CHAPTER FOURTEEN

REMEMBERING FEAR. THE FEAR OF VIOLENCE AND THE VIOLENCE OF FEAR IN SEVENTEENTH-CENTURY WAR MEMORIES

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In the summer of 1634 murdering and plundering Swedish troops threatened the Catholic Dominican convent Zum Heiligen Grab near Bamberg. On 19 August, however, as we learn from the nun Maria Anna Junius, ‘the Swedish military that had been deployed across this area moved on in great haste and fear to Schweinfurt’. The chronicler was amazed by this sudden decampment, ‘since at that time, not a single one of the Emperor’s soldiers was around’. She could explain these happenings only as an act of God: ‘I believe, our Lord has struck them with fear and driven them away’.1 Let us now move to Vienna, 1683. For two months, the city had been ‘frightened’ by the ‘Turks’.2 Yet contemporary observers recount how, when the allied relief troops arrived at Vienna, the Ottoman forces, who had been so terrifying before, suddenly took fright and fled from their positions. Again, the victors felt ‘astonishment’; the enemy had taken flight even though its military situation had been far from precarious. Authors could explain this behaviour only as the result of divine intervention. According to numerous broadsheets and eyewitness accounts, God had ‘put a hare into the Turks’ breast’ and fear into their heart; He had ‘struck’ them with a ‘blindness’ that not only prevented people from recognising

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2 For references see n. 13.
God but also blinded them to their own advantage. According to natural philosophers, such blindness resulted from fear, anxiety and terror. By striking them with blindness, God had thus also struck them with fear.

These ‘scourges’ of fear must not be regarded as mere metaphors. In the seventeenth century, fear and anxiety were perceived to be physically violent; that is, they were ‘affects’ in the historical sense of the word: they ‘affected’ the body and caused it to move—both externally as well as internally. The fear of violence sent by God might result not only in flight but also in deadly illness or sudden death. It was not until the late eighteenth century that we can observe the epistemological shift that remains influential today. In Enlightenment thought, ‘affects’ were transformed into ‘feelings’ and confined within the closed and inaccessible inner space of the person. We can find significant differences between spatial concepts of fear and anxiety in the early modern period and their psychological conceptualisations since the late eighteenth century. Fear could be perceived as physically powerful and violent because the inner space of the person did not qualitatively differ from external space.

In the Thirty Years War and the wars against the ‘Turks’, autobiographers, diarists and chroniclers recalled not only the physical violence they

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3 Johann Peter von Vaelkeren, Wienn von Türcken belägert/von Christen entsezt . . . (Linz, 1684), 92; Summarische Relation/ Was sich in während Belagerung der Stadt Wien in- und ausser dereselben zwischen dem Feind und Belägerten von Tag zu Tag zugetragen . . . (Nuremberg, s.a.), 12; Eberhard Werner Happel, Der Ungarische Kriegs-Roman, Oder Aufführliche Beschreibung/ Deß jüngsten Türcken-Kriegs . . . (Ulm, 1685), 812.