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The Calvinesque

An Aesthetics of Violence in English Literature after the Reformation

Introduction

This book is about a literary imagination of violence after the Reformation. It seeks to establish new perspectives for the interpretation of an aesthetics of violence in texts generated under the influence of Protestant theology and ideology.

One of the key observations is the degree of voyeurism in various kinds of popular Protestant texts when it comes to violence. This goes especially for moral pamphlets and explicitly ideologically driven textual material used for propagandistic purposes. In the following chapters, I contrast this material with more literary and poetic texts composed in post-Reformation England: the plays of Christopher Marlowe and Psalm translations. I argue for a cultural connection between different texts displaying what I would call a 'voyeuristic imagination of violence' relying on visuality and realistic detail. In contrast to the still popular assumption of an early modern residual 'medieval barbarism', I argue for an intrinsic connection between Protestant theology and specific modes of representing violence. Historical continuities between pre-modern, medieval and early modern representations of violence must be taken into account and considered alongside what I identify as Protestant modes of representing violence. However, as a general tendency, my argument is critical of approaches that assume voyeuristic representations of violence to be a universal human phenomenon. In Greek tragedy, the representation of violence was considered inappropriate: violent scenes were not enacted but were reported in dramatic speech, although beatings and verbally violent arguments were acceptable and welcome in comedy.[1] The enjoyment of violent spectacles has been considered ethically

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1   Christel Meier, "Prügel und Performanz. Ästhetik und Funktion der Gewalt im Theater des Spätmittelalters und der Frühen Neuzeit," in: Gerd Althoff ed. *Zeichen – Rituale – Werte. Internationales Kolloquium des Sonderforschungsbereichs 496.* Symbolische Kommunikation und gesellschaftliche Wertesysteme, Schriftenreihe des Sonderforschungsbereichs 496, 3 (Münster: Rhema 2004), pp. 325–360.

questionable at various points in history, and was (and often is) associated with the lower classes and their basic instincts, or with male youth. This view implies that the bestial nature in man desires violent spectacles, which applies to the blood-thirsty mob at the Roman arena which the man of letters should avoid to safeguard his refined nature,[2] or the 'groundlings' in Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, who would be most impressed by actors "out-herod[ing] Herod" (III.ii.13). In my readings, I propose to add another perspective to the enjoyment of violent spectacle, which takes into account a specific religious imagination.

The thesis is developed from the assumption that the Reformation crucially meshed into, shaped and changed cultural and aesthetic practices in Europe. The theoretical patron of this outlook for me has been Max Weber with his seminal essay *Die Protestantische Ethik und der Geist des Kapitalismus* (1904/05).[3] Instead of rejecting Weber's approach, as has been common in the historical sciences for a few decades now, I would like to expand it to aesthetics.

The idea that religious cultures, 'ideas' and patterns of thought may give rise to related aesthetic expression, however, is not entirely new. I am drawing this mode of thinking from an intellectual tradition with representatives such as Walter Benjamin, Erich Auerbach, Erwin Panofsky and Aby Warburg. I will not refer to their works in detail here because none of them have focused specifically on an aesthetic of Protestantism, and their approaches are nevertheless quite different from mine. Although my approach may be more indebted to art historical traditions of thought, philological and rhetorical analysis have been valuable methods for developing my argument. By marrying formal analyses with cultural historical questions, I hope to contribute to a method that pursues politically and historically relevant questions without abandoning poetically sensitive literary readings and interpretative practices.

In early modern English literary studies, Debora Kuller Shuger, Barbara Kiefer Lewalski, and Brian Cummings have developed and perpetuated an

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2   Lucius Annaeus Seneca, *Moral Epistles*, trans. Richard M. Gummere. The Loeb Classical Library (Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 1917–25), vol. 1, Epistle VII, "On Crowds".

