

The Institute of English Cultures and Literatures, University of Silesia
The Committee on Literature Studies, Polish Academy of Sciences

Civilisation and Fear

Writing and the Subject/s of Ideology

<http://www.fear.us.edu.pl>

Conference Call for Papers

22-25 September 2010

Ustron, Poland

And I will show you something different from either
Your shadow at morning striding behind you
Or your shadow at evening rising to meet you,
I will show you fear in a handful of dust.

(T.S. Eliot, *The Waste Land*, ll.27-30)

What Eliot voices here is, no doubt, his fear and, simultaneously, concern about the prospects of European civilisation as he saw it in the first decades of the 20th c. Eliot's lines carry eschatological overtones, too. Do we fear the end of our civilisation, or the condition it has reached at present? What is the connection between fear and civilisation? Are we still waiting for the barbarians? Do we have more fear of the real or the virtual? Should we, perhaps, opt for the positive senses of fear whose presence may testify to the mystery human life is, or brings to light the limitations which human life involves? Can we possibly conquer our fears by writing about them, and redefining their sources? Aren't we – as individuals, citizens, family members, superiors and inferiors, natives and strangers, bodies and spirits – our own fears writ large?

This call for papers is not intended to alarm or intimidate anyone. We extend a cordial invitation to all scholars who take genuine interest in any of the issues raised in the title of the conference as well as those listed below. Our aim is to address a multiplicity of concerns which often coincide and intersect in modern discourses (including literary and cultural studies, psychology, sociology, religious studies, art and others). However, we propose to consider **writing** (both literary and non-literary) as a window onto, and a meeting ground for, the following themes:

- **Arts & literature:** the future of arts; literatures of terror; artistic (literary) modes (genres) of terror; the terrific/horrific sublime; (limits of) self-fashioning and self-expression; anxiety of influence in the age of parody, travesty and appropriation
- **Civilisation & technology:** fear of modernisation & of acceleration; clashes of civilisations; the fearful interplay between culture and nature; man *vis-à-vis* machine (e.g., threats to humanness, simulacra of the human as source of anxiety, “new” humanity)
- **Politics & ideology:** enslavement, subjection, subordination through discourses; the “fearful asymmetry”: discourses & practices of the modern state (intersections of the political and the personal); democracy, liberty(ies), religion: from orthodoxy to fundamentalism and back, the self of ideology
- **Discourses:** thanatophobia and the postmodern condition; religious studies as a necessary/contingent by-product of recent traumas; fear and/of metaphysics; power and its institutions as forces prescribing discourses of the self
- **Identity / the self:** phobias of exposure to fear and trauma; the threatened/shifting selfhood & competing models of subjectivity; the sub/un/conscious; the Lacanian Real

We invite all delegates to deliver 20-minute presentations. Abstracts of the presentations should not exceed **200 words** and should be submitted electronically to civilizationandfear@gmail.com by **March 31, 2010**.

For further details please visit: <http://www.fear.us.edu.pl>

Registration

The registration form will be attached to the first Circular (to be sent to prospective participants in April) and will be also available from our website. The registration fee will not exceed \$150 (inclusive of access to all conference events, delegate bag, mid-session refreshments, seminar room hire, and the publication of conference proceedings). As you receive this, our negotiations with prospective sponsors are under way, and we expect to be able to reduce the fee. You will be notified of any alterations in this regard.

Organisers

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University of Silesia
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in cooperation with
The Committee on Literature Studies, Polish Academy of Sciences

Chair of the Organising Committee

Prof. Wojciech Kalaga

Secretary of the Organising Committee

Anna Chromik
civilizationandfear@gmail.com

Plenary speakers

Prof. **Agata Bielik-Robson** – IFiS, Polish Academy of Sciences, Poland
Prof. **Horst Ruthrof** – Murdoch University, Australia
Prof. **Jeremy Tambling** – University of Manchester, UK

Venue

The conference will take place in Ustroń, Poland. Details will be included in the conference circulars. We estimate that full board and accommodation should not exceed 150 PLN per day (ca \$50). Detailed get-to information will be posted in the forthcoming circular.

Contact us at: civilizationandfear@gmail.com

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