American history to be impeached twice by Congress.⁴

At first glance, these passages seem just as mismatched as these men. Separated by two decades, they are in different languages, address disparate audiences, and serve very distinct purposes. But it's precisely the differences that make the commonalities here so striking. Humiliation is central to both and is articulated as a relation of power and powerlessness in which the protagonists are virtually identical: the humiliators and humiliated are Americans and Muslims.⁵

Each depicts defeat as a symbolic emasculation, victory a measure of virility, and virility a means to victory. But here, victory is less a matter of numbers,

1. Trump, "Donald Trump's Complete Convention Speech, Annotated." Trump said something very similar in a speech in October of the same year: "The humiliation for our country never seems to end." "Remarks at the Collier County Fairgrounds."

2. Bin Laden, "I'lān al-jihād 'alā al-Amrīkiyyīn al-Muḥtallīn li-bilād al-Ḥaramayn" [Declaration of Jihad against the Americans Occupying the Land of the Two Holy Sites]. The final phrase in the Bin Laden excerpt is from the Qur'ān (9:14): "Fight them, [and] God shall punish them at your hands and disgrace them and bring you victory over them and heal the breasts of a believing people."

3. Bigelow, *Zero Dark Thirty*.

4. While Trump lost his bid for a second term to Joe Biden in 2020, he was re-elected to a second term in 2024.

5. As the "Declaration of War" is in Arabic, this is my translation of the terms Bin Laden uses: *hawān* and *akhzākum*.

matériel, or battle strategies than a performance in which the enemy is literally or symbolically driven to his knees, witnessed by everyone: humiliation is a “spectacle” for Bin Laden, just as victory over it must be, in Trump’s phrase, “shown to the whole world.”⁶ This public posture of utter subjugation is dictated by the rightful hierarchy of power. The capacity of the intrinsically base to dominate those whose natural superiority grants them dominion over others is an unendurable corruption of the proper order of things. It demands immediate redress, a restoration in which the dominance of the deserving is accomplished by driving the lowly back where they belong, on their knees and in the dirt.

As men inhabit the roles of humiliators and humiliated, this violent contest plays out on and through male bodies. For Bin Laden, the dead, stripped US soldier dragged literally through the dirt of the Mogadishu streets enacts rather than merely symbolizes American abjection.⁷ Triumph and defeat are instantaneous here, the satisfactions for the victor and the ignominy of the loser immediate rather than deferred. For Trump, it’s not just US sailors kneeling, hands behind their heads, at the feet of their Iranian captors; their families and country have also been driven to their knees.⁸ Such an intolerable demonstration of US impotence demands not considered policy proposals but action verbs that deliver American muscularity in speech. Fight. Build. Protect. Win. Win fast.

These salvos are far from anomalous. Trump has a well-earned reputation as a master humiliator who’s dangerously thin-skinned when there’s a whiff of

6. Trump, “Remarks at the Collier County Fairgrounds.”

7. In 1993, the bodies of several male American soldiers were stripped, mutilated, and dragged through the streets of Mogadishu, Somalia. Photographs of the corpses instantly appeared in newspapers across the United States, with captions consistently referring to the horror depicted as a “humiliation,” not of the specific men, but of the American nation. Dauber, “Shots Seen ‘Round the World,” 666. A number of news articles on the legacy of the incident for American foreign policy similarly depict it as a grievous humiliation of the United States. These events were the subject of a Hollywood movie based on a book by Mark Bowden, both titled *Black Hawk Down*.

8. The reference here is to an incident on January 12, 2016, when Iran’s Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps seized two US naval vessels that had trespassed into Iranian waters and took the American sailors on board captive. The full quotation from these remarks is: “You see the way they captured our ten sailors ‘cause they were a little bit in the wrong waters. And instead of saying nicely, ‘Hey, listen. You gotta be over there a little bit,’ they humiliated the sailors, humiliated their families, and humiliated our country, right.” Trump, “Remarks at the Southeastern Livestock Pavilion.” He invoked it again in a tweet from January 14, 2016: “Iran humiliated the United States with the capture of our 10 sailors. Horrible pictures & images. We are weak. I will NOT forget!”

ridicule from anyone else.⁹ In a famous *Playboy* interview more than twenty-five years before his first run for president, Trump insists repeatedly that the entire world is laughing at the United States.¹⁰ His conviction that the crisis of greatest moment is ridicule of those who most deserve reverence—America abroad, real Americans at home, and Trump himself—would become a central theme of his 2016 campaign to Make America Great Again. As candidate and then US President, Trump evinced equal gusto and even pleasure in humiliating his Republican competitors, the Democratic presidential candidate, Hillary Clinton, the disabled, survivors of sexual assault, and even supporters—usually cheered on by fans at his rallies.¹¹ Donald Trump wasn't the first to deploy humiliation politically, of course, but there's no other modern politician who has so effectively normalized it.

By the same token, humiliation is a conspicuous trope throughout Bin Laden's writings, interviews, and speeches, but in the "Declaration of War," it's an insistent

9. Insiders have speculated that Trump's very entry into politics as a presidential candidate originated at the 2011 White House Correspondents' Dinner, where he took Obama's jokes at his expense—a ritual of the roast—as an intolerable public humiliation by the first Black president. Bodenner, "Obama Taunted Trump and Look Where It Got Us." Michael D'Antonio, a veteran journalist and biographer of Trump, told *Frontline*, "Donald dreads humiliation and he dreads shame, and this is why he often attempts to humiliate and shame other people. This is a burning, personal need that he has to redeem himself from being humiliated by the first black president." Taddonio, "Watch: Inside the Night President Obama Took on Donald Trump."

10. He makes the same point no less than four times in the course of a single interview. Glen Plaskin, "The *Playboy* Interview with Donald Trump."

11. For example, an article in *The New Republic* instructs future candidates to see the lesson from Trump's behavior in the 2016 presidential election: humiliate or be humiliated (Shephard and Reston, "Trump's Political Lesson"). Another describes Trump as a professional dominatrix, capable of bringing former rivals and sometime critics Chris Christie, Ted Cruz, Marco Rubio, Rudy Giuliani, and Mitt Romney to heel like lapdogs in a carnival of humiliation to which both parties have implicitly assented. Ryan, "Donald Trump Is a Professional Dominatrix." In a recent study of how humiliation figures discursively in populist narratives of national security, Trump and his rhetoric supply virtually every example. Homolar and Löffmann, "Populism and the Affective Politics of Humiliation Narratives," 1–11. Members of his (ever-changing) inner circle exhibited similar propensities. Trump's chief White House strategist, Stephen K. Bannon (Grynbaum, "Trump Strategist Stephen Bannon Says Media Should 'Keep Its Mouth Shut'") for example, launched a verbal attack on "elite" media he characterized as utterly humiliated by an election outcome they failed miserably to predict or understand. "That's why you have no power," Bannon explained to a reporter with relish. "You were humiliated. . . . The media should be embarrassed and humiliated and keep its mouth shut and just listen for a while." See also Cillizza, "Donald Trump Humiliated J. D. Vance for Fun."

rhetoical cadence. Invoked over a dozen times in a document of only twenty-five Arabic pages, the text even closes with a prayer to God to exalt (*yu'azz*) His obedient followers and humiliate (*yudhall*) the disobedient. In this preoccupation, Bin Laden is example and lodestar. From Libya to Pakistan, Somalia to Indonesia, Islamist discourse in multiple languages is saturated with invocations of “the humiliation of Islam,” accompanied by repeated exhortations to make the enemies of Islam “taste the humiliation” that has been inflicted on Muslims.¹²

This unorthodox pairing spotlights a hallmark of contemporary politics that animates this study: the pervasiveness of humiliation rhetoric and the imperative to recognize and decode it. For evidence, one need look no further than the war in Gaza, ongoing as of this writing. As very little about this complex, brutal, and destructive war is taken as settled fact by all sides, it's remarkable that all sides see humiliation at stake. In an op-ed from October 7, 2023, for example, Al Jazeera political analyst Marwan Bishara describes the Hamas attack as a “scandalous humiliation” of Israel. Humiliation is a wage of hubris, Bishara writes, the culmination of decades of degrading occupation combined with a misguided sense of invincibility and the consistent tendency of Israeli leaders to underestimate their enemies. “The Palestinians have made it clear today that they would rather fight on their feet for justice and freedom than die on their knees in humiliation,” he concludes. “It is high time the Israelis heed the lessons of history.”¹³

For those such as far-right Israeli Finance Minister Bezalel Smotrich, the national humiliation of October 7 is precisely why Israel's response must be ruthless and unyielding. Any cease-fire agreement hands Hamas a victory, Smotrich contends, so Israel must not yield to international pressure or hesitate to attack Rafah, the last refuge of Palestinians in Gaza: “enter Rafah immediately,” he instructs Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, “do not wave the white flag, do not allow Sinwar [then the top Hamas leader in Gaza] to humiliate us again.”¹⁴ In several quarters (and as of this writing), outrage at images of gaunt and haunted Israeli hostages released by Hamas has focused not just on the condition of the captives but on the humiliation of Israel their suffering is said to represent.

In December 2023, videos and photographs of unarmed, half-naked, and bound Palestinian men detained in Gaza by the Israeli army circulated widely

12. See note in chapter 2 for a brief clarification of my use “discourse” in relation to “rhetoric.”

13. Bishara, “From Hubris to Humiliation.”

14. Azulai, “Smotrick to Netanyahu.” Yahya Sinwar was killed by the IDF on October 17, 2024.

across social media. In one of many such images, heavily armed Israeli soldiers guard kneeling, barefoot men stripped to their underwear, hands bound and heads bowed. They're arranged single-file at one edge of a street lined by bombed-out buildings with blasted windows like empty eyes. Dozens of shoes and flip-flops are strewn along the rubble-filled road in the foreground. News outlets from New York to Jerusalem captioned the images as Hamas terrorists surrendering to the IDF (Israeli Defense Forces), but subsequent reports and interviews identified the images as indiscriminate mass round-ups of all Palestinian males of "military age" in areas the army had ordered evacuated.

A spokesman for the Israeli government at the time defended the practice as a necessity given that Hamas members do not wear uniforms.¹⁵ But in a *Haaretz* op-ed, Gideon Levy contends that the real purpose of such practices and the circulation of such images is to demonstrate the imperium of Israel by publicly forcing Palestinians literally and figuratively to their knees, a spectacle not just of surrender but utter powerlessness. The victims are young and old, some well-fed and others gaunt, he writes; "some have pale skin and others are scorched by the hardships of the war." All are men and, if their wives and children are watching, all the better. The entire tableau is, he concludes, a "Hanukkah gift of humiliated Palestinians" that shows how low Israel is willing to go.¹⁶

These often-brutal examples dramatize a more basic fact: humiliation rhetoric is not unique to a particular people, region, or language, and it's just as easily voiced in a nationalist as a religious idiom, by the powerful as well as the powerless, and across the political spectrum. Like a proverbial Zelig, it pops up in virtually every frame and phenomenon, perpetually protean. Humiliation is said to be a major driver of international conflict and political violence, characterized as the "single most underappreciated force in international relations" by Thomas Friedman.¹⁷ The 2011 Arab uprisings were sparked by the humiliation of

15. Brianna Keilar interview with Eylon Levy, CNN News Central, December 8, 2023. See also Shalaby and Youssef, "Palestinian Recounts Being Stripped and Driven Away by Israeli Army."

16. Levy, "By Trying to Humiliate Gaza to Its Core, Israel Is the One Being Humiliated." Palestinian women and children are not just bystanders to the humiliation of men. At the start of the Israeli attack on Rafah, for example, Sahar Abu Nahel, a grandmother who had fled with her family to the city in search of safety, said, "I have no money or anything. I am seriously tired, as are the children. Maybe it's more honorable for us to die. We are being humiliated," (Mednick, Federman, and Mroue, "Hamas Accepts Gaza Cease-Fire Proposal").

17. Friedman, "Humiliation Factor." The argument that humiliation is a driver of international conflict and political violence has been made by journalists, policymakers, and scholars

a Tunisian fruit seller.¹⁸ The humiliations of Iranian women propelled the 2022 protests following Mahsa Amini's death.¹⁹ The US withdrawal from Vietnam is the humiliating failure that has haunted American foreign ventures since the fall of Saigon.²⁰ The partnership of racism and humiliation is integral to White supremacy in the United States.²¹ Gender-based violence intensifies when men are humiliated.²² The rise of the Third Reich is routinely explained in terms of it.²³ China even named an entire century after it. The "Century of Humiliation," one scholar contends, is the "master narrative of modern Chinese history."²⁴

Depending on where you look and what you read, then, humiliation is an act and an experience, a cause and a consequence, a trope and an event, an emotion and an epoch. Given such an array of guises, it's little wonder that what humiliation actually means is difficult to pin down. This elusiveness marks a political and theoretical puzzle largely hidden in plain view: humiliation is rhetorically pervasive and politically potent, but conceptually elusive.

In the vast majority of contemporary scholarship, journalism, public policy, and even vernacular speech, humiliation is taken as self-explanatory or a

of international relations, psychology, and terrorism, and it became increasingly popular following the attacks on 9/11. See, for example, Bergen and Lind, "Matter of Pride," 8–16; Fontan, "Polarization between Occupier and Occupied in Post-Saddam Iraq," 217–38; Marton, "Terrorism and Humiliation"; and Lindner and Deutsch, *Making Enemies*. These are directly or indirectly indebted to earlier inquiries into the dynamics of humiliation, such as William Ian Miller's excellent *Humiliation*; Steinberg's "Psychoanalytic Concepts in International Politics," 65–84; Susan B. Miller's "Humiliation and Shame," 40–51; Gilligan's *Violence*; Klein's "Humiliation Dynamic," 87–92; and Wengst and Bowden's *Humility*.

18. The precipitating incident is more complex and contested than this suggests; see discussion in chapter 4.

19. See Moaveni, "Protests in Iran." Moaveni characterizes the protests as an expression of women's feeling of humiliation and depicts Amini's death as akin to the Bouazizi "spark."

20. There are innumerable references to US humiliation in Vietnam and its legacies by scholars, journalists, policymakers, and commentators alike. In "Post-Vietnam Syndrome," Myra Mendible argues that the "psychodrama of humiliation" around the US withdrawal from Vietnam has a gendered register particularly evident when the aversion to war becomes a "sign that America had been feminized by defeat, turned into a nation of wimps and pacifists."

21. Griffin, "Racism and Humiliation in the African-American Community," 149–67.

22. See, e.g., Fleming et al., "Competition and Humiliation," 197–215; and Heilman and Barker, *Masculine Norms and Violence*.

23. There's a vast literature in which the "humiliation of Germany" by the Treaty of Versailles following World War I is identified as critical to the rise of the Nazi Party.

24. Callahan, "National Insecurities," 204. No footnote could ever do justice to the immense literature on China's "Century of Humiliation."