3   Max Weber, *Die Protestantische Ethik und der Geist des Kapitalismus*, ed. Dirk Kaesler (München: Beck, 2004).

interdisciplinary approach between theology and literary aesthetics, to which my study is related and indebted.[4] My attention to both literary and non-literary documents is methodologically related to the New Historicist approach. The central interest of this book is to explore an aesthetics of violence related to Calvinism, and I pursue cultural anthropological questions through literary documents in a way that is different from but related to Stephen Greenblatt's exploration of a 'poetics of culture'.[5]

Delineation of Definitions and Categories

'The Calvinesque': An Aesthetics of Violence

This thesis proposes a new aesthetic category emphasising the nexus between religious ideas and aesthetics: the 'Calvinesque'. I suggest this category be employed in the way in which all categories should be employed: not as a rigid strait-jacket, but rather as a new pair of glasses that might provide new and relevant insights. It is important to me to retain a degree of playfulness and openness in this category. This does not diminish the serious concern to bring something to light that has been overlooked. In fact I would like to use the term 'category' with reference to the etymology of the Greek word *kategorein* (meaning to 'accuse'). In this sense, a category is an accusation against the world, because it does not correspond entirely to the object that is categorised ("Die Kategorie ist eine Anklage an die Welt, weil sie nicht in ihr aufgeht").[6] If categories remain imperfect, however, they may carry the possibility to make

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4   Brian Cummings, *The Literary Culture of the Reformation: Grammar and Grace* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2002). Barbara K. Lewalski, *Protestant Poetics and the Seventeenth Century Religious Lyric* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1979). Debora K. Shuger, *The Renaissance Bible: Scholarship, Sacrifice and Subjectivity* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994). Debora K. Shuger, *Habits of Thought in the English Renaissance. Religion, Politics and the Dominant Culture* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990).

5   Stephen Greenblatt, "Towards a Poetics of Culture," in: *The New Historicism,* ed. H. Aram Veeser (London: Routledge, 1989), pp. 1–14.

6   Rudi Thiessen in his lecture seminar *Erlösung Als Ob*, Dept. of Religious Studies, Freie Universität Berlin, Summer 2003.

properties visible. Hence, I would like to develop the hypothesis starting with the premise that: 1. there is a connection between religious ideas and aesthetic manifestations in the secular world, even in contexts where religious doctrine is not explicitly articulated or consciously present. A writer does not have to identify with a religious doctrine to promote its very contents and aesthetics. 2. there is a connection between a particularly violent imagination and Calvinism, which becomes discernible in various textual genres. 3. this violent imagination carries distinct aesthetically discernible features which suggest a connection with Calvinism.

This is not to say that some of these features or a particularly violent imagination have occurred *only* as a result of Calvinism. Seemingly similar violent fantasies may have developed in other cultural and religious contexts for different reasons. This should not prevent us, however, from examining the specific frames for specific cultural products with characteristic aesthetic properties.

My use and understanding of aesthetics is not located in any specific philosophical tradition. More appropriately, I could have used the term 'poetics', as my project focuses almost entirely on textual, literary qualities. However, I consciously chose the term aesthetics for three reasons: 1. it carries a meaning in its colloquial use which I would like to invoke here, namely the 'attractive', alluring quality of this poetics of violence. 2. the visual dimension of texts appealing to the 'eyes of the mind' play a large role in my analyses. 3. I allude to the paradoxical usage of the term aesthetics in German literary scholarship in the context of something that according to Enlightenment parameters is not perceived as beautiful or admitted to have attractive qualities.[7] However, precisely the voyeuristic delight in that which is morally and ethically repulsive and prohibited is central to my argument.

