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# Stories, Scandals, and Censorship

*Telling the Story of the Guantánamo Bay Detainee  
Library Facilities*

Ways of arranging books:

- alphabetically
- by continent or country
- by color
- by date of acquisition
- by date of publication
- by format
- by genre
- by major periods of literary history
- by language
- by priority for future reading
- by binding
- by series

None of these classifications is satisfactory by itself. In practice, every library is ordered starting from a combination of these modes of classification, whose relative weighting, resistance to change, obsolescence, and persistence give every library a unique personality.

— *Georges Perec*

The very fact of knowing that the books in a library are set up according to a rule, whichever that may be, grants them preconceived identities, even before we open their first pages.

— *Alberto Manguel*

**B**Y THEIR LOCATION and legal status, prison libraries operate on principles that differ fundamentally from the workings of most traditional public and university libraries. They are distinct in their structure, their staff, and their mission. Whereas most American libraries are places for people to convene, contemplate, discover, gather, ponder, reflect, and research, prison libraries are dictated by policies and practices that are inherently rigid and restrictive. They are institutions

known for censoring content and limiting access. Tammi Arford explains another quality that distinguishes prison libraries: “Though libraries still exist in most prisons, many are not staffed by professional librarians and even more lack adequate resources, often depending solely on donations to build their collections” (Arford 2013: 27). William Coyle (1987: 1) finds that some aim to instruct or rehabilitate incarcerated individuals through faith and morality, and research by Jonathan Abel (2013: 1171) indicates that others aim to occupy prisoners so guards can have more free time.

Preliminary evidence suggests that the Guantánamo Bay Detainee Library has all of the characteristics of traditional prison libraries. The collection fluctuates in size and occasionally shrinks due to formal censorship. Furthermore, the staff of the Detainee Library has little experience in library science (Gary 2012: 1). When asked to justify the library itself, many members of the U.S. military working in the Guantánamo Bay Detainee Library shared reasoning that mirrored that of their peers working on continental U.S. soil. For example a cultural advisor of the Joint Task Force–Guantánamo explained, “Some people look and ask why we give them, (the detainees) so much. They have to realize how much we are doing for the guard force by keeping that detainee busy” (Gary 2012: 1).

The Guantánamo Bay Detainee Library is a military prison library under the control of the Joint Task Force–Guantánamo. In 2009 the Department of Defense revealed its book circulation policies: “Library staff distributes books weekly to detainees in all camps, and all detainees are permitted to maintain at least three books and one magazine at a time. Compliant detainees in Camps 1, 2, 3, 5, 6 and 7 are allowed four books and two magazines at a time, and Camps Echo, Iguana and 4 are allowed five books, three magazines and one personal DVD at a time” (Department of Defense 2009: 33). Reading materials are available in the following nineteen languages: Arabic, Chinese, English, French, German, Italian, Kazakh, Pashto, Persian, Russian, Serbo-Croatian, Spanish, Somali, Swahili, Tajik, Turkish, Uighur, Urdu, and Uzbek.<sup>1</sup> The majority of individuals stocking, shelving, and maintaining the facility are not trained as librarians; they are military personnel with no formal background in library science.<sup>2</sup> Multiple journalists have revealed that the chief librarian is a “Pentagon contractor” (Rosenberg 2012: 1), but the Joint Task Force–Guantánamo has not provided any information regarding the extent of his training in librarianship.

There is tension between civilian and military reporters about what to call the reading facilities.<sup>3</sup> Most U.S. journalists have opted to call the facility a “prison library” (Savage 2013: 1) rather than the term used by the U.S. Joint Task Force–Guantánamo: “detainee library” (Gary 2012: 1).<sup>4</sup> Many questions remain about book collection but one central question lingers: what kind of library is it, exactly?<sup>5</sup> This is a question that has prompted considerable debate.

The collection of books at the Guantánamo Bay Detainee Library has grown during the past fourteen years. In an article written for the *Miami Herald*, Carol Rosenberg (2016: 1) estimated that the Detainee Library contained 35,000 books, magazines, games, and DVDs.<sup>6</sup> U.S. Department of Defense documents indicate that reading materials could come from three possible sources: the International Committee of the Red Cross, civilians, or the Joint Task Force–Guantánamo (Department of Defense 2010: 9). Carol Rosenberg is one of the few journalists who has written extensively about the source of donations at the Guantánamo Bay Detainee Library. In one article Rosenberg (2016: 1) interviews an Army captain in charge of the Detainee Diversion Program; he admits that his staff no longer has a budget for new acquisitions.<sup>7</sup> In another piece she discloses that lawyers and the International Committee of the Red Cross are responsible for most donations (Rosenberg 2015: 1).<sup>8</sup>

In October 2013 Rosenberg wrote a profile of an anonymous donor whose father had died at the World Trade Center during the attacks of September 11, 2001. The donor had come to observe the U.S. military tribunal proceedings involving Khalid Sheik Mohammed and his four alleged co-conspirators; he donated seventy-one books to the Joint Task Force–Guantánamo. Rosenberg interviews the donor and describes his donations in considerable detail:

Name a classic you read in school and it’s probably there—from John Steinbeck to William Shakespeare to Mark Twain. Also, four novels by Haruki Murakami, who happens to be the donor’s favorite author. About half are in Arabic or are dual Arabic-English side-by-side translations. . . As for the prisoners, he said: “Regardless of what they did—and I believe they are in fact guilty—I have a choice: I can either try to help another human escape from darkness or I can look away and do nothing. And I chose to help.” He would not say how much he spent on the books, just that he got them from four vendors, one an online Arabic-language bookseller. (Rosenberg 2013: 1)

Despite these donations the Guantánamo Bay Detainee Library has also experienced periods of shrinkage.<sup>9</sup>

The 2004 Camp Delta Standard Operating Procedures (SOP) differs from the 2003 edition in several substantial ways. The 2003 SOP instructs interpreters to screen new publication titles and reject any books with the following content (Joint Task Force–Guantánamo 2003: 15.4–15.5):