“reduplicative intensifier” of more primary emotions such as vengeance or rage.²⁵ In striking contrast to other emotions such as shame, fear, or hate, there are few systematic efforts to define it.²⁶ Even political theory, a field known for such conceptual work, an increasing interest in the emotions, and a particularly rich vein of scholarship on shame,²⁷ has surprisingly little to say about it.²⁸ In more than a few instances, good work meant to address humiliation winds up circling around it, rerouted into phenomena such as shame, vengeance, scapegoating, or right-wing populism.²⁹

This raises a number of political, theoretical, and methodological questions that haven’t yet been posed, let alone answered. Take the two passages that opened this chapter: What do such invocations of collective humiliation say, and how do they work discursively, rhetorically, affectively, and politically? Do figures like Trump and Bin Laden even mean the same thing by humiliation? What and where are the blockages that have prevented these kinds of politically pressing questions from arising in the first place? What approach might make it possible to grasp something so pervasive yet seemingly elusive, and even identify unexpected patterns in what it says and does?

As the puzzle begins with the way humiliation is used in language, in this book, I look to language to take up the interlocking questions it raises. By this, I don’t mean the impossible effort to survey invocations of humiliation in every language. Instead, I turn to one language in particular, Arabic, and focus specifically on exemplary moments in Arabic humiliation rhetoric—verbal, visual, and

25. Miller, *Humiliation*, 133.

26. This must be distinguished from the absurd claim that nothing has been written about humiliation or the presumptuous argument that there is nothing to learn from what has been written. Of particular note is Klein’s “Humiliation Dynamic” (discussed below), one of the earliest and best studies of humiliation in social psychology. See also Saurette’s work, particularly on Kant (see below), Frevert’s informative history of public humiliation in Europe, *Politics of Humiliation*, Koestenbaum’s *Humiliation*, and *Humiliation*, edited by Guru, a collection of essays both old and new about humiliation in India, and notes 20, 40, 53, 68, and 83.

27. See, e.g., Williams, *Shame and Necessity*; Locke, “Shame and the Future of Feminism”; Tarnopolsky, “Prudes, Perverts, and Tyrants”; Manion, “Moral Relevance of Shame” and “Girls Blush, Sometimes,” 21–41; Saxonhouse, *Free Speech and Democracy in Ancient Athens*; and Agamben’s account of shame in several of his works, especially *Remnants of Auschwitz*. Rom Harré also provides a useful analysis of shame in contrast to embarrassment in “Embarrassment.”

28. The few that do so treat it very briefly. See, e.g., the references to Richard Rorty and Judith Shklar in note 86.

29. See note 71.

embodied. To analyze verbal humiliation discourse in chapter 2, for example, I draw on such influential texts as Sayyid Qutb's multivolume Qur'anic interpretation, *Fi Zilāl al-Qur'ān* (In the shade of the Qur'ān). In chapter 3, I provide a reading of visual humiliation rhetoric in two particularly infamous ISIS execution videos. Chapters 4 and 5 draw on verbal, visual, and embodied expressions of humiliation from the 2011 Egyptian revolution, an archive comprised of blogs, vlogs, professional and amateur videos, poetry, tweets, songs, chants, and slogans by prominent and unnamed Egyptians alike.

These illustrations are clearly clustered around two major moments and phenomena, Islamism and the Arab uprisings, although my focus is more on texts, genres, and modes of expression than on the contested categories to which they are usually assigned. Still, these particular moments take center stage because they so sharply articulate the puzzle and its political stakes. Islamists have advanced the most visible account of humiliation in Arabic and one of the most conspicuous in the contemporary world, but it is largely overlooked and understudied. By the same token, invocations of humiliation suffused the Egyptian Revolution, yet it remains one of the most neglected and undertheorized features not just of the Egyptian Uprising, but of uprisings from Tunisia to Yemen, Syria to Bahrain. Such inattention to the ubiquity of humiliation in the mountainous commentary on the uprisings is precisely the kind of omission this book aims to identify and rectify.

Most of these Arabic invocations of humiliation are drawn from sources, sites, and genres usually situated outside the conventional jurisdiction of political theory, but I take them as texts that need to be read, analyzed, and interpreted as much as books. This is in the spirit of work in an array of fields that understands "texts" capaciously to include the practices, experiences, and articulations of "regular" people who are themselves understood as authors rather than simply objects of political knowledge.³⁰ I read these archives specifically for what humiliation says and how it works in these texts and the worlds in which they are embedded; I don't presume that the meaning of any single invocation is exhausted by this focus or the reading it yields. To borrow from Sara Ahmed, texts can be an invaluable entrée to how experiences are made into meaning provided we

30. From ethnographic work, to literary, cultural, and postcolonial theory, to recent scholarship on the "security vernacular" in critical security studies (e.g., Bubandt, "Vernacular Security"; Jarvis, "Toward a Vernacular Security Studies"; and Jarvis and Lister, "Vernacular Securities and Their Study"), this capacious view of texts and focus on "regular people" is hardly new. Yet longstanding disciplinary divisions of labor have meant that there are entire areas of political inquiry that do not engage in it or have only very recently incorporated it.

make certain not to assume an “equivalence between texts and the histories they keep alive.”³¹

As these Arabic expressions of humiliation are vastly understudied, I take them as significant areas of inquiry in their own right and intend these close readings to contribute to ongoing efforts to understand the particular phenomena of which they are a part. At the same time, I thematize tropes, idioms, strategies, and structures that emerge within and across these archives, tracking patterns and discontinuities in the way these articulations of humiliation contest or refigure it, reproduce or shore it up. As I’ll argue in greater detail below, these readings show how and why such expressions are untapped resources for theorizing humiliation not in terms of what it’s said to be but in terms of the way it’s articulated, produced, and contested in and through language.

Such resources come into focus only by asking different questions than those usually posed when it comes to concepts such as humiliation. The crucial questions are not: Does this qualify as humiliation? Or: Are such claims of humiliation legitimate? Instead, the questions are: Who is invoking collective humiliation and how? To whom are such invocations addressed, what collective solidarities do they presuppose, what purposes do they make explicit, and what meanings do they encode? How do these rhetorical deployments define the stakes of repair, the form such repair must take, and those tasked with it? Are there significant patterns in the way humiliation works politically, affectively, and rhetorically? How might such patterns address the puzzling conceptual vacuity that currently prevails so that we can grasp what humiliation says and does in contemporary politics?

A Busy Intersection

Given the ubiquity of humiliation, it’s possible to begin this inquiry elsewhere, but Arabic rhetoric is a particularly instructive way to pursue and answer these questions. This isn’t because there’s a unique affinity between humiliation and Arabic-speaking peoples but precisely because such an affinity, commonly presumed and reiterated axiomatically, has made the intersection of Arabs and Muslims (rendered interchangeable) and humiliation a very busy one in recent decades.³² All sorts of explanations for behavior, accounts of motivation, and assumptions about culture converge and entangle in its features. Crucial blockages

31. Ahmed, *Cultural Politics of Emotion*, 216.

32. Needless to say, not all Arabs are Muslim and not all Muslims speak Arabic, but the conflation of Arabs and Muslims is a critical feature of the accounts that follow.

to theorizing humiliation are readable in these features, as are the political logics such blockages both express and conceal.

Claims of national humiliation tend to appear whenever American preeminence abroad seems diminished, for example, but Arabs and Muslims have increasingly taken center stage as a major, at times primary, threat. This is particularly true after 9/11, but well before then, the “Green Peril” (green is often associated with Islam) had become a viable replacement for the communist “Red Menace.”³³ Trump’s insistence that devious Muslim states and savage Islamist terrorists are responsible for the “string” of international humiliations that have made America an object of ridicule is just one of the more recent variations on this theme.

What has been described as George W. Bush’s strutting “cowboy masculinity,” in combination with the hypermasculinist dynamics of his inner circle, helped constitute the 9/11 attacks as a national humiliation requiring public retribution to restore American potency and pride.³⁴ Similar masculinist logic emerged in rhetoric depicting President Barack Obama’s apology for the burning of Qur’ān pages by American military personnel in Afghanistan as a national humiliation. The accusation that Obama had embarked on an “apology tour of the Middle East” returned repeatedly during the 2012 presidential election, often in language suggesting that Obama had essentially “bent over” for Muslims and Arabs.³⁵

Arabs and Muslims represent the threat of national humiliation here, but at other moments are constituted as collectively humiliated. In a *Foreign Affairs* article, for example, French political scientist Dominique Moïsi argues that the

33. Sciolino, “Seeing Green.”

34. Ferguson, “Cowboy Masculinity, Globalization and the U.S. War on Terror,” and Saurette, “You Dissin Me?,” 512, 514, 518. This particular dynamic is neither unique to the Bush administration nor American foreign policy toward Muslim-majority countries. In *Faking It*, Cynthia Weber shows, for example, that similar anxieties about symbolic castration and demonstrations of hypermasculinity characterized US foreign policy toward the Caribbean from 1959 to 1994.

35. Presidential candidate Mitt Romney invoked this characterization on many different occasions during the campaign. Sterling, “CNN Fact Check: Obama Went on an Apology Tour.” The commentary on Obama in this instance—and in so many others—exemplifies the often unspoken matter of race deeply and toxically intertwined with humiliation, gender, and sexuality in American life, past and present. It also seems that such depictions are especially common when the administration is Democratic. President Jimmy Carter’s handling of the Iranian hostage crisis in 1979–80, for example, contributed to depictions of him as a “wimp.” And there was an outcry about President Joe Biden humiliating America when he withdrew troops from Afghanistan in 2021. In connection with the latter see, for example, Galston, “Anger, Betrayal, and Humiliation.”

“Arab and Muslim worlds are trapped in a culture of humiliation” that has devolved into a “culture of hatred.” Or consider a *New York Times* column on the escalation of hostilities in Southern Lebanon in which journalist John Tierney depicts Hizbollah as fighting “to humiliate the enemy, not for any particular objective.”³⁶ In the former, humiliation is stripped of historical context and lived experience to become an ontologically grounded culture of hatred. In the latter, the act of humiliation figures as the very antithesis of an objective, by implication both self-evident and purposeless.

Humiliation has also become a fixture of explanations of why young Muslim men are motivated to heed the call of armed jihad.³⁷ Jessica Stern’s *Terror in the Name of God*, for example, contains an entire chapter titled “Humiliation” that focuses on interviews with Palestinians about the “real or perceived national humiliation of the Palestinian people by Israeli policies.”³⁸ Stern doesn’t supply a definition of humiliation, but rather clusters it throughout the book with various other terms such as alienation, deprivation, rage, desperation, fear, hopelessness, embarrassment, and envy. How these are related to one another, in what they consist, and whether they’re intended as synonyms, elaborations, triggers, or consequences of humiliation remains unclear. Stern concludes that what really explains Islamic terrorism “are perceived humiliation, relative deprivation and fear—whether personal, cultural, or both . . . holy wars take off only when there is a large supply of young men who feel humiliated and deprived.”³⁹ Yet this begs rather than answers the central question of what counts as the experience of humiliation to these young men and why it would necessarily drive them into the arms of radical Islamists.⁴⁰

Then there are depictions of “the Muslim world” as hypersensitive to humiliations of their own making and convulsed by what Nietzsche called *ressentiment*,

36. Moisi, “Clash of Emotions,” 8–12; Tierney, “Another Man’s Honor.”

37. Many of the following examples also contain excellent research unrelated to humiliation. See, e.g., Hafez, “Martyrdom Mythology in Iraq,” 95–115; Khosrokhavar, *Suicide Bombers*; Khouri, “Terrorists Are Also Spawned by Humiliation”; Pape, *Dying to Win*; Danchev, “‘Like a Dog!’”; Luban, “Human Dignity, Humiliation, and Torture”; Fattah and Fierke, “Clash of Emotions”; Saurette, “Humiliation and the Global War on Terror” and “You Dissin Me?”

38. Stern, *Terror in the Name of God*, 32.

39. Stern, *Terror in the Name of God*, 235–36.

40. Very few accounts in this area of inquiry supply even a brief definition of humiliation. Saurette’s excellent article, “You Dissin Me?,” and Fattah and Fierke’s “Clash of Emotions” are exceptions, but they also exemplify the dominant philosophical formulation (see above). Saurette defines humiliation as a “process of disrespecting” (507), a violation of one’s dignity and self-respect; Fattah and Fierke say much the same thing (77, 84).

the vindictive rancor that festers among those powerless against the greatness of spirit and talent animating the triumphs of the powerful.⁴¹ Perhaps the best-known proponent of this view is historian Bernard Lewis. Well before the events of 9/11, Lewis assiduously traced contemporary “Muslim rage” to resentment at the humiliation of Islamic civilization by the accumulation of Western military, political, cultural, and economic “victories.”⁴² Far from alone in making such arguments, Lewis’s scholarly standing nevertheless infused them with an authority and legitimacy that gave them a new lease on life among the neoconservative architects of American foreign policy in the wake of 9/11.

In the American-led “war on terror,” Arabs and Muslims would be reconstituted, figured as objects as much as agents of humiliation. Many of the interrogation techniques used on detainees at Abu Ghraib as well as in Bagram and Guantánamo prisons were developed specifically to exploit the anxieties and taboos supposedly constitutive of Arab/Muslim culture. As Seymour Hersh’s exposé on abuse of Iraqi prisoners by the US Army revealed, Raphael Patai’s 1973 book depicting a timeless and unchanging Arab masculinity obsessed with sex and animated by avoidance of humiliation and shame was essential training for American interrogation tactics used on male detainees. According to one of Hersh’s sources, Patai’s book—revealingly titled *The Arab Mind*—became “the bible of the neocons on Arab behavior.”⁴³

The cruelty on display in the photographs from Abu Ghraib is just one part of the picture.⁴⁴ One of the most notorious photographs that began circulating in 2004 depicts Private Lynndie England holding the leash of a man cowering naked like a whipped dog on a dirty floor. To follow the leash up from the neck of the detainee is to behold the face of fun: a soldier smiling for the camera as

41. Nietzsche, *Genealogy of Morals*, I, 10.

42. See, for example, Lewis, “Roots of Muslim Rage” and *Crisis of Islam*, esp. 21–22. Lewis makes this argument in different ways in several of his other publications, and the martial metaphor is central to how he makes it.

