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Representations & Reflections
Studies in Anglophone Literatures and Cultures

Volume 8

Edited by
Uwe Baumann, Marion Gymnich
and Barbara Schmidt-Haberkamp

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Marion Gymnich (ed.)

Who's afraid of…?

Facets of Fear in Anglophone Literature and Film

With 2 figures

V&R unipress

Bonn University Press

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universitätbonn



Bibliographic information published by the Deutsche Nationalbibliothek

The Deutsche Nationalbibliothek lists this publication in the Deutsche Nationalbibliografie; detailed bibliographic data are available in the Internet at http://dnb.d-nb.de.

ISBN 978-3-8471-0050-8
ISBN 978-3-8470-0050-1 (E-Book)

Publications of Bonn University Press
are published by V&R unipress GmbH.

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Cover image: Schönwiesner, Jan (www.12frames.de). Title: “Psycho”, source: photocase.com
Printing and binding: CPI Buch Bücher.de GmbH, Birkach

Printed in Germany

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Marion Gymnich

Fictions of Fear – Representations of Fear in Anglophone Literature and Audiovisual Media

I. Introduction

Fear in its different facets appears to constitute an intriguing and compelling subject matter for writers and screenwriters alike. After all, many literary texts, movies and TV productions address fear more or less extensively. Moreover, there are a number of (literary and audiovisual) genres where the depiction of fear is virtually a necessary element; Gothic fiction and the horror movie are among the most obvious cases in point. To a certain extent, the omnipresence of references to and representations of fear in works of fiction may certainly be accounted for by the fact that the depiction of fear often turns out to be a crucial ingredient in the process of creating suspense. Yet the almost overwhelming interest in fear one encounters in works of fiction is also encouraged by the fact that fear is a truly universal phenomenon.

In the course of one's life everyone is presumably bound to experience situations that trigger fear (in a more or less intense way). This is due to the fact that fear can be classified as a basic human emotion – an emotion that is closely linked to the survival instinct, which is in and of itself one of the essential forces governing human as well as animal life. What distinguishes fear from other, related emotional states is that fear is always associated with a particular object or situation, or, as Julian Hanich puts it, "[w]hile anxiety is free-floating, in fear we are afraid *of* something, whether real or imagined".[1] Fear is a perfectly normal reaction to situations where the individual is confronted with some kind of danger; yet there are also people who suffer from fears that are either excessive or that do not seem justified by the circumstances in which they occur at all. Phobias, which may be triggered by a wide range of objects and situations that are subjectively perceived to be threatening, are a case in point. Both fear as a natural reaction to danger and fear as a pathological state are referred to and

1 Hanich, Julian. *Cinematic Emotion in Horror Films and Thrillers: The Aesthetic Paradox of Pleasurable Fear.* New York/London: Routledge, 2010. 19.

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explored in countless works of fiction. Of course fictional texts may vary considerably in terms of how prominent, how detailed and how psychologically sound the depiction of fear is. In addition, the representation of fear in a particular work of fiction is inevitably shaped by historically and culturally variable notions of human psychology.

The study of the phenomenon of fear from the point of view of psychology can be traced to the very beginnings of psychology as a discipline.[2] Sigmund Freud already established the basic distinction between fear as a temporary state, i. e. as a reaction to a specific situation, on the one hand, and fear as a person's disposition or character trait on the other hand.[3] According to psychological studies, fear is among the most basic and universal human emotions.[4] Thus, one may safely assume that fear is known in all cultures and all historical periods, even if one has to admit that emotions tend to be culture-specific to a certain extent.[5] Fear may be triggered by the perception of physical danger as well as by situations which threaten an individual's self-esteem, such as exams and public performances.[6]

Fear as a temporary affective phenomenon is defined by psychologists as a state that is characterised by an increased activity of the nervous system, combined with the awareness of being excited, a feeling of suspense and the subjective impression of being threatened.[7] Like any other emotional state, fear can be described in terms of physiological and behavioural-expressive parameters as well as the subjective cognitive assessment of the emotional state.[8] The physiological parameters of fear include multiple processes in the central nervous system as well as muscular reactions, for instance ocular movements.[9] The behavioural-expressive parameters include facial expressions, vocalization and movements.[10]

In psychological experiments, fear is measured by means of different methods. Reports of a test person grant access to the subjective parameters, i. e. the way an individual experiences fear on the cognitive level, whereas the

2 Cf. Stöber, Joachim and Ralf Schwarzer. "Angst." In: Jürgen H. Otto, Harald A. Euler and Heinz Mandl (eds.). *Emotionspsychologie: Ein Handbuch.* Weinheim: Beltz, 2000. 189 – 98, 196.
3 Cf. Krohne, Heinz Walter. *Psychologie der Angst.* Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 2010. 14.
4 Cf. for instance Hock, Michael and Carl-Walter Kohlmann. "Angst und Furcht." In: Veronika Brandstätter and Jürgen H. Otto (eds.). *Handbuch der Allgemeinen Psychologie – Motivation und Emotion.* Göttingen et al.: Hogrefe, 2009. 623 – 32, 623.
5 Cf. for instance Heelas, Paul. "Emotion Talk across Cultures." In: Rom Harré (ed.). *The Social Construction of Emotions.* Oxford: Blackwell, 1986. 234 – 66.
6 Cf. Hock and Kohlmann. "Angst und Furcht." 624 as well as Stöber and Schwarzer. "Angst." 192.
7 Cf. Krohne. *Psychologie der Angst.* 17.
8 Cf. Krohne. *Psychologie der Angst.* 15.
9 Cf. Krohne. *Psychologie der Angst.* 49 – 63.
10 Cf. Krohne. *Psychologie der Angst.* 43.

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method of recording a person's heartbeat falls back on physiological parameters of fear, for example. Neither of these methods is regarded as an ideal way of measuring fear, however.[11] One of the reasons for this is that the different systems that are involved in the experience of fear do not necessarily react simultaneously. In other words, the reactions on the different levels do not always set in at the same time; nor do they invariably stop simultaneously: If a person is suddenly faced with a dangerous situation, the behavioural reaction (for instance: running away) is typically activated more quickly than physiological reactions such as an accelerated beating of the heart or an increased frequency of breathing.[12] The different physiological reactions may also be differentiated quite clearly in terms of how fast the respective reaction sets in. A person's heartbeat is typically accelerated before the frequency of breathing increases, for instance.[13] Although people without expertise in psychology in all likelihood are largely unaware of the interaction between the different parameters of the experience of fear, the symptoms mentioned above tend to play an important role in fictional representations of fear as well. Fictional depictions of fear do not just fall back on a representation of subjective assessments of a situation or behavioural-expressive parameters of fear; very often they allude to physiological parameters such as the heart beginning to beat faster or an increased frequency of breathing as well.