Violence in the following chapters primarily refers to 'physical harm and destruction inflicted on a human body' (my definition), rather than any of its

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7   Most commonly with studies on German Romantic aesthetics, e.g. Karl Rosen-kranz, *Die Ästhetik des Hässlichen* (Königsberg: Bornträger, 1853). Karl-Heinz Bohrer, *Die Ästhetik des Schreckens. Die pessimistische Romantik und Ernst Jüngers Frühwerk* (München: Hanser, 1978). Peter-André Alt, *Ästhetik des Bösen* (München: Beck, 2010).

originally political implications.[8] Neither does my study consider more subtle forms of oppression, e.g. structural violence in the Foucaultian fashion, or violent speech acts, such as insulting, cursing and slander.[9] I have also chosen to neglect gender aspects in favour of theological, philological, and cultural-historical questions. It would have been possible indeed to examine representations of Protestant victimhood for 'femininity', and of reading the dichotomy of the persecuting vs. the persecuted according to gender binaries. However, I believe this would have been a circular argument, since to my mind, Anglo-American gender theory in the Marxist-Freudian intellectual tradition is steeped in Protestant modes of reasoning to an extent that is yet to be uncovered, and hence based on constructions whose very foundations might require radical re-examination and historicisation.[10] This is by no means to

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8   Among German scholars, especially medievalists, it is common to distinguish between two kinds of "Gewalt": *violentia* and *potentia*, i.e. acts of force violating the social order vs. legally exerted force exercised by those in power. See e.g. Thomas Lindenberger, Alf Lüdtke eds., *Physische Gewalt. Studien zur Geschichte der Neuzeit* (Frankfurt/M. Suhrkamp 1995). Valentin Groebner, *Ungestalten. Die visuelle Kultur der Gewalt im Mittelalter* (Hanser: München, Wien, 2003). See also Walter Benjamin, "Zur Kritik der Gewalt", in: *Gesammelte Schriften*, ed. Rolf Tiedemann, Hermann Schweppenhäuser (Frankfurt/M.: Suhrkamp, 1991), vol. II/1, pp. 179–203.

9   I have dealt with violence and language in two separate studies published as essays. The impact of the Reformation is central to my argument in both of them: "Exorcising Radicals: John of Leyden Carnivalized," in: Jan-Frans van Dijkhuizen, Richard Todd eds., *Reformation Unsettled. British Literature and the Question of Religious Identity 1560–1660* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2009), pp. 85–98. "'Wenn Flüche töten könnten': Shakespeare und der Fluch," in: Sybille Krämer, Elke Koch eds. *Gewalt in der Sprache. Rhetoriken verletzenden Sprechens* (München: Fink, 2010), pp. 225–235. On slander, cf. Ina Habermann, *Staging Slander and Gender in Early Modern England* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2003).

10   Mary Wollstonecraft and early feminists emanated from a radically dissenting (Protestant) environment. The 17th century moreover saw a number of female prophets in the tradition of the (male) prophets of the Hebrew Bible, according to Teresa Feroli representing "an early phase in the rise of modern feminist consciousness" and giving shape to "secular feminism": Teresa Feroli, *Political Speaking Justified. Women Prophets and the English Revolution* (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 2006), pp. 15, 32. Phyllis Mack, *Visionary Women. Ecstatic Prophecy in Seventeenth Century England*

reject feminism's general ethical agenda, which after all enables me to write this book. The Calvinist conception of God seems to carry more masculine than feminine attributes, however, which might indeed be responsible for the scenarios of violence, war, aggression and physical destruction which I look at in this thesis. The fact that all of the authors discussed here are male, of course, has to do with the fact that early modern women were not officially and publicly involved in theological debates up until the 17th century, although they were encouraged to read the Bible and engage in writing about religious themes.[11] It might be revealing to test 17th century prophetic womens' writing for occurrences of the 'Calvinesque' in future studies.

