

ENGAGING TERROR

THE HUMAN CONDITION SERIES

ENGAGING TERROR
A CRITICAL AND
INTERDISCIPLINARY APPROACH

THE HUMAN CONDITION SERIES EDITORIAL BOARD



BrownWalker Press
Boca Raton

Engaging Terror: A Critical and Interdisciplinary Approach

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BrownWalker Press

Boca Raton, Florida • USA

2009

ISBN-10: 1-59942-453-3 (*paper*)

ISBN-13: 978-1-59942-453-8 (*paper*)

ISBN-10: 1-59942-497-5 (*ebook*)

ISBN-13: 978-1-59942-497-2 (*ebook*)

www.brownwalker.com

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Engaging terror : a critical and interdisciplinary approach / [edited by]
Marianne Vardalos ... [et al.].

p. cm.

Includes bibliographical references.

ISBN-13: 978-1-59942-453-8 (pbk. : alk. paper)

ISBN-10: 1-59942-453-3 (pbk. : alk. paper)

1. Terrorism. 2. Terrorism and mass media. 3. Terrorism--Psychological aspects. I. Vardalos, Marianne, 1966- II. Title.

HV6431.E547 2009

363.325--dc22

2009030133

This book is dedicated to the potential of humanity
and those committed to it.

*“Terror becomes total when it becomes independent of all opposition:
it rules supreme when nobody any longer stands in its way.”—Hannah Arendt*

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Foreword.....	XIII
Preface and Acknowledgments.....	XV
List of Contributors.....	XVII
Introduction	
<i>Guy Kirby Letts</i>	19
The Rhythm of Terror	
<i>Nandan Choksi</i>	23
Who is the Terrorist?: Analyzing the Discourse and Practices Surrounding the Confrontation Between Governments and Insurgent Organizations	
<i>Maritza Felices-Luna</i>	31
Media as an Anti-Peace Making Tool in the Context of Globalization: Analyzing News Coverage in a Time of Terror and War	
<i>Narges Valibeigi</i>	43
The Media in the Service of Terrorism	
<i>Dario Kuntić</i>	67
Liberalism and Governmentality in the War on Terror	
<i>Matthew Morgan</i>	75
Combating Terror of Law in Colonial India: The Law of Sedition and the Nationalist Response	
<i>Aravind Ganachari</i>	93
Terror, Outlawry, and the Experience of the Impossible	
<i>Mary Bunch</i>	111
What's in a Name? Interpreting Terrorism from the Perspective of Personal Construct Theory	
<i>James Horley and Ian McPhail</i>	119
On Terror Considered As One of the Fine Arts	
<i>Milo Sweedler</i>	129

ENGAGING TERROR

Some Thoughts on Political Terrorism and Film Music <i>Panayiotis Demopoulos</i>	141
Re(con)figuring the Spectacle: State Flexibility in Response to Imaged Terror <i>Rebecca A. Adelman</i>	149
“Don’t Say the Zed Word!”: Toward a Linguistic Construction of Social Class in the Contemporary <i>Living Dead</i> Film <i>Leslie Russell Ashby</i>	159
Fate and Terror in Don DeLillo’s <i>Falling Man</i> <i>Christine Muller</i>	167
Terror as Text: DeLillo’s <i>Falling Man</i> and the Representation of Poker as Terror <i>Charly Norton</i>	175
Creative Action: Language and Gender Beyond Terror <i>Stephanie Barann</i>	185
Cosmopolitan Hospitality in Post-9/11 Popular Fiction: Asad’s <i>The Reluctant Fundamentalist</i> <i>Amy Hildreth</i>	195
Stereotyping Islam: A Critical Study of Terror in John Updike’s <i>Terrorist</i> <i>Amal Al-Leithy</i>	203
The Tyrannizing Order of Mental Health Promotion <i>Cindy Vander Meulen</i>	209
Terror of AIDS: Risky Sexual Behavior of Migrants in Two Cities of India <i>Parveen Nangia</i>	229
Addressing Terror Through Group Psyche <i>Sophia C. Hughes</i>	245
Curing and Educating Through Terror: (A Comparative Case Study) <i>Razvan Amironesei</i>	255

