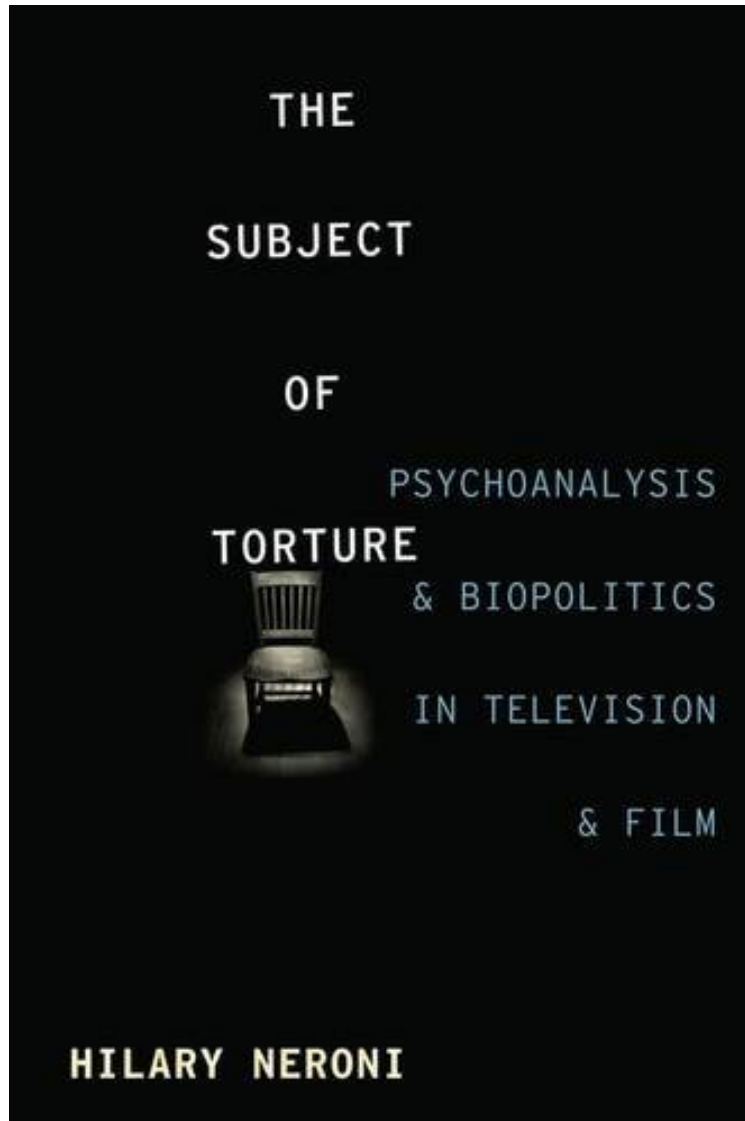


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# The Subject of Torture: Psychoanalysis and Biopolitics in Television and Film

Hilary Neroni

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**Hilary Neroni : The Subject of Torture: Psychoanalysis and Biopolitics in Television and Film** before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The Subject of Torture: Psychoanalysis and Biopolitics in Television and Film:

Considering representations of torture in such television series as *24*, *Alias*, and *Homeland*; the documentaries *Taxi to the Dark Side* (2007), *Ghosts of Abu Ghraib* (2007), and *Standard Operating Procedure* (2008); and "torture porn" feature films from the *Saw* and *Hostel* series, Hilary Neroni unites aesthetic and theoretical analysis to provide a unique portal into theorizing biopower and its relation to the desiring subject. Her work ultimately showcases film and television studies' singular ability to expose and potentially disable the fantasies that sustain torture and the regimes that deploy it.

One of the clearest signs of the ethical regression that characterizes the last decade is the changed status of torture in public discourse: no longer a taboo, something that is to be done in secret, torture is today a topic of 'rational' legal, ethical, and medical debates. This renormalization of torture would not have been possible without movies and television series that gradually rendered it acceptable. This is why Hilary Neroni's *The Subject of Torture* reaches well beyond cultural studies and provides a courageous examination of the ongoing moral catastrophe everyone who cares about our ethical predicament should read it. The book is not only very readable and simultaneously a work of highest academic standards, it is much more: an alarm call that should awaken us all from our moral slumber. (Slavoj Žižek, author of *Less Than Nothing* and *The Year of Dreaming Dangerously* and coauthor of *What Does Europe Want?*) Wonderfully astute, politically timely, and deeply engaging. Hilary Neroni undertakes the pressing task of destroying the logic that sustains contemporary justifications for torture. *The Subject of Torture* is truly pathbreaking in its lucid engagement with the torture debate from a psychoanalytic perspective. (Jennifer Friedlander, Pomona College) The suffering, tremulous body examined in this excellent book is not that of the torture victim, who must pay in the flesh for our access to truth, but that of the torturer, who conceals his obscene pleasure behind euphemisms such as 'enhanced interrogation' and rationalizations based on false scenarios of imminent threat. Hilary Neroni's expert and detailed readings of the Abu Ghraib photographs, documentary films about the events leading up to them, and the new genre of 'torture porn' that appeared in their wake execute a fine twist, one that completely revises the course of reflections on the body at stake in biopolitics. (Joan Copjec, Brown University) Neroni deftly illuminates the conspicuous uptick of post-9/11 media representations of torture by adopting the neglected but indispensable viewpoint of unconscious motives and distorting fantasies. A valuable contribution. (Richard Boothby, Loyola University Maryland) About the Author Hilary Neroni teaches in the Film and Television Studies Program at the University of Vermont and is the author of *The Violent Woman: Femininity, Narrative, and Violence in Contemporary American Cinema*.