Physical violence according to my definition is central to Christianity. The crucified bleeding body of Christ is the central site around which the Christian religious imagination evolves. Not only is the meditation of His wounds and martyred body part of devotional practices, but also its very imitation in rituals of flagellation and self-castigation, as well as the invitation of physical suffering as a sign of humility and God's grace. Despite the rather central role of the crucified and martyred body of Christ in medieval piety,[12] it is a common place in art history that the rise of the 'man of sorrows' and the representation of the crucified and tortured body of Christ becomes increasingly violent in the early modern period, when there seems to be a rising interest in the human

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(Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1994). On the methodological problems of historical gender studies, cf. also Sabine Schülting, "Reading Sex Historically: Zu Problemen und Perspektiven der kulturhistorischen Gender Studies," in: Sabine Lucia Müller, Sabine Schülting eds. *Geschlechter-Revisionen: Zur Zukunft von Feminismus und Gender Studies in den Kultur- und Literaturwissenschaften*. Kulturwissenschaftliche Gender Studies, vol. 9 (Königstein: Helmer, 2006), pp. 58–74.

11   Suzanne Trill, Kate Chedgzoy, and Melanie Osborne eds. *Lay by Your Needles Ladies, Take the Pen: Writing Women in England, 1500–1700* (London et al.: Arnold, 1997). Helen Wilcox ed., *Women and Literature in Britain, 1500–1700* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1996). On the increase of women engaged in religious writing in the 17th century and the relationship to contemporary feminism, cf. Erica Longfellow, *Women and Religious Writing in Early Modern England* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2004).

12   E.g. Caroline Walker Bynum, *Fragmentation and Redemption. Essays on Gender and the Human Body in Medieval Religion* (New York: Urzone Publishers, 1991).

rather than the divine or royal qualities of Christ.[13] However, as we shall see in the chapter on martyrdom, what appears violent to a modern mind may have been entirely differently encoded in medieval piety, with violence against Christ and martyrs evoking sentiments of love rather than pity or even morally justified anger.

This thesis is about a specific aesthetics of violence that may be indebted to the theology and culture of Calvinism more than has previously been noted. Debora K. Shuger's speculations about a connection between an obsessive fantasy of violence and Calvinism, which she felt was related to the peculiarly Calvinistic construction of divinity, and accordingly, man's relationship with the divine, have served as a crucial source of inspiration to this study.[14] I share the conviction of the cultural impact of ideas, especially ideas regarding the highest power. Not incidentally, Shuger quotes a line from Theodore Agrippa d'Aubigné's epic *Les Tragiques* in the beginning of the essay, however, without explicating the connection. More can be said about Agrippa d'Aubigné though: the writer was a Calvinist who composed his epic in a prophetic voice. It is replete with grotesquely violent scenes involving physical mutilation, especially in the final books, "Vengeance" and "Jugement".[15] Since this is a thesis in English literary studies and *Les Tragiques* to my knowledge has not been immediately relevant to literature in England, I have chosen not to include the work. From what I understand, the prophetic stance of the speaker and scenarios of physical mutilation swaying between the experience of violent suffering and the hope of vengeance, which is central to my understanding of the 'Calvinesque', can be discerned in this work as well, which could be taken as an argument in favour of the pervasive power of theology to transcend national and cultural boundaries.[16]

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13 Idlefons Herwegen, *Kirche und Seele. Die Seelenhaltung des Mysterienkults und ihr Wandel im Mittelalter* (Münster: Aschendorff, 1926), p. 18: "die Abwandlung des triumphierenden Erlöserkönigs zum schmerzentstellten Menschensohne."