The Possibility of Terror Through the Story of Anxiety
Melissa Abbey Stronger 269

Constructing the Aboriginal Terrorist: Depictions of Aboriginal
 Protestors, the Caledonia Reclamation, and Canadian Neoliberalization
Jennifer Adese..... 275

Unresolved Issues: The Roots of the 1970 FLQ Crisis in the
 Rebellions of 1837-1838 in Lower Canada
Marty Wood..... 287

Technologies of Resistance: The Role of Public and Collective Memory
 in Responding to Past and Present State-Violence in Argentina
Ana Laura Pauchulo..... 301

Terrorizing (Un)citizens: A Genealogy of Security Certificates
Sarah Hamilton..... 309

CTOs: A New Order of Terror?
Katie Aunbrecht..... 323

Taking Back Projections:
 The Despair and Hope in Projective Identification
Karyne Messina..... 331

Learning Rules And Roles
Dianne D. Bergsma..... 345

Narrative Interlude: The Rules and the Game
Beatrix Prinsen 351

The Rules Do Not Make a Game
Maureen Connolly..... 357

Youth Terror or Terrorized Youth? Youth Violence in Nigeria:
 Redefining Spaces of Politics and Belonging
Andrea Kirschner..... 369

Humanist Terrorism in the Political Thought of Robespierre and Sartre
Timothy Johnson..... 387

ENGAGING TERROR

The Importance of Propaganda for Germany's Fascist Regime:
A Comparison of Two Academic Accounts
Beatrice Marry..... 399

The Man with the Hissing Bomb: Anarchism and Terror in the
North American Imagination
Richard JF Day 405

Endorsements for *Engaging Terror*..... 415

FOREWORD

It seems right to say that since 9/11, all western societies have been forced to accept the significance of international and non-nation-state forms of terrorism. As these forms of terrorism have only spread and worsened globally, a conference on terror would be very timely. But if 9/11 changed anything with respect to this timeline, it was not in forcing the sudden realization that there is a terrorist threat against which we must mobilize. It was in awakening us to the critical realization that the significance of the threat can reside in other spaces and forms. Today, in witnessing the intense tactics of social mobilization throughout the western world, it becomes clear that the truly significant phenomena are those diverse forms of terror used in these very tactics of mobilization. One witnesses governed uses of fear, insecurity, states of emergency and pathologies. One experiences them in our communities, schools, public institutions, consumption patterns and societal relations. These tactics and forms have precise histories that have been extended beyond the western world and long pre-date 9/11. Herein lays the timeliness of these significant forms of terror which are never reducible to the forms of terrorism. The former reveal a historical and social backdrop intimate with terrorized and terrorizing activities, for which the new international terrorism is only a recent and partial player (though clearly a pressing one). In our view it was highly appropriate to stage a conference on terror if one multiplies the fields of critical research beyond the priority that is too often accorded, quite uncritically at times, the new forms of international terrorism (especially by the mainstream western media).

The concept of terror is often found safely hidden and un-thought in diverse cultural, philosophical, and religious traditions and ways of life. One can see these safe havens extending from the divine mythologies of religious experience to the seemingly opposed rationalized life of contemporary hi-tech societies. With respect to religious experience, it is clear that we have to seriously reconsider the dynamics of organized religion in the face of rising religious fundamentalisms and terrorist activity. But terror in the highly rationalized world of technological societies can also impose its existing logic as a way of maintaining the order of things. We give it various positive names that conceal its potency and negative effects—at precise moments in history terror's potency has appeared in benign terms such as “child welfare”, “residential schools”, the “founding nation”, the “developed world”, the “hysterical woman”, the “mentally ill”, the “social and sexual deviant”, the “immigrant problem”, the “disposable income” and the “democratic liberation of other peoples”. It is essentially the absurd rationalizations of these terms in the face of concrete realities that covers over terror's effects and keeps it intact.

