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THE TALK OF THE TOWN

ing specific to say about pornography. What Islamic law does decree, according to Najam Haider, an assistant professor of religion at Barnard, is that "nothing should be disseminated that promotes sin. When we're dealing with pornography, we're talking about a means toward a sin—masturbation."

Unless, perhaps, one's theology has been warped by the perverse interpretations of Islam that have been Al Qaeda's specialty. "Islamic law works largely according to rule and exception," Andrew March, an associate professor of political science at Yale, said. "Because the normal rule would be that it is a sin and a crime to produce pornography if you are a Muslim, and a sin to view it in private, and the only way you could justify it would be as a necessary evil to avoid a greater sin, like fornication."

Dept. of Further Exceptions: What if the performers are non-Muslim?

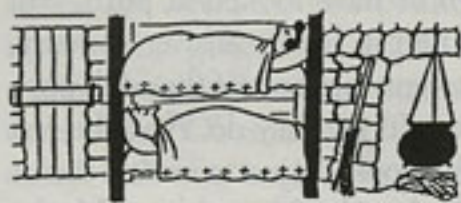
"It's possible, though I have no evidence of it, that Al Qaeda operatives view non-Muslim women as licit for sinless sexual use, because their moral status is so low," March said. "I've heard it argued that it's permissible to have sex with European women and visit strip clubs on these grounds, since the jihadis are already in the 'land of war.' It's possible that jihadis living in bin Laden's compound regarded non-Muslim women according to this status."

Was Professor March taken aback by the porn revelations?

"I suppose I was moderately surprised when I heard, although I took the news with a grain of salt," he said. "But I'm not completely shocked, certainly not the way I would have been if the confiscated material had been, say, a copy of John Rawls's 'A Theory of Justice.' Or a Bible."

—Mark Singer

OLLY OLLY OXEN FREE HIDEY-HOLES



If you stopped by the International Contemporary Furniture Fair at the Javits Center last week, you may have noticed, tucked among the minimalist mirrors and squiggly light fixtures, a booth containing shelves packed with more practical

goods—toilet paper, anchovies, bottled water, powdered Jell-O. This was a fallout shelter. Or, rather, it was a fake fallout shelter, created to promote Susan Roy's new book, "Bomboozled: How the U.S. Government Misled Itself and Its People Into Believing They Could Survive a Nuclear Attack."

Bomb shelters have existed in Europe since at least the Second World War, but D.I.Y. nuclear-fallout shelters—evoking both paranoia and optimism—are an American innovation. The government encouraged people to build them during the Cold War. "They were the beginning, in a way, of the national-security state," said Roy, who has short hair and wore square-framed red eyeglasses. "They're an example of our obsession with security, and of the government responding to people's demand to be protected from things you can't really be protected from." (Then: nuclear war. Now: "random acts of terrorism.") Roy got the idea when she came across an issue of the magazine *Nest* with pictures of a spacious ranch house, which was constructed in the seventies, for the businessman Girard B. Henderson, in a steel-and-concrete shell twenty-five feet under Las Vegas. The house has oil paintings, sliding glass doors, and, in the little yard area inside the shell, a guesthouse, a putting green, and a patio barbecue. The walls of the cave around it are painted with scenes of New Jersey and of a New Zealand sheep farm—landscapes dear to its owner.

There was no right way to build a fallout shelter, and Roy's book catalogues the different varieties. "They had some that were pod-shaped," she said, "and rectangles, cubes, and little igloos made out of concrete blocks." The Kelsey-Hayes Shelter was designed for easy assembly. Ad copy: "No excavating. No stones to lay. Simply bolt the prefabricated panels together in your basement and fill with sand and gravel or earth." Another design, by the Los Angeles interior designer Dorothy H. Paul, featured a Fun Room, where occupants could pass the time during a nuclear war by editing movies.

Did the government believe its citizens could survive nuclear attack by hiding in holes in their back yards? Not really, Roy said. The security technologist Bruce Schneier coined the term "security theatre" to describe certain measures, such as post-

9/11 T.S.A. pat-downs and subway bag checks, which, he says, improve feelings of security while doing little or nothing to protect people. "By the time these shelters were being constructed, bombs a thousand times more powerful than those dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki had been invented," Roy said. Survival was unlikely, and even if you did survive, "when you came out, it would be like Cormac McCarthy's 'The Road.'"

On the wall of Roy's display was a photo from *Life* showing a New York plumber named Art Carlson, with his family, in their fallout shelter. Carlson holds a shovel. One daughter is the "shelter librarian," while his son monitors the family's lanterns. Mrs. Carlson is in charge of food. (A *Chicago Daily Tribune* article, reprinted in the book, called "Meals for Two Days in a Fallout Shelter," had menus. Lunch: cream-of-vegetable soup, devilled ham, Bing cherries.)

The literature skirts a number of practical matters. Tests of family fallout shelters showed that some air-intake systems—tubes connecting to the surface, often equipped with hand-cranked air blowers—didn't work so well. "It was like a tomb down there," Roy said. "One thing that was very rarely talked about was going to the bathroom. You were supposed to take a garbage bin and line it with plastic. Imagine. When it was full, you were supposed to close it, run outside really fast, and leave it."

The fallout-shelter display at the convention elicited a variety of reactions. Older people got nostalgic remembering duck-and-cover drills. David McAlpin, an architect, said that his parents' farmhouse in New Jersey has a fallout shelter. "The air pipe is now in the middle of a lilac bush." An artist from Yonkers said she'd turned her family's shelter into a studio when she was a teen-ager: "I painted depressing, muddy-colored paintings."

If there's a lesson for today's civilians in the war on terror, Roy said, "it's learning to recognize propaganda when you see it." Roy lives at Sixty-first and Lexington. "After 9/11, we ran out and got flashlights and battery-operated lanterns," she said. But she didn't buy duct tape and plastic sheeting, as experts advised, in response to an anthrax scare. She said, "I don't think it would do any good."

—Lizzie Widdicombe