14 Shuger (1994), pp. 89–127.

15 Theodore Agrippa D'Aubigné, *Les Tragiques* (Paris: S.T.F.M., 1990).

16 Cf. also Dagmar Stöferle, *Agrippa d'Aubigné: Apokalyptik und Selbstschreibung* (München: Fink, 2008). My attention to d'Aubigné is indebted to a conversation with

Religion, Protestantism, Violence

The degree to which the religious heritage has often been overlooked in literary and cultural studies of the past decades has perhaps diminished since the so-called 'religious turn', but much remains to be done in theory after decades of *Religionsvergessenheit*. As Daniel Weidner has pointed out, not only modern but postmodern theory especially has cultivated prejudices against theology resulting in a lack of attention to religious texts:

> Nicht nur das moderne, auch das postmoderne Denken hat ein Vorurteil gegenüber der Theologie. Es hat sich wohl als fatal erwiesen, dass der frühe Derrida Heideggers Argument übernommen hat, die Theologie sei nichts als ein Untergebiet, ja die letzte Steigerung der abendländischen Präsenzmetaphysik. Was bei Heidegger noch Strategie war, bewusste Verschleierung der Spuren – findet jene Abgrenzung doch genau in dem Augenblick statt, in dem Heidegger selbst massiv auf die theologische Tradition zurückgreift und Paulus, Luther und Kierkegaard rezipiert – ist bei Derrida schon eine Selbstverständlichkeit, geronnen im Kompositum „metaphysisch-theologisch" und dem bündigen Urteil: „Die Epoche des Zeichens ist ihrem Wesen nach theologisch". Theologie wird hier als Einheitsdenken gesetzt, sei es, dass man Religion insgesamt als vereinheitlichend und harmonisierend auffasst, sei es, dass man die vielfältige und lebendige religiöse Erfahrung von der abstrakten und „toten" Formalisierung der Theologie unterscheidet, wobei freilich diese Entgegensetzung den Dekonstruktivisten schon zu denken geben sollte, wissen sie doch, dass sich hier auf der Seite des Todes oft sehr Wesentliches verbirgt.[17]

Research centres on religion and culture appear to grow in numbers, and they are needed especially now, since the new enthusiasm in cultural studies about the rediscovered 'exotic' field of religion often leads to superficial and

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the author many years ago. See also Jody Enders, "The Rhetoric of Protestantism: Book I of Agrippa D'Aubigné's *Les Tragiques*," *Rhetorica* 3.4 (Autumn 1985): 285–294.

17 Daniel Weidner, "Walter Benjamins Erfahrungen. Zum religious turn in der gegenwärtigen Literatur- und Kulturwissenschaft," in: Andreas Nehring, Joachim Valentin eds., *Religious Turns – Turning Religions. Veränderte kulturelle Diskurse – neue religiöse Wissensformen* (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 2008), pp. 32–44. Here: p. 41.

uninformed approaches.[18] The lack of attention to the religious cultural heritage among poststructuralist critics is relevant to my thesis in the sense that it is also visible in Foucault's widely received historical narrative of the birth of the prison in Europe. As I am going to argue in the final chapter, the consideration of Protestantism, especially Calvinism, appears to be crucial to the first prisons that were established in Europe, which adds a historically relevant perspective to the rise of disciplinary culture and internalised violence.

The lack of interest in religion in cultural theory and philosophy has also affected literary studies. Despite the opening up of the discipline towards various kinds of texts that were previously perceived as 'non-literary', religious and theological texts do not seem to have benefited from this new openness. German literary studies especially have implicitly maintained the value judgement that the literary quality of a text consisted precisely in its emancipation from theology – a similar perspective was largely responsible for the appreciation of Shakespearean drama, whose quality has often been found precisely in its secular orientation. As Weidner points out, the interdisciplinary field of theology and literature to date suffers on both sides from a lack of engagement with the other discipline. While literary and cultural studies have neglected religious texts and theology (despite the attention given to all kinds of other non-literary texts, including scientific and medical texts), theologians' understanding of literature rests on assumptions and literary theories dating from the 19th century, and the discipline has not made an effort to keep up with the theoretical developments in literary studies. The present study seeks to contribute to building a bridge between literary studies, religious studies, and theology.