II. Fear on the Plot Level – Thrills for the Reader and Viewer

Given the fact that the experience of fear is a universal phenomenon, it seems hardly surprising that one encounters more or less extensive descriptions of fear in a wide range of literary texts and audiovisual productions. In many works of fiction moments of fear experienced by a character are just mentioned in passing, but fear may also be presented as an experience that has a lasting impact on a character's life. Right at the beginning of Charles Dickens' well-known novel of development *Great Expectations* (1860/61), the grown-up narrator looks back upon an incident in which he experienced fear during his childhood. According to the grown-up narrator, this incident has made him aware of his identity:

> My first most vivid and broad impression of the identity of things, seems to me to have been gained on a memorable raw afternoon towards evening. At such a time I found out for certain, that this bleak place overgrown with nettles was the churchyard, and that Philip Pirrip, late of this parish, and also Georgiana wife of the above, were dead and

11 Cf. Krohne. *Psychologie der Angst*. 15.
12 Cf. Krohne. *Psychologie der Angst*. 15.
13 Cf. Krohne, *Psychologie der Angst*. 16.

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> buried; and that Alexander, Bartholomew, Abraham, Tobias, and Roger, infant children of the aforesaid, were also dead and buried; and that the dark flat wilderness beyond the churchyard, intersected with dykes and mounds and gates, with scattered cattle feeding on it, was the marshes; and that the low leaden line beyond was the river; and that the distant savage lair from which the wind was rushing, was the sea; and that the small bundle of shivers growing afraid of it all and beginning to cry, was Pip. (*Great Expectations* 5 – 6)

Becoming aware of one's mortality certainly is an experience that is likely to evoke fear, in particular for children.[14] Likewise, a feeling of being lonely or left behind (in this case by the protagonist's deceased parents and brothers) is apt to trigger fear. Finally, the gloomy atmosphere evoked by the description of the bleak landscape contributes to the feeling of fear that appears to overwhelm the boy.[15] All of this reduces the protagonist Pip to a "small bundle of shivers growing afraid of it all", as the narrator puts it. But worse is to come. Soon Pip's crying is roughly cut short by an escaped convict, who threatens Pip in "a terrible voice" (*Great Expectations* 6): "'Keep still, you little devil, or I'll cut your throat!'" (*Great Expectations* 6) Now there is a new reason for fear on Pip's part; the fear caused by feeling alone in a desolate landscape and by pondering the fact that he is bound to die eventually is replaced by a reaction to a tangible danger he is suddenly faced with – the encounter with the convict who threatens him and causes the boy to feel "mortal terror" (*Great Expectations* 16). The scene thus illustrates very well that fear may be caused by a range of different triggers – in reality as well as in fiction. Moreover, as was pointed out above, the complex experience of fear in this scene is clearly a defining moment for the protagonist Pip and thus reminds the reader that moments of intense fear may have a lasting impact on a person's life.

The ways in which fear is depicted in works of fiction may of course differ substantially in terms of how plausible they seem and with respect to the literary strategies that are used. Fear is often presented by providing a verbal description of a character's emotions and/or of physiological symptoms of fear, such as the character's heart beginning to race. Alternatively, a character's fear can be portrayed by focusing on the character's facial expression and/or his/her body language (including utterances). In films and TV productions various camera techniques may be employed very effectively to express a character's fear, for instance point-of-view shots or frequent cuts which visualise a character's sense

14 Cf. the article by Sara Strauß in this volume for the perspective of children in this context. Imke Lichterfeld explores the presentation of the fear of death – *timor mortis* – in Frank McGuinness' historical play *Speaking Like Magpies* (2005).

15 The strategy of presenting a gloomy and desolate landscape in order to create a threatening atmosphere is of course familiar from genres such as the Gothic novel, but also from audiovisual depictions of ominous situations.

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of disorientation and panic. Moreover, the visual track may create an impression of danger and gloom by means of showing a surrounding that appears to be threatening in some way or other. In audiovisual media the soundtrack likewise tends to play a very important role for evoking suspense and portraying the characters' fear. Sound effects and musical themes (such as drums alluding to the accelerated beating of a character's heart) may alert viewers to the presence of danger or create an uncanny atmosphere.[16] Fictional depictions of fear are shaped by different cultural and historical parameters: Firstly, the depiction of fear is likely to be influenced by the knowledge of psychology that exists in the cultural and historical context in which a work of fiction is produced. Secondly, emotions in general, including fear, are to a certain extent shaped by attitudes that are prevalent in a particular cultural and historical context. The depiction of fear in works of fiction may thus also respond to the way fear or emotions in general are judged in a particular cultural context.[17] Likewise the emergence and popularity of specific 'genres of fear' may be seen as a reaction to a particular cultural and historical constellation. A striking lack of fear displayed by characters in a work of fiction or the suppression of fear in a text or a genre may also turn out to be highly interesting. In her contribution to this volume Barbara Puschmann-Nalenz explores the implications of the surprising lack of fear displayed by the clones in Kazuo Ishiguro's dystopian novel *Never Let Me Go* (2005). Another contribution that addresses in particular a suppression of fear is Antonio Wojahn's reading of J.G. Ballard's *Crash* (2008).

The popularity of genres such as the Gothic novel and the horror film can hardly be explained by the fact that they actually frighten readers or viewers. Instead, for most readers and viewers at least, these genres tend to instill merely a pleasurable thrill, a mixture of excitement and unease. This type of reaction is also displayed by one of the most famous fictional readers of Gothic fiction, the protagonist Catherine Morland in Jane Austen's novel *Northanger Abbey* (1818).[18] Catherine is an avid reader of Gothic novels, which presumably provide her with the thrills her own life seems to lack. Catherine's reaction to Ann Radcliffe's *The Mysteries of Udolpho* (1794) certainly does not suggest that she feels truly frightened by the threatening scenarios she reads about in one of the

16 On the function of music in horror movies, cf. Hentschel, Frank. *Töne der Angst: Die Musik im Horrorfilm.* Berlin: Bertz + Fischer, 2011. As Hentschel points out, the use of sound effects and music to evoke a sense of danger tends to be highly conventionalised.

17 Cf. for instance Andrea Rummel's exploration of the staging of fear in Romantic drama and Stella Butter's contrastive analysis of constructions of fear and empathy in a nineteenth-century novel and a contemporary bestseller in this volume.

18 On the relationship between *Northanger Abbey* and the Gothic tradition see in particular the article by Angela Wright. "Disturbing the Female Gothic: An Excavation of the *Northanger* Novels." In: Diana Wallace and Andrew Smith (eds.). *The Female Gothic: New Directions.* Houndmills, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009. 60 – 75.

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classics of Gothic fiction. Instead, she excitedly anticipates the revelation of new terrors, which might be waiting, for instance, behind the famous 'black veil', as Catherine tells her friend Isabella Thorpe:

> '[…] what can it be? – But do not tell me – I would not be told upon any account. I know it must be a skeleton, I am sure it is Laurentina's skeleton. Oh! I am delighted with the book! I should spend my whole life in reading it. I assure you, if it had not been to meet you, I would not have come away from it for all the world.' (*Northanger Abbey* 60 – 61)

In the same conversation Catherine eagerly asks Isabella, who has just read out a list of further Gothic novels the young women might read in the future: "'[…] but are they all horrid, are you sure they are all horrid?'" (*Northanger Abbey* 61) Thus, Austen's protagonist is looking for new, possibly more intense thrills in her reading, enjoying in the safety of her ordinary environment the vicarious pleasure of reading about threatening situations faced by various damsels-in-distress. In the context of "[t]he mixed mocking and defence of fiction in *Northanger Abbey*",[19] reading offers Catherine excitement and thrills in her otherwise quite uneventful life. In this respect, Catherine is certainly a predecessor of today's fans of horror movies, who might also be looking for thrills everyday life tends to be devoid of.

