**ABSTRACT**

A few days after the terror attacks of 9/11, then Vice President Dick Cheney appeared on television with a call for “working the dark side.” While still unclear what this expression entailed at the time, Cheney's comment appears in retrospect to almost have been prophetic for the years to come – years where parts of the U.S. Army and intelligence community set up a rampant torture regime all across the world. Yet, the connection between a so-called “dark side,” “working” this “dark side,” and the torture that followed is not a given, but, instead, a consequence of a set of very specific legal, political, and personal choices in the early years after 9/11. This dissertation is an investigation into how the notion of a “dark side” took form, and of how and why the specific make-up of this“dark side” ended up creating a torture regime which already today seems almost unreal. The dissertation's first half—*dark side—*documents the making and nature of the dark side by analyzing a series of legal memos from the Department of Justice's Office of Legal Council and from the White House and concludes by relating its findings to traditional ideas about emergency action, national security, and torture. By analyzing official reports and testimonies from soldiers partaking in the War On Terror, the dissertation's second part—*dark arts*—focuses on the transformation of the dark side into a productive space in which “information” and the hunt for said information overshadowed all legal, ethical, or political boundaries and came to define what it meant to “work” the “dark side.”