

Preface

Fear is everywhere, it is measurable, and it is reportable. Or so the viewer is apprised in countless media broadcasts designed to draw one in to the latest fragmentary and predigested roundup of global news. Such certainty about an omnipresent and scalable emotion seems to accord with the consensus of the analyses now available that ruminate on the supposed failure of the Enlightenment project to free us from so elemental a condition. As Jan Plamper has noted, fear sells, and this marketability, which apparently reflects the daily concerns of the modern consumer, meshes with Zygmunt Bauman's observation that we choose stubbornly to fear everything, from the weather to strangers and even our own memories. Life surely abounds in peril, and terrors can be racked up, one upon the other, to create a hierarchy of worry to be treated both by the technicians of modernity—particularly the psychoanalysts and insurance agents whose industries are examined by Joanna Bourke—and by the more traditional religious mechanics of destiny.¹

Even if it is experienced in the present moment, one might argue that fear is inherently of the future; that it is the pervading sense of uncertainty about an inherently unknowable condition that could potentially visit pain on the body or loss of what one holds dear. As a result the modern subject is potentially rendered utterly insecure, perhaps more so than her/his ancestors. After all, it has even been observed that the states that can claim the most sophisticated security systems are those that identify the greatest number of threats.² Yet has it always been thus? If the Enlightenment was supposed, by the inculcation of universal reason, to free everyone from fear and thus remove the Divine as an imagined agent of history (which so clearly has not happened), then how different have the fears of the past been? Is the overwhelming and constantly reiterated Islamophobia of today the same as that of previous epochs? And how, and indeed whom, might we fear in times to come?

These seemed but a few of the potential questions to be posed when, in October of 2006 and under the direction of Gyan Prakash, the Shelby Culom Davis Center for Historical Studies issued a call for applications from scholars working on the subject of fear in all its manifestations. Over the course of the 2007–8 academic year, a wide-ranging set of conversations explored specific histories of fear in various settings. In many instances the discussions did indeed proceed from debates over the meaning of

Enlightenment claims to free the individual from the fears born of ignorance, superstition, and perhaps even religion itself. Moreover it became clear how such fears were often invested in the body, or visualizations of bodies that transcended the individual to include the formative nation-states of which she or he was a member. With this transition in mind we found it fruitful to move the discussion toward how fear could be rationalized, mobilized, or even visualized by the state and its agents as a naturally chaotic enemy of order and, consequently, of the future.

Of course this set of conversations hardly developed in isolation, and there are already numerous works that offer different perspectives on what, how, and why we have feared. The aim of this volume is both to build upon and connect with those other works, and perhaps serve as a somewhat broader discussion of the topic for those interested in the intersections of emotionology and history. The contributions that were generated from our discussions, presented chronologically, provide snapshots of histories and historically laden presents in which fear has played a decidedly powerful role. We commence with David Lederer's recounting, by way of the contents of sometimes garishly illustrated broadsheets, of how early modern German literati envisioned their nation as a monstrously deformed beast, while commoners of the period anticipated possible starvation or penury and reflected on the bloody executions and tortures so often witnessed during their childhoods. Contrasted with this last gasp of the Old Order in Europe, Ronald Schechter shows that fear, or more specifically Terror, was not simply cast as a doomed condition to be banished by hope, but rather was conceptualized in Enlightenment discourse as a tool to be deployed by the rational overseer, and in ways akin to those of great princes past that were to be no less shocking to the populace.

Fear can have a convenient past too. In Charles Walker's chapter, set far from the domains of the *philosophes* but in the same Age of Revolution, we learn how clergy suspected of collaboration with the Peruvian rebel Tupac Amaru II (1742–1781) resorted to claiming that their apparently treacherous actions had been motivated solely by fear—a situation reluctantly allowed under Canon Law. For her part, Lisbeth Haas suggests that Spanish missionaries in the California borderlands a few decades later tried to mask their incomprehension of indigenous responses to their presence by ascribing fear to them, even as she contends that the Indians themselves appear to have come to celebrate the fears of their conquerors as a means of valorizing their own resistance.