- (1) Extremism (Modernist writing that incites Jihad)
- (2) Militant Islam / Militant Jihad
- (3) Anti-American topics
- (4) Anti-Semitic topics
- (5) Anti-Western topics
- (6) Any military topic
- (7) Sexual situations

The 2004 edition adds four more categories that librarians are instructed to not circulate (Joint Task Force–Guantánamo 2004: 15.5):

- (8) Dictionaries
- (9) Language Instruction
- (10) Technology/Medical Updates
- (11) Geography

It is unclear whether the Joint Task Force–Guantánamo revised the SOP after 2004 to limit or permit additional materials.<sup>10</sup>

Cataloguing and classification in the Guantánamo Bay Detainee Library deviates from traditional practices in public and university libraries in the United States. All books are catalogued in one of twenty-one categories, nineteen of which represent language groups. The categories include Arabic, Chinese, English, French, German, Italian, Kazakh, Pashto, Persian, Russian, Serbo–Croatian, Spanish, Somali, Swahili, Tajik, Turkish, Uighur, Urdu, and Uzbek.<sup>11</sup> There are also two additional categories: picture books and Shiite material. It is unclear who developed this system of categorization, but it represents a deviation from traditional U.S. library norms and classification systems.<sup>12</sup>

The Guantánamo Bay Detainee Library is a facility for detainees, but detainees themselves are not allowed to peruse the shelves. Instead members of the military allow detainees to select materials from a bookmobile that is taken to their cells.<sup>13</sup> Detainees also have access to newspapers that the Guantánamo Bay Detainee Library receives on a daily or weekly basis.<sup>14</sup> Many members of the military have access to the facility, including chaplains, linguists, and military librarians.<sup>15</sup> The Detainee Library has also received visits from members of the press, from the United States and

elsewhere. It has occasionally been included as a stop in the tour of the detention camp, when members of the U.S. Congress have traveled to the U.S. Naval Station.<sup>16</sup>

Little is known about the size of the budget of the Guantánamo Bay Detainee Library, though Carol Rosenberg (2015: 1) has reported that as of late 2015 the library staff no longer had funds to purchase additional texts. In 2003 and 2004, the Standard Operating Procedures included the following text: “Funding for new reading material purchases will be requested through normal J-4 process” (Joint Task Force–Guantánamo 2003: 15.4; Joint Task Force–Guantánamo 2004: 15.5). Indeed it is difficult to find any details about the cost of specific components of the detention camp.

The only available comparison is related to the construction of a soccer field for detainees. In 2012 Rear Admiral David Woods disclosed that military contractors Burns and Roe Services and Dick Corp received \$744,000 to build a 28,000-square-foot soccer field that includes a soft gravel walking track, security cameras, and a high fence topped with razor wire.<sup>17</sup>

One plausible reason why the Joint Task Force–Guantánamo has not shared details about the budget of the Detainee Library is simple: U.S. presidential candidates in the 2016 election cycle have tended either to cite the cost of keeping the detention camp open or indicate that the Joint Task Force is spending too much on detainee care. In a speech about U.S. tax policy, Donald Trump made the following statement:

We just spent a million dollars building a soccer field. Okay. A soccer field for our prisoners that happen to be in Guantánamo. Okay. I don't like that. What do you need a million dollars for that? Level out the surface. Let them play. What do you need to spend a million dollars? We just spent. There's a story today. A million dollars on a soccer field? How do you spend a million dollars on a soccer field? You have a level piece of land. Throw them a ball, let them play soccer, if they have to play at all.<sup>18</sup>

No U.S. presidential candidate or U.S. president has thus far commented on the cost of maintaining the Detainee Library.

## STOCKING MULTILINGUAL LIBRARIES

SCHOLARS IN NORTH AMERICA have grappled extensively with the challenges of providing multilingual biblioservice to readers. Marie Zielinska (1976: 441) probes how Canadian public libraries sought to satisfy the

needs of their bilingual readers. Others (Witten et al. 2005; Borgman 1997; Wu et al. 2012) suggest various ways for digital libraries to develop multilingual and multicultural collections. The United States has a rich legacy of multilingual librarianship in its university and public libraries, but that diversity is absent in many prison libraries. Moreover prison scholars and librarians (Vogel 2009) have only written anecdotally about the lack of reading materials available to incarcerated and detained populations on U.S. soil.

### LIBRARIES IN U.S. GERMAN PRISONER OF WAR CAMPS

THERE IS WELL-DOCUMENTED evidence of how specialized libraries during World War II maintained multilingual collections. Here, I examine the linguistic profile of three libraries that belonged to wartime detention centers: (1) libraries in U.S. German Prisoner of War Camps, (2) Japanese-American community libraries in U.S. internment camps, and (3) the Theresienstadt Ghetto Central Library, 1942–45.

Trista Raezer's MA thesis at San Jose State University (2008) focuses on the culture and book collections belonging to American German Prisoner of War (POW) Camps during World War II. Her study is significant, because it examines how POW libraries grew. She establishes that there were three main mechanisms that POWs could use to acquire new books: "Books were sent to soldiers by their families. The camp libraries were stocked by the International Committee of the Red Cross and the War Prisoner's Aid of the International Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA). POWs were also allowed to purchase their own books, or purchase books for the libraries" (Raezer 2008: 4). Raezer admits that the role of books in the re-education program in the POW camps remains a "subject that is in great need of more scholarly work . . ." (Raezer 2008: 11). She indicates that there were, on average, 1,050 books per two hundred POWs (Raezer 2008: 11) and that "the Provost Marshal General and the Special Projects Division provided camp libraries for the POWs not only to fulfill the obligations of the Geneva Convention, but also to re-educate and influence the minds of the POWs" (Raezer 2008: 16).

Raezer uses archival material to document the origins of the libraries in the POW camps.