In addition to entertaining readers/viewers, fiction that depicts fear may arguably also fulfil a 'therapeutic' function by allowing individuals to ponder danger from a safe distance. Reading about or watching characters faced with situations that would frighten the readers/viewers in real life may make it possible to confront one's own (latent) fears. In this respect it is quite interesting that horror films in recent years increasingly invite viewers to feel empathy with the characters' fear, as Jason Davis points out:

> Of course, elements like surprise, scares, and imagery are essential to crafting a compelling nightmare, but the modern horror film is foremost a study of character and emotion. While bygone eras carved up their characters like a monster's smorgasbord, the current variety wants to insure that the viewer feels the character's fear.[20]

Psychologically convincing fictional studies of fear may make readers/viewers aware of the mechanisms governing the experience of fear and may even point out possibilities of coping with it. This hypothesis of course applies less to horror films and Gothic fiction than to the depiction of fears that are closer to the readers'/viewers' life, such as the fear of death, of illnesses or of making a fool of oneself in a public performance.

19 Brownstein, Rachel M. "*Northanger Abbey, Sense and Sensibility, Pride and Prejudice.*" In: Edward Copeland and Juliet McMaster (eds.). *The Cambridge Companion to Jane Austen.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997. 32 – 57, 36.

20 Davis, Jason. "The Character of Fear: Writing the Horror Film." In: *Creative Screenwriting* 13,5 (2006): 66 – 70, 66.

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Although the depiction of fear in literary works and audiovisual media certainly does not have the primary function of frightening readers/viewers, fiction still has the potential of making readers and viewers feel uncomfortable or even causing nightmares, as Julian Hanich points out in his discussion of horror films and thrillers:

> The most powerful movies manage to leave us afraid (or at least uneasy) after we have turned off the TV or entered our car to drive back from the theater. By denying full narrative closure and leaving the end open many contemporary filmmakers reveal that this is a goal they *deliberately* aim at. Think of the surviving monster or psychopath in films like *Halloween* (1978), *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre*, *Henry – Portrait of a Serial Killer* or *The Silence of the Lambs:* Michael Myers, Leatherface, Henry and Hannibal Lecter are not dead or behind safe prison bars, but still haunt the imaginary streets – and possibly our imagination.[21]

In a similar vein, Davis argues that "the best horror films tend to stay with their audience",[22] making the viewers see certain things or situations in a different light. Presumably the thin line between a pleasant shiver on the one hand and being haunted by nightmares after having watched a horror movie on the other hand adds much to the fascination 'fictions of fear' have exerted throughout the centuries, occasionally bringing the vicarious pleasure of being thrilled by what one reads about or watches a bit closer to the actual experience of fear than one might have anticipated. Curiosity plays a crucial role in making readers and viewers wish to be exposed to narratives and images that may frighten them. This attitude is illustrated quite well by the reaction displayed by one of the characters in Ann Radcliffe's Gothic novel *The Romance of the Forest* (1791) when this character discovers a human skeleton in a deserted abbey:

> Upon the ground […] stood a large chest, which he went forward to examine, and, lifting the lid, he saw the remains of a human skeleton. Horror struck upon his heart, and he involuntarily stepped back. During a pause of some moments, his first emotions subsided. That thrilling curiosity, which objects of terror often excite in the human mind, impelled him to take a second view of this dismal spectacle. (*The Romance of the Forest* 53 – 54)

What Radcliffe describes here as the "thrilling curiosity, which objects of terror often excite in the human mind" makes the character look again; this impulse is also what makes readers and viewers interested in fiction depicting situations that are associated with fear. In other words, curiosity is certainly one of the main reasons for the enormous success of genres in which fear plays a prominent role.

21 Hanich. *Cinematic Emotion in Horror Films and Thrillers*. 11.

22 Davis. "The Character of Fear." 70. Davis (ibid.) quotes one of the scriptwriters of the horror film *Saw III*, James Wan, who pointed out: "'I saw *Poltergeist* at the age of seven and it's made me terrified of anything that is clown- or doll-related. It pretty much scarred me for life.'"

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III. Genres of Fear

References to fear and descriptions of characters experiencing fear as well as of settings and situations which are likely to trigger suspense can be found in a wide range of different genres. Still there are some genres for which the depiction of fear appears to be a necessary feature. Typically, these genres are also meant to offer the readers or viewers a pleasant shiver. The Victorian sensation novel, which reached its climax in the 1860s with classics such as Wilkie Collins' *The Woman in White* (1860) and Mary Elizabeth Braddon's *Lady Audley's Secret* (1862), is a case in point. The sensation novel was described by contemporary critics as "prey[ing] on the 'sensations' of the body, giving goose-bumps – what *Punch* in 1863 called 'Making the Flesh Creep' – as well as producing sweats, sudden frights, heightened blood pressure, and worse still, sexual stimulation".[23] Novels like the ones mentioned above tend to show characters in all sorts of dangerous and uncanny situations. In this respect, the sensation novel is very similar to the older genre of the Gothic novel, which has been referred to as 'literature of terror' by David Punter in his influential study[24] and as "a genre of darkness".[25] Traditional Gothic novels such as Horace Walpole's *The Castle of Otranto* (1764), Ann Radcliffe's *The Mysteries of Udolpho* (1794), Matthew Lewis's *The Monk* (1796), Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* (1818) and Bram Stoker's *Dracula* (1897) have provided a rich inventory of settings, character constellations, situations and, last but not least, strategies apt to make the reader anticipate further terrors that are still drawn upon today when writers or producers seek to evoke a threatening atmosphere. In her article in the present volume Elena Baeva explores the modification of Gothic devices in Shirley Jackson's novel *We Have Always Lived in the Castle* (1962) and Quentin Tarantino's movie *Inglourious Basterds* (2009), showing that the motif of fear may be used in extremely flexible ways.

As far as audiovisual media are concerned, the horror film is certainly the foremost 'genre of fear'. According to Georg Seeßlen and Fernand Jung, this genre tends to draw upon fears that are situated on three different levels: firstly, the horror film exploits fears which are part of cultural mythology, i.e. fears which were already drawn upon in fairy tales for instance (such as the fear of wolves); secondly, horror films make use of fears which tend to accompany people from their childhood onwards (e.g. the fear of darkness); thirdly, the

23 Purchase, Sean. *Key Concepts in Victorian Literature.* Houndmills, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006. 189.

24 Punter, David. *The Literature of Terror: A History of Gothic Fictions from 1765 to the Present Day.* London: Longman, 1980.

25 Kaye, Heidi. "Gothic Film." In: David Punter (ed.). *A Companion to the Gothic.* Oxford: Blackwell, 2000. 180–92, 180.