43. Hersh, “Gray Zone”; Patai, *Arab Mind*.

44. As will become clear, the impact of these photographs on radical Islamists, and its connection to the language of humiliation, should not be underestimated. In one very early response, a video was posted depicting the beheading of American Nicholas Berg. The execution was reportedly carried out by Abu Mus‘ab al-Zarqawi himself, the leader of al-Qa‘ida in Iraq, as well as progenitor and inspiration for ISIS. In the video, the narrator asks: “How does the Muslim sleep, his eyelids at rest, while he sees Islam slaughtered and sees the hemorrhaging of honor [*karāma*] and the pictures of shame [*al-‘ār*] and the reports of satanic humiliation [*al-imtihān al-shayṭānī*] of the people of Islam, men and women, in Abu Ghraib prison?”

if on holiday. The picture captures what might be called the pleasure of humiliation, an unmentionable feature that simultaneously implicates spectators in a prurient voyeurism and calls on them to avert their gaze. Such satisfactions are irreducible to the sadistic pleasures of inflicting physical pain, although they commonly appear together and often work in tandem. Quickly buried by a landslide of language about the unprecedented and aberrant that eventually settled on low-level (and notably female) military personnel such as England, the pictures showed Americans as “cheerful decimators,” exhibiting what Wayne Koestenbaum dubs the specifically “sportive nature of U.S. style humiliation.”⁴⁵

Preeminent threat and arrested culture. Rage and resentment. Agents and objects. The cumulative effect of all this traffic is to securely tether humiliation to Arabs and Muslims who inhabit an alien world of developmentally arrested honor cultures in which hypermasculine men seethe under the weight of their own humiliating failures. It does so not by way of explicit argument or persuasive speech but by a process of affective attachment that can be usefully understood in terms of what Sara Ahmed has called “sticky signs.” Both metaphor and argument, “sticky signs” foregrounds the way repetition and circulation attaches words to meanings, things, and even bodies while concealing the operations that bind them.

The ‘binding’ effect of the word is also a ‘blockage’: it stops the word moving or acquiring new value. The sign is a ‘sticky sign’ as an effect of a history of articulation, which allows the sign to accumulate value. . . . [But] the association between words that generates meanings is concealed: *it is this concealment of such associations that allows such signs to accumulate value*. I am describing this accumulation of affective value as a form of stickiness, or as ‘sticky signs.’⁴⁶

Given these processes, theorizing what humiliation says and does isn’t simply a matter of collecting and analyzing the ways that people speak and invoke it. It’s also about adhesion and blockage. It’s about the way affectively laden meanings are produced by attachments sedimented through repetition and circulation. And it’s about how what’s stuck together also disjoins—or blocks—through concealment, producing a sense of essential cultural difference.

The present inquiry by no means exhausts the “stickiness” of humiliation. On the contrary, it showcases the need to examine its inflections by other affective attachments—for starters, the historically specific racialization of humiliation that has constituted American Black bodies as always already humiliated. At the

45. Koestenbaum, *Humiliation*, 6.

46. Ahmed, *Cultural Politics of Emotion*, 92, emphasis in the original.

same time, this point of departure throws a particularly powerful spotlight on the way humiliation has been culturalized, in this instance pegged to culturally distinctive pathologies and resentments to become just one more marker of Muslim or Arab Otherness. Close examination of Arabic invocations of humiliation, the stakes of the action they enjoin, and the dynamics of political power they refract are rendered superfluous. Parallels or overlaps in what humiliation rhetoric says and how it works viscerally and politically across time and context remain unthought. In this light, the ubiquity and opacity of humiliation is less a puzzle than what philosopher Cheshire Calhoun calls a nonlogical implication of repeated emphases and silences.⁴⁷ Such emphases and silences demonstrate the need to theorize humiliation; decoding them uncovers unanticipated resources for doing so.

From Concept to Relation

Close reading of humiliation rhetorics requires attending to the specificity of meanings written into the word that are brought out, mobilized, or remade in use. There are several different Arabic terms that, depending on context, can sensibly be translated as humiliation, and the etymological roots invest each with an array of latent valences. The most common are terms derived from the root ذل/*dhāl-lām-lām* (low, base, vile, abased, subjected, ignominious, contemptible, humiliated) and هون/*hā'-wāw-nūn* (to despise, humble, humiliate, degrade, insult, scorn, or disdain). There are at least three other trilateral roots—صغر/*ṣād-ghayn-rā'* (to be small, to debase, make lowly or inferior), خزي/*khā'-zayn-yā'* (degradation, dishonor, humiliation, shame), and فضح/*fā'-dād-hā'* (to publicize information or expose faults that shame, disgrace, or dishonor someone else)—derivations of which can and have been translated as humiliation.

The terms derived from one final root, رغم/*rā'-ghayn-mīm*, have the widest range of meanings that connect metaphorically. This root provides Arabic words for dirt and earth; to be dirt/dust covered; to be coerced, compelled against one's will, humiliated, and abased. It is also integral to a premodern idiomatic phrase, variations of which appear in ḥadīths⁴⁸ on humiliation: *arghama anfahu*,

47. Calhoun, "Justice, Care, Gender Bias," 452–53.

48. Ḥadīth is a report concerning the words and deeds of the Prophet Muhammad, collected and recorded in the centuries following Muhammad's death. Both the major Sunni and Shi'i Ḥadīth collections are replete with references to humiliation. Unsurprisingly, humiliation figures very differently in the two corpora.

literally “make his nose cleave to the earth,” which essentially referred to humiliation.⁴⁹ This link between humiliation and earth/dirt/ground is echoed in one of the derivations of *dhāl-lām-lām*, which means “to walk or ride upon [the earth or ground].”

It’s instructive that the etymology of these Arabic terms signifies a push or orientation downward, a debasement or degradation. The emphasis on Arabic etymology is often viewed with suspicion, the legacy of a tendency in twentieth-century Orientalist scholarship to conflate the root of a word with the way Arabic speakers invoke, understand, and enact it. This etymology is instructive not because there’s a straight line between root and action but because it directs attention to how continuities in what humiliation says and does across languages mobilizes and reworks overlaps written into the word. It’s particularly significant, then, that this downward orientation is equally true of the etymology of the English *humiliation*, traceable to the Latin *humus*, “earth” or “ground,” and something similar can be found both in German and biblical Hebrew.⁵⁰ Such an etymological entanglement of humiliation with earth/dirt/dust suggests the experience of being shoved into the ground, of being forced, literally, to “eat dirt.”

There’s a connotation of imposed powerlessness threading throughout these linked etymologies, as the passive voice at once installs and conceals the presence of two figures, one forced into the dust and another with the power to have forcibly made another eat dirt. In this sense, hierarchy is already written into the Arabic words for humiliation, much as it is in other languages such as English, German, and biblical Hebrew. This hierarchy is a relation of both stature and

49. Lane, *Arabic–English Lexicon*, 3:1113.

50. Consider the various German nouns for humiliation: *Erniedrigung* (humiliating, abasing, debasing, bring low); *Demütigung* (to be humbled, to be humiliated, to be brought low, reduction of spirit and courage); *Beschämung* (embarrassment, shame, humiliation); *Schmach* (disgrace, humiliation); and the twinned terms *Kanossa/Kanossagang* (to be humbled, humiliated). The closest parallel to the Arabic is evinced by biblical Hebrew, which fully expresses the links among humiliation, powerlessness, and dirt/dust/earth. A case in point are some well-known lines in the liturgy: “God makes poor and makes rich, humiliates [*mash-pil*] and also exalts. He raises the nobody out of the dirt [*afar*], out of the refuse heap he lifts up the poor” (1 Samuel 2:7–8). Another case in point is Isaiah 25:12, referring to how God will punish pride by razing even the most fortified walls, laying them “low and humble . . . razed to the ground, to the very dust.” Humiliation and one who is brought low into the dust share the root *shin-pay-lamed*. Georgakopoulos et al., “Meaning of Ancient Words for ‘Earth,’” 428. I am indebted to Jens Kruse for the German and Rachel Isaacs for the biblical Hebrew.

power expressed spatially and metaphorically as elevation and lowliness. Such “lowliness” is not a matter of relative powerlessness but absolute impotence: to be forcibly shoved into the ground, face in the dust, is to have one’s body, will, status, and appearance in the world seized by another. All that you once were is eclipsed by what the humiliator has made you to be.

The distinction between humiliation and shame comes into focus here. As I indicated earlier, these terms are often used interchangeably, a tendency that likely reflects the etymological overlap between shame and humiliation in languages ranging from Arabic to Mandarin. The word most commonly used in China for national humiliation when referring to “China’s Century of Humiliation,” for example, is *guóchǐ*, a compound of the Chinese characters *guó* (國), meaning country, nation, state, or kingdom, and *chǐ* (恥), meaning humiliation, shame, or disgrace.⁵¹

There is no doubt that shame may slide into humiliation or the other way around. But both analytically and experientially, there’s a significant difference between what Christina Tarnopolsky aptly refers to as the “cognition of inadequacy” characteristic of shame and what I identified earlier as the imposition of impotence by those who undeservedly have the power to do so.⁵² This is why Trump, ever eager to humiliate others, is very often referred to in passing as “shameless.” In these instances, common English usage captures precisely the phenomenon named: an incapacity to feel shame anchored in an inability or unwillingness to recognize any failures or failings as his own.

The distinction between shame and humiliation also elucidates what could be called the public character of humiliation written into these terms, one of the many features the opening two passages share. Donald Klein captures this character by positing a triangulation of three roles—humiliator, humiliated, and witness—constitutive of its particular structure.⁵³ The presence of a witness is an

51. There are several terms used in China that refer to losing face or to being disgraced, shamed, or humiliated in international relations, but *guóchǐ* is most commonly invoked in “China’s Century of Humiliation.” I am grateful to Paul Cohen and William Joseph for email conversations about the multiplicity of terms used for humiliation in China and the inflections of each. See also Cohen, “Remembering and Forgetting National Humiliation in Twentieth-Century China.” There are many more languages in which the etymologies of terms that can mean humiliation also suggest shame.

52. Tarnopolsky, “Prudes, Perverts, and Tyrants,” 477.

53. Klein, “Humiliation Dynamic.” Some of the most interesting conceptual work on humiliation was done by empirical and social psychologists, some over thirty years ago. While not immune from some of the problems analyzed here, at its best, such research sought to

explicit or implicit feature of humiliation rhetoric across these chapters, where both “presence” and “witness” are broadly construed. From an omniscient God who sees everything to a crowd that has physically gathered, the *sine qua non* of humiliation in these expressions is visibility, even spectacle.⁵⁴

It is precisely this public character that can make boasting of the event after the fact an extension of humiliation rather than a simple recounting of it. If humiliation lives in the rupture between unjustly imposed impotence and rightful status, repeated rehearsal of it can constitute a reenactment of the rupture, one capable of revivifying the experience itself. As the following chapters show, the same is true of retaliatory humiliation, but in this instance, what’s enacted, re-enacted, and potentially revivified is the repair of such rupture. Herein lies the “healing” of Bin Laden’s Declaration: the imposition of humiliation upon one’s humiliator offers the gratification, even pleasure, of reclaiming one’s power and vindicating one’s sense of significance in the social order.

Verbal, Visual, and Embodied Rhetorics

An inquiry focused on language as use must be clear about the language it uses. I take up such complex and contested terms as Islamism and dignity as they arise in subsequent chapters, but even “rhetoric” is far from straightforward. Laden with an intellectual history that usually begins with the ancient Greeks, rhetoric has fallen in and (mostly) out of favor as it has traveled through a series of debates in Euro-American thought that have continuously reconfigured its meaning, purposes, and relationship to power.⁵⁵ As I use it, “rhetoric” is not about this history or those debates, but it comes into sharp focus against this backdrop in three ways. First, I deliberately bracket the distinction, deeply rooted the intellectual history

distinguish humiliation from phenomena such as shame, guilt, and embarrassment, and to conceptualize it as an act and experience dependent upon publicly available yet contextually determined standards. See, e.g., Lazare, “Shame and Humiliation in the Medical Encounter”; Miller, “Humiliation and Shame”; and Evelin Gerda Lindner’s work, one of the few who has conducted research in so-called non-Western societies. See, e.g., *Making Enemies*; “Women and Terrorism,” 10–12; “Humiliation as the Source of Terrorism”; *Concept of Humiliation*; and *Anatomy of Humiliation and Its Relational Character*.

54. This brackets the question of whether entirely private humiliation exists, a subject beyond the scope of this inquiry. See Silver et al., “Humiliation,” 270, 278.

55. I am indebted to conversations with Keith Topper about rhetoric in general and in connection with his current research project, provisionally titled “The Return of the Repressed: On the Rediscovery of Rhetoric in Political Theory.”

of rhetoric, between emotional rhetoric designed to mobilize irrational passions on the one hand and, on the other, rational speech in which logic is leveraged to persuade equals in democratic deliberations. Such an opposition has certainly flourished over the centuries in a variety of forms, but it is nevertheless implausible and distracts from the politically pressing task of examining what invocations of humiliation say and do.

Second, inasmuch as rhetoric was once considered, in Terry Eagleton's words, a "textual training of the ruling class in the techniques of political hegemony," the expressions of humiliation that are the stuff of these chapters can be understood as antihegemonic.⁵⁶ By this, I don't mean that these figures and groups have no power, are emancipatory by definition, consistently opposed to the state, or are themselves incapable of domination. Many branches of the Muslim Brotherhood, for example, have conformed to an array of state arrangements and participated in formal political processes. It's also the case that, as Ariel Ahram argues, ISIS in many ways mimicked the patterns of violent state-building and control in the region.⁵⁷ They are antihegemonic in the sense that they have largely positioned themselves outside of and/or in opposition to both the state and the international order.⁵⁸

Third, I adopt a capacious conception of rhetoric along the lines suggested by Keith Topper. Rhetoric encompasses diverse modes of expression that work less through formal or explicit argument than through the visceral power of address, invective, juxtaposition, metonymy, and the like.

[T]he term "rhetoric" often signifies the persuasive sphere of language and denotes those elements of a text that are designed to persuade through means other than conventional forms of linear or transparent reasoning . . . the use of figural language, specific tropes, and other literary and framing devices, as well as stylistic choices, matters of formal organization, exploration of different literary genres, and the constitution of the ethos and pathos of the author or speaker. . . . [I]t frequently refers to the deployment of these elements not just to persuade, but also to inspire action that aims to bring about or resist political change.⁵⁹

Defined in this way, rhetoric straddles three primary modes of expression in these materials: verbal, visual, and embodied. They work through a variety of genres and techniques, disseminated by way of disparate mechanisms of

56. Eagleton, "A Short History of Rhetoric," 86.

57. Ahram, "Sexual and Ethnic Violence."

58. Eagleton, "Short History of Rhetoric," 86.

59. Topper, "Introduction."

production and circulation that also overlap. Humiliation rhetoric is articulated visually in genres that range from photographs to screen grabs to videos, expressed through composition, symbolic and dramaturgical features, religious and pop-cultural references, narrative structure, pacing, choices of casting, clothing, props, and so on. Verbal rhetoric most obviously includes words spoken and written for particular purposes and effect, but the genres of verbal expression here range widely from vlogs to spoken poetry to published volumes of Qur'ānic interpretation.

Each of these rhetorical modes is foregrounded in the three substantive chapters of this book. These are only loose correspondences, however, as these modes are analytically distinguishable but almost impossible to fully disentangle in use. A number of poems in chapter 4, for example, were initially performed live before ever appearing in print or were never formally published at all, circulating instead as recordings uploaded to the poet's website or unauthorized videos on social media. The ISIS videos in chapter 3 are moving images that communicate by way of the words spoken along with the "casting" of those who speak, how the captives are clothed, the postures of each body, and the positioning of the executioner who looms over each in succession.⁶⁰

The third rhetorical mode of expression is what I call an embodied idiom of humiliation, quite likely the most widely recognizable even if it sounds unfamiliar at first. Throughout these chapters, this mode is expressed in several metaphors, images, and idiomatic phrases that center the body to convey humiliation in the absence of the word itself. The most common have already made an appearance: forced to kneel, driven into dirt, bent over. These are terms in an embodied vocabulary that includes *tiksar 'aynī* ["break my eye"], which connotes being forced to cast one's eyes down, and *arghama anfahu* [literally "make his nose cleave to the earth"] or *rughimat unūf* ["noses were dirtied"]. As such examples indicate, this embodied idiom refers to both the way humiliation can operate on and through the flesh and the consistently somatic register in which it is articulated.