The initial existence of libraries in the camps is due to the work of [Major General Allen W.] Guillon. On March 31, 1942, before the large waves of German POWs arrived, Guillon wrote to the YMCA's War Prisoner's Aid accepting their offer of recreational and welfare

aid. This included the “furnishing of libraries and special books.” This letter established the start to a long and rewarding relationship between the YMCA and the PMGO. . . . Due to Guillion’s attitudes against re-education and his desire to adhere strongly to the Geneva Convention the books going to the POWs during this time were not under the heavy-handed censorship that would happen later in the war. (Raezer 2008: 26–27)

Raezer devotes an entire chapter to POW libraries in the United States during World War II. She relies heavily on the results of a survey that the U.S. government distributed in 1945 in order to assess the quality of its POW libraries. The survey inquired about the following points.

1. Are library and reading room facilities adequate for the use of all prisoners of war?
2. How many volumes are contained in the library?
3. What percentage of the books are in constant circulation?
4. Attach a list of all books in the library, exclusive of textbooks, by title, author, and language.
5. If the present supply of books is inadequate, how many additional books and what type are needed?
6. What percentage of the prisoners of war use the library and reading rooms?
7. What is the chief source of supply for books?
8. Has a system of rotation of books between base and branch camps been arranged?
9. Have the prisoners of war specifically requested that certain books be placed on sale in the canteen?
10. Are sufficient German–English and English–German dictionaries available?
11. Attach a list of the newspapers and magazines in English and German now in the camp and also those requested by the prisoners.
12. Are the prisoners of war informed about such sources of books as the Modern Library, Pocketbook Editions, and *Infantry*-Penguin Series?
13. What action is recommended as necessary in the field?<sup>19</sup> (Raezer 2008: 53)

Raezer examines twenty-one of the returned surveys for her thesis. Altogether the POW libraries are said to have had 64,985 books with an average of 3,095 books per library (Raezer 2008: 53). The breadth and content of the collection of each surveyed POW library varied greatly: for example, Camp Colona, Michigan, had fifteen books total, but Camp Dermott, Arkansas, had more than nine thousand (Raezer 2008: 54).

On April 23, 1945, Colonel A. J. Lamoureaux wrote a memo to all POW camp commanders in the United States and emphasized the importance of books (Raezer 2008: 56):

People have become increasingly accustomed to a plentiful supply of books and magazines in civilian life. They provide friendship when a man is lonely; stimulate his mind when he is bored; serve as a release for his tensions; broaden his horizons; fortify his spirit; and deepen his understanding. The easy availability of books has become one of the fundamentals of our democracy. . . . [Books] fulfill their functions only when properly arranged, displayed and made available. A library is not a room full of books; a library is a service.<sup>20</sup>

I want to pause here for a moment and speculate briefly on what factors might have made the U.S. government so committed to providing such a well-developed collection of books to German POWs. Raezer makes the point that “everything the Red Cross representatives witnessed was reported back to Switzerland and Germany. Thus, if the United States did something wrong, the Nazi’s [*sic*] could retaliate and do the same thing to the American POWs” (Raezer 2008: 45). During World War II the Nazis are said to have captured a total of 98,312 American prisoners of war (Spiller 1998: 1), and the U.S. military detained and took “nearly a half million German men . . . to every corner of the United States to live as POWs until hostilities ended” (Raezer 2008: 18).

We need to consider the asymmetry of power in the case of Guantánamo. The U.S. government has detained more than 770 individuals from more than forty different countries since 2002. Scott Gartner noted that in 2003, with “with MIA and POW figures in the single digits (compared, for example, to almost 8,000 from the Korean War) Iraq and Afghanistan reflect a historic change in America’s ability to rapidly locate missing military personnel” (Gartner 2013: 1). In 2014 by most accounts the only American POW thought to be left in either Iraq or Afghanistan was Bowe Bergdahl (Friedman 2014: 1), and he was detained by the Taliban, not the Afghan government. When the Joint Task Force–Guantánamo created its detention camp in 2002, therefore, it did not have to proceed with the same level of caution that the Department of Defense did at the height of World War II.<sup>21</sup>

## LIBRARIES IN JAPANESE-AMERICAN INTERNMENT CAMPS

ANDREW B. WERTHEIMER (2004) has written the most extensive history of Japanese-American internment camp libraries; he focuses on the facilities belonging to sixteen detention centers on the West Coast. He demonstrates that these libraries differed from those in American German Prisoner of War Camps, as well as those belonging to the Theresienstadt Ghetto Central Library, in their linguistic compilation. Interned Japanese-Americans sought reading material for many of the same reasons as did their German and Jewish counterparts, but many of them faced a distinct form of isolation: the U.S. Army's Wartime Civil Control Administration policy was to confiscate all Japanese-language books, magazines, and phonograph records. Wertheimer explains that "although the Japanese-language books confiscated in the centers were eventually released, the [War Relocation Authority] maintained vague but effective coercive censorship policies regarding Japanese-language books without establishing clear or consistent criteria" (Wertheimer 2004: 198). Californian public libraries treated temporary detention centers as "nominal branches or deposit stations" (Wertheimer 2004: 72).

Wertheimer's research also sheds light on the challenges that individuals faced in trying to fund libraries in detention centers:

The budget question for libraries remained unclear. In August [1942] California State Librarian Gillis reported to [American Library Association] Headquarters that West Coast recreation Director Lucy Adams explained that \$7,500 would be allocated for library acquisitions for camps that would hold 10,000, and that \$10,000 would be allocated for camps that held 15,000. Only days before, Gillis told Adams that she heard from Tule Lake's director Elmer Shirrell that contrary to all earlier reports, "no money will be available for the purchase of books." (Wertheimer 2004: 108)

Another takeaway from Wertheimer's work is that tracing the ways in which detainee libraries obtained their books and, by extension, their funding is no easy feat. We see the same issue arise in the case of Guantánamo: information about the size of the budget that the Department of Defense allocated for use in the Detainee Library is hard to confirm. It is clear, however, that during World War II a wide network of individuals—both behind and outside the barbed wire—helped to create reading facilities for Japanese-American detainees. Many of them are rec-

ognized by name in Wertheimer's dissertation. By contrast, today it remains almost impossible to create a comprehensive list of the individuals in the U.S. military who have helped to design, stack, and structure the Detainee Library since its creation in 2002.