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horror film often addresses fears which are informed by sexual (phallic or vaginal) symbolism.[26] Typically, horror films rely on visual shock effects to create thrills for the viewer. The strategies used in horror films for this purpose include specific sequences of shots and what Hanich refers to as the strategy of "disrupted relief", where "the film lures us into a position of *non*-expectation. We relax and forget the offscreen threat. Precisely at this moment, the unexpected sting of shock penetrates."[27] Similar to other genres of fear, horror films are informed by changing cultural contexts with respect to the threats they present. In his article in this volume Christian Knöppler addresses specifically the cultural functions of horror film remakes.

Genres may also change in terms of how much fear they allow their characters to display. A genre that has changed considerably in terms of its depiction of the characters' fear is the war film. Traditionally, war movies often sought to present a heroic attitude on the part of the soldiers, and heroes were not supposed to betray any obvious signs of fear. Yet war films have changed considerably in this respect, as Klaus Scheunemann shows in his contribution to the present volume; he argues that the concept of heroism has changed in recent war films along with the representation of fear.

While the genres mentioned so far are quite obvious examples of works of fiction that are closely associated with fear, other fictional genres may also react to fears that are particularly prominent in a certain historical and cultural context.[28] Given the fact that genres may be regarded as responding to social and cultural problems and concerns,[29] it is hardly surprising that they often address anxieties that shape a society at a particular point in time.[30] The industrial novel, for instance, which reached the peak of its popularity in the middle of the nineteenth century with works including Elizabeth Gaskell's *Mary Barton: A Tale of Manchester Life* (1848), *North and South* (1854/55) and Charles Dickens's *Hard Times* (1854), can be seen as a response to widespread fears regarding the possibility of violent class conflicts in Victorian England. In a particularly memorable scene in Gaskell's *North and South* the middle-class protagonist

26 Cf. Seeßlen, Georg and Fernand Jung. *Horror: Geschichte und Mythologie des Horrorfilms.* Marburg: Schüren, 2006. 31.

27 Hanich. *Cinematic Emotion in Horror Films and Thrillers.* 139. For an overview of filmic techniques used in horror films, cf. ibid. *passim.*

28 James Eli Adams, for instance, refers to the British novels of the 1830s as "lightning rods for political anxiety" (Adams, James Eli. *A History of Victorian Literature.* Malden, MA/Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2009. 82). Cf. also Marcel Inhoff's discussion of literary reactions to personal and political fears in the years dominated by Richard Nixon.

29 Cf. Voßkamp, Wilhelm. "Gattungen als literarisch-soziale Institutionen." In: Walter Hinck (ed.). *Textsortenlehre – Gattungsgeschichte.* Heidelberg: Quelle & Meyer, 1977. 27–42.

30 Jason Davis, for instance, argues that "horror is essentially defined by what scares a given society at a specific time" (Davis. "The Character of Fear." 66–67).

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Margaret Hale and the factory owner John Thornton face a threatening group of workers. When the angry workers have gathered in front of Thornton's factory, they are shown to be dangerous, being referred to, for instance, as an "angry sea of men" (*North and South* 178) by the heterodiegetic narrator. Margaret Hale is eventually injured quite seriously by a stone that was meant to hit the factory owner. The way the working-class characters are described in Gaskell's novel makes it clear that it is the collective that is seen as dangerous, whereas individuals can be talked to, reasoned and negotiated with. After all, there are many scenes in *North and South* where individual workers, most of all Nicholas Higgins and his daughter Bessie, are presented in an extremely positive manner. The novel thus clearly reflects the widespread Victorian fear of workers uniting in trade unions or, worse, in angry mobs threatening the middle class and the upper class. The industrial novel thus is one of several genres that reflect and renegotiate collective fears of the Victorian period. In her contribution to this volume Gislind Rohwer-Happe discusses the ways in which another genre that is typical of the Victorian period, the dramatic monologue, explores a range of themes associated with collective fears in Victorian England.

In recent years, terrorism and in particular the terrorist attacks in New York City on September 11, 2001 have played a prominent role in the context of the exploration of collective and individual fears in literature as well as in audiovisual media. Many poems, plays, novels (including novels written for children), movies and television series address the fear of terrorist attacks in the aftermath of 9/11.[31] Fiction may explore the fear experienced by people after 9/11, but it may also show possible ways of coping with fear and trauma. Novels addressing 9/11 often present characters that feel the impact of 9/11 and seek to overcome their fears in various ways. In Jonathan Safran Foer's novel *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close* (2005), for instance, nine-year-old Oskar Schell, who has lost his father in the attacks on the World Trade Center, talks about suffering from fears that are clearly related to the terrorist acts:

> There was a lot of stuff that made me panicky, like suspension bridges, germs, airplanes, fireworks, Arab people on the subway (even though I'm not racist), Arab people in restaurants and coffee shops and other public places, scaffolding, sewers and subway grates, bags without owners, shoes, people with mustaches, smoke, knots, tall buildings, turbans. (*Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close* 36)

Most of what Oskar claims to be afraid of is directly associated with the fear of an (Islamist) terrorist attack. In the course of the novel the protagonist's attempts at

31 Cf. for example Hoth, Stefanie. *Medium und Ereignis. 9/11 im amerikanischen Film, Fernsehen und Roman.* Heidelberg: Winter, 2011.

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overcoming his fears are shown. He, for instance, manages to visit the top of the Empire State Building despite his fear of high buildings.

Fictional texts addressing 9/11 and its aftermath may fulfil a range of different functions with respect to the representation of fear: Firstly, they explore different manifestations and effects of individual and collective fears, thus arguably making the mechanisms governing fear specifically in the aftermath of 9/11 more transparent. Secondly, fictional works addressing 9/11 may potentially have a 'therapeutic' effect in so far as they show possible ways of coping with fear. Thirdly, they may try to render the supposedly dangerous 'other' more accessible and thus arguably less threatening. Instead of presenting the terrorist acts as the work of a faceless terrorist network, Don DeLillo's *Falling Man* (2007) includes the perspective of a terrorist in his novel, seeking to formulate hypotheses concerning the motivations and the personal background of the men behind the 9/11 terrorist acts. A novel such as Mohsin Hamid's *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* (2007), which is discussed by Nina Liewald in her contribution to this volume, likewise invites the readers to explore the perspective of the 'other' in the aftermath of 9/11, thus rendering the 'other' more understandable.

IV. Case Study: *The Village*

As was pointed out above, literary texts and audiovisual media make use of a wide range of different strategies in order to depict characters' fear and to make the readers or viewers shiver. The following brief analysis of a film that exemplifies a considerable range of possibilities of addressing fear is meant to round off this introduction to the representation of different facets of fear in literature and audiovisual media. The movie that was chosen for this purpose is *The Village* (2004), which was produced, written and directed by M. Night Shyamalan, who is well-known for exploring fear in his films. In his début *The Sixth Sense* (1999), for instance, Shyamalan addresses the basic human fear of death and specifically the fear of ghosts. *The Village*, which "was the top-grossing film in the U.S. market for the first several weeks after its release on July 30, 2004",[32] arguably explores fear on even more levels than *The Sixth Sense*. Moreover, the depiction of fear in *The Village* is particularly interesting because it provides insights into the psychological and social mechanisms that generate fear in individuals as well as in a community.