ENGAGING TERROR

Most importantly, the conference was interested in investigating what role terror has in maintaining the contemporary condition of humanity and what hope there is of envisioning a condition in which terror is natural and organic rather than strategic and imposed.

The Human Condition Series Editorial Board

PREFACE

In May of 2008 The Human Condition Series (THCS) held its second annual interdisciplinary conference on the timely theme of Terror. Over 100 presenters from around the world descended on Barrie, Ontario in Canada to present their research and engage in genuine and meaningful dialogue.

The Human Condition Series, founded in 2006, is an ongoing series of international, interdisciplinary conferences that seek to address the current state of the human condition. Unlike the diversity and eclecticism of multidisciplinary approaches, an interdisciplinary approach seeks out the creative antagonisms and tensions existing between the diversity of disciplines and emphasizes the complements and unifying elements among them. The series brings together people from a variety of disciplines to assess a singular topic from artistic, cinematic, literary, ethical, social, political, philosophical, psychological and religious perspectives. Presenters come from around the world to share innovative ideas and new ways of thinking and acting. These original theorizations transcend traditional boundaries and contest the very foundations upon which whole fields of ideas are divided, disciplined and sanctioned as true forms of knowledge. In 2007, the theme was Empire.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Our sincerest thanks to our international presenters representing scholarship from Australia to Mumbai, from Singapore to Zimbabwe. It would not be an international conference were it not for those willing to make the journey to Barrie, Ontario, Canada. We especially acknowledge the courage of those international scholars who tried to attend but were prevented, faced with adversity in the forms of being denied a visitor's visa, institutional funding or permission from other authorities to travel and share their ideas. We gratefully acknowledge the generosity of Sunera Thobani, Henry Giroux and Sut Jhally for sharing their most recent scholastic forays into terror and for making themselves accessible to the many participants who traveled so far to hear them.

Sincere appreciation to founding student organizers whose voluntary fundraising efforts continue to bear fruit because of their personal commitment to the series: Deborah Clyne, Jana Carpenter, Katrina Dobson, Derek Fleur, Susan Mills, and Andrew Preston. Welcome to incoming organizers Melissa Aceto, Ashley McNaughton, Kyle Patterson, and Mark Welsh. Thank you to the many, many more who assisted behind the scenes.

ENGAGING TERROR

A special thank you to the artists who donated their talents to make the conference extraordinary: Teena Aujla for her artistic vision and graphic designs, Valerie Selnyk and Callam Rodya for their performance of spoken word poetry to original music, and Arturo Escobar of Theatre of the Oppressed for his moving one-man show.

At Laurentian University, Sudbury, we gratefully acknowledge the financial support of the Office of the Vice-President Academic (Anglophone Affairs), the Office of the Dean of Social Sciences and Humanities, and the departments of Sociology and English. We continue to be grateful to The University Partnership Centre at Georgian College, for financial, physical and administrative support. We thank Christine Redfern and Andrea MacGregor for so competently taking care of business and gratefully acknowledge the hard work of Liane Chesire, Darlene Forrester and Linda Taylor-Eddington.

Thanks to the Library Commons of Georgian College, specifically, Vicki Macmillan for both intellectual and financial contributions to the conference with the establishment of the THCS Screening Room. Thank you also to the Library of Social Sciences in New York for showcasing the publications of our keynote speakers and presenters.

Thanks to Jeff Young of Brown Walker Press for bringing the deserving proceedings of these annual meetings to a readership. Last but not least, we thank Brandy Foster for the preparation of the manuscript, no small feat that it was.

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INTRODUCTION

Guy Kirby Letts

Terror (terrorem): to be frightened or filled with great fear and dread. While the term ‘terrorism’ and ‘terrorist’ are a part of our collective lexicon within contemporary popular culture, the concept of terror as a psychosocial phenomenon is accorded little if any attention. As both a phenomenological and sociological aspect of the human condition, what is terror, how does it function, what are the conditions that facilitate it, and how is it situated within the social body? These are a few of the questions that will be addressed in *Engaging Terror: A Critical and Interdisciplinary Approach*.