### THE THERESIENSTADT GHETTO CENTRAL LIBRARY

IN 1941 Reinhard HEYDRICH, a high-ranking official in the Nazi regime, announced the creation of the so-called Theresienstadt Ghetto in northwestern Czechoslovakia. The German government designed the facility in order to give the impression that the resettlement of Jews could be successfully achieved by giving them model ghetto communities to inhabit. The Nazi government went so far as to create a film in 1944 called *Der Führer schenkt den Juden eine Stadt* (*The Führer Gives a City to the Jews*). Ultimately the metropolis was a unique project in deception: artists, writers, and scholars contributed to an extensive docket of cultural activities and, at various junctures, detained Jews were even given temporary access to banks, schools, stores, and gardens. It even contained a library with "over 60,000 books" (Fischel 1998: 55). Many of the titles were confiscated from arriving Jews. Theresienstadt was not the sanctuary that it claimed to be; of the approximately 109,000 Jews whom the Nazis sent to the ghetto by the end of 1942, 16,000 died in Theresienstadt and 40,000 others were deported to Lublin, Minsk, Auschwitz, and elsewhere (Friedman 1998: 173).

In her article "'People were literally starving for any kind of reading': The Theresienstadt Ghetto Central Library, 1942–1945," Miriam Intrator (2007) examines how a select number of Jewish intellectuals sought to accommodate the literary needs of the camp population. The Theresienstadt Library ultimately contained more than one hundred thousand volumes; it grew asymmetrically and haphazardly, with many books coming first from the Rabbinical Seminary of Berlin and later from the personal belongings of Jews. Intrator highlights the challenges of satisfying such a linguistically diverse community: "many books were in German or Hebrew, an imbalance bemoaned by the camp's majority who wanted to read for pleasure and escape in their native language, often Czech" (Intrator 2007: 516). One of the designated librarians, Hugo Friedmann, would later lament that "alas, the stock of Czech books is totally insufficient and unable to meet the minimal demands of the public" (quoted in Intrator 2007: 516). Although most of the ghetto's inhabitants

were Czech or Austrian, there were also Dutch, Danes, and Poles (Light 1990: 5). Intrator also includes anecdotes by survivors to reveal the ways in which the dearth of material in their native language(s) challenged them. R. Gabriele S. Silten, one such survivor, explained:

If I wanted to read, I had to read in German. . . . But I had never learned to read or write in German. Since I had learned to read in Dutch, I had learned only the Roman alphabet; the German books in the Theresienstadt library, however, were printed in gothic characters (Fraktur). Like it or not, I had to learn to decipher these if I wanted to read. (Silten 1995: 151)

The Theresienstadt Ghetto Central Library differs from the Guantánamo Bay Detainee Library in a number of ways. Its collection consisted almost exclusively of books that were taken from the baggage of Jews, many of whom the Nazis later sent to the Treblinka and Auschwitz extermination camps in occupied Poland. The Joint Task Force–Guantánamo, to my knowledge, does not permit detainees to bring any books of their own to the detention camp, and it is believed that all donations accepted, even those brought by the defense counsel of specific detainees, are brought first to the Detainee Library for processing.

## THE LIBRARY AS A SERIES OF SYSTEMS

IT IS MY HOPE that this essay will serve as an example of a different type of study, one that looks at the library first and foremost as the conglomerate of a series of systems. These systems are not only ideological in nature, they are also linguistic, economic, political, religious, social, and cultural. We can use this notion of systems to better understand the complexities of wartime prison libraries.

Scholars conducting descriptive studies on the content of wartime prison libraries place considerable emphasis on the availability or censorship of individual titles. For example, Raezer (2008: 40) claims that no German prisoner of war in the United States could have acquired a copy of Hitler's *Mein Kampf*, but she fails to delve systematically into what people and policies influenced book acquisitions, circulation, and classification. Similar trends surface in prison scholarship and have been discussed, particularly in the work of Paula Vogel (2009: 13).<sup>22</sup> Like its predecessors, the Guantánamo Bay Detainee Library has an ideological system that is the result of many decisions made by a governmental body. In 2002, the Joint

Task Force–Guantánamo worked with a small team to design and to stock the Detainee Library. In 2016, many questions about the library’s design remain unanswered. It remains unclear what factors led the Joint Task Force–Guantánamo to organize the books first and foremost by language group. Furthermore there is no record of who decided that the Detainee Library would have books available in at least eighteen different languages. In 2009, the Department of Defense published its “Review of Department Compliance with President’s Executive Order on Detainee Conditions of Confinement” (2009) and stated that “a detainee library provides all detainees with regular access to more than 13,000 books, nine hundred magazines, and three hundred DVDs—all of which span 18 native languages of the population” (Department of Defense 2009: 34).<sup>23</sup> By this statement does the Department of Defense mean to imply that the detainee population in 2009 collectively spoke *only* eighteen different languages? Did the Department of Defense take the needs of illiterate detainees into account? How many languages were spoken by all the 771 detainees who have passed through the U.S. Naval Station of Guantánamo? Did the Department of Defense add different language groups to the collection as the detainee population expanded? These are some of the questions that are beyond the scope of this essay. In the pages that follow I examine which language groups dominate the collection of books available in the Detainee Library, and I consider the ideological implications of the classification method that the Joint Task Force–Guantánamo adopted.