If anything, the first four chapters contribute to a discussion of fear, rationality, and religion in the absence of modern technologies now seen as essential to its projection or aversion. In our first foray into the emergent embrace of film, mass suggestion, and fear in the twentieth century, Andreas Killen opens his account with a Nazi censor's assessment of Fritz

Lang's *Dr. Mabuse*, whose hypnotic powers were perceived as having the potential to break down rational social order in Germany. Such images were all the more terrifying, it seems, because they were projected via a medium that was deemed hypnotically subversive in and of itself, having been deployed in a society awash with itinerant, Caligari-esque hypnotists who had cut their teeth on the ranks of traumatized veterans of the Great War. Still, as Killen closes his account, it is clear that this medium offered as much promise as peril. Similar themes may be seen in Marla Stone's exploration of how and what faithful Italians who had embraced the cinema were expected to fear when a state desired them to do so. In her case moviegoers—while doubtless optimistic of a hopeful resolution to films about the recent Spanish Civil War of 1936–39—would find their particular fears for social disorder embodied in the disheveled and merciless Soviet officer, a figure who some might argue only briefly displaced the beturbaned jihadist and his veiled counterpart. Such a transition is explored by Melani McAlister, who writes the history of the U.S. evangelical movement that embraced rights talk in the 1990s while simultaneously engaging with a global(ized) Christian body that was viscerally encouraged to fear Islam in much the same way the Communist enemy had once been feared, in hopes of thus combating and similarly defeating it.

From these mediations we then move rapidly to two different sites of fear and imagination. First we have the apparent chaos of a modern Delhi that defied the prescriptions of colonial and postcolonial planners. Ravi Sundaram demonstrates how the urban cacophony has been rendered as a fertile playground for hybrid animals of the imagination, or yet machines able to deal out yet more fear in an already confusing nexus of apparent disorder that had defeated modern planners set on vanquishing the unruly (or indeed the monstrous).³

Monsters, meanwhile, are a prominent feature in the popular culture of post-Soviet Russia as excavated by Alexander Etkind. Taking a rather different approach influenced by film studies and psychoanalytic theory, Etkind argues that the memories, or ostensible memories, of the gulag, and of lost parents and grandparents, are yet to be settled by memorials, and walk the earth instead in the form of the Freudian uncanny, sometimes even as zombies combated at times by the lycanthropes that were so feared by the subjects of David Lederer's contribution. Regardless of the manner of its representation in so many books and films, however, Etkind argues that such fear is as much of a future repetition of the past as it is a function of memory.

In the final chapter of the volume I offer my own *longue* perspective on the culture of Islamophobia in the Netherlands, a modern European nation not-so-long sundered from "its" India, or *Nederlandsch Indië*, as Indonesia was once known to its Atlantic colonizers. I argue that by more

forcefully situating the seemingly transcended colonial past within the all-too-threatening present, one understands how Islam creates a Dutch sense of the uncanny, even as many regard the dress and imagined thoughts of their fellow citizens as inexorably alien.

Taken as a whole, then, these essays cover a great deal of ground and time, generating conversations that both topically and disciplinarily cross-pollinate. As should be the case with edited volumes, these essays can be read in any order to set up other parallels of experience and interpretation. What truly matters, though, is that we can gain some small insight into pasts whose experiences still resonate with us today.

Acknowledgments

The editors wish to express their deepest appreciation here to the successive directors of the Davis Center, Gyan Prakash and Dan Rodgers, for having brought together the contributors in the first place and then for offering unstinting advice to bring this project to fruition. Thanks are certainly due too to our colleagues at Princeton, to the ever amenable staff of the Department of History and the Davis Center (especially Jennifer Houle, Carla Zimowsk, and Brooke Fitzgerald), to the board of Princeton University Press, and to the reviewers of the work, who made it clear what was needed to cut to the chase, and indeed what to cut altogether. We are also profoundly indebted to Jan Plamper, who went beyond the call of most reviewers and offered rich and helpful insights derived from his parallel project on interdisciplinary perspectives on fear, which is due out from the University of Pittsburgh Press shortly.

Michael Laffan