32 Collier, Patrick C. "'Our Silly Lies': Ideological Fictions in M. Night Shyamalan's *The Village*." In: *Journal of Narrative Theory* 38,2 (2008): 269 – 92, 269.

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The Village, which has been referred to as "the darkest and most cynical of Shyamalan's films",[33] features Covington Woods, a small settlement in a valley surrounded by woods that is completely cut off from other settlements. Due to the way the characters are dressed and are shown to live, the viewers are first led to believe that the story is not set in the present, but in the late nineteenth century. This impression is reinforced by a gravestone the viewers see in one of the first scenes of the movie, which suggests that a child who has just been buried died in the year 1897. Much later, the viewers find out that the story is set in the present and that the quaint way of life portrayed in *The Village* is in fact the result of a social experiment triggered by the wish to escape from the dangers people are exposed to in contemporary society. The viewers learn that Covington Woods was founded by a group of people who wanted to leave modern civilization behind. As Jeffrey Andrew Weinstock puts is,

> each of the elders in the village of Covington Woods […] has suffered a loss so profound that, in the language of the film, he or she 'questioned the merit of living at all' and made the decision to drop out of the world. Edward Walker's (William Hurt) father was murdered by a business partner, Alice Hunt's (Sigourney Weaver) husband was robbed and murdered, Mrs. Clack's (Cherry Jones) sister was raped and murdered, and so on.[34]

Being disillusioned by modern American society, the founders of the village, who are referred to as 'the Elders', have established a utopian community which propagates the idea of "a simplified existence and pastoral values exemplified in communal meals and collective governance".[35] The nostalgia felt for a supposedly better past has led the inhabitants of the village to make their children, who were born in the village and who do not even know what exists beyond the woods, believe that they actually live in the late nineteenth century. In other words, life in Covington Woods is based on constant lies: "[…] in order to maintain this community, the elders resort to deception and hypocrisy, thereby inviting into their community the same evils from which they fled".[36]

In order to ensure that their way of life is not endangered by contact with the modern world beyond the woods, the Elders face a twofold task: keeping intruders out and preventing their children from leaving the village. The first of these tasks does not seem to constitute a major challenge. In order to prevent outsiders from finding the village, the area is surrounded by a high fence which is constantly controlled by guards, as the viewer finds out near the end of the

33 Weinstock, Jeffrey Andrew. "Introduction: Telling Stories about Telling Stories – The Films of M. Night Shyamalan." In: Jeffrey Andrew Weinstock (ed.). *Critical Approaches to the Films of M. Night Shyamalan: Spoiler Warnings.* Houndmills, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010. ix-xxix, xx.

34 Weinstock. "Introduction." xx.

35 Weinstock. "Introduction." xx.

36 Weinstock. "Introduction." xx.

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movie. The latter task, which turns out to be significantly more difficult, is accomplished by instilling fear in the younger inhabitants of the settlement. The founders of the village teach their children that the 'towns' beyond the forest are "wicked places where wicked people live" (9:35mins.). Since it is a well-known fact that warnings do not necessarily keep people from doing what is forbidden, the Elders have devised additional measures to keep the younger inhabitants of the village from straying away from the settlement. They tell their children that the woods surrounding the village are inhabited by dangerous creatures which will not harm the villagers as long as they do not enter the forest. In order to make this lie more convincing, the Elders take turns at creating eerie noises in the woods and donning fanciful, bright-red costumes to impersonate the creatures. These efforts stress that "like all ideological narratives, [...] the story of the creatures is subject to discursive contestation, and must be periodically reiterated, defended, and adapted in response", as Collier puts it.[37] As a consequence of these efforts on the part of the Elders, "the children of the village are as fearful of 'Those We Do Not Speak Of' as the elders are of the ambient violence of modern existence in 'The Towns'".[38] Thus, for the younger inhabitants of Covington Woods fear is an ingredient of everyday life in the supposedly idyllic, utopian community. The fact that the younger inhabitants take turns at keeping watch near the edge of the forest each night further emphasises that fear is their constant companion.

For the younger inhabitants of Covington Woods life in the village is strongly linked with taboos, which illustrate very well how fear operates. Firstly, there is a taboo concerning references to the mysterious creatures that are supposedly haunting the woods. Instead of giving the creatures a name, the inhabitants of Covington Woods consistently refer to them as 'Those We Do Not Speak of'. Thus, the creatures remain part of the unknown, which is likely to increase their potential of evoking fear; after all, we tend to be more easily frightened of what we do not understand. Taboos concerning names are a feature that exists in many different cultures. Such taboos tend to be an expression of a feeling of fear and awe; they establish a distance and maintain a lack of knowledge, which is apt to induce fear. Breaking the taboo by using a name thus may turn out to be empowering and may contribute to defeating fear. In the fairy tale of "Rumpelstiltskin", for instance, finding out the name of the supernatural creature that threatens the protagonist means that the spell can be broken; knowing the name of the threatening creature deprives the latter of its power and restores the freedom of the human protagonist.

37 Collier. "'Our Silly Lies': Ideological Fictions in M. Night Shyamalan's *The Village*." 277.
38 Weinstock. "Introduction." xxi.

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Secondly, the younger inhabitants of the village have been taught that the colour red (i. e. the colour linked with the creatures) is the 'bad colour'.[39] In several scenes the characters are shown to bury red flowers or shun red berries in a way that suggests that they feel uncomfortable or even frightened in the presence of red objects. The colour symbolism used in *The Village* is reinforced by the idea that yellow appears to be regarded as a protective colour. The reactions triggered by encounters with the 'bad colour' are indicative of a neurotic fear rather than the kind of fear that can be accounted for as a natural reaction to danger. Yet the way the camera singles out the red flowers and berries suggests that there is indeed a reason for being afraid of the 'bad colour'. The fact that the younger inhabitants of the village have been taught that red is the 'bad colour', which must be avoided, reinforces the impression that they have grown up in an atmosphere saturated with fear. Moreover, the red flowers growing all of a sudden in the middle of the village may be read as a reminder of the fact that one cannot avoid danger, no matter how hard one may try to do so. Red objects turning up in Covington Woods seem to foreshadow what is going to happen. After all, Noah Percy, who has grown up in the supposedly idyllic and safe community, will soon attack two of the inhabitants of the village. The real danger comes from inside the community and not from the outside.

Thirdly, the woods are presented as a place that is taboo because it is associated with danger. The fact that the forest is seen as a threatening place harbouring unknown dangers is clearly an archetypical notion. Fairy tales and folk ballads are among the genres that have traditionally shown the forest as a place where one may encounter dangerous and supernatural creatures. The film *The Blair Witch Project* (1998) is a more recent case in point, which proves that forests are still regarded as places where dangerous things may happen to more or less unsuspecting victims. Forests have also tended to play an important role in the tradition of the American Gothic, often replacing the aristocratic castles and abbeys that loom large in the British Gothic tradition.[40] When the title character of one of the classics of American Gothic literature, Nathaniel Haw-

39 As Seeßlen and Jung point out, in Gothic and horror fiction the colour red tends to be associated with blood, with the body and sexuality, but red is also linked with power, since red robes have traditionally been worn by monarchs. Cf. Seeßlen and Jung. *Horror: Geschichte und Mythologie des Horrorfilms*. 62. This complex symbolism has certainly also informed the choice of red as the 'bad colour' in *The Village*. The association with blood may serve as a reminder of the Elders' reasons for leaving the ordinary world behind, i. e. their experience with extreme violence.