The final terminological clarification concerns my use of the word "discourse." A thoroughgoing account of the debates about discourse, or how the various understandings of discourse and rhetoric intersect is far beyond my focus. I use "discourse" in two interrelated senses here. The first is relatively straightforward,

60. Complicating matters, the multiple modes of humiliation rhetoric in these videos circulated widely as screen grabs that, according to Friis ("Beyond Anything We Have Ever Seen"), significantly reshaped American and British responses to Da'ish. For discussion, see chapter 3.

and refers to the collection of statements, assumptions, categories, terms, and so on pertaining to a particular subject. The second sense of “discourse,” associated with a range of approaches including poststructuralism, refers not only to such a body of statements but also to the conditions and constraints that constitute the field of knowledge itself and make certain claims intelligible within it. In this sense, “discourses” both include and exclude, are repressive and productive, and so on. If discourse foregrounds the historically contingent imbrication of power and knowledge, following Topper, I take rhetoric to mean, first, the strategies and structures deployed to persuade others and second, the interpretive practice of making those very strategies and structures, along with their attendant assumptions and stakes, explicit and understandable.⁶¹

A Scaffolding of Humiliation

As is now evident, this emphasis not just on what humiliation says but also on how it works doesn't refer to effect in a positivist causal sense. Instead, it refers to the approach of this book, that is, the way the meaning and significance of humiliation are established by how they are used in language. This approach is grounded in Wittgenstein's work on language as a social practice, particularly his emphasis on meaning as use, in tandem with Charles Taylor's case for context-dependent epistemology in social science. As is well known, Wittgenstein sought to challenge philosophers who assume that the meaning of a statement exists prior to and independent of how it is employed, arguing that what a statement and the words that comprise it say are determined by how they work in concrete contexts.⁶²

61. In some scholarly circles, this kind of work is referred to as Critical Discourse Theory (CDA), but I find greater clarity and precision in the rhetorical approach as defined here. It can be difficult to pin down precisely what CDA entails given how differently it's defined and practiced in various fields of scholarship that are themselves variously constituted depending upon geographic location (e.g. the United States versus the United Kingdom). Even among those political theorists who explicitly claim allegiance to CDA, there is wide variance in what they each mean and to whom they are indebted (for example, some draw on Althusser, others on Gramsci, and still others on Foucault, Bourdieu, etc.).

62. Wittgenstein most obviously intends “use” to refer to language in speech, whereas the examination of meaning in use in the chapters that follow includes speech *and* writing. This is, I think, consistent with Wittgenstein's intent, as he makes clear that “language game” is meant to emphasize the way that language is an activity (*Philosophical Investigations* I, §23). So while there are clear differences between speaking and writing, both are ultimately different kinds of resources for indicating the meaning of a statement or a word.

Taylor, for his part, argues that the effort to capture and understand human conduct must at once begin with the participants' self-understandings and recognize that such subjective understandings are not the "property of one or some individuals, but rather intersubjective meanings, which are constitutive of the social matrix in which individuals find themselves and act."⁶³ In other words, intelligibility depends on participants' views but isn't reducible to them. Taylor turns to the communicative capacities of the body to illustrate, pointing to the way one's public comportment—or "style of movement"—may convey a dignity or power that remains unrecognized, unknowledged, or unarticulated.⁶⁴ As Topper puts it, while accounts that "abstract from the meaning structures that house that activity obscure the very reality to be disclosed," intelligibility, descriptive accuracy, and moral reflection alike require attention to how intersubjective meanings constitute the horizon of "intelligible possibilities" for such self-understandings.⁶⁵

An approach to humiliation informed by Wittgenstein and Taylor may be clarified in contrast to the way empiricism, causality, and generalizability is understood in positivist social science. To begin with, this shift from effect to significance is not a turn from the domain of the empirical to the purely abstract or imaginative. Quite the contrary. Analysis of what such invocations do and say is necessary precisely because of the abundance of empirical evidence attesting to the rhetorical prevalence and little understood political purchase of humiliation across both language and history. And as Taylor's argument makes clear, the deep dive into how humiliation is articulated, produced, and contested at specific moments does not represent a retreat into particularism. Instead, it demonstrates how an inductive approach rooted in language can remedy the conceptual murkiness of humiliation.

Much as this approach is greatly clarified in contrast to positivist assumptions, the account of humiliation it makes possible is best clarified through a quite different contrast, namely, with the account of humiliation as a violation of dignity or respect derived from the leading strand of moral philosophy.⁶⁶ The default

63. See, for example, Taylor, "Interpretation and the Sciences of Man," in *Philosophy and the Human Sciences*, vol. 2.

64. Taylor, *Sources of the Self*, 15.

65. Topper, *Disorder of Political Inquiry*, 72.

66. Dignity and respect are not interchangeable, but they tend to be used as philosophical and subjective-psychological ways of saying something very similar about humiliation. Still, there are disagreements about the relative merits of grounding humiliation in dignity versus self-respect. Statman argues, for example, that it's the conception of self-respect, not dignity, that is capable of explaining the "moral wrongness of humiliation" ("Humiliation, Dignity and

formulation when humiliation is given any substance at all, this account grounds such dignity or respect in the inherent and equal worth of every human being. Such worth is, in turn, said to be at once secured and expressed by the moral autonomy of a (generic) individual.

This formulation abbreviates a far more complex and contested philosophical account usually attributed to Immanuel Kant that has been taken up, refined, and elaborated in a voluminous secondary literature.⁶⁷ I leave to others the matter of whether it is or isn't Kantian and in what ways.⁶⁸ For my purposes, its import lies not in its lineage but the extent to which it has become akin to common sense. It is almost habitually asserted rather than argued or elaborated in scholarship across a remarkably wide range of fields and professions with slightly different emphases, from health care to public policy, philosophy to political science, journalism to education, human rights to law.⁶⁹

Avishai Margalit's *The Decent Society* is one of the more sustained efforts to bring this definition of humiliation to bear upon collective life, inspired by John Rawls's idea of a just society.⁷⁰ Margalit focuses less on relationships among

Self-Respect," 535). *Humiliation, Degradation, Dehumanization*, edited by Kaufmann et al., contains a range of arguments and approaches in favor of the moral relevance of human dignity both in general and in relation to humiliation in particular.

67. This literature is far too extensive to catalogue.

68. While primarily associated with Kant, this formulation is historically and philosophically indebted to thinkers such as Augustine (d. 430) and Hegel (d. 1831). For an analysis of humiliation in Kant, see Saurette, *Kantian Imperative* and "Kant's Culture of Humiliation." For a discussion of Kantian humiliation, dignity and respect, see Kuch, "Rituality of Humiliation."

69. For just a few among innumerable examples, see Webster, "Degradation"; Peičius et al., "Dignity Violations and Barriers to Dignity Assurance"; Henry, "Jurisprudence of Dignity"; Lindner, "Concept of Humiliation"; Luban, "Human Dignity, Humiliation, and Torture"; Statman, "Humiliation, Dignity and Self-Respect"; Roy, *Failure of Political Islam*; and Dworakin, *Is Democracy Possible Here?*

70. Rawls himself says very little about humiliation, although assembling the few references he does make in *A Theory of Justice* is revealing. In his discussion of the original position, Rawls characterizes envy and humiliation—repeatedly coupled with shame, although not defined—as feelings and complications that inevitably "afflict men," but which must be supposed not to exist when formulating the first part of his principles of justice (124). Then there are the "outbreaks of envy" that can be managed or prevented by the "well-ordered society." This includes the feeling of humiliation that erupts when those of "subordinate ranking in public life" are "forcibly reminded" of their condition (477, 469, 471). He also refers to humiliation when distinguishing among the evil, unjust, and bad man his full theory of justice makes possible. The evil man seeks to rule in order to "manifest his superiority" by violating the

individuals than on “the setup of the society as a whole,” developing an account of humiliation as part of a normative standard of decency by which to judge institutional practices. In a decent society, Margalit contends, institutions do not humiliate people. An institution qualifies as humiliating when it engages in “any sort of behavior or condition that constitutes a sound reason for a person to consider his or her self-respect injured,” whether it takes the form of domination, dehumanization, or exclusion from the group to which one has belonged.⁷¹ As self-respect and dignity are interrelated, humiliation entails “injury to human dignity.” In fact, Margalit writes, “if there is no concept of human dignity, then there is no concept of humiliation either.”⁷²

The Decent Society is a profoundly decent book and there’s more to it than a definition of humiliation.⁷³ Yet this formulation reprises rather than resolves the notable vacuity of most conceptual and explanatory work on humiliation by bringing the central problems with this common formulation into sharp relief. Dignity is notoriously contested; not even philosophers agree on either its content or worth.⁷⁴ But whether phrased in terms of injury or violation, dignity or respect, in this account, humiliation is entirely derivative, predicated on what it is said to violate.

principle of equality and offending the self-respect of others, Rawls writes. “[H]e delights in the impotence and humiliation of those subject to him and he relishes being recognized by them as the willful author of their degradation” (385–86).

71. The claim that humiliation is dehumanization that targets and expels is repeated elsewhere and in work located in very different theoretical traditions. The most notable example is Guenther’s “Resisting Agamben.” This convergence may have something to do with the shared emphasis on the Nazi persecution and extermination of the Jews. This is the paradigmatic example for Guenther, just as it is for those aspects of Agamben’s thought she addresses. It also figures centrally in Margalit’s work, implicitly in *The Decent Society* but more explicitly in his other work. This also suggests why Guenther’s account of humiliation (61) is a far more apt characterization of scapegoating, which humiliation may serve but is not identical to it.

72. Margalit, *Decent Society*, 9, 262, 52, 149.

73. For a thoroughgoing analysis of Margalit’s claims about what constitutes a decent society, see Honneth, “Society without Humiliation?,” 306–24.

74. Among the best-known skeptics of human dignity are Pinker (“Stupidity of Dignity”) and Macklin (“Dignity Is a Useless Concept,” 1419–20). Many chapters in *Humiliation, Degradation, Dehumanization* emphasize the moral relevance of human dignity, yet the introductory chapter by the editors points out that the range of “dignity violations” explored in their volume demonstrate how little accord there is about the proper approach to defining human dignity (i.e., “negative” or “positive”), let alone its precise content, even among a fairly select group of “Western” philosophers.

Then there's the knotty problem that this definition presents as established fact a highly debatable conclusion, "proof" of which is already guaranteed by its starting premises. The logical result is a tautology whereby humiliation entails a violation of human dignity and respect for dignity entails not humiliating people. In his review of *The Decent Society*, Steven Lukes zeroes in on precisely this logic to identify the critical questions this account of humiliation begs: what counts as a sound reason; whether or not there is a single definition of self-respect that applies to all cultures; what constitutes a reasonable standard of injury; which individuals, communities, and audiences are relevant to determining such reasons, standards, and definitions; and whether the categories of "dignity" and "self-respect" are even appropriate to capture the content and significance of humiliation across and within cultures.⁷⁵

For my purposes, what's critical is the default philosophical formulation of humiliation rather than the lapses of any one book or philosopher. Admirable in intent and humane in principle, this formulation says a great deal about the importance many moral philosophers attach to "dignity" and "respect," but it provides little traction on what humiliation says and does in the world. More significantly, this formulation reflects and reinforces a depoliticization that impedes such understanding. As scholars such as Chantal Mouffe, Mahmood Mamdani, Slavoj Žižek, and Wendy Brown argue, depoliticization abstracts and reroutes, either by channeling political categories into moral terms that personalize and individualize, or by culturalizing and essentializing historically contingent phenomena conditioned by power:

Depoliticization involves removing a political phenomenon from comprehension of its *historical* emergence and from a recognition of the *powers* that produce and contour it. No matter its particular form and mechanics, depoliticization always eschews power and history in the representation of its subject. When these two constitutive sources of social relations and political conflict are elided, an ontological naturalness or essentialism almost inevitably takes up residence in our understandings and explanations.⁷⁶

In the previous section, I argued that the conceptual opacity of humiliation is tied to a theoretical blockage hidden by the way humiliation has been consistently pegged to cultural pathologies supposedly distinctive to Arabs and Muslims.

75. Lukes, "Humiliation and the Politics of Identity."

76. Brown, *Regulating Aversion*, 15, emphasis in the original. See also Mouffe, *On the Political*, 5; Žižek, *Violence*; and Mamdani, *Good Muslim, Bad Muslim*.

Humiliation becomes a matter of essential cultural features that are unchangeable, abstracted from the conditions of history and power that produce and pattern its rhetorical expressions. The analysis here points to an additional but equally invisible blockage: a default philosophical account that shunts humiliation into matters of individual dignity defined in terms of an axiomatic moral principle. Inasmuch as these blockages effect and hide the depoliticization of humiliation, pinpointing them is essential to grasping what it means and how it works.

In the spirit of Wittgenstein's warning to resist the philosopher's "craving for generality," this inquiry takes seriously the imperative to presume less and inquire more.⁷⁷ Heeding this imperative entails reversing the order of argument and inquiry. Instead of an account that *begins* by positing a normative principle in order to adjudicate between what does and doesn't qualify as humiliation, it proceeds the other way around, building a conception of humiliation up from the meanings it acquires in use. As theory is anchored in practice rather than opposed to it, such an approach to conceptualizing humiliation is also conducive to theorizing humiliation, in the sense of discerning patterns in what might otherwise appear to be unrelated historical events or political phenomena. Rather than residing in an invariant conceptual structure prior to use in language, humiliation here emerges from patterned variation in the way people express and enact it, recurrent features that may not be equally present in every expression of humiliation nor configured in exactly the same way in identical combinations.

In the chapters that follow, I turn to the metaphor of "scaffolding" to capture what it means to theorize humiliation along these lines. Architectural metaphors can imply a certain rigidity, but I use scaffolding in an allusive rather than technical sense to evoke the skeleton of a structure, and the interplay of fixity and flexibility, materiality and multiplicity it suggests. The skeleton of a building is comprised of elements that can be configured along different lines but not in infinite variations, possibilities that at some point run up against constraints such as environment, function, and gravity. These anchor a variety of architectural styles, compositions of spaces, designs of function and flow, and expressive details of material and décor. This constrained flexibility is, in turn, conducive to thinking spatially about humiliation and to conceptualizing how different understandings capture one or many dimensions. Its visual immediacy lends a particular clarity to the relationship among its elements sometimes difficult to grasp or convey in more abstract language. It also clarifies by translating theory

77. Wittgenstein, *Nachlass*, TS 309, §27.

itself into visual terms. Theory anchored in human expression—expression that is situated in history and contoured by power—is akin to building on foundations firmly planted on the ground.