Engaging Terror is a collection of select, extended papers drawn from The Human Condition Series (THCS). THCS is part of The Centre for the Study of the Human Condition (CSHC) which provides research, analysis, publications, and international forums on aspects of the human condition. The thirty-five essays presented here are a representative sample of the 115 papers presented as part of The Human Condition Series Conference on Terror that took place in 2008. The international scope of the conference drew participants from twenty-three countries including Brazil, Columbia, Cuba, France, Israel, Lebanon, Lithuania, New Zealand, Nigeria, Pakistan, Philippines, Scotland, Singapore, South Africa, Turkey, and United Kingdom.

In this volume, scholars from Croatia, Egypt, Greece, Germany, India, and from across Canada and the U.S. share their insights from a variety of perspectives on the representation and production of terror. Terror is examined not only from a contemporary western perspective, but also as a historical and global phenomenon, including analysis and case studies from Argentina, Germany, India, and Nigeria. Ana Laura Pauchulo’s essay, “Technologies of Resistance: The Role of Public and Collective Memory in Responding to Past and Present State-Violence in Argentina,” for instance, examines collective memory in relation to state violence, trauma and resistance, and its impact on constructing democracy in Argentina, while Aravind Ganachari’s piece entitled, “Combating Terror of Law in Colonial India: The Law of Sedition and the Nationalist Response,” traces the Indo-British Law of Sedition through the diverse phases of India’s struggle for freedom.

Several thematic topics are evident throughout the book. For example, terror is analysed in the context of the state, mass media, fiction, film, health practices, and education, to name a few. The book begins with Nandan Choksi’s provocative essay, “The Rhythm of Terror,” which asserts that terror is an inevitable and immutable aspect of existence and an integral element

in the forces of disintegration and destruction, as well as integration and reconstruction. Choksi goes on to argue that while terror is a subset of fear, it is neither good nor evil, but simply a rhythm. While Choksi addresses the ontological aspects of terror as a natural and organic phenomenon, the essays by Maritza Felices-Luna and Matthew Morgan confront the strategic and imposed notion of terror as a decidedly socio-political construct within relations of power. Felices-Luna's grounded case study, "Who is the Terrorist?: Analyzing the Discourse and Practices Surrounding the Confrontation Between Governments and Insurgent Organizations," traces the Bush administration's legal and political construction of 'torture culture' which was used as a tool in the 'war on terror'. Morgan's more structural treatment, "Liberalism and Governmentality in the War on Terror," on the other hand, examines the changes in technologies of self and government within liberal democracies under the rubric of the 'war on terror'. According to Morgan, the development of new surveillance techniques are designed to socially sort members of the liberal polity into categories based on their perceived threat to the social order.

Within the topic of power and socio-political constructs, Jennifer Adese's, "Constructing the Aboriginal Terrorist: Depictions of Aboriginal Protestors, the Caledonia Reclamation, and Canadian Neoliberalization," and Richard JF Day's, "The Man with the Hissing Bomb: Anarchism and Terror in the North American Imagination," look at the imaginary construction and representation of Aboriginal protestors and anarchists as both social deviants and terrorists. Like Aboriginal peoples, anarchists are being singled out not for what they have done, but for who they are. In this sense, not only are those deemed a threat to the social order targeted, but also marginalized groups, in the case of Aboriginal peoples, as part of an ongoing effort to maintain structures of repression and hierarchical supremacy. As Adese puts it, such 'representations conceal the institutionalized racism of the Canadian state and citizens'.

The role of the state in the construction of 'terrorist groups' is often facilitated through the media. Much of what we know about the world is mediated through the press and news coverage. While Adese's essay focuses on an analysis of newspaper articles in constructing Aboriginal protestors as terrorists, Narges Valibeigi's, "Media as an Anti-Peace Making Tool in the Context of Globalization: Analyzing News Coverage in a Time of Terror and War," examines the characterization of Islam in news reports from CNN and the BBC which ultimately reinforces otherness and stereotypes about Muslims. While mass media is often the voice of the state and reflects dominant cultural values, Dario Kuntić's essay, "The Media in the Service of Terrorism," illustrates the ways in which non-state terrorist organizations utilize the media and mass communications, such as the internet, both to support their cause and to spread fear.