40 Cf. Allan Lloyd-Smith's comment on nineteenth-century American Gothic writers "using the resources of the wilderness and the primitive emotions of the rough settlers for its effect" (Lloyd-Smith, Allan. "Nineteenth-Century American Gothic." In: David Punter (ed.). *A Companion to the Gothic*. Oxford: Blackwell, 109 – 21, 113), which suggests that *The Village* is indeed a variation on traditional examples of the American Gothic.

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thorne's short story "Young Goodman Brown" (1835), ventures into the forest he meets the devil himself and faces a Witches' Sabbath in which most of his neighbours seem to participate. Similar to Hawthorne, the Elders in *The Village* have established a dichotomy between the supposedly safe village and the dangerous forest, thus creating a boundary which must not be breached, but which turns out to be deceptive, because evil resides in the very midst of the community.

The boundary in *The Village* is visually introduced quite early in the movie by "an overhead, night-time establishing shot [that] reveals a watchtower, lit by a line of torches and manned by villagers, from which the line between the village and the woods is surveilled and maintained".[41] The way the boundary is guarded is reminiscent of further archetypical fears, namely the fear of the dark and the fear of wild animals, which are kept away by fire. Moreover, the visual demarcation suggests that "[t]he threshold to the forest must not be crossed by any means: beyond it you are immediately inside the forest, enwrapped, as it were, by its frightening spell".[42] Both the visual track and the soundtrack support the idea that the forest is dangerous right from the beginning of the movie. Already during the opening credits the viewers see bare, black branches of trees in front of a leaden sky and are exposed to a musical theme that introduces the eerie and threatening atmosphere that is going to shape much of the movie.[43] Ultimately, of course, the viewers find out that "[t]he woods are forbidden in order to protect

41 Collier. "'Our Silly Lies': Ideological Fictions in M. Night Shyamalan's *The Village*." 278.

42 Hanich. *Cinematic Emotion in Horror Films and Thrillers*. 176.

43 Collier provides a thorough description of the opening sequence which shows why the beginning of the movie already makes the viewers expect frightening things to happen: "The sequence begins with a slow upwards tilt through some tree branches, framed medium-close and in dim light, over which the names of the lead actors are one-by-one superimposed in titles, while ominous music slowly gathers on the soundtrack. With the startling beat of a bass drum, an abrupt blackout clears the screen, and the film's title appears. Then the light slowly comes up on a diagonal, slightly right-to-left pan through tree branches (and thus a change in the direction of the camera movement). A second blackout provides a background for the names of supporting actors, and again the light comes up on tree branches, again with the camera direction having shifted. This pattern of alternation between blackness and images of the forest – between not seeing and seeing, as it were – continues until the credits conclude with a more distant, more formally composed shot of the woods in which individual trees can be made out, with one tree artfully framed as the dominant contrast. We are kept in the dark in this sequence, figuratively so when not literally so: we're given nothing resembling an establishing shot until the end – reversing the usual (and thus legible) order of close-up to establishing shot, and the sequence of images we get ostentatiously controls and limits our information, literally halting the flow via blackout before we would begin to get our bearings." (Collier. "'Our Silly Lies': Ideological Fictions in M. Night Shyamalan's *The Village*." 282 – 83.)

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residents not from mysterious creatures but from the dangers and temptations of urban modernity".[44]

The idea that transgressing boundaries may be associated with danger is a notion that is also familiar from fairy tales. In his classic study of the fairy tale, Max Lüthi points out: "It is obvious that the fairytale hero is also one who *transgresses boundaries*, since he violates interdictions, and especially since he opens forbidden doors."[45] The heroine in *The Village* is the blind girl Ivy Walker, who exhibits the strength of character and determination that also tend to be the key to the success of fairytale heroes and heroines. Ivy's reasons for seeking to transgress the boundary are 'pure'; in other words, she is not led by mere curiosity, but wants to fetch medicine for the young man who has been seriously wounded by Noah. This 'purity' is supposed to provide her with a certain protection – a notion that also seems to echo the fairy tale. When Ivy, the quest heroine, is attacked by Noah, who has escaped from his prison and has donned one of the 'creature' costumes, the blind girl displays a remarkable resourcefulness by managing to trap Noah in a hole in the ground. Yet before she summons her courage and confronts what she presumably supposes to be one of the creatures she has heard about all her life, Ivy experiences intense fear. Her fear and confusion are captured by means of camera techniques; as Collier puts it, the "shocks are heightened by the frenetic editing, from hand-held shots to bird's-eye views to low-angle shots, in which the confrontation with the creature is shot".[46] The camera technique used in this climactic scene clearly invites the viewers to feel empathy with Ivy's fear.

In addition to the setting (the woods, the isolated location), *The Village* picks up a further feature that, at least in the nineteenth century, is characteristic of the American Gothic rather than the British Gothic tradition, namely the interest in insanity, one of the hallmark features of E.A. Poe's short stories, which time and again expose the reader to the musings of clearly insane narrators.[47] Already in one of the first scenes of *The Village* the viewers are introduced to the irrational behaviour displayed by Noah. Interestingly enough, Noah's irrationality is made apparent by the fact that he is the only one in the group who does *not* display any signs of discomfort when strange noises echo from the woods. Instead of being disturbed by the noise, he reacts with wild glee, which offers the viewers a very

44 Collier. "'Our Silly Lies': Ideological Fictions in M. Night Shyamalan's *The Village*." 277.
45 Lüthi, Max. *The Fairytale as Art Form and Portrait of Man.* Translated by Jon Erickson. Bloomington/Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1984 [1975]. 141.
46 Collier. "'Our Silly Lies': Ideological Fictions in M. Night Shyamalan's *The Village*." 281.
47 Many of Poe's narrators are not only insane, but are also unreliable narrators. This suggests a further parallel to *The Village*, which can be seen as an example of filmic unreliable narration, since the viewers – similar to the younger inhabitants of Covington Woods – are deceived with respect to the temporal setting and the status of the village.