I use the term 'Protestant' to refer to denominations that supported the Reformation and ultimately divorced themselves from the Roman Catholic Church as the foundation of their faith. Although Protestant sects may emphasise different aspects and sometimes differ in religious practice (e.g. the reliance on Scripture alone vs. inspiration through the holy spirit, or doctrinal differences between Calvin, Luther and other reformers), more often than not they turn out to stand united in their resentment of the Pope and everything

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18   Ibid.

he stands for, as well as in their desire for a more authentic form of worship. Many Protestant sects cherished millenarian hopes.[19] Mainstream Protestantism was not quite as devoid of these as has been claimed, which is why an all too narrow insistence on sectarian boundaries can be misleading. For the most part, this thesis deals with Calvinist Protestantism, and I often use Calvinist and Protestant interchangeably. If other branches or subdivisions are addressed (e.g. Lutherans, Anabaptists, Pietists etc.), this will be indicated.[20]

Why Calvinism and Protestantism? Protestantism is one of the most potent forces that have shaped the modern world and continue to shape our values in all areas of life. The religious-ideological foundations, however, remain largely hidden because this ideology now presents itself as secular and 'modern', and may conveniently be transported into all parts of the world that are presumably in dire need of 'modernisation', from educational to legal and social theories and practices. The doctrine of predestination seems to be unnoticeably still at work in various areas of Western, particularly American, society. The idea of determining the gene that is responsible for criminal behaviour in order to eliminate crime looks just like a modern scientific variant of the Calvinist doctrine of predestination, where "sinners" are predestined to be evil even before they are born. One wonders also to what extent the present culture of secret surveillance, which is promoted first and foremost by the USA, might be indebted to a tradition that has formulated a negative anthropology for the majority of the human population. As Timothy Gorringe has convincingly argued, Calvinism did have a unique effect on the way societies affected by Calvinism came to deal with crime and punishment, when he points out that

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19   Norman Cohn, *The Pursuit of the Millennium. Revolutionary Millenarians and Mystical Anarchists of the Middle Ages* (London: Temple Smith, rev. ed., 1970).

20   Patrick Collinson, *The Religion of Protestants. The Church in English Society* 1559– 1625 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1982). Christopher Haigh, *English Reformations: Religion, Politics, and Society under the Tudors* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993). On problems of the usage of the term 'Protestant' cf. Diarmaid McCulloch, *Reformation: Europe's House Divided 1490–1700* (London: Penguin, 2003), pp. xx, 171. On the different developments of Calvinism in European countries, cf. Andrew Pettegree, Alastair Duke, and Gillian Lewis eds., *Calvinism in Europe, 1540–1620* (New York: Cambridge UP, 1994).

"wherever Calvinism spread, punitive sentencing followed".[21] If this is true, its effects would certainly also be felt in other areas of cultural expression. American action films, for example, have frequently been criticised and condemned for their use of violent spectacle, especially the way in which morality is distributed, and the 'irresponsible' exploitation of violence for commercial reasons.[22] Perhaps this is rather to do with the fact that the US are indebted to a specific cultural tradition, which emphasised the visual depiction of violence for ethical purposes, as the following chapters will show. Marshall Rosenberg in his classic on *Nonviolent Communication* also recognises the fact that there are cultures who are more prone to violence depending on how moral questions are defined:

> […] there is considerably less violence in cultures where people think in terms of human needs than in cultures where people label one another as 'good' or 'bad' and believe that the 'bad' ones deserve to be punished. In 75 per cent of the television programs shown during hours when American children are most likely to be watching, the hero either kills people or beats them up. This violence typically constitutes the climax of the show. Viewers, having been taught that bad guys deserve to be punished, take pleasure in watching this violence.[23]

Cultural historians and philosophers increasingly seem to become aware of the Protestant matrix of Anglo-American Western society and contemporary modern culture, and in intellectual history (previously known as 'history of ideas') the impact of Protestant ideas does seem to receive renewed attention, often including a reappraisal of Max Weber. Topics tend to be politically

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21 Timothy Gorringe, *God's Just Vengeance. Crime, Violence and the Rhetoric of Salvation* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1996), p. 140.