The media, then, is a fundamental element in the modern construction of terror, terrorism and terrorists. Beyond the immediacy of news coverage, however, other forms of media and communications—such as fiction, film and music—also figure prominently in the production, configuration, and reproduction of terror. The culture industry, for instance, reifies terror within the field of popular culture, tacitly informing the popular imaginary. Milo Sweedler's, "On Terror Considered As One of the Fine Arts," and Rebecca A. Adelman's, "Re(con)figuring the Spectacle: State Flexibility in Response to Imaged Terror," look at how non-state terrorism and terrorist acts are turned into spectacles as part of the spectacular within mediated culture. Sweedler notes that while Jean Baudrillard is right to insist that 9/11 was symbolically important, the success of the attack was irreducible to the destruction of the symbol and the spectacular aspect of the destruction itself. Adelman too sees the importance of the spectacle in the discourse of terrorism and outlines the strategies used by the U.S. to reconfigure spectacular defeat into small victories in the global war on terror, though no spectacular triumphs were ever present.

Mass communication and popular culture are significant factors in both informing and expressing collective experience. While state and non-state terrorism are part of a global narrative, the stories we tell can shape the kinds of questions that might be asked in the face of catastrophe and fear. Here, the relationship between fiction and terror is explored from Amal Al-Leithy's, "Stereotyping Islam: A Critical Study of Terror in John Updike's *Terrorist*," and Amy Hildreth's, "Cosmopolitan Hospitality in Post-9/11 Popular Fiction: Asad's *The Reluctant Fundamentalist*," to Christine Muller and Charly Norton's essays on Don DeLillo's novel *The Falling Man*. The events of 9/11 usured in a new poetics of terror in the west, bringing with it a new language and perspective. As part of the new poetics of terror, literary works are being used as a means of exploring catastrophe and its residue. Film too, as in Leslie Russell Ashby's paper, "Don't Say the Zed Word!: Toward a Linguistic Construction of Social Class in the Contemporary *Living Dead* Film," also plays with the social meanings of terror. Ashby's essay, for instance, looks at the relationship between terror and language in the construction of social class. According to Ashby, 'the living dead are a class subjected to the definitions and limits placed upon them by the living survivors who always deem themselves to be more human'. In this sense, certain truths are revealed about our social interactions as we come to terms with our own 'living dead'.

Circumventing the obvious impact of the media and popular culture on constructing and defining terror is the more subtle role that social institutions and institutional practices play in the formation of terror. The terror of institutional discourses, for instance, is reflected in medical and educational practices. Cindy Vander Meulen's, "The Tyrannizing Order of Mental Health Promotion," demonstrates how psychological illness transformed mental

health into a medical problem by treating it according to a disease model of human development. As a result, mental health professionals work from a standpoint that re-folds individuals into a social norm of deviance, psychological evaluation, and treatment. The three inter-related papers by Dianne D. Bergsma, Beatrix Prinsen, and Maureen Connolly examine the rules and regularities that produce power, fear and dread within education. Drawing on the works of L. Bain's hidden curriculum and Paulo Freire's archaeology of consciousness, the authors look at the dynamics of power and normative logics that produce the familiarization of fear and deter the politics and pedagogy of liberation.