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first glimpse of his insanity. Later on the viewers find out that Noah is responsible for killing and skinning small animals, which are found within the settlement. In addition to these gratuitous acts of violence, which suggest that he enjoys killing and perhaps even torturing animals, Noah attacks his closest friend, Lucius Hunt, with a knife, an act that is motivated by jealousy. While the mysterious creatures in the woods turn out to be mere bogeymen, the real danger is a young man who is well known to all of the inhabitants of the village, someone who has lived among them since the day he was born.[48]

Ivy Walker is certainly the character the viewers are invited to feel most empathy with. She experiences intense fear when she is alone in the woods, but she still manages to act rationally when confronted with real danger, i. e. when Noah (in the guise of one of the creatures) is attacking her. Ivy's comparative helplessness is reminiscent of the Gothic stock character of the 'damsel-in-distress', a young woman who is pursued ruthlessly by the villain. Yet Ivy, despite her apparent helplessness, proves that she is up to the challenge. Rational behaviour is what ensures her victory despite the enormous disadvantage of her blindness. Noah, the attacker, is certainly a villain, but he presumably is also a victim. Like the other younger inhabitants of the village he has been systematically deprived of knowledge and has been raised in an atmosphere saturated with fear. One might perhaps even argue that the film raises the question of whether Noah's deeds can at least to a certain extent be attributed to the peculiar circumstances in which he has grown up and specifically to the lack of professional medical/psychological care.

Shyamalan's film does more than simply presenting individuals experiencing fear in the framework of a social experiment that may appear more or less plausible to the viewers; the experiment in and of itself clearly has complex cultural and historical resonances. The movie alludes to different periods of American history. The tombstone that can be seen in one of the first scenes obviously suggests that the story is set at the end of the nineteenth century. Likewise,

> Colonial, Puritan America is cited in viewers' encounters with this community early in the film. At the communal meal following Daniel Nicholson's burial, Edward Walker prefaces his prayer with the question, 'Did we make the right decision to settle here?' Immediately after the prayer, the villagers hear an otherworldly howling coming from

48 The choice of a well-known and clearly human villain in *The Village* corresponds to a tendency that is also characteristic of the modern horror film according to Davis: "While more ethereal enemies once allowed viewers to distance themselves from the sources of daily anxiety personified in vampires or ghosts, modern fears seem inclined to wear human masks." (Davis. "The Character of Fear." 68.)

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the woods, a none-too-subtle reference to the 'howling wilderness' of Puritan captivity narratives and exploration tracts.[49]

The Village can clearly be seen as a study of the fear experienced and generated in 'frontier' situations; thus it picks up a historical constellation that has been extremely important for American history and identity. Founding small settlements in a potentially hostile environment and trying to defend these against real or imagined intruders is a consequence of colonising a continent already inhabited by indigenous people, who presumably know much more about the natural environment than the newcomers do. Lauren Coats et al. point out that *The Village* reiterates ideas that are familiar from early accounts of encounters with the indigenous population in North America; Shyamalan's movie echoes those "stories about fear, violence, and inevitable triumph [that] underwrote the conquest of North America and the transformation of British into United States imperialism".[50] Puritan narratives as well as countless Westerns address situations that bear a strong resemblance to the predicament of the (younger) settlers in *The Village:* the fear caused by the presence of potentially hostile beings whose aims and motivations are largely unknown to the inhabitants.[51]

Beyond the historical resonances that are evoked by the situation depicted in *The Village* and specifically by the way of life voluntarily chosen by the Elders, the representation of a community separated from modern life is also reminiscent of groups who refuse to blend into modern American society, such as the Amish. Moreover, many critics comment on the references to the political situation in the United States at the beginning of the twenty-first century one can identify in *The Village*. Patrick C. Collier, for instance, points out that "the film was written and shot in the aftermath of the World Trade Center attacks on Sept. 11, 2001, and debuted in early 2004, 10 months after the United States launched a war in Iraq on premises that turned out to be just as fictional as the monsters in Shyamalan's woods".[52] In more general terms, *The Village*, being "a

49 Coats, Lauren et al. "Those We Don't Speak of: Indians in *The Village*." In: *PMLA* 123,2 (2008): 358 – 74, 363.

50 Coats et al. "Those We Don't Speak of." 359.

51 Although the frontier experience has been particularly significant for US-American culture, other 'settler colonies' have also been influenced by this type of experience. The novel *Remembering Babylon* (1993) by the Australian writer David Malouf, for instance, presents an Australian version of the frontier situation.

52 Collier. "'Our Silly Lies': Ideological Fictions in M. Night Shyamalan's *The Village*." 273. Cf. also Coats et al. "Those We Don't Speak of." 361: "The consensus reading of the movie […] is that it is an allegory of contemporary United States foreign policy. […] Resonating with an interpretation of Bush-administration policy following the events of 9/11, the community of Covington Woods is sustained by terror and by a story that is fabricated to create and sustain that terror (the village's leader shares the name Walker with George Walker Bush)."

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story about the power of stories to construct our sense of reality", "emphasizes the way in which narrative can be used as a tool of political control".[53] One should add that *The Village* does not just explore the function of *narrative* as a political tool, but, more specifically, the power *narratives of fear* may exert both on the individual level and on the collective level.[54]

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A number of the articles in the present volume are based on papers that were delivered in the context of a conference which took place at the University of Bonn in September 2010. Thus, thanks are due to the people who helped organise this conference – Anna Coogan, Anja Drautzburg, Miriam Halfmann, Hatice Karakurt and Klaus Scheunemann. In addition I would like to thank Elena Baeva, Anna Coogan and Hatice Karakurt for their help with the editing and proof-reading of this volume.

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53 Weinstock. "Introduction." xxi.

54 For an exploration of narratives of fear and their political implications in the context of English Renaissance literature and culture, cf. the contribution by Uwe Baumann in the present volume.

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Uwe Baumann

Ruling by Fear / Ruled by Fear: Representations of Political Violence and Political Fear in English Renaissance Culture and Literature

I. Prologue

"A spectre is haunting humanity: the spectre of fear. Death stares unblinkingly at us. Danger dallies in everyday environs. Sometimes a scary person or menacing object can be identified: the flames searing patterns on the ceiling, the hydrogen bomb, the terrorist. More often, anxiety overwhelms us from some source 'within': there is an irrational panic about venturing outside, a dread of failure, a premonition of doom. There often seems no limit to the threats".[1] With these striking words that outline the main features of contemporary mentality, Joanna Bourke opens the introductory chapter of her cultural history of fear, which is divided into five main sections (I: "Worlds of Doom", 23ff; II: "Spheres of Uncertainty", 79ff; III: "Whorls of Irrationality", 165ff; IV: "Zones of Confrontation", 195ff; V: "Realms of Anxiety", 293ff; "Conclusion: Terror", 357ff). Following an almost four hundred pages long *tour de force* of the history of politics and mentality primarily of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, she also stresses the civilizing and empowering functions of fear towards the end of her extensive analysis, as it were as a last consolatory appraisal:

> […] fear is a great and glorious stimulant that works in direct opposition to attempts to rigidly control our environment. We are right to fear. A world without fear would be a dull world indeed. It is sobering to contemplate a world where parents did not fear for their children or where death was as insignificant as eating a meal. In the words of a woman living in Britain during the First World War when under attack by Zeppelins: 'I was dreadfully frightened and said my prayers … I could never get used to raids, they frightened me terribly, as much for my two boys who were fighting in France as for myself. 'If it is like this here, what must it be there?' I used to ask myself'. A world without fear would be a world without love. Fear has been one of the most significant driving forces in history, encouraging individuals to reflect more deeply and

1 Bourke, Joanna. *Fear. A Cultural History.* London: Virago Press, 2005. 1.

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> prompting them to action. Indeed, much of the human urge to creativity depends upon fear […].[2]

It may be difficult at times to realize this quality of fear, which to all intents and purposes is capable of stimulating positive, creative developments; for example in the international agreements and treaties concerning a protraction or prevention of the climate disaster triggered by global warming, inadequate as they still may be, or in the recent attempts at preventing a collapse of the European currency. What remains unchallenged, however, is that fear has always been one of the crucial factors in historical developments.[3] In general, however, the fundamental ambivalence of fear, as well as the role of emotions in history, has only begun to attract increased scholarly attention in historical studies within the last decades.[4] These studies, no matter which one of various topics they analyse and

2 Bourke. *Fear.* 1 (with a quotation from Dorothy Constance Peel. *How We Lived Then 1914 – 1918.* London: John Lane, 1929).