Finally, a particular scaffolding may be tethered to a single structure in one place, but scaffoldings underpin structures everywhere. In a similar vein, while this theory is anchored in patterns evident in Arabic expressions of humiliation, this is not an Arabic theory of humiliation let alone a theory of “Arab humiliation.” The striking resemblances in the pair of passages that opened this chapter are discernable in a variety of combinations with different emphases across an array of languages. This suggests that while humiliation is constituted *in* language and distinctively inflected by disparate histories and experiences of power, these recurrent features also constitute a vocabulary intelligible *across* languages. If this is the case, aspects of humiliation can, like an affective Esperanto, “speak” viscerally and emphatically across context, requiring fluency in no particular language to grasp. While speculative, this point derives from examples too numerous to ignore; I return to it in the final chapter.

Given this approach, it's crucial to be explicit about what this book does not claim or aim to do. This inquiry does not provide a causal explanation about why humiliation rhetoric is currently ubiquitous, nor does the argument rest on the claim that humiliation is demonstrably *more* pervasive than in any previous era. The import of this study does not depend upon large-scale data measuring reception and uptake. As resonances usually circulate below the surface of observable behavior, a precise accounting of the extent to which such invocations resonate, how, and among which constituencies is, in any case, elusive at best.⁷⁸ The fact that such meanings and mechanisms elude quantification, Saurette observes, doesn't make humiliation any less politically significant or influential.⁷⁹ This only makes it more urgent, as Topper rightly argues, to detect and decode the communicative features and often unrecognized, hidden, or unspoken stakes such rhetoric reflects and constructs, and then trace the connection between words and deeds it renders legible.⁸⁰

78. Resonance here signals both the literal meaning of the word as “evoking a response” and an approach indebted to Connolly's account of it as “energized complexities of mutual imbrication and interinvolvement, in which heretofore unconnected or loosely associated elements *fold, bend, blend, emulsify and dissolve into each other*, forging a qualitative assemblage resistant to classical models of explanation.” Connolly, “Evangelical-Capitalist Resonance Machine,” 870 and 875, emphasis in the original. See also Connolly, “Method, Problem, Faith,” 342–44.

79. Saurette, “You Dissin Me?,” 503.

80. From Topper, “Introduction.”

The result of such work will not satisfy that deep craving for the universal and objective normative principles that enable us to judge what does and doesn't count as a legitimate claim to humiliation. Given that it's the "cognitive content of the belief underlying the emotion, and not its truth, falsity, or exaggeration that makes the emotion 'humiliation,'" it's unclear how one would go about proving or disproving whether someone is "really" humiliated.⁸¹ Perhaps more to the point, it's unclear what would be achieved by doing so. As philosopher Bernard Williams, author of a pioneering analysis of shame, once put it, "[w]hat people's ethical emotions are depends significantly on what they take them to be," and what they take them to be emerges in the realm of thought and experience forged with others.⁸²

The Arc of the Argument: An Inquiry in Four Parts

The arguments of this book proceed along four tracks that, in the absence of more inspired terminology, can be characterized as empirical, theoretical, methodological, and political. The previous section specified the approach of this inquiry and the definition of theory central to its import. The empirical entails a deep dive into how humiliation is expressed, constituted, and contested in exemplary Arabic texts illustrating different rhetorical modes and genres articulated at specific moments and sites. Such analysis detects and decrypts meanings both unspoken and explicit, as well as experiences and solidarities such invocations reflect and construct. In the process, they show how humiliation rhetoric simultaneously encodes a gendered political project and constitutes the practices to bring it about. As will become evident, humiliation isn't just an idea, argument, or evocation of powerlessness but is itself a powerful political rhetoric that summons, translates, defines, transposes, and even transforms relations of power.

These four tracks are simultaneous rather than sequential and unfold over the course of four chapters. In chapter 2, "A Theodicy for Powerlessness: Islamist Discourses and Retaliatory Humiliation," I track humiliation across a selection of some of the best-known, most influential, or most conspicuous twentieth- and twenty-first-century Islamist expressions of humiliation, all gathered under the rubric of verbal rhetoric. These texts and sources vary by genre, time period, and context, and are far from homogenous in politics, perspective, and sensibility.

81. Silver et al., "Humiliation," 278.

82. Williams, *Shame and Necessity*, 76–77, 84, 91, 102.

But in all of them, humiliation is defined in terms of what it does rather than a formal proposition in need of systematic argument or evidence. What emerges is a shared understanding of humiliation as the imposition of impotence by those with undeserved power, a condition that urgently demands immediate redress. This expository definition can be rephrased experientially: humiliation lives in the rupture between one's own sense of significance and place in the social order, and acute awareness of who one has been made to be by those with more and undeserved power. It is, in a sense, to be made unrecognizable to oneself. Like two sides of a single coin, these formulations capture the same understanding of humiliation from different angles: the first centers the act of humiliating another, while the second captures the experience of humiliation produced by the act. In other words, the act and experience of humiliation here refer not to two different definitions but to this interrelationship between dual dimensions of one understanding.

Throughout these chapters, the gendered connotation of the word "impotence" is intentional and signals an essential feature of this scaffolding of humiliation. Gender norms anchored in a sexual division of labor have been reworked, challenged, and reproduced in complex and variable ways. But as these archives attest, conventional gender roles still enjoy widespread recognition, and the expectations associated with them exercise significant influence across an array of societies. Inasmuch as such norms implicitly bind gender to order and a gendered order to power, powerlessness is routinely construed as emasculation and/or feminization, its antidote translated into manliness or virility. This is precisely why humiliation rhetoric doesn't evoke a simple relation of power to powerlessness or posit a generic distinction between who deserves one or the other. As this gendering of power constitutes humiliation, humiliation rhetoric encodes powerlessness, its premises and stakes, in the viscerally charged terms of masculinity and its many metaphors. This is also why, in the opening passages and in the pages that follow, humiliation rhetoric so often becomes a goad, a taunt, an incitement or indictment.

In the Islamist texts in chapter 2, for example, impotence is taken to reflect and reinforce a deeply malformed set of social relations in which disbelievers dominate Muslims, women are lured into a betrayal of their domestic vocation, and the capacity of men to be breadwinners, defenders, and protectors is sabotaged. These features posit a gendered, heteronormative ontology as an imperative of nature and Islam to shore up a particular family structure. They also supply the grammar of a stylized script in which vulnerable or violated female bodies "speak" to, first, impeach Muslim manhood; second, conjure a cadre of male

mujāhidīn dedicated to vindicating it; and third, goad such men into the kind of restorative acts against enormous odds Machiavelli called *virtù*—courageous deeds specifically designed to recuperate and enact masculine prowess.⁸³ So understood, this account of humiliation encodes an urgent demand for retaliatory humiliation, depicted as an imposition of impotence upon the humiliator. It simultaneously serves as the rhetorical mechanism to bring it about.

Islamists conjure an Islamic imprimatur for this account of humiliation in a way that addresses a central dilemma: the power God has conferred on the enemies of Islam to humiliate Muslims. Sayyid Qutb's Qur'ānic interpretation is the critical text here. It renders legible a crucial pivot from humiliation as a divine dispensation to an expression of what human beings do to one another, from a prerogative of God to an exigency of human domination. It shows how the current humiliation of Muslims at the hands of powerful unbelievers is transformed from a source of despair or a justification for imitation into a spur to restorative action. And it shows how the Qur'ān is deployed to recast the humiliation of Muslims' humiliators not only as an expression of God's will on earth, but as a premier act of devotion that realigns a world severely out of joint. The radical Islamist invocations of humiliation I also analyze in this chapter take precisely this imperative as a given.

Chapter 3, "Spectacles of Sovereignty," focuses specifically on visual rhetorics of humiliation. It advances a reading of two notorious productions ISIS put in the service of building its Islamic state—the videos staging the beheadings of two American journalists, James Foley and Steven Sotloff—along with lesser-known productions such as "Kasr al-ḥudūd" (Breaking the Borders) and "Although the Disbelievers May Dislike It/Wa-Law Kariha al-Kāfirūn." Analysis of these widely circulated, watched, and reposted videos renders legible a visual rhetoric of humiliation largely eclipsed by the security logic about "Islamic terrorism" into which these videos snugly fit.

Drawing on recent scholarship on visibility, performative violence, digital media, and affect, I analyze an overlooked disunity in what visual and verbal rhetorics say and do in these videos. While the words are about threat and retaliation, the visual and embodied rhetorics enact retaliatory humiliation. The meaning,

83. Machiavelli, *The Prince*. This understanding of *virtù* is grounded in scholarship emphasizing the gendered aspects of the term. See Pitkin, *Fortune Is a Woman*, 122–37; Brown, *Manhood and Politics*, 117; and Elshtain, *Women and War*, 56–59. Also helpful in this connection is the description of *virtù* as a "quality of action" revealing "the creative energy (or 'vitality') that one needs to respond to opportunities and dangers" (Morgado, "Threat of Danger: Decadence and Virtù," 237).

(continued...)

INDEX

Page numbers followed by n indicate notes.

- Abbas, Wael, 170–71
 ‘Abbasid Caliphate, 108
 ‘Abd Allah ‘Azzam, 57n54
 Abdullah, King (Saudi Arabia), 144
 abjection: in Egyptian revolution, 139, 143;
 embodiment of, 193; enforced, 53;
 powerlessness as, 47, 54, 75–76, 181;
 sexual, 191–92; spectacles of, 89, 108,
 116–17; symbolic, 2–3
 al-Abnūdī, ‘Abd al-Raḥmān, 147, 156n127
 Abu Bakr, 81–82n5
 Abu Ghraib prison: photographs from,
 13–14, 68, 94, 97n47, 110–11, 193, 208–9;
 treatment of prisoners, 13–14, 180n222
 Abu Za‘bal prison, 185
 Adeeb, Amr, 160
 Aden, Yemen, 1, 62
 Adly, Malek, 140n140, 151–52, 170, 184,
 191, 198
 al-‘Adnānī al-Shāmī, Abū Muḥammad,
 69–70, 104–5, 115
 Adorno, Theodor W., 110
 Afghanistan: Afghan jihad, 60, 67; US War
 on Terror in, 11, 71n86, 114n81
 Agamben, Giorgio, 24n71
 Ahmed, Sara, 9–10, 14
al-Arabiyya News, 172
 al-Asad, Bashar, 68, 112
 al-‘Awda, Salman, 58n58
 al-Awlaki, Anwar, 115
 al-Baghdadi, Abu Bakr, 81, 96n46, 107, 112
 al-Banna, Hasan, 35–38, 55n49, 56, 57n56,
 77, 196
 al-Baradei, Mohamed, 155
al-Dawla al-Islamiyya, 80n2. *See also* ISIS
 al-Din, Ahmed Gamal, 170
 Algerian Salafi Group for Preaching and
 Combat, 70
 al-Ghazali, Zaynab, 77
 al-Hasa, Farida, 173–74
 al-Husayn, 122n5
al-Ikhwān al-Muslimūn. *See* Muslim
 Brotherhood
 al-Khatib, Takadum, 169–70
al-mawt wa-lā’l-l-madhalla (“death rather
 than humiliation”) Syrian chant, 122–23
al-Mīdān [The square] (Abnūdī), 147
al-Mudhill (the Humiliator), 49
 al-Naṣr, Aḥlām (“poetess of ISIS”), 80
 al-Nasser, Gamal ‘Abd, 77, 142, 194n21
 al-Qaddāfi, Mu‘ammar, 145
 al-Qa’ida, 2, 62–66, 71, 115
 al-Qa’ida in Iraq, 62
 al-Qaradawi, Yusuf, 57n57
 al-Sadat, Anwar, 142
 al-Sadr, Muhammad Baqir, 57n57
 al-Shabab, 66, 67n72
 al-Shāmī, Abū Muḥammad al-‘Adnānī,
 69n78
 al-Shomali, Abu Mu’awiya, 74–76
 al-Suri, Abu Mus’ab, 57n54
 al-Suyūṭī, Jalāl al-Dīn, 48n32
 al-Ṭabarī, Muḥammad b. Jarīr, 48n32
 “Although the Disbelievers May Dislike
 It/Wa-Law Kariha al-Kāfirūn” video
 (ISIS), 30, 111–14
 Althusser, Louis, 56n53
 al-Wadi, Mohamed Tarek, 138n57, 155
 al-Wuhayshi, Nasir, 115
 al-Zarqawi, Abu Mus’ab, 13n44, 67, 70–73,
 76n100, 112
 American hostages. *See* hostages

- American imperialism, 68
 Amīn, Qāsim, 39
 Amini, Mahsa, 7
 “Anā Ikhwān” [I am brotherhood] (Gakh), 191n11
 Anbar, 71
 April 6 Youth Movement, 158n136, 184
 Arabic humiliation, 8–15, 27, 36, 64–79, 194; metaphors for bowing or bending one’s head, 53–54, 76, 186–87, 191–93; metaphors for fighting men as lions (*usūd*), 70, 76, 109–10, 113, 159–60n142, 178, 196; Qur’ānic terms, 47–49; terms for humiliation, 15–16, 47–49, 183
 Arab League, 68
 Arab nationalism, 140–42
 Arabs, 10n32, 13–14, 67
 Arab Spring. *See* Arab uprisings (2011)
 Arab uprisings (2011), 9, 122–23, 130, 131n28, 199; backstory of, 152–62; spark for, 6–7
 Asad, Talal, 41n13, 43n19
 Athens, Greece, 203
 Augustine, 23n68
 Austin, J. L., 94n42
 authority: paternal, 131–39; royal, 136n36
 ‘Azzam, Abdullah Yusuf, 67–68, 75

 Badawī, Hind Nāfi’, 175
 Bagram prison, 13
 Bahrain, 9, 122–23
 baltagi effect, 150–51n110
 balṭagiyya (thugs): discourse of, 150–51n110, 166; “Iḥnā mish balṭagiyya” (We are not thugs) video, 150–51
 Baron, Beth, 135–36, 157
 Bayat, Asef, 178
 beheadings: *ḥudūd* crimes, 111n76; in ISIS videos, 9, 30–31, 80–120, 193; Islamic tradition and, 83n11, 111n76; Islamist, 73; jihadist, 84–85; snuff videos, 115
 Beirut, Lebanon, 1, 62, 98
 Ben Ali, Zine el-Abidine, 126, 161, 185
 Benjamin, Walter, 121n1
 Berg, Nicholas, 13n44
 Bible, 43, 167n175
 biblical Hebrew, 16
 Biden, Joe, 11n35
 Bin Laden, Usama, 2; “Declaration of Jihad Against the Americans Occupying the Land of the Two Holy Sites,” 1–5, 18, 37, 55–66, 196–97, 209; ideology of, 4–5, 8, 42, 60n63; in ISIS videos, 112; Saudi Arabian National Guard Headquarters bombing (1995), 59; US Air Force housing complex bombing (1996), 59; US killing of, 115
 Bishara, Marwan, 5
 black banners, 108
 blackening the face, 68n76
 black-eyed ones (*ḥūr al-‘ayn*), 63, 74–75
 black garb, 108
 Black Lives Matter protests, 166n166
 Bloch, Ernst, 34, 186, 204–5
 Blue Bra Girl, 172
 body language: bowing or bending one’s head, 53–54, 76, 186–87, 191–93; expressions of restoration, 193–95; holding one’s head high, 194–95, 205–6; Rāb’a’a salute, 182–83; standing up (*al-ḥamiyya*), 52–55, 190–200; standing up or erect, 34, 190–208. *See also* embodied rhetoric; posture
 Bouazizi, Muhammad, 153–54, 161–62, 169, 185
 Bourguiba, Habib, 161
 Bourguiba, Wassila, 161
 bowing or bending one’s head, 53–54, 76, 186–87, 191–93
 Breaking the Borders (“Kasr al-ḥudūd”) video (ISIS), 30, 104–5
 British hostages. *See* hostages
 Brown, Wendy, 25
 Bush, George W., 11, 76, 146n89
 Butler, Judith, 62n66, 94n42, 98, 110