22 In my analysis of Bollywood films on terrorism and their Hollywood counterparts, I have argued that Bollywood has taken special care to avoid the demonisation of terrorists so common in US media and political discourse: "The Ethics of Coexistence. Bollywood's Different Take on Terrorism," *CrossCurrents* 594 (2009): 484–499. Violence and terror in Hollywood are analysed and criticised in more detail by: Carl Boggs, Tom Pollard, *The Hollywood War Machine. US Militarism and Popular Culture* (Boulder, CO: Paradigm Publications, 2007).

23 Marshall B. Rosenberg, *Nonviolent Communication. A Language of Life* (Encinitas, CA: PuddlePress, 2003), pp. 17–18.

charged, ranging from the development of Western disciplinary culture and the professionalisation of warfare to the impact of revolutionary ideas on Western modernity.[24] Michael Haneke's film *Das Weiße Band/ The White Ribbon* (2009), set in a village in northern Germany shortly before the outbreak of World War I, has further fuelled the debate about the cultural impact of Protestantism, its psychological effects and its perhaps under-theorised relationship to violence. Of course, by extending sympathy towards such historical narratives we do not necessarily subscribe to Friedrich Gentz' pessimistic claim that "Protestantism is the first, the true, the only source of all the vast evils under which we groan today."[25] Indeed, some of the recent approaches have tended to strive for reconciliatory modes of interpretation, highlighting the antidotes to the more inhumane aspects of Protestant culture, which it simultaneously seems to have developed.

The focus of the present study is post-Reformation English literature and culture, and I see the 'Calvinesque' as a product of Calvinism in England especially, although perhaps not exclusively. In the final chapter, I shall join the debate of these historians and raise the question whether certain reverberations of the 'Calvinesque' might be found in modern Western (especially popular) culture. My focus is on literary scenarios of violence that display a striking

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24 William G. Naphy, *The Protestant Revolution. From Martin Luther to Martin Luther King Jr.* (London: Ebury Press, 2007) to accompany the documentary in 4 parts presented by Tristram Hunt on UK's Channel 4. Alister E. McGrath, *Christianity's Dangerous Idea: The Protestant Revolution. A History from the Sixteenth Century to the Twenty-First* (New York: HarperOne, 2007). Charles Taylor, *A Secular Age* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard UP, 2007). Barbara Ehrenreich, *Dancing in the Streets. A History of Collective Joy* (New York: Metropolitan Books, 2006). Philip Gorski, *The Disciplinary Revolution. Calvinism and the Rise of the State in Early Modern Europe* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003). Thomas Albert Howard, *Protestant Theology and the Making of the Modern German University* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2009). J. R. Hale, *Renaissance War Studies* (London: The Hambledon Press, 1983), therein: "Incitement to Violence? English Divines on the Theme of War, 1578 to 1631," pp. 487–517.

25 Metternich's secretary Friedrich Gentz to Adam Müller in 1819. Cit. in Eric J. Hobsbawm, *The Age of Revolution: Europe 1789–1848* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1969), p. 231.

degree of voyeurism and an apparent attraction to violence, while they can be shown to belong to the culture of Calvinism.

The book is divided into four chapters. The first two chapters deal with the question of Protestant iconophobia vis à vis a visually intense and vivid imagination of violence.

Here, I revisit Calvin's commentaries on the prophets, which, contrary to our idea of an anti-visual and anti-theatrical Calvin, stress the idea of 'word-painting' when it comes to preaching effectively, which I suggest should be read against the background of larger Renaissance aesthetics advocating vivid styles and lively imagery. This striking interest in rhetoric and in ways of communicating religious ideas effectively will be contrasted with Calvin's and Perkins' understanding of the imagination. Calvin's understanding of images and icons is rather murky given the amount of energy the Reformation invested into the question, and Perkins' and Calvin's demonisation of the imagination as the source of idolatry contradicts the appreciation of prophetic word-painting. The first chapter then concludes with the observation that Calvin's appreciation of prophecy subverts the thorough condemnation of the image (which he and Perkins articulate explicitly), and is one defining aspect of a literary aesthetic I propose to label the 'Calvinesque'.