Henry Giroux reminds us that,

Democracy begins to fail and political life becomes impoverished when society can no longer translate private problems into social issues... In the post-911 world, the space of shared responsibility [in the west] has given way to the space of private fears... and the social obligations of citizenship are now reduced to the highly individualized imperatives of consumerism. (2006:1)

For Giroux, the terror of neoliberalism, domestically, is predicated on undermining the social contract which emphasizes the public good through expanding social provisions such as adequate access to health care, housing, employment, education and public transit whereby the conditions of democracy could be experienced and critical citizenship could be engaged. However, the social contract "has been replaced with a notion of national security based on fear, surveillance, and control rather than on a culture of shared responsibility" (2004:xv). Many of the concerns raised by Giroux are also addressed in *Engaging Terror* from Sarah Hamilton's, "Terrorizing (Un)citizens: A Genealogy of Security Certificates" and Katie Aubrecht's, "CTOs: A New Order of Terror?," to Andrea Kirschner's, "Youth Terror or Terrorized Youth? Youth Violence in Nigeria—Redefining Spaces of Politics and Belonging" and Karyne Messina's essay, "Taking Back Projections: The Despair and Hope in Projective Identification." These essays, as well as those mentioned earlier, not only resist state definitions of terror and defy the notion of fear as a defining and totalizing experience, but represent the reclaiming of both the social and political spheres as a place of promise in which the human condition can flourish, in all its complexity, beyond the confines of commercialism and institutional domination.

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THE RHYTHM OF TERROR

Nandan Choksi

Terror is fun! The Tower of Terror, at Disney World, is a source of immense pleasure to millions. But terror can also cause immense pain. In order to create either pain or pleasure, however, terror must be learned. Terror is only a subset of fear—it is extreme fear. And psychologists have long ago demonstrated that fear is itself learned rather than innate. Professor R. L. Gregory explains in *The Oxford Companion to the Mind* that “The impact of early behaviorism with its massive emphasis on the importance of acquired behavior led to the demise of the notion that some fears may be innately determined” (257).

Those of us who subscribe to the Jungian school of thought believe in archetypes, the notion that everyone is born with some inherent qualities and capacities. Even so, however, it is not necessary to believe that one is born with the knowledge of fear of any type. Certainly, one is born with the capacity to learn from anything one experiences. Exactly what each person learns from his or her unique experiences, however, is infinitely variable. But, even assuming that a person can and does learn to fear, the capacity to learn something implies, equally, the capacity to unlearn it and/or to learn something else that may help us manage what we have learned already.

Extreme fear, like anything else, becomes unpleasant when the circumstances causing it are perceived as being, not simply uncontrolled, but uncontrollable. Mere knowledge of possible death or disaster creates no terror. Usually, it fails to create even mild fear. Extreme terror is caused, then, not so much by the fear of any actual consequences, but by the feeling of total loss of control. But it is possible to learn to deal with any emotion, including the feeling of total loss of control.

Role of Government and Society

There is no such thing as social terror. An entire society can never be terrorized. It is always the individual who feels terror. But society can and does play a very significant role in causing the individual to feel terror. Society amplifies the feeling of terror associated with certain types of acts or events. Political and business leaders use the various media as tools to perpetuate fear throughout society. In their essay, *The Strategy of Terror and the Psychology of Mass-Mediated Fear*, the analysis of professors Breckenridge and Zimbardo is that, “Social amplification is especially common when there is ambiguity, doubt, or misinformation, which provoke fear and instigate rumor” (123).

Social amplification, however, is a technique that can be used with equal effectiveness by governments and criminals alike. In their analysis of Professors Scott Gerwehr and Kirk Hubbard's essay, "What is Terrorism? Key Elements and History," professors Pratchett, Brown and Bongar point out, "Gerwehr and Hubbard posit that the success or failure of a terrorist campaign depends on the ability to achieve each of the six stages outlined in the Yale model of social influence: exposure, attention, comprehension, acceptance, retention and translation" (454).

But why does terrorism exist? What purpose does it serve? From a purely business perspective, terrorism is counter-productive. To train a suicide bomber, for instance, the terrorist needs a trainer. Then the terrorist needs someone who can make a bomb that the bomber can operate. Someone must fund the entire project. And, in the end, nothing is left—the money, the trainer, the bomb, and the bomber are all gone. The organizer often takes no credit for the deed, fearing for his or her own life. To continue being a terrorist for an extended period of time, the terrorist must, inevitably, have access to practically unlimited resources—financial and social.