## AN INVENTORY, AN IDEOLOGY

ON NOVEMBER 24, 2009, Dr. Susan Maret filed a Freedom of Information Access request<sup>24</sup> and asked the Department of Defense to deliver the following documents:

1. Administrative responsibility for oversight of the libraries
2. Annual reports generated by the DOD and library staff concerning library management, policies, and services
3. Contractors that may provide library management and services
4. DOD regulations governing the management and operation of the Joint Task Force Detainee Library and the detainee library at Camp Iguana
5. Library access policies
6. Library circulation policies and statistics
7. Library collection development policies
8. Library staff credentials, including the number of staff holding a

MLS or MLIS (Masters in Library and Information Science)

9. Library staffing levels
10. Policy and procedure manuals developed by the DOD and library staff concerning library management and services
11. Shelf list or inventory of titles in the libraries' collections
12. Training materials generated by DOD and library staff concerning library management, policies, programs, and services. (Maret 2013: 1)

On June 28, 2013, she received an undated document that provides all titles available at the Guantánamo Bay Detainee Library along with their call numbers and authors. I use her list to determine the categories of classification.

There are many problems with the inventory list delivered by the Department of Defense. I focus on the issues that are of greatest relevance to this study. The inventory list breaks content down into eleven distinct categories:

1. Books
2. Mags [*sic*]
3. DVDs
4. Articles
5. AD Read
6. Newspapers
7. Other Media
8. IOE
9. Dictionaries
10. Donations to Oz
11. Library Donations (Maret 2013: 1)

We cannot be entirely sure of what distinguishes “Donations to Oz” from “Library Donations,” and because these items are lacking call numbers, we cannot be sure of their language. “AD Read” is related to the inventory’s Arabic books, as “AD” is short for Arabic in the classification system. I cannot determine for certain the meaning of “IOE,” but I suspect that it might be related to Innovations in Online Education, Inc., a company that provides continuing online education for military and spouses posted overseas with the Department of Defense (Innovations in Online Education, Inc. 2014: 1). Due to space and time constraints, I examine here the category with the largest collection of reading materials, namely “Books” (Maret 2013: 1).

No scholar has thus far evaluated the linguistic breakdown of the Guantánamo Bay Detainee Library by analyzing its inventory. In the remainder of this chapter, I first assess all of the languages represented

in the library; the results are found in Appendix B of the online version of this essay. I then examine how many titles are available in each language; this information is available in Appendix C (also online). I focus on which language groups are most poorly represented in the inventory.

## OBSTACLES

The inventory of books in the Guantánamo Bay Detainee Library presents multiple challenges. No ISBN or date of publication is included in the Excel spreadsheet. With only two exceptions, the names of translators are not disclosed, and as a result it is impossible to determine the edition that is available. I do not tabulate the majority of bilingual books, as many of them are dictionaries. I also avoid evaluating all books shelved in *SH* (presumably Shiite) and *PIC* (presumably picture books), because it is impossible to determine their language.

Filing Freedom of Information Access (FOIA) requests tends to be a complicated process, but generally agencies are required to respond to a FOIA request in twenty business days, excluding Saturdays, Sundays, and legal holidays. Researchers filing FOIA with the U.S. Southern Command must traditionally contend with a different temporal framework. Responses such as the one I received are commonplace.

We will be unable to respond to your request within the FOIA's 20 day statutory time period as there are unusual circumstances which impact on [*sic*] our ability to quickly process your request. These unusual circumstances are: (a) the need to search for and collect records from a facility geographically separated from this Office; (b) the potential volume of records responsible to your request; and (c) the need for consultation with one or more other agencies or DoD components having a substantial interest in either the determination or the subject matter of the records. — Marco Villalobos, personal correspondence with author, April 26, 2016.

Researchers investigating Guantánamo typically accept this type of delay, but some FOIA filers have worked with legal clinics to compel the Department of Defense and the U.S. Southern Command to provide files.<sup>25</sup> Unsurprisingly Dr. Maret also received a response of this nature.<sup>26</sup> In January 2016, I reproduced her initial FOIA request in order to try to secure an updated inventory list. However, as of May 2016, I am still working with Marco Villalobos, the FOIA Manager of the United States Southern Command, to access these documents.<sup>27</sup>

## FINDINGS

IT IS CHALLENGING to decipher trends and patterns that emerge in an inventory of more than ten thousand books. In Appendix D (included online), I provide short descriptions of the titles in each language group. I analyze 10,878 book titles across eighteen distinct language categories. The language groups with the most books were: Arabic (7,921), English (1,166), and Pashto (399). The next tier of languages includes: Urdu (332), Russian (279), Persian (267), Uighur (166), French (143). Lastly all of the following language groups had a number of books that fell in the single or double digits: Uzbek (77), Spanish (49), Chinese (21), Turkish (18), German (14), Serbo-Croatian (10), Italian (5), Kazakh (5), Tajik (3), Swahili (2), and Somali (1).<sup>28</sup> In the following paragraphs I group my analysis into two categories. The first category consists of Arabic, English, and Pashto titles. The second category contains the remaining fifteen language groups.

### *Arabic, English, and Pashto*

Of the nearly eight thousand books in Arabic, the majority were written by Middle Eastern writers, such as Taha Hussein, an Egyptian modernist writer; Abdullah Bin Muhammad al Dawoud, a Saudi author of popular self-help books; Zaki Najib Mahmood, a contemporary Egyptian intellectual; and Emily Nasrallah, a Lebanese women's rights activist and journalist.<sup>29</sup> It is challenging to confirm the identities of a number of authors listed in the Arabic inventory, such as Abdul Qader Jagloul, Rawhi Al Balbaky, Mohammad Rashid Al Owayed, but I speculate that the works of these authors are likely not translations. There are very few books in the Arabic language inventory that are written by individuals from the United States and Europe. Several titles by Dale Carnegie, the Missouri-born self-help specialist, and Plato are available in translation. The selection appears not to privilege canonical European novels. There are instead many books on Islamic jurisprudence and Middle Eastern politics (i.e. an Arabic *European Union and Middle East* by Imad Jad and *The Credibility of the Arab Media* by Mohammed Sayed), and there are also texts related to European and U.S. political theory. These Arabic titles include translations of *Kissinger's Strategic Thinking* by Henry Kissinger, *Victory Without War* by Richard Nixon, and *Secrets of Capitalism* by Hirnando DeSoto.