 Cairo, Egypt: cemetery population, 125, 148; homelessness, 125n12, 148; Mustafa Mahmoud Square graffiti, 139; police stations, 199n34; Rabi’a al-‘Adawiyya Square mosque, 182; Rabi’a al-‘Adawiyya Square protests, 165, 185; Shaykh Rihan Street graffiti, 194; Tahrir Square protests, 127n14, 140, 158, 172–76, 179–80, 185, 192; tuktuks, 141n73
 Cairokee, 159–60n142, 194
 caliphate (*khilāfa*), 81–82n5
 Cameron, David, 81
 Camp Bucca, Iraq, 107
 capitalism, 204–5

- capital punishment, 111n76. *See also* beheadings
- cartoons, 93
- castration. *See* emasculation
- Cavarero, Adriana, 206–7
- Century of Humiliation (China), 7, 17
- chants, 122–23, 132, 154, 162, 192–97; “death rather than humiliation” (*al-mawt wa-lā’l-l-madhalla*), 122–23; “we will never accept humiliation” (*hayhāt minnā al-dhilla*), 122–23
- El Chazli, Youssef, 130
- China: Century of Humiliation, 7, 17; terms for humiliation, 17n51
- The Choir Project, 184, 195
- Christian fundamentalism, 39
- Christian violence, 83n11
- Clinton, Bill, 1, 62
- Clinton, Hillary, 1, 4
- clothing, 20; black garb, 108; Blue Bra Girl, 172; orange jumpsuits, 110
- collective humiliation, 65, 97
- collective powerlessness, 189
- collective restoration, 63
- collective virility, 97
- colonialism, 40n9, 68, 104
- communication: violence as, 87–88. *See also* body language; rhetoric
- communication studies, 87n19
- Connolly, William, 27n78, 41n13
- Cooper, Julie, 41–42
- Coptic Christians, 124, 127, 170–71, 190n6, 195–96n26, 198
- cowboy masculinity, 11
- Critical Discourse Theory (CDA), 21n61
- Critical Security Studies, 87n19, 92
- Crusades, 83n11
- cultural theory, 9n30
- cyberwarfare, 84n14
- Dabiq* (ISIS), 82–83n9, 117–18n86
- Da’ish. *See* ISIS
- Danial, Mina, 170–71, 198
- Dār al-‘Ulūm, 57n56
- “death rather than humiliation” (*al-mawt wa-lā’l-l-madhalla*) Syrian chant, 122–23
- debasement. *See* humiliation
- debauchery (*fujūr*), 178
- decapitation. *See* beheadings
- “Declaration of Jihad Against the Americans Occupying the Land of the Two Holy Sites” (Bin Laden), 1–5, 18, 37, 55–66, 196–97; opening passage, 61–62; references to humiliation, 55–64; rhetorical techniques, 60
- decorum, 110–11
- degradation, 150–51, 159. *See also* humiliation
- dehumanization, 24
- democracy, 68
- depoliticization, 25
- Derrida, Jacques, 94n42
- digital or new media technology, 82, 87n18, 91–99, 118–19
- dignity, 187–88; Black, 206n50; Bloch on, 34, 186, 204–5; embodiment of, 186–209; humiliation as violation of, 12n40, 22–26, 33–34; Kantian, 201–2, 205–8; Melian, 34, 200–209; “orthopedia of the upright carriage,” 203, 203n49; restorative standing, 34, 193–95, 202–8; revolutions of, 122n4, 200–202; Stoics on, 205; of upright gait, 34, 186, 205. *See also* *karāma*
- Dignity Revolutions, 122–23
- dirt/dust/earth: link between humiliation and, 2–3, 15–16, 20, 50–53, 61–62, 70–71, 88, 192–94
- discourse, 20–21; of *baṭṭagiyya* (thugs), 150–51n110, 166; Critical Discourse Theory (CDA), 21n61; Islamic tradition, 43–44, 43n19; Islamist, 4–5, 9, 28–29, 35–79, 159, 189–90, 193–200, 207–8. *See also* verbal rhetoric
- Doma, Ahmed, 163–64, 167, 193
- drone strikes, 114n81
- earth/dirt/ground: link between humiliation and, 2–3, 15–16, 20, 50–53, 61–62, 70–71, 88, 192–94
- Egypt: Abu Za’bal prison, 185; Arab aid to, 143n78; begging in, 145n85, 152; campaign to erase criticism and opposition in, 183–84; Combatting of Prostitution law, 178; depictions of, 145, 156–57; exceptionalism of, 32, 140–41, 143, 196–97; and gendering of humiliation, 152–62; homelessness in, 125n12, 150–52; humiliation of, 140–52,

- Egypt (*continued*)
 191; materiality of, 146–52; Ministry of Religious Endowments, 150n108; and Morsi's presidency, 132, 140, 143, 160, 167–70, 178–79, 185; and Mubarak regime, 32, 127, 137–49, 154, 160–71, 179; national debt, 145n85; nationalism, 157; neoliberalism, 146–52; October War (1973), 134n42; offensive in Sinai, 70–71; parliamentary elections, 127, 185; paternal authority, 131–39; Port Said soccer match massacre (February 1, 2012), 131–32; postrevolutionary, 144n83; poverty, 125, 145n85, 198; public schools, 137–38; relations with Israel, 142–43; relations with Saudi Arabia, 143n78, 144; revolutionary history, 127n14; rituals of torture, 193; rule of humiliation, 32, 131–39; Sisi regime, 32, 68–71, 127–28, 132, 135, 143–44, 160–61, 168, 178–79, 184–85; Supreme Council of the Armed Forces (SCAF), 128–33, 156, 160–63, 166–67, 172–73n193, 176–79, 185, 191, 195; women's political participation, 159n138
- Egyptian Centre for Human Rights, 147–48n96
- Egyptian ferry sinking (2006), 140–41, 147, 184
- “Egyptian Karāma” (Mekky), 159
- Egyptian Museum, 176
- Egyptian Revolution (Egyptian Uprising) (2011), 9, 32–33, 121–85; Cabinet of Ministers (*Majlis al-wuzarā'*) events, 172, 175, 185; chants and slogans, 132, 154, 162, 192–97; chronology, 184–85; depictions of, 131n28, 201–2; graffiti, 139, 194; men's participation, 152–62; popular songs during, 191–92; provocation of, 147–48n96, 154, 158n137; psychic violations, 162–81; Rabi'a al-Adawiyya Square protests, 165; restorative practices, 195–200; rhetoric, 122n6, 152–62, 191–92, 196n27, 207–8; role of poetry in, 124n10; sexualized violence, 172–81; slogans, 121–23, 194; street art, 194; Tahrir Square protests, 140, 158, 172–76, 179–80, 185, 192; terminology, 129; terms for humiliation, 183; violence, 162–81; women's participation, 152–62
- Egyptian Uprising. *See* Egyptian Revolution (2011)
- “Egypt Is Standing Up” (popular song), 194
- Elbernameg* (The program), 132
- El Fattah, Alaa Abd, 133, 159, 164, 177n208, 187, 208
- El Fattah, Sanaa, 133n40
- El Fattah, Seif Abd, 133n40
- el-Fiky, Anas, 186–87, 209
- el-Gakh, Hisham: “al-Mukālama” (The Phone Call), 190n6; “Anā Ikhwān” (I am brotherhood), 191n11; “Guḥā,” 122n7, 147; “Mikammilīn” (We'll keep going), 138, 140n68, 154
- el-Ghobashy, Mona, 125n11
- el-Ibrashy, Wael, 149, 153–54
- El Nadeem Center for the Rehabilitation of Victims of Violence, 174, 175n199
- el-Naggar, Mostafa, 157n129
- el-Nawawy, Alaa el-Din, 190–91
- el-Sayyad, Eslam, 131
- el-Sayyed, Essam, 121, 131–32
- el-Sherif, Safwat, 194
- el-Sisi, Abdel Fattah: chronology, 185; election campaign, 161n148, 194n18; justification for virginity tests, 176–77; paternal authority, 135, 144; presidential election, 127–28, 185; regime, 32, 68–71, 129, 132, 135, 143–44, 160–61, 168, 178–79, 184; rhetoric, 160, 161n149
- emancipation, 196
- emancipatory movements, 207–8
- emasculat[i]on: powerlessness as, 32–33, 64; symbolic, 2–3, 11n34, 89, 95, 117–20. *See also* impotence
- embarrassment, 8n27
- embodied rhetoric, 18–21, 186–209; bowing or bending one's head, 53–54, 76, 186–87, 191–93. *See also* rhetoric
- embodiment. *See* posture
- empowerment, 206n51
- Emwazi, Mohammed (Jihadi John), 101–3, 109–15, 118, 193
- “The end of Sykes-Picot” video (ISIS), 104–5
- England, Lynndie, 13–14
- equality, 162–71; gender inequality, 40n10; spiritual, 39–40
- Esperanto, 209

- ethnography, 9n30
etymology, 15–17
Euben, J. Peter, 197
European colonialism, 68
exceptionalism, Egyptian, 32, 140–41, 143, 196–97
executions: by ISIS, 9, 20, 30–31, 80–120, 193, 208–9. *See also* beheadings
extra-lethal violence, 92
- Facebook, 65n68, 158n136, 160
Fadl, Bilal, 164n159, 167, 169
Fadl Allah, Muhammad Hussayn, 57n57
familial metaphors, 131–39
“Fatima’s Fiancé” (2004), 74–75
fatwā genre, 57, 65
femininity: gender norms, 29, 33, 39–40, 78, 153–54, 188–89; inclined posture of maternity, 207n53. *See also* women
feminization, 8n27, 29, 105, 191–92
Filmer, Robert, 136n51
fiqh (Islamic jurisprudence), 96, 111
5FadaFada, 152, 168
Fī Zīlāl al-Qurān (In the shade of the Qur’ān) (Qutb), 9, 30, 37, 45–55, 65–66
Foley, James: “Complete Message from James Foley,” 82–83n9, 117n85; experience in captivity, 106, 112n78; “Foley’s Blood Is on Obama’s Hands,” 117–18n86; last words, 100–106; video execution of, 30–31, 81, 85, 92–95, 99–101, 105–14, 117–20, 193
Foucault, Michel, 95–97
Freedom and Justice Party, 139n62
Friedman, Thomas, 6
Friere, Paulo, 199n36
Friis, Simone Molin, 20n60, 92–94, 115
fujūr (debauchery), 178
- Gaza war (October 2024–), 5–6, 140–41, 208–9
gender, gender norms, 31–33, 153–54, 188–89; feminization, 29, 105, 191–92; gender-based violence, 7; gender inequality, 40n10; gendering, 8n27, 32–33, 63, 67n72, 152–62; Islamist, 39–40, 78. *See also* femininity; masculinity
German humiliation, 7, 16
Germany, 7
Gezi protests (2013), 131n30
Ghoneim, Wael, 127n16, 156–57
God: *al-Mudhill* (the Humiliator), 49; Beautiful Names of, 49n33; as ever-present witness, 18, 48
Gouda, Salwa Hussein, 176–77
graffiti, 139, 194
Great Britain, 20n60, 35, 92–94, 104–5
Greater Syria, 80n2
Greek rhetoric, 18, 205
Green Peril, 11
ground/earth/dirt: link between humiliation and, 2–3, 15–16, 20, 50–53, 61–62, 70–71, 88, 192–94
Guantánamo prison, 13, 106
Guḥā (folklore hero), 122n7
“Guḥā” (Gakh), 122n7, 147
Guweida, Farouk, 146–47, 148n101, 156–60
- Haaretz*, 172
Ḥadīth, 15n48, 43, 108
Hafez, Mohammed M., 65n69
Haines, David Hawthorne, 81, 101n52, 102
hajj (pilgrimage to Mecca), 144
Hallaq, Wael, 40n9
Hamas, 5, 66, 140–41
Hamdi, Faida, 153–54
Hammoudi, Said, 152–53
Hansen, Lene, 93
“Ḥayāt al-Midān” (Life of [Tahrir] square) song, 195
hayhāt minnā al-dhilla (“we will never accept humiliation”) Bahrain chant, 122–23
Hebrew, 16
Hegel, Georg Wilhelm Friedrich, 23n68
Henning, Alan, 81, 92–93, 101n52
Hersh, Seymour, 13
Hizbollah, 12, 62, 66–69
Hobbes, Thomas, 95, 105
“Hold Your Ground” (Cairokee and Zap Tharwat), 194
Hollywood, 2, 108n68, 115
homelessness, 125n12, 150–52
Homo erectus, 206–7
honor codes, honor societies, 157–58, 200–201n39
Horkheimer, Max, 110

