

THE LOGIC OF YOO

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He had heard of this John C. Yoo, what he had written while soldiers packed black-hooded men into planes & wondered how far they could go, when it would be too much & for how long it could be endured, but Yoo was a bartender, a mixologist, making adjustments—too sweet, too bitter—so skilled (is this what one knew after Harvard & Yale?) at jiggers & proofs, siphoning cheap vodkas into designer blue bottles, switching labels on the Johnny Walker—Red to Black.¹ The hoods were not for the prisoners. The hoods were not the opposite of maps or the soldiers' names, which were already blank. The hoods were a permission. Lights dimmed, music cupping its sonorous white hands around the prisoners' ears, it was easy not to meet the eyes, just to look at the lines in the grain of the bar, serve up the shots. What was war, what evil, what measurements could be brought to bear?

¹ Matt Labash, "The Passion of Dick Cheney," *Weekly Standard*, 22 September 2008, sec. 14, 2. In an interview, the Vice President reveals that his Scotch of choice is Johnny Walker Red.

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U.S. Code
Section 2340A:
“torture is an act
committed by a person
intended to inflict
severe
physical
or mental pain
and suffering
(other than pain or
suffering
incidental to lawful
sanctions)”