There are 1,166 English books in the inventory, and almost all of the titles were originally published in English. They include *Three Cups of Tea*

by Greg Mortenson, *Utopia* by Sir Thomas More, *My First 1000 Words: A Picture Wordbook* by Thea Feldman and Alan Benjamin, *Mother Tongue* by Bill Bryson, *Too Far from Home* by Chris Jones, *Yoga: Postures for Your Body, Mind and Soul* by Jessie Chapman. Some of the translations that I could confirm were *The Dreams* by Naguib Mahfouz, *Thebes at War* by Naguib Mahfouz, *The Gift: Poems by Hafiz*, and *Rumi: Whispers of the Beloved*.<sup>30</sup> Even when added together, however, the number of translations from any language into English was fewer than one hundred. Interestingly the majority of books in English regarding Islam, Middle Eastern cultures, and Asia appeared to be authored by U.S. and U.K. writers. Professor Robert Hillenbrand's *Islamic Art and Architecture* and *Kazakhstan in Pictures* by Bella Waters are two examples of this sort of text. In general when English-language books do topically address international themes, such as the Fédération Internationale de Football Association (FIFA), these titles are almost entirely written by native Anglophones.<sup>31</sup> In terms of political content, the English-language is commendable for its bipartisanship. The collection includes *The Bridge: The Life and Rise of Barack Obama* by David Remnick; *Going Rogue: An American Life* by Sarah Palin; and *The Audacity of Hope* by Barack Obama.

The majority of the Pashto books are written by Pakistani and Afghan writers. There are almost no books in the Pashto language inventory that can be identified as translations from English or European language groups. The collection is infused with contributions from Afghan political theorists, such as Abdul Jabar Sabit (author of *Who Destroyed Afghanistan?*); Afghan political documents (such as the *New Afghanistan Constitution*); and Pashto poetry written by Pashtuns.

#### *Other Language Groups*

The remaining language groups incorporated in the Detainee Library have few commonalities. It is difficult to analyze the offerings in the single or double digits, so I do not attempt to make any generalizations about these collections. There are, however, a few surprises worth noting. In the Uzbek collection of seventy-seven books, there are only a few titles that appear to be translations: *Memory of Solferino* by Henry Dunant, *Steppenwolf* by Hermann Hesse, and *The Night Doorman* by Irving Shaw. In contrast the majority of the Turkish titles included in the collection are in fact translations of U.S. and U.K. authors, such as *War of Troy*, *David Copperfield*, *A Tale of Two Cities*, and *Great Expectations*. Surprisingly the only books by Orhan Pamuk, the famous Turkish Nobel Prize recipient,

are in English or Uighur. One wonders why military librarians chose to exclude Turkish authors so rigorously from the collection, especially when contemporary Turkish novelists have attracted so much international acclaim in the past decade.

Different questions arise in the analysis of the Spanish inventory, which consists in almost equal parts of translations of Harry Potter and *Goosebumps* as well as several Spanish copies of Cervantes' *Don Quijote de la Mancha*. According to the GiTMO Docket of the *New York Times*, of all the detainees to pass through the detention camp, only one came from a country that maintained Spanish as an official language. We can posit that some number of detainees might have some proficiency in Spanish and that it might serve as a link language, but there is no comprehensive proof or evidence to that effect.

I exclude the books in Chinese, German, Serbo-Croatian, Italian, Kazakh, Somali, Swahili, and Tajik from analysis, because together these language groups only account for sixty-one books in the entire inventory. We can hypothesize that detainees who were monolingual and proficient in only one of these eight languages would most certainly endure some degree of linguistic isolation. The question that we have to concurrently pose is: to what extent would they take advantage of literary resources in English, Pashto, or Arabic to enrich their minds? At this juncture we cannot answer this question.

## EVALUATING MULTILINGUAL INFORMATION ACCESS

ACADEMIC LITERATURE on Guantánamo, including literature in the social sciences, law and psychology, has only briefly touched on the experience of being isolated by language. Peter Honigsberg (2014) and Alexa Koenig (2015) have both used the testimonies of former detainees to support the hypothesis that the Detention Camp's policies further a culture of linguistic isolation amongst detainees. Honigsberg (2014: 19) argues that linguistic isolation deserved to be recognized on its own terms and not as an appendage to physical or psychological isolation. He is the first to write descriptively about linguistic isolation as it relates to the experiences of detainees at Guantánamo Bay. Koenig (2015: 220) incorporates linguistic isolation into her theory of social death at Guantánamo; she asserts that the Joint Task Force's strategy of separating detainees from others who spoke their own language created "social islands" in the Detention Camp: "Lingual isolation was so difficult to

endure that some prisoners created disturbances within the prison . . . just to motivate guards to move them to a different block, with the hope that they would be placed near another detainee who spoke their language” (Koenig 2015: 220).

The inventory of the Guantánamo Bay Detainee Library demonstrates that certain language groups—such as Pashto, Arabic, and English—have collections that span many different genres. Others—such as French, Italian, Turkish, and Uzbek—number in the single digits and have very few materials available in translation. Does the Guantánamo Bay Detainee Library facilitate an environment of linguistic isolation? We cannot easily evaluate the ideological aspects of the facility using such rigid binary questions.