- hostages: Hamas, 5; Iranian crisis (1979–80), 11n35; ISIS executions of, 9, 20, 30–31, 80–120, 193, 208–9; ISIS system of cataloguing, 107
- hudūd* crimes, 11n76
- humiliation: Arabic invocations of, 14–15, 64–79; borders of, 104–5; collective, 65, 97, 167–68; concept of, 1–34, 50–51; culture of, 11–12; definition of, 12n40, 23–25; as dehumanization, 24; in Egypt, 121–85, 191; embodiment of, 18–21, 186–209; equality in, 167–68; as experience and action, 7, 12–16, 29, 33n86, 36, 54, 163n154, 180–82, 188; gendering of, 8n27, 29, 32–33, 67n72, 105, 152–62, 191–92; in German, 7, 16; by God, 49–50; in Hebrew, 16; idiom of, 15, 20, 42–45, 54, 187, 191–93, 202, 208–9; ISIS's visual rhetoric of, 99–116; of Islam, 4–5, 12, 42–44, 65; Islamist expressions of, 4–5, 28–30, 35–79, 159, 189–90, 193–200, 207–8; of Israel, 5; of Jewish people, 49–50; Latin root of, 16; in Mandarin, 17; market of, 146–52; of men, 32–33; metaphors for bowing or bending one's head, 53–54, 76, 186–87, 191–93; Muslim concept of, 12–13, 50–51; national, 11–12, 17, 140–46; of Palestinians, 5–6; phenomenology of, 33n86, 121–85; pleasure of, 13–14; private, 18n54; psychic violations of, 33, 162–71; public, 4n9, 8n26, 62; Qur'ānic, 41–49, 55; racialization of, 14–15; refusal of, 195; retaliatory, 35–79, 80–120, 189–90, 199–200; rule of, 32, 131–39; scaffolding of, 21–28, 48n31, 79, 188–89; vs shame, 17–18; somatic terms for, 190–200; Soviet, 209n56; stickiness of, 14–15; teleology of, 50–51, 55; terms for, 15–16, 17n51, 47–49, 183; theory of, 10, 14, 27, 79, 188, 207–8; of Trump, 4n9; US, 2–7, 11–12, 62, 95, 105, 116–20; of women, 6n16, 176
- hūr al-'ayn* (black-eyed ones), 63, 74–75
- Hussein, Saddam, 57–58
- hypermasculinity, 11, 11n34
- Ibn 'Abd al-Wahhab, 57n54
- Ibn Kathīr, 48n32
- Ibn Nuṣayr, 112
- Ibn Taymiyya, 57n54
- Ibrahim, Mostafa, 191
- Ibrahim, Samira, 176n206, 178
- Ibrahim, Sherif, 121n3, 159–60, 166–67
- IDF (Israeli Defense Forces), 5–6
- idioms, idiomatic phrases: of humiliation, 15, 20, 42–45, 54, 187, 191–93, 202, 208–9; of impotence, 77; kin idioms, 135–36.
See also embodied rhetoric
- “Iḥnā mish baḷṭagiyya” (We are not thugs) video, 150–51
- “Ilā kull jallād ṭāghī” [To every tyrant executioner] (Guweida), 146–47
- imperialism, 68, 104–5
- impotence: collective, 97; demonstrations of, 62, 71, 105; idiom of, 77; imposition of, 17–18, 29–34, 38–39, 56–57, 64, 76–78, 88–89, 116–17, 188–89, 199–200.
See also emasculation; embodied rhetoric
- Innocence of Muslims* (2012), 43n18, 68–69, 151
- Institute for Strategic Dialogue Database (ISD), 65n68
- interpellation, 56n53
- Iqtidar, Humeira, 40, 40n10
- Iran, 4n8, 11n35
- Iraq, 68, 81, 104–5
- Iraq war, 65n69, 68, 71n86, 84n14, 114n81
- “Irḥāl” [Leave] (Guweida), 146–47
- ISIL, 80–81n2. *See also* ISIS (Islamic State, *al-Dawla al-Islamiyya*)
- ISIS (Islamic State, *al-Dawla al-Islamiyya*, ISIL), 19; “Although the Disbelievers May Dislike It / Wa-Law Kariha al-Kāfirūn” video, 30, 111–14; attacks in Syria and Iraq, 90n25; black garb, 108; British and American responses to, 20n60, 92–93; cyberwarfare, 84n14; *Dabiq*, 82–83n9, 117–18n86; demonization of Shi'a by, 112; depictions of, 1, 66; destruction of, 90–91, 93n39; “The end of Sykes-Picot” video, 104–5; executions, 9, 20, 30–31, 80–120, 193, 208–9; formation of, 81; invocations of humiliation, 68, 78; “Kasr al-ḥudūd” (Breaking the Borders) video, 30, 104–5; Kata'ib al-Khansa' (women's brigade), 73; leadership, 82–83; in Mozambique, 90–91; name, 81; in Niger, 90–91;

- publications, 70n81, 76n100; recruitment of women, 77; restorative project, 42–43, 78, 196–97; retaliation as prerogative of, 103–4; retaliatory humiliation by, 116–20; self-valorization of, 113; sex slavery, 110n73; sovereignty of, 89, 91, 95–97, 103–4, 116–17; system of cataloguing hostages, 107; targeting of Yazidis by, 81n3; Trump on, 1; US strikes against, 115, 119–20; videos, 9, 20, 30–32, 80–120, 193, 208–9; violence, 84n15, 98
- Islam: challenge to, 38–39; Green Peril, 11; humiliation of, 4–5, 12, 42–44, 65; restoration of, 42–43; standing up for, 193
- Islamic jurisprudence (*fiqh*), 96, 111
- Islamic law (*Shari'a*), 40n9, 55, 155
- Islamic tradition, 43–44, 83n11, 103, 111n76
- Islamism, 44n21; al-Qa'ida, 2; beginnings of, 35–36; definition of, 37n3; discourse of, 4–5, 9, 29–30, 35–79, 159, 189–90, 193–200, 207–8; gender norms, 39–40, 78; genealogy of, 112; radical, 44, 65n68, 84n15, 112, 159; relations with '*ulamā*', 57n57; terminology, 44–45; violence against women, 172–75; "Women of the Islamic State," 73; women's participation in, 78
- Ismail, Amr, 121, 148, 191–92
- Israel: Hizbollah's declarations of victory over, 62; humiliation of, 5; Mubarak's policies toward, 140–42; rage against, 68; relations with Egypt, 142–43; relations with Hamas, 5; relations with Palestinians, 5–6, 12, 140–43
- "Izzay" [How] (popular song), 191
- Jam'at al al-Sayyidāt al-Muslimāt (Muslim Women's Association), 77
- January 2011 protesters, 121n3
- Jews, 24n71, 49–50
- jihād*, 84n13, 103, 109
- Jihadi John, 109. *See also* Emwazi, Mohammed
- jihadism, 72, 84–85
- Judaism, 39
- juxtaposition, 39
- "Ka'anna al-'umr mā kāna" [As if life never was] (Guweida), 146–47
- Ka'ba, 58
- Kaempf, Sebastian, 114, 118–19
- Kamal, Ghada, 173–74, 181
- Kamel, Omar, 167
- Kant, Immanuel, 23, 201, 205–8
- karāma*, 33–34, 187–88; definition of, 200–201; "Egyptian Karāma" (Mekky), 159; as embodied practice of standing erect, 190–202; enactment of, 53; as more Melian than Kantian, 202. *See also* dignity
- "The *Karāma* of the Egyptian [*Karāmat al-Maṣri*]," 196
- "Kasr al-ḥudūd" (Breaking the Borders) video (ISIS), 30, 104–5
- Kassig, Peter, 81n4, 112n78
- Kata'ib al-Khansa' (ISIS women's brigade), 73
- Kemal, Mustafa, 81–82n5
- Khobar, Saudi Arabia, 59
- Khomeini, Ruhollah, 45–46n25, 57n57
- Kifāya* (Enough) movement, 127
- kin idioms, 135–36
- Klein, Donald, 17–18
- Koresh, David, 44n21
- Kraidy, Marwan, 86–88
- Kuwait, 57–58, 143n78
- language: as social practice, 21–22. *See also* body language; rhetoric
- Lashkar-e-Taiba, 66
- Latin, 16
- Leibniz, Gottfried Wilhelm, 41n12
- letters home, 71–72
- Lewis, Bernard, 13, 144–46, 160, 169, 178
- Lewis, Shady, 137–138, 182
- lions (*usūd*): metaphor for fighting men, 70, 76, 109–10, 113, 159–60n142, 178, 196
- Lloyd, Vincent, 206n50
- Locke, John, 136
- Lukes, Steven, 25
- Machiavelli, Niccolò, 30, 40
- Mahalla al-Kubra, Egypt, 184
- Mahfouz, Asmaa, 158, 198n33
- Majlis Shūrā al-Mujāhidin fī al-ʿIrāq, 74–75
- "Making Men" (al-Qa'ida), 64–65
- Mamdani, Mahmood, 25
- Mandarin, 17
- manliness. *See* virility

- Mansour, Adly, 161
 Margalit, Avishai, 23–24
 market of humiliation, 146–52
 martyrdom operations, 65n69, 74–75
 masculinity: Black, 105n58; cowboy, 11;
 fake men, 156; fighting men as lions
 (*usūd*) metaphor, 70, 76, 109–10, 113,
 159–60n142, 178, 196; gender norms,
 29, 33, 39–40, 78, 153–54, 188–89;
 hypermasculinity, 11; metaphors of
 virility, 77; models of, 97n48; posture of
 erection, 205–7; powerlessness as
 emasculatation, 32–33, 64; symbolic
 emasculatation, 2–3, 11n34, 89, 95, 117–20;
 virility, 2–3, 29–33, 64, 77, 97, 161,
 188–89. *See also* men
 Maspero Massacre (2011), 170–71, 185,
 195n26
 materialism, 146
 Maududi [Mawdudi], Sayyid Abu al-A'la,
 40n10, 45–46n25
 meaning: as use, 21–22, 123. *See also*
 Wittgenstein, Ludwig
 Mecca, 58, 144
 Media Front for the Support of the Islamic
 State, 70–71
 media technology, 82, 87n18, 91–99, 118–19
 Medina, 58
 Mekky, Ahmed, 159, 195n24
 Melian dignity, 34, 200–209
 Melos, 202
 men: depictions of, 39, 70–76, 79; fake, 156;
 fighting men as lions (*usūd*) metaphor,
 70, 76, 109–10, 113, 159–60n142, 178, 196;
 humiliation of, 32–33; motivation of,
 12–13; participation in Egyptian
 Revolution, 152–62; sexualized violence
 against, 178–80; who expect martyrdom,
 74–75. *See also* masculinity
 metaphors, 156–57; for bowing or bending
 one's head, 53–54, 76, 186–87, 191–93;
 familial, 131–39; for fighting men as lions
 (*usūd*), 70, 76, 109–10, 113, 159–60n142,
 178, 196; for restorative action, 205; of
 virility, 77
 metonymy, 39
 “Mikammilin” [We'll keep going]
 (el-Gakh), 138, 140n68, 154
 Misr Shebin al-Kom Spinning and
 Weaving Company, 149–50, 158n136
 modernity, European, 41n13
 Mogadishu, Somalia, 1, 62, 208–9
 Mohsen, Mohamed, 159, 195n24
 monarchy, 136n51; rage against, 68
 Morsi, Mohammed: attempts to
 domesticate women's political
 participation, 155n123; chronology, 185;
 humiliation of, 160n144; presidency, 132,
 140–41, 143, 160, 167–70, 178–79, 185;
 presidential election, 128, 185; removal
 from office, 139n62, 185
 Mouffe, Chantal, 25
 Mounir, Mohamed, 194n18
 Mozambique, 90–91
 “Mr. Citizen, Son of Egypt” song, 161
 Mubarak, Gamal, 145
 Mubarak, Hosni: beggary and manners,
 145; chronology, 185; exit from power,
 186–87; paternal authority, 133–34,
 137–39; policies toward Israel, 140–42;
 regime, 32, 127, 137–49, 154, 160–71, 179;
 requirements of those who served him,
 191–92
 Mubarak family, 145, 148n100
 Muhammad, 62, 108, 108n67, 151–52
mujāhidīn, 29–30, 71–72, 76n100
 music: popular songs, 159, 161, 191–96
 Muslim Brotherhood (*al-Ikhwān*
 al-Muslimūn), 19, 43n18, 128; ‘Arabī
 Ikhwānī (Brotherhood Arabic), 132;
 attempts to depoliticize women, 155n123;
 chronology of, 185; founding of, 35–36;
 Freedom and Justice Party, 139n62;
 leadership, 77; rule of humiliation, 132,
 139; sexual violence by, 174–75n198
 Muslim men. *See* men
 Muslim women. *See* women
 Muslim world, 12–13; idea of, 44n20;
 Muslim-majority countries, 11n34;
 Muslim-majority societies, 77
 Mustafa Mahmoud Square, Mohandessin:
 graffiti, 139
 “My Mother Doesn't Care for Politics”
 (Ismail), 148
 Nasrallah, Hassan, 68–69
 national humiliation, 11–12, 17, 140–46
 nationalism, 68; Arab, 140–42; modern,
 135n49, 157
 Nazi Party, 72n23, 24n71

- Negm, Ahmed Fouad, 192
 Negm, Nawara, 140–42, 154, 160
 neoliberalism, 146–52
 Netanyahu, Benjamin, 5
 new media or digital technology, 82, 87n18, 91–99, 118–19
 Nietzsche, Friedrich, 12–13
 Niger, 90–91
 “The Night of Ittihadiya” (Al Jazeera), 128
 Nile river, 146, 147n96, 148
 9/11 attacks (2001), 2, 11, 75
 Nuṣayrī. *See* Ibn Nuṣayr

 Obama, Barack, 81, 105n58; depictions of, 11; in ISIS execution videos, 99, 101, 105; jokes at Trump’s expense, 4n9; response to Sotloff video, 93, 114n82, 116; Trump on, 1
 obedience, 53–55
 oligopolization, 114
 Omar, Manal, 134, 139
 Omar Effendi Department Stores, 148
 Operation Desert Storm, 58
 oppositional talk, 124
orthopedia, 205
orthos, 205
 Ottoman Empire, 135n49

 Pakistan, 2, 5, 114n81
 Palestinians, 5–6, 12, 60–62, 140–43
 paradise maidens, 74–75
 Paris, France: November 2015 attacks, 98
 Patai, Raphael, 13
 paternal authority, 131–39
 performative victory, 62–63, 87–88
 performative violence, 31, 62–63, 88–91, 94n42
 performativity, 88n20, 94n42
 phenomenology, 32, 33n86, 121–85
 physical torture. *See* torture
 pilgrimage to Mecca (*hajj*), 144
 Pinker, Stephen, 24n74
 PKK, 68
 poetry, 124n10
 police brutality, 167
 political theory, 7, 9, 28, 41–42, 124
 popular songs, 159, 161, 191–96
 populism, 4n11
 pornography, torture, 115
 Port Said soccer match massacre (February 1, 2012), 131–32, 185
 postcolonial theory, 9n30
 posture, 20, 34, 53, 64, 207n53; bowing or bending one’s head, 53–54, 76, 186–87, 191–93; expressions of restoration, 193–96; holding one’s head high, 194–95, 205–6; of maternity, 207n53; in rituals of torture, 193; standing up (*al-ḥamīya*), 52–55, 190–200; standing up or erect, 34, 190–208; upright gait, 34, 186, 205–7. *See also* body language
 potency. *See* masculinity; virility
 poverty, 125, 140–41, 145n85, 151–53, 198
 powerlessness, 29, 75–77; as abjection, 47, 54, 75–76, 181; collective, 189; as emasculation, 32–33, 64. *See also* impotence
 power relations, 32–33; symbolic reversal of, 38–39 (*See also* impotence). *See also* humiliation
 prayer, ritual, 53
 private humiliation, 18n54
 privatization, 149
 propaganda, 66, 80–120
 prostitution, 178
 psychic violations (*intihākāt nafsīyya*), 33, 162–81
 public humiliation, 4n9, 8n26, 62
 public schools, 137–38
 Putin, Vladimir, 209n56