The government and media can do what nobody else can—they can decide what stories to tell and they can disseminate those stories freely and openly. When the government runs out of money, it can raise more by the simple expedient of legally raising taxes. But why would people agree to pay higher taxes to fund terrorist activities? Nobody would—unless, of course, they feel that the government needs the money to fund anti-terrorist programs.

But why should people believe that there are so many terrorists committing so many crimes that an anti-terrorist fund is necessary? According to Loretta Napoleoni, in her book, *Modern Jihad: Tracing the Dollars Behind the Terror Networks*, government-backed counter-insurgency has been a staple of US foreign policy since the 1960s when then-President John F. Kennedy, "presented the National Security Council with an immediate budget allocation of \$19 million (equivalent today to \$100 million) as part of an ambitious counter-insurgency program including an expansion of the US Army's Special Forces from a few hundred to 4,000 men" (13). It is Dr. Napoleoni's contention that Kennedy, however, is not the first or only political leader to espouse counter-insurgency. Dr. Napoleoni asserts that, "A new concept in political warfare, counter-insurgency effectively legitimized state-sponsored terrorism" (12). Whether or not one agrees with Dr. Napoleoni's views, it is certain that every major government in the world today is popularizing the idea of a terrorist threat to its people.

And it is not only the Al-Qaedas and the IRAs and other religious extremists of the world, who engage in acts of terror, and it is not only religious extremists that various governments target as terrorists. The problem, as Dr. Philip Cole says, in a chapter aptly entitled "Communities of Fear," in his book, *The Myth of Evil*, the politics of terrorism is much deeper and more complex than that:

Rather than political communities forming themselves around shared identities, they are formed through the exploitation by political authorities of social fears and insecurities, by focusing those fears upon one threatening ‘evil’ figure—the vampire, the witch, the Jew, the migrant, the asylum seeker, the Gypsy, the ‘Islamicist’ terrorist—and claiming to protect the ‘genuine’ members from those deviant and dangerous threats. (81)

According to Dr. Cole, Dr. Napoleoni and others, then, governments not only fund counter-insurgency programs, but use the media and other resources at their command to isolate and demonize specific minority groups. The purpose, of course, is to show that governments and politicians are not only useful, but indispensable. The effect, however, is quite often just the opposite. By isolating, alienating, and disenfranchising specific groups and individuals for reasons that have more to do with political expediency rather than national security, all governments create a seething, powerless minority in every country in the world. Inevitably, some members of such minorities express their displeasure at being marginalized through angry words and rather literally explosive actions. Up to a certain point, it is in the government’s interest to ensure the existence of such groups. And therefore, either directly or indirectly, every government in the world funds such groups and individuals.

But such a strategy will ultimately fail. Loneliness and impotence are powerful weapons in the arsenal of any government, when used sparingly and directed against groups and individuals that do, truly, threaten national security. Hannah Arendt is quite correct when she says, in the chapter entitled “Ideology and Terror” in her famous book-length analysis of governmental excess, *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, “Nevertheless, organized loneliness is considerably more dangerous than the unorganized impotence of all those who are ruled by the tyrannical and arbitrary will of a single man” (478).

Terror as Image and Symbol

Medusa, the Gorgon, she of the venomous blood and deadly gaze, for instance, is as much terrified as terrifying. Although, as a Gorgon she has fearsome powers, as compared to a mortal, she is powerless before the gods of Olympus, such as Athena and Poseidon. It is Poseidon’s rape of Medusa in Athena’s temple that causes Athena to curse Medusa, turning the once-beautiful and gentle Medusa into a hateful and terrifying creature. And even so, she terrorizes nobody. She continues her pregnancy until the great hero, Perseus, sneaks into her home, and kills her while she sleeps, without even looking at her. And, despite everything, Medusa gives birth. And her children are neither monsters nor monstrous. Chrysaor goes on to become a great king while Pegasus the winged horse becomes the mount of the great hero, Bellerophon. It is not, therefore, Medusa’s actions, nor her associations, that