### **SORTING BY LANGUAGE GROUP**

IN THE FIRST EPIGRAPH to this essay, Georges Perec explains that there are at least twelve distinct ways to arrange books in a library (1999: 48). In its second epigraph, Alberto Manguel asserts that the way a library is ordered contributes to the way in which its collection is perceived (2006: 35). Perec and Manguel both imply that librarians make deliberate choices that influence the identity of the library. The chaplains, Department of Defense contractors, and other members of the military working at the Guantánamo Bay Detainee Library made the decision to arrange the books first by language group and then by genre.

In her article Joan Howland remarks that “there are still libraries where there is a relatively low tolerance for diversity, not only of races and cultures but also of viewpoints” (Howland 2001: 112). The inventory list of the Guantánamo Bay Detainee Library reveals that each language group contains a different level of diversity in topical offerings. Many questions loom and linger. Why are the majority of Turkish titles translations of Russian and English titles? What factors led the development of the Pashto collection to include more titles by Afghan writers? Could a Freedom of Information Access request yield more information about the sources of the books? Did different military personnel work together to select books in different languages, and to what extent did their ideologies and methodologies differ?

In “The Making of Memory: The Politics of Archives, Libraries, and Museums in the Construction of National Consciousness” (1998), Brown and Davis-Brown discuss the ways in which ideology can influence

decision-making in librarianship. They ask “to what extent do the logical hierarchies for classification and arrangement reflect social and political hierarchies?” (Brown and Davis-Brown 1998: 17). There are social and political norms and hierarchies operating outside the Detainee Library that undoubtedly impacted its development, but there is not space in this essay to probe linguistic norms as they exist in the U.S. military leadership.

In this conclusion I want to speculate briefly on two reasons why the staff of the Guantánamo Bay Detainee Library may have chosen to arrange books by language group. First, the classification methods that are used by the Joint Task Force–Guantánamo encourage reports about the Guantánamo Bay Detainee Library to adopt a certain narrative of information access. Elspeth van Veen notes that “in particular, the visualities and materialities of Guantánamo tours were used to construct the site as ‘safe, humane, legal, transparent,’ Guantánamo’s official motto” (2014: 20). By organizing books by language group, the Joint Task Force–Guantánamo gave the storytellers, the rewriters, the journalists evidence of the many language groups available to detainees. As a result many journalists unsurprisingly focused on the Detainee Library’s level of linguistic diversity. A number of the stories about the Detainee Library that emerged in 2009 were about Harry Potter; journalists like Victoria Derbyshire (2011: 1) broadcasted the fact that detainees had access to the series in eighteen languages. Many journalists in the United States latched onto this narrative—the story of the library as a place of constant enrichment and popular entertainment—but they failed to probe the limitations of the multilingual collection.<sup>32</sup> By ordering the library by language, the Joint Task Force–Guantánamo made it structurally challenging for journalists to analyze to what extent the collection differed in language groups. We revisit this issue of how journalists framed the narrative of the Guantánamo Bay Detainee Library in the next chapter. What is important to note here is the influence of constraints, especially those put in place by the Joint Task Force–Guantánamo.

There is another potential benefit of stacking books by language group. This classification method lets the members of the military, who are responsible for selecting books for detainees to read, ensure that the reading materials on the bookmobile reflect the linguistic needs of the block of cells that they are visiting. This way of arranging books compensates for the fact that the majority of individuals working in the Detainee Library have no formal background in library science.

The majority of detainees come from countries where Arabic, English, or Pashto are the official language(s).<sup>33</sup> It is therefore not surprising to find that detainee populations that speak Arabic, English, and Pashto are provided with the most monolingual reading resources. It is difficult to make any overarching conclusions about what types of materials detainees are capable of reading. There is no public record of the language proficiencies and literacy level of each detainee. Researchers may want to consider contacting the defense attorneys of released and current detainees in order to obtain information of this sort. Some of the 680 released detainees have come forward to offer testimonies of their experiences in Guantánamo, but many of them have chosen to avoid speaking publicly.

In the epigraph Manguel suggests that rules contribute to the pre-conceived identities of libraries. In the case of the Guantánamo Bay Detainee Library, it can be challenging to trace the evolution of policies and protocols that have shaped the collection. One way to probe the identity and the ideologies underlying any library is to examine the stories that are told about it.

In this essay I put myself forth as a rewriter of the narrative of the Guantánamo Bay Detainee Library. I am the first to use the inventory list in order to discuss the power of ideology and the way that linguistic diversity is unevenly distributed across the collection of books. These are themes that some journalists have addressed, but none relied on an Excel spreadsheet of this nature to substantiate their claims. My aim is not, however, to argue that my version of rewriting is superior or of a higher quality than that offered by journalists. Instead I seek to demonstrate that there are multiple pathways to rewriting and reimagining the legacy of the Guantánamo Bay Detainee Library.

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> The *Review of Department Compliance with President's Executive Order on Detainee Conditions of Confinement* states that there are reading materials available in eighteen unlisted languages. This statement conflicts with an inventory of books released by the Department of Defense in 2013, which puts the count closer to nineteen languages (Maret 2013: 1). I am unable to determine what language group is meant by "TB," though Tajik books are designated as "TJ." There are three books coded as "TB." One of the books, *Chorsu*, is by the Tajik intellectual and journalist Nur Tabarov. It is possible that "TB" is meant to refer to Tajiki Persian or Tajik, but it is baffling that *Chorsu* is coded as "TB," rather than "TJ." The other two titles listed under "TB" are entitled *Animal Stories* and *The Beginning and End of Love*. Given

that these titles are listed in English, it is challenging, if not possible, to make any substantial assertions regarding the language of their content. It is unlikely that “TB” is an abbreviation for Turkmen. Asim Manizada, a colleague from Azerbaijan, joked via email on May 26, 2016, that he “can’t think of anything better than tuberculosis.” I have consulted a number of other library specialists, and the joint hypothesis is that “TB” could be a typo.

<sup>2</sup> For more regarding the personal testimonies of detainee librarians, see Spc. Kelly Gary, “In the Library: A Look Inside the Joint Task Force Detainee Library,” *The Wire* 12 (44). Carol Rosenberg, a civilian reporter, has indicated that the chief librarian is a “Department of Defense contractor” (2013: 1).

