Special Issue 'Aesthetics of Fear in Asian Cinema'

Deadline for abstracts/proposals: 31 August 2022
Deadline for submissions: 28 February 2023

"... we are all caught in this terrible thing called fear. We don't seem to be able to resolve it. We live with it, become accustomed to it, or escape from it; through amusement, through worship, through various forms of entertainment, religious and otherwise. So, we must together examine again the nature and the structure of fear."

– J. Krishnamurti

Etymologically, the word fear, from old English, færan means “to terrify, frighten;” in Old Saxon faron means “to lie in wait;” in Middle English fere, it is “calamity, sudden danger, peril, sudden attack;” and in Old Norse far it means “harm, distress, deception” (Online Etymology Dictionary). Despite these traditional definitions of fear, new fear scholarship has been expanding these definitions and incorporating more complex meanings and contexts for understanding the nature and role of fear. Scholars have explored far beyond the biology and psychology of fear. Now, we are confronted with representational complexes of the “ecology of fear,” “geography of fear,” sociology of fear,” “politics of fear,” “dramaturgy of fear,” “philosophy of fear,” “architecture of fear,” “semiotics of fear,” “culture of fear” and concomitant evolving notions that ‘fear’ is no longer merely an emotion/feeling (response to danger), nor can it be fixed in its pre-given constitution and affects. Through holistic-integral, postmodern, postcolonial, and posthumanist lenses, the topic becomes even more complicated.

However, the multi-layered inquiry project of fear still engages with diverse human situations ranging from (in)voluntary migration, exiles, war, conflict, trauma, demographic evolution, climate change, memory, health, history, pandemics, disease, quotidian life, and even home. Boundaries of private and public fear experiencing become ever more frail and inseparable. From a very personal narrative on one’s fears, interest is growing to the project(ion) of fear which has transmuted itself to infuse a dominant public imagination of fear, which calls for a pluri-disciplinary empirical and hermeneutic approaches to its study.

Several disciplines are theorizing fear using their own conventional as well as hybrid/experimental methodologies. In literary-cultural studies, the element of fear has been part of most theoretical and socio-cultural engagements.
Paola Mayer, in her book *The Aesthetics of Fear in German Romanticism*, argues that the Enlightenment can be described as an attempt to contain fear. Sublimity, romanticism, postmodernism, and postcolonialism projects are all based on the element of fear. In literature and cinema fear is generally portrayed as an agent of an extraordinary moment; for instance Peter Parker in the film *Spider-Man* (2002) undergoes dejection, fear, trauma and illness before the power emerges—a complete transformation occurs. Mayer’s search is to investigate and understand fear as a normalized event that is part of every human’s quotidian life. However, Ruth Wodak disagrees with this normalization of fear due to its political implications in her seminal work titled *The Politics of Fear: The Shameless Normalization of Far-Right Discourse* (2020). Needless to say, most of our systems—educational, medical, legal, military, governmental, non-governmental, and religious—are evidently entangled with fear.

Recently in cinema studies, Matt Glasby’s *The Book of Horror: The Anatomy of Fear in Films* (2020) analyses the most terrifying horror films ever produced in the West to create a critical framework for the cinematic elements of fear that makes the horror films fearful. Similar studies have been attempted earlier with specific foci. Neil Lerner's *Music in the Horror Film: Listening to Fear* (2009), Aviva Briefel's and Sam J. Miller's 2012 book, *Horror After 9/11 “World of Fear, Cinema of Terror; Horror Film: Creating and Marketing Fear* (2004) by Steffan Hantke are all pioneering works. Most of these films that are considered for fear-analysis adopt the Western trope, which clearly opens an intriguing niche for an all-encompassing inter- and transdisciplinary fear-analysis of Asian cinema.

This is a global Call (authors welcomed from any country or region) for a Special Issue of the journal *Asian Cinema*, which will explore the theme of “Aesthetics of Fear in Asian Cinema." The issue will bring onboard essays focusing on the themes and structures of cinema from the north, south, east, and west parts of Asia. The terminology of ‘Aesthetics of fear’ involves consideration of a fluid-open-ended notion of fear as a cinematic tool but also a methodology and medium itself for cinematic ecologies of arts, aesthetics, affects, creativity, and other relevant relationships that revolve around fear dynamics.

In this Special Issue, the essays and/or poetics are expected to explore how the fear-project has and is currently developing in cinema. A few questions may be helpful in the theorization of fear: What are the cinematic elements of fear? How are they created? Is a genre approach to a fear-framework in cinema possible? How do audience studies help in defining cinematic fear? How is fear related to other affects and emotions in films? How is fear written in Cinema (fear communications)? How are causes and effects, and affects of fear defined and imagined? Is fear beyond any psychographic representations in cinema? In the spectrum of expressions and meanings of fear, how would one locate the frightening disorientation, anxieties, distancing, and estrangement.
that are now the texture of everyday living and dying for many?

We welcome interested contributors to submit abstracts of around 250 words along with a bio-note of not more than 150 words as a single MS Word (.doc or .docx) file to raysonalex@goa.bits-pilani.ac.in and drrajithavenugopal@gmail.com by 31 August 2022. Authors of selected abstracts will be invited to contribute full papers for the Special Issue of the Asian Cinema.

Prospective strands of discussion in Asian cinema may include but are not limited to:

- Fear, Pity, and Catharsis
- Fear in Nature films
- Fear-based relationships between characters
- Gender and Insidious fear
- Fear and Phobia
- Ecophobia
- Sublimity and fear
- Gothic and fear
- Audiences' experience of fear
- Horror and fear
- Fear and Separation
- Fear and Migration
- Fear, Patriotism, Fascism
- Postcoloniality and fear
- Decoloniality and fear
- Neoliberalism and fear
- Postmodernism and fear
- Anxiety and fear
- Food, eating, and fear
- The posthuman fear
- Plastophobia and animals
- Apocalyptic fear
- Spectrum of Ecofear
- Ecoanxiety
- Xenophobia
- Ecofascism

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CALL FOR PAPERS
Key Dates:

- Abstract (250 words) Deadline: 31 August 2022
- Intimation of Selection: 30 September 2022
- Full paper (6000-8000 words)* Deadline: 28 February 2023
  (* including reference)
- Revisions to be complete by: 30 March 2023
- Publication: May 2023

About the Journal

Asian Cinema is a peer-reviewed seminal journal, which was published from 1995 by the Asian Cinema Studies Society under the stewardship of Professor John Lent.

The journal currently publishes a variety of scholarly material—including research articles, interviews, book and film reviews and bibliographies—on all forms and aspects of Asian cinema. The journal’s broad aim is to advance understanding and knowledge of the rich traditions of the various Asian cinemas, thereby making an invaluable contribution to the field of film studies in general.

To know more about the journal, please visit our website.

Instructions to the contributors can be accessed here.