Terror and the Postcolonial

Edited by Elleke Boehmer and Stephen Morton
Terror and the Postcolonial
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Contents

Notes on Contributors vii
Acknowledgments xi

Introduction: Terror and the Postcolonial 1
Elleke Boehmer and Stephen Morton

Part I Theories of Colonial and Postcolonial Terror 25

1 The Colony: Its Guilty Secret and Its Accursed Share 27
Achille Mbembe

2 Vanishing Points: Law, Violence, and Exception in the Global War Prison 55
Derek Gregory

3 The White Fear Factor 99
Vron Ware

4 Sacrificial Militancy and the Wars around Terror 113
Alex Houen

5 Postcolonial Writing and Terror 141
Elleke Boehmer
## Contents

### Part II Histories of Post/colonial Terror  

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Revolutionary Terrorism in British Bengal</td>
<td>153</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>Peter Heehs</em></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Excavating Histories of Terror: Thugs, Sovereignty, and the Colonial Sublime</td>
<td>177</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>Alex Tickell</em></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Terrorism, Literature, and Sedition in Colonial India</td>
<td>202</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>Stephen Morton</em></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Israel in the US Empire</td>
<td>226</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>Bashir Abu-Manneh</em></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>The Poetics of State Terror in Twenty-first-century Zimbabwe</td>
<td>254</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>Ranka Primorac</em></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>The Mediation of “Terror”: Authority, Journalism, and the Stockwell Shooting</td>
<td>273</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>Stuart Price</em></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Part III Genres of Terror  

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Terror Effects</td>
<td>307</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>Robert J. C. Young</em></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>“Gendering” Terror: Representations of the Female “Freedom Fighter” in Contemporary Sri Lankan Literature and Cultural Production</td>
<td>329</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>Neluka Silva</em></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Terror, Spectacle, and the Secular State in Bombay Cinema</td>
<td>345</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>Sujala Singh</em></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>“The age of reason was over... an age of fury was dawning”: Contemporary Fiction and Terror</td>
<td>361</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>Robert Eaglestone</em></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>Bodies of Terror: Performer and Witness</td>
<td>370</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>Emma Brodzinski</em></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Index  

vi
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Introduction: Terror and the Postcolonial

Elleke Boehmer and Stephen Morton

As If Invoked, Like Dracula

Terror, postcolonial or otherwise, induces affect, as a number of essays in this book describe. Among the affective repercussions of acts of terror are extreme fear, galvanizing shock, vengeful anger, displacement, and, perhaps above all, paranoia – the belief that having struck once, terror will do so again, at the same place, like lightning. Or, even if it has not appeared before, the deep paranoia associated with terror is that, once conceived, once entertained in the mind, terror will inexorably arise, somewhere, and attack the body, whether national, social, or individual, just as Dracula attacks, with his type of watchfulness and cunning.

That day, 7/7/2005, “London’s 9/11” (with apposite, necromantic rhyme), it certainly did seem to this book’s editors that our theoretical engagement with terror and terrorism, defiant and skeptical as it was, had in some way called forth the configuration of terrorist events that manifested all about us. North, east, west of our meeting that day in the heart of London, bombs exploded, the repercussions of which we almost immediately felt; the aftershocks of which pulled through us, forming as we did part of a vast, moving crowd. Thus drawn in, it was as if our academic investigations – especially because they were skeptical and against current neo-imperial orthodoxies concerning the unquestioned rightness of the war on terror – had mysteriously invoked these outrages, even conjured them into being.