<sup>3</sup> In this essay I use “Detainee Library” as shorthand to refer to the Guantánamo Bay Detainee Library. Instances of “detainee library” in the lowercase refer to other detainee libraries.

<sup>4</sup> In April 2013, Charlie Savage launched a blog that invited journalists to submit photographs of bookshelves in the Guantánamo Bay Detainee Library. Savage contributed the first image, a picture of a worn copy of *Too Far from Home: A Story of Life and Death in Space* by Chris Jones (Savage 2013: 1).

<sup>5</sup> In his book *Improbable Libraries*, one scholar, Alex Johnson, goes so far as to characterize the Guantánamo Bay Detainee Library as a “not library” (Johnson 2015: 270). I take issue with his claim, because it exacerbates a recurrent problem in recent attempts to examine the Detainee Library: instead of examining its institutional practices and protocols, scholars are squabbling over what to call it.

<sup>6</sup> Her exact phrase is “35,000-item collection of books, magazines, games and DVDs” (2016: 1).

<sup>7</sup> There is no publicly available declassified information about the current or former budget of the Guantánamo Bay Detainee Library.

<sup>8</sup> Information about which lawyers donated books to the Guantánamo Bay Detainee Library is only anecdotal. Clive Stafford Smith (2013: 1) published a partial list of books that the Joint Task Force–Guantánamo had barred him from sharing with his clients; he is the only habeas corpus lawyer to write publicly about a list of reading materials he attempted to share.

<sup>9</sup> One way to detect changes in the inventory list is to examine amendments to the Camp Delta Standard Operating Procedures; this military policy document often dictates minor changes to aspects of the detention camp that cannot be detected easily by members of the media.

<sup>10</sup> At the time of writing, the SOP from 2005 onwards have not been declassified, although some veterans (Hickman 2015: 32) allude to them in books they have authored after their deployment at the U.S. Naval Station in Guantánamo Bay ended.

<sup>11</sup> See Appendix A in the online version of this essay at [www.massrev.org](http://www.massrev.org) for a full breakdown of the languages represented in the inventory list of the Guantánamo Bay Detainee Library.

<sup>12</sup> For more on the many ways that books can be sorted and stocked, see Manguel, *The Library at Night* (2005: 40).

<sup>13</sup> Between 2002 and 2016, many defense attorneys donated books to the Detainee Library. It is not possible in the scope of this thesis to verify what percentage of donations the Joint Task Force–Guantánamo accepted.

<sup>14</sup> Captain Scholl confirmed this detail in an interview with *Breitbart News* (quoted in Schachtel 2015: 1).

<sup>15</sup> This policy is established in the SOP (2003: 92; 2004: 38).

<sup>16</sup> We can only know from statements to the press which congressional officials have visited the Detainee Library. For example, Senators Bernie Sanders (Sanders 2014: 1) and Marco Rubio (Rubio n.d.: 1) both wrote about or released photos documenting their trips to the U.S. Naval Base, but neither mentioned the Detainee Library specifically.

<sup>17</sup> For more information about this disclosure, see Jane Sutton, “Guantánamo Commander Defends \$744,000 Soccer Field” (2012).

<sup>18</sup> See Les Grossman, NEW OFFICIAL CHANNEL. “Donald Trump Tax Policy News Conference. Trump Unveils Tax Plan,” *You Tube* video, 25:01, September 28, 2015, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=d7E4bq-woHU>.

<sup>19</sup> See Field Service Camp Survey, February 1945. Box No. 1608. National Archives.

<sup>20</sup> See Memorandum to Camp Commanders, Prisoner of War Camps, from Colonel A. J. Lamoureaux, 23 April 1945. Box No. 1642. National Archives.

<sup>21</sup> Very few members of the U.S. military have been detained as POWs between 2002 and 2016.

<sup>22</sup> We also see a continued lack of attention towards the ideological system in previous scholarly articles that attempt to treat the issue of prison libraries.

<sup>23</sup> The document is also important because it reveals that some detainees have access to classes in Arabic, Pashto, and English (2009: 34).

<sup>24</sup> A sample of the inventory list originally delivered to Dr. Maret is included as Appendix B in a version of this essay posted online at [www.massrev.org](http://www.massrev.org).

<sup>25</sup> To my knowledge no one has yet conducted a comprehensive review of all the FOIA requests filed with the U.S. Southern Command concerning the U.S. detention camp at Guantánamo Bay. Individuals wishing to begin this line of research may wish to use FOIA Mapper, an online resource that lets researchers search FOIA requests by subject and U.S. government agency.

<sup>26</sup> Susan Maret, telephone interview with author, July 3, 2015.

<sup>27</sup> I filed four FOIA requests in total, including one to confirm the identities of all of the journalists who have visited the U.S. detention camp.

<sup>28</sup> To see this information in the form of a table, see Appendix C.

<sup>29</sup> For a more thorough description of the titles available in each language group, see Appendix D. For reasons already discussed I exclude books coded as “TB” and “TJ” from analysis. .

<sup>30</sup> In describing *The Gift: Poems by Hafiz*, the compiler notes that the book contains “translations by Ladinsky” (Maret 2013: 1). About *Rumi: Whispers of the Beloved*, the compiler discloses that the book is a “Trans. By Maryam Mafi” (Maret 2013: 1).

<sup>31</sup> These titles include *Legends of Cricket* by Geoff Armstrong and *The Oxford Book of Australian Sporting Anecdotes* by Richard Cashman.

<sup>32</sup> Specifically they ignored the fact that the quality of Harry Potter translations has varied from language to language, and furthermore they did not investigate what additional reading materials were available to detainee populations with proficiency in minority languages, such as Uzbek.

<sup>33</sup> See Appendix E in the online version of this essay at [www.massreview.org](http://www.massreview.org).

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