 Qur’ān, 45–46n25, 49n33, 108n68, 167n175; Bin Laden’s use of, 61n64; blackened faces in, 68n76; *Fī Ṣilāl al-Qurān* (In the shade of the Qur’ān) (Qutb), 9, 30, 37, 45–55, 65–66; humiliation in, 41–49, 55
 Qutb, Sayyid, 45–46n25, 47n27, 57n54, 77n103, 104, 197; education of, 57n56; *Fī Ṣilāl al-Qurān* (In the shade of the Qur’ān), 9, 30, 37, 45–55, 65–66; hostility toward Jews, 49–50; on humiliation, 45–55, 193, 208; on jihad in the contemporary world, 109; on restoration and emancipation, 42, 196; *Signposts along the Road* (*Ma’ālim fī al-ṭarīq*), 39–40; on “standing up” (*al-ḥamīya*), 52–55; terms for “bowing down,” 53–54; writings, 54n48, 55n49

- R4ba'a salute, 182–83
- Rabi'a al-'Adawiyya Square, Cairo:
mosque, 182; protests, 165, 185
- race, racism, racialization, 7, 11n35, 14–15, 105n58
- radical Islamism: genealogy of, 112;
humiliation rhetoric, 65n68, 159, 193;
terminology, 44; violence by, 84n15
- Rafah, 5, 6n16
- rāfiḍa*, 112
- Ramadan, Khairy, 161–62
- Rancière, Jacques, 92, 118n87
- Rawls, John, 23
- Red Sea: Egyptian ferry sinking (2006),
140–41, 147, 184
- refusal: feminine gesture of, 207n53;
restorative action in, 34, 63–65, 88,
159, 195–97, 200–204; vs retaliation,
208
- religion, 41n13. *See also* theodicy
- respect, 23n68, 25. *See also* self-respect
- ressentiment*, 12–13
- restorative action: Arabic rhetoric on,
195–96; bodily expressions of, 193–95;
collective, 63; as dignity/*karāma*, 34;
Egyptian practices, 195–200, 205;
exhortations for, 33, 78, 195–96; ISIS
project, 42–43, 78, 196–97; Islamist
definition of, 199–200; mechanisms of,
64; Qutb's understanding of, 42, 196–97;
in reclamation of power or agency, 88,
96, 118, 203; as refusal, 34, 63–65, 88, 159,
195–97, 200–204; as retaliatory
humiliation, 199–200; in ritual displays,
96; standing up, 34, 193–95, 202–8.
See also dignity
- retaliatory humiliation, 35–79, 88n22,
189–90; goads to, 75–76; ISIS beheading
videos, 80–120; Muslim men as made
by, 70–71, 76; remediation as, 189;
restorative action as, 199–200
- revolutions of dignity, 122n4, 200–202
- rhetoric, 1–10, 15–17; ancient Greek, 18,
205; Arabic, 8–15, 27, 36, 64–79, 195;
Arabic metaphors for bowing or
bending one's head, 53–54, 76, 186–87,
191–93; Arabic metaphors for fighting
men as lions (*usūd*), 70, 76, 109–10, 113,
159–60n142, 178, 196; definition of, 19;
during Egyptian revolution, 122n6,
152–62, 181–83, 191–92, 207–8; embod-
ied, 18–21, 186–209; gendered terms,
188–89; Islamist discourse, 4–5, 9,
28–30, 35–79, 159, 189–90, 193–200,
207–8; kin idioms, 135–36; language
game, 21n62; metaphors, 77, 131–39, 159,
191–92, 205; power of, 209; radical
Islamist, 65n68, 159, 193; radical Sunni,
109–10; for restorative action, 34, 195,
205; during Tunisian Uprising, 122n6;
verbal, 18–21, 28–29, 35–79; visual,
18–21, 30–31, 80–120
- Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, 59, 63
- Rorty, Richard, 33n86
- rule of humiliation, 32, 131–39
- Said, Khaled Mohamed, 121n3, 127, 169,
185, 199
- Salafists, 65n68, 70n81, 155n123
- Saudi Arabia: Bin Laden's declaration
of war against, 1–5, 18, 37, 55–66,
196–97; National Guard Headquarters
bombing (1995), 59, 63; Operation
Desert Storm, 58; rage against the
monarchy, 68; relations with Egypt,
143n78, 144
- Ṣawt al-jihād* (Voice of jihad), 67, 73
- SCAF (Supreme Council of the Armed
Forces), 128–33, 156, 160–63, 166–67,
172–73n193, 176–79, 185, 191, 195
- scaffolding, 21–28, 79, 188–89
- scapegoating, 24n71
- Schlafly, Phyllis, 83n11
- Schmitt, Carl, 95, 105n60
- sectarianism, 113
- secularism, 41n13
- Seif, Mona, 167, 184
- self-constitution, 197n30
- self-immolation(s), 149–54, 185
- self-respect, 12n40, 22–23n66, 25
- sexual abjection, 191–92
- sexual harassment, 172, 180n223
- sexualized violence: during Egyptian
revolution, 172–81; against women, 125,
156–57, 172–80, 185
- sexual torture, 110
- sexual violation, 78, 178–80, 191–92
- Seyam, Gamal, 164–66
- Seyam, Sherif Gamal, 164–66
- shame, 4n9, 8n27, 17–18, 152

- Shari'a* (Islamic law), 55, 155
 Shenouda III, 171
 Shi'a, 68, 112
 Shi'i Ḥadīth, 15n48
 Shklar, Judith, 33n86
Signposts along the Road (Ma'ālim fi al-ṭariq) (Qutb), 39–40
 Sinai, Wilāyat, 70n81
 “Šinā'at al-rijāl” (Making men) video, 71
 Sinwar, Yahya, 5
 slogans, 2, 121–23, 194
 Smotrich, Bezalel, 5
 snuff films, 115
 soccer match massacre (February 1, 2012), 131–32, 185
 social media, 119n90, 182n225, 195
 solidarity, 38n4
 Soliman, Omar, 185–86
 songs, popular, 161, 191–96
 Sotloff, Steven: experience in captivity, 106, 112n78; last words, 101–3, 106; video execution of, 30–31, 81, 85, 95, 99n51, 101–2, 105–8, 111–20, 193
 Soueif, Laila, 133n40
 sovereignty: divine, 41–42, 54–55; gendering of, 31, 80–120; performance of, 31, 80–120; spectacles of, 30–31, 80–120; visibility, violence and, 91–99; Westphalian concept of, 103–4
 Soviet Union, 209n56
 speech act theory, 62–63
 standing: restorative, 34, 193–95, 202–8; standing up (*al-ḥamiya*), 52–55, 190–200
 Stern, Jessica, 12
 sticky signs, stickiness, 14–15, 97n47
 street art, 194
 Suez Canal Company, 35, 142n75
 Suez Canal Zone, 35
 suicide(s), 150–54, 158, 161–62, 185
 Suleiman, Omar, 138
 Sunni Ḥadīth, 15n48
 Sunni Muslims, 38, 65n69, 110, 113
 Supreme Council of the Armed Forces (SCAF), 128–33, 156, 160–63, 166–67, 172–73n193, 176–79, 185, 191, 195
 Sykes-Picot agreement, 104–5
 Syria, 9, 80n2, 90n25, 104–5; Asad or Alawite regime, 68, 112; “death rather than humiliation” (*al-mawt wa-lā'l-l-madhalla*) chant, 122–23
tafsīr genre, 45–46, 65
 Tahrir Square, Cairo: “Ḥayāt al-Midān” (Life of [Tahrir] square) song, 195; protests, 127n14, 139–46, 158, 175–76, 179–80, 185, 192
 Tantawi, Mohamad Hussein, 156
 “Ṭāṭī Ṭāṭī” [Lower, lower] (popular song), 191
 Taylor, Charles, 21–22, 41n13
 technology, new media or digital, 82, 87n18, 91–99, 118–19
 teleology of humiliation, 50–51, 55
 terrorism: Islamic, 12; 9/11 attacks (2001), 2, 11, 75; Paris November 2015 attacks, 98; Saudi Arabian National Guard Headquarters bombing (1995), 59; US Air Force housing complex bombing (1996), 59; US War on Terror, 11, 13, 71n86, 114n81
 terrorism studies, 84–85
 theodicy, 35–79, 41n12, 45–46n25
 theory, theorizing, 10, 14, 79, 188, 207–8; Critical Discourse Theory (CDA), 21n61; Critical Security Studies, 92; cultural theory, 9n30; political theory, 7, 9, 28, 41–42, 124; postcolonial theory, 9n30; speech act theory, 62–63
 Third Reich, 7
 Thucydides, 186, 202–3
 “To Every Tyrant Executioner” (Guweida), 159–60
 Topper, Keith, 19, 22, 27
 torture: during Egyptian revolution, 162–71; humiliation as extension or variant of, 33n86; normalization of, 128; rituals of, 193; sexual, 110
 torture pornography, 115
 translation, 121n1
 Treaty of Versailles, 7n23
 Trinh Minh-ha, 119
 Trump, Donald, 1–4, 8, 11, 17, 90–91, 167, 209
 tuktuk drivers, 140–41, 144
 Tunisian Uprising (2010–11), 9, 122n6, 126–27, 130, 161; chants, 122–23; chronology, 185; spark, 6–7, 153, 161–62, 169
 Twitter, 65n68, 194
 Ultras, 131–32
umma, 73, 76–77

- United Arab Emirates (UAE), 143n78, 144n83
- United Kingdom, 82
- United States: Abu Ghraib prison, 13–14, 97n47, 110–11, 180n222; al-Qa'ida in Iraq's claim to have defeated, 62–63; Bagram prison, 13; Bin Laden's declaration of war against, 1–5, 18, 37, 55–66, 196–97; Black Lives Matter protests, 166n166; Bush administration, 11n34, 107; Camp Bucca, Iraq, 107; counterterrorism strategy, 115; foreign military intervention, 71n86, 92–93, 105; foreign policy, 11n34, 82; geopolitical power, 98–99; Guantánamo prison, 13, 106; humiliation of, 2–7, 11–12, 61–62, 95, 105, 116–20; interrogation techniques, 13, 107; invasion of Iraq, 65n69; military operations, 115; 9/11 attacks (2001), 2, 11, 75; Operation Desert Storm, 58; presidential election (2016), 4n11; racialization of humiliation in, 14–15; rage against, 68; response to ISIS, 20n60, 92–94; symbolic emasculation of, 2–3, 11n34, 89, 95, 117–20; War on Terror, 11, 13, 71n86, 114n81; White supremacy, 7; withdrawal from Afghanistan, 11n35; withdrawal from Syria, 90n25; withdrawal from Vietnam, 7
- upright gait, 34, 186, 205–7
- upright posture: standing up (*al-ḥamiya*), 52–55, 190–200; standing up or erect, 34, 190–208
- verbal rhetoric, 18–21, 28–29; chants, 122–23, 132, 154, 162, 192–97; Islamist discourse, 4–5, 29–30, 35–79, 159, 189–90, 193–200, 207–8; slogans, 2, 121–23, 194. *See also* rhetoric
- victory, performative, 62–63, 87–88
- video(s): “Although the Disbelievers May Dislike It / Wa-Law Kariha al-Kāfirūn” (ISIS), 30, 111–14; Egyptian Uprising (2011), 155, 158, 162–63, 182–83; “The end of Sykes-Picot” (ISIS), 104–5; “Iḥnā mish balṭagiyya” (We are not thugs), 150–51; *Innocence of Muslims* (2012), 43n18, 68–69; ISIS execution videos, 9, 20, 30–32, 80–120, 208–9; “Kasr al-ḥudūd” [Breaking the Borders] (ISIS), 30, 104–5; “Šinā'at al-rijāl” (Making men), 71; ultraviolent, 88n23
- Vietnam, 7
- violation(s), 77; of dignity, 12n40, 22–26, 33–34; during Egyptian revolution, 162–71; psychic, 33, 162–71, 180; sexual, 78, 178–80, 191–92
- violence: Christian, 83n11; as communication and dramatization, 87–88; against Coptic Christians, 127, 170–171, 195, 195n26; drivers of, 6–7n17; Egyptian revolution (2011), 162–81; extra-lethal, 92; extreme forms of, 82n7; gender-based, 7; Mubarak regime, 32, 127, 140–46, 154, 161–62, 163n153, 179; officially sanctioned, 114–15; performative, 31, 62–63, 87–91, 94n42; permissible vs savage, 83–84; radical Islamist, 84n15; sectarian, 171; sexualized, 156–57, 172–81, 185; and sovereignty, 91–99; ultraviolent videos, 88n23; against women and girls, 40–41, 71, 156, 185. *See also* beheadings
- virginity tests, 176–78, 185
- virility, 2–3, 29–33, 64, 77, 97, 161, 188–89. *See also* masculinity
- virtù, 30, 40
- visuality, 87n19, 91–99
- visual rhetoric, 18–21; Abu Ghraib prison photographs, 13–14, 68, 94, 97n47, 110–11, 193, 208–9; ISIS execution videos, 9, 30–31, 80–120, 208–9; street art, 194. *See also* rhetoric
- waithood, 150
- Waldron, Jeremy, 201
- Walzer, Michael, 42
- war in Gaza (October 2024–), 5–6, 140–41, 208–9
- War on Terror, 11, 13, 71n86, 114n81
- “We Are All Khaled Said” Facebook page, 121n3
- Weber, Cynthia, 11n34
- “we will never accept humiliation” (*hayhāt minnā al-dhilla*) Bahrain chant, 122–23
- White House Correspondents' Dinner (2011), 4n9
- White supremacy, 7
- Williams, Bernard, 28

- witness, witnessing, 17–18, 31–32, 48n31, 87, 118n86, 196–97; audio-visual media, 118–20; forced, 107; global, 145–46; God as ever-present witness, 18, 48; public, 166
- Wittgenstein, Ludwig, 21–22, 26
- women: Blue Bra Girl, 172; cult of true womanhood, 39; depictions of, 39–40, 63–64, 71–76, 156; gender inequality, 40n10; gender norms, 29, 33, 39–40, 153–54, 188–89; humiliation of, 6n16, 176; *ḥūr al-ʿayn* (black-eyed ones), 63, 74–75; ISIS recruitment campaign, 77; Islamist, 77–78; participation in Egyptian revolution, 152–62; participation in Islamization, 77; participation in politics, 155n123, 158n135, 159n138; protection of, 71n86, 156–57; sexual harassment of, 172, 180n223; “sitt al-banat” (the best of all girls), 172; spiritual equality of, 39–40; victim blaming, 177n209; violence against, 40–41, 71, 110n73, 156, 172–81; virginity tests and, 176–78, 185. *See also* femininity
- “Women of the Islamic State,” 73
- women’s bodies, 75–76, 188–89
- women’s voices, 73–74, 78
- worship, 53–55
- “Yā Sitt al-Kull” [My lady] (Abnūdī), 156n127
- Yassine, Abdessalam, 40n8
- Yazidis, 81, 105, 110n73
- Yemen, 9
- Youssef, Bassem, 132, 133n41
- Zaman, Muhammad Qasim, 40, 44
- Zap Tharwat, 194
- Zionism, 68
- Žižek, Slavoj, 25