3 Cf. Robin, Corey. *Fear. The History of a Political Idea.* Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004. 1: "It is seldom noted, but fear is the first emotion experienced by a character in the Bible. Not desire, not shame, but fear. Adam eats from the tree, discovers he is naked, and hides from God, confessing, 'I was afraid, because I was naked.' [Genesis 1 – 3]. Before this admission, God creates and sees that his creations are good. […] But these are reports of antiseptic perception, with no warming murmur of appreciation or aversion. Everyone looks, everyone sees. Does anyone feel? Not until they eat the forbidden fruit do we hear of felt experience. And when we do, it is fear. Why fear? Perhaps it is because, for the authors of the Bible, fear is the most electric of emotions. Prior to being afraid, Adam and Eve exist and act in the world, but without any palpable experience of it. Afraid, they are awash in experience, with God promising even more – for Eve the pain of childbirth, for Adam the duress of work, for both the dread knowledge of death. Unafraid, Adam and Eve have only the laziest appreciation of the good and haziest apprehension of the bad. Their dim cognizance of evil makes them spectators to their own lives, semiconscious actors at best. Adam names, Eve succumbs, but neither really knows what it is that they do. Afraid, they know. Shallow temptation gives way to dramatic choice, inertial motion to elected action. Their story – our story – is ready to begin".

4 Cf. e. g. Aschmann, Birgit (ed.). *Gefühl und Kalkül. Der Einfluss von Emotionen auf die Politik des 19. und 20. Jahrhunderts.* Stuttgart: Franz Steiner, 2005; Bergsdorf, Wolfgang. "Politik und Angst." In: Franz Bosbach (ed.). *Angst und Politik in der europäischen Geschichte.* Dettelbach: Röll, 2000. 13 – 28; Bormann, Patrick, Thomas Freiberger and Judith Michel (eds.). *Angst in den Internationalen Beziehungen.* Göttingen: Bonn University Press, 2010; Furedi, Frank. *Politics of Fear.* London: Continuum, 2005, esp. 123 ff; Glassner, Barry. *The Culture of Fear. Why Americans Are Afraid of the Wrong Things.* New York: Basic Books, 1999; Hebblethwaite, Kate and Elizabeth McCarthy (eds.). *Fear. Essays on the Meaning and Experience of Fear.* Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2007; Horn, Klaus and Volker Rittberger (eds.). *Mit Kriegsgefahren leben. Bedrohtsein, Bedrohungsgefühle und friedenspolitisches Engagement.* Opladen: Westdeutscher Verlag, 1987; Kaeselitz, Hella. "Die Ängste der Margaret Thatcher. Einige Aspekte der britischen Haltung zur deutschen Vereinigung." In: *Utopie kreativ* 105. Rosa Luxemburg Stiftung. Juli 1999, 61 – 67; Ritter, Gerhard. *Angst als Mittel der Politik in der Ost-West-Auseinandersetzung.* Berlin: Duncker & Humblot, 1986; Robin, Corey. *Fear. The History of a Political Idea.* Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004; Schildt, Axel. "'German Angst': Überlegungen zur Mentalitätsgeschichte der Bundesrepublik." In: Daniela Münkel and Jutta Schwarzkopf (eds.). *Geschichte als Experiment:*

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take stock of – the fears surrounding World War One, the policy of deterrence in the Cold War, British fears of a reunified Germany, American politics and the fear after September 11, 2001, or specifically American fears at large –, have one thing in common: almost without exception, they are limited to roughly the past one hundred years.[5] In the following, I intend to retreat into my *provincia*, my very own field of expertise and analyze some exemplary texts (political epigrams, tragedies) and cultural representations (political trials and the politics of Henry VIII) of the English Renaissance which concentrate on the differing functions of fear in the government, the governing and the governed. These exemplary analyses will necessarily be highly selective. Nevertheless, it will also be useful by way of introduction to briefly summarize some aspects that reach back to the classical era. It is here that the general argumentative contexts for the representation of political fear in the culture and literature of the English Renaissance are generated.

II. Representations of Political Fear: Facets of the Classical Tradition

While trying not to become entangled in the difficult problems of anthropological continuities and discontinuities, it is imperative, at the outset of this study, to state that fear was ubiquitous in the myth, history, and politics of classical antiquity.[6] Bearers and messengers of fear were the Erinyes or Furies,[7] from whose gaze one would flee in horror-struck confusion. 'Fear' and 'flight' were homonymously known in Ancient Greek as 'phobos'. In Aeschylus' *Eumenides*, the oppressively haunting words of the prophetess, who encountered the Erinyes in the temple of Apollo, still attest to her horror: "[…] but these are wingless, sable, and altogether detestable. Their snorting nostrils blow forth

Studien zu Politik, Kultur und Alltag im 19. und 20. Jahrhundert. Festschrift für Adelheid von Saldern. Frankfurt/Main: Campus-Verlag, 2004. 87 – 97; Schrecker, Ellen (ed.). *Cold War Triumphalism: The Misuse of History After the Fall of Communism.* New York: The New Press, 2004; Schultz, Nancy L. (ed.). *Fear Itself: Enemies Real and Imagined.* West Lafayette: Purdue University Press, 1999; Schwarz, Urs. *Die Angst in der Politik.* Düsseldorf/Wien: Econ, 1967; Senghaas, Dieter. "Angst in der Politik." In: Hans Jürgen Schultz (ed.). *Angst.* Stuttgart: Kreuz-Verlag, 1987. 248 – 60; Stearns, Peter N. "Fear and Contemporary History: A Review Essay." In: *Journal of Social History* 40,2 (2006): 477 – 84; Stearns, Peter N. *American Fear. The Causes and Consequences of High Anxiety.* New York/London: Routledge, 2006; Svendsen, Lars. *A Philosophy of Fear.* London: Reaction Books, 2007, esp. 102 ff.

5 Cf. the following footnotes for some remarkable exceptions (esp. fts. 10, 12, 15, 17, 23, 24, 31, 32 and 34).

6 Cf. Schwarz. *Die Angst in der Politik.* Esp. 140 ff.

7 Cf. Hunger, Herbert. *Lexikon der griechischen und römischen Mythologie.* 6th edn. Reinbek: Rowohlt, 1974. 127 – 28, s. v. 'Erínyen'.

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