The second chapter, "Anti-Theatricality and the Imagination of Violence", explores the imagination of God's judgement and its relationship with the anti-theatrical and anti-visual stance. Tertullian's treatise *De Spectaculis*, which is the starting point for our discussion, reflects this contradiction to such an obvious degree that we cannot but wonder if it should be read as an instance of Tertullian's famously embracing attitude towards paradox ("credo quia absurdum est"). Augustine's letter *Ad Simplicianum* seems to be a predecessor to Calvin's theory of double-predestination and the ensuing voyeuristic interest in divine punishment. If it is true that this letter is a key text in the development of Western emotional and intellectual patterns with regard to theatrical punishment and torture of sinners (alongside a heightened sense of guilt and self-torture), as Kurt Flasch claims, we are urged to keep in mind that the 'Calvinesque' belongs to a tradition that was not shaped by Calvin alone.

Thomas Beard's *Theatre of God's Judgements* already in its title proves that Calvinism was not entirely consistent in its proclaimed anti-theatricality especially with regard to divine punishment. This applies to explicit and graphically detailed scenarios of violence in Protestant moral pamphlets, too, which has puzzled scholars. The designation of these stories as textually staged 'morality plays' might necessitate a reconsideration of genre divisions between narrative and ritual performance especially after the Protestant Reformation.[26] Equally puzzling is the notion of an increased and allegedly 'un-Protestant' sense of textual theatricality in John Foxe's *Book of Martyrs*. Since the book must be considered the most influential record and performance of the English Protestant conceptualisation of violence inflicted and endured, and a key document forging Anglo-American Protestant identity, I argue that the theatrical and graphic nature of violence in this work must be understood as an intrinsically early modern Protestant trait rather than an instance of residual medieval Catholicism. Although the book of martyrs is not about just punishment but about victimhood, the Protestant stress on 'like for like', and its binary understanding of sinners and saints indirectly implies the violent just punishment of the 'persecuting Church'.

The third chapter is dedicated to the literary manifestations and transformations of the 'Calvinesque', and traces the reverberations of this aesthetics through literary and dramatic examples, including 16th and 17th century translations of Psalm 137 and Milton's *Sonnet 18*. Jacobean revenge tragedy figures here only marginally as a point of reference, as it is generally recognised for its indebtedness to Calvinist providentialism and the increased interest in blood and horror. The drama of Christopher Marlowe receives special attention, as it was initially the starting point for all other chapters. Marlowe's designation as 'Calvinesque' may appear surprising. However, stylistic features characteristic

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26 This is not the primary concern of the present thesis, although one of the results of my essay "John of Leyden Carnivalized" was the discovery that narrative structures with essentially moralistic contents imitate ritual exorcism in ways that pose the question of a possible Protestant translation of exorcism and ritual cursing into narrative, replacing Catholic and pre-modern rituals of dealing with forces that threatened the sacred order. Cf. note 9.

of Marlowe, such as sadistic scenarios of violence and degradation in combination with hyperbole and the future reference mode, may be viewed in a new light in the context of the material discussed here. The texts chosen in this section are interlinked by the common recurrence of a particularly striking image of violence, 'braining,' which I shall discuss in detail.

In the fourth chapter I return to cultural-historical questions about the imagination of violence addressed briefly in previous passages of the introduction. I shall revisit cultural-historical theories on the impact of Protestantism on Western civilisation, and the rise of disciplinary culture. The essay by Karen Halttunen on an Anglo-American "pornography of pain" in this section summarises and contextualises the results of my analyses.