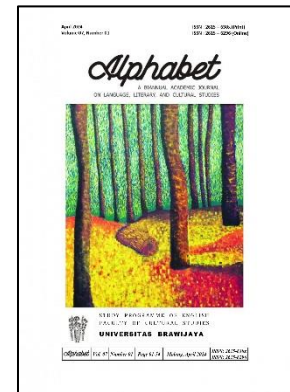


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The Fundamental Expressions of Fear in Sofia Samatar's *The Huntress*

Hariyono

Silvia Marta Wijaya

Kusuma Wijaya

Rommel Utungga Pasopati

Rindrah Kartiningsih

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Hariyono¹
Silvia Marta Wijaya²
Kusuma Wijaya³
Rommel Utungga Pasopati⁴
Rindra Kartiningsih⁵

Abstract

This article underlines the expressions of fear in Sofia Samatar's flash fiction entitled *The Huntress*. The fear felt by the townspeople was thick, the darkness and silence merged. The moon was shining, everyone had their windows shut tight, and a brave man had come to visit the town. The silence is in line with a frightening situation in the story of *The Huntress* by Sofia Samatar. This paper would like to answer the question of how may fear be accentuated in Sofia's Samatar's *The Huntress*? Through qualitative method with cultural studies approach in the theory of myth by Claude Levi-Strauss, this paper locates expressions of fear, darkness, and courage in a story of *The Huntress* by Sofia Samatar. Darkness expresses the threat and disgrace experienced by the townspeople, the hunters are like a feared tenor lion, but then comes a young stranger who calls for courage in the townspeople. The fear of the townspeople is such a socio-cultural myth that has been embraced by them for a long time. In conclusion, the story shows how a young stranger tries to dispel the fear that gnaws at the townspeople's souls, convincing them that hunters are not dangerous.

Keywords: Claude Levi-Strauss; Fear; Myth; Sofia Samatar; *The Huntress*

The fear expression is consistently found to convey attributes like weakness and low social status relative to other expressions (Miscione, 2016; Vercellone, 2020). The literary work of *The Huntress* by Sofia Samatar digs into a world of palpable terror, horror, and bravery, expertly creating a narrative that arouses strong feelings in its readers. The mere mention of the huntress in the title alludes to a study of instinctual drives and a voyage into the unknown where dread is a constant companion

(Samatar, 2013). In this paper, the authors conduct an examination of the various ways in how Samatar's narrative portrays fear. The story is set in a village where the locals struggle with a foreboding silence that is only lighted by the moonlight. The people hide in fear behind securely shut windows, waiting for a mysterious, brave figure to appear.

The main goal of this study is to answer the question of how may fear be accentuated in Sofia's Samatar's *The Huntress*? This paper

-
- 1 Universitas Dr. Soetomo, Surabaya, Indonesia. Email: hariyono@unitomo.ac.id
 - 2 Universitas Teknokrat, Bandar Lampung, Indonesia. Email: silviamartawijaya002@gmail.com
 - 3 Universitas Dr. Soetomo, Surabaya, Indonesia. Email: kusuma.wijaya@unitomo.ac.id
 - 4 Universitas Dr. Soetomo, Surabaya, Indonesia. Email: rommel@unitomo.ac.id
 - 5 Universitas Dr. Soetomo, Surabaya, Indonesia. Email: rindra.kartiningsih@unitomo.ac.id

examines qualitative approach in cultural studies. The fear expression is shown in how it signals the condition of being helpless and in distress (Marsh et al., 2005). In Samatar's story, darkness comes to represent the danger and humiliation that the villagers must face. The huntress, who is portrayed as fearsome predators, instills fear comparable to that produced by a roaring lion (Samatar, 2013). Nevertheless, during this unease, a youthful outsider shows in and inspires the locals to show courage. The socio-cultural myth that underlies the terror of the villagers emerges at this point (Miscione, 2016; Vercellone, 2020). In Samatar's story, people can learn how a young stranger tries to convince the locals that the hunters are not as dangerous as they seem to eliminate the deeply established fear that has crept into their souls.

The Huntress captures a compelling story in which a young stranger rationalizes the legend that has shaped terror among the locals. Samatar's work not only reveals the subtleties of human fear, but also emphasizes the empowering nature of bravery (Samatar, 2013). The cultural dimension of dread inside this flash fiction is the clear reflection of myth that has lived among fear in everyday life of the villagers.

By using qualitative method, certain concepts and written data are analyzed to answer the question in this paper. Written through description, online and offline scripts are used to explain correlations between flash fiction of *The Huntress* written by Sofia Samatar with myth and fear theory by Claude Levi-Strauss alongside literary concepts and psychological ideas. Online and offline scripts are derived from journals and articles to understand shown matters. The data analysis includes obtaining sources, reading sources carefully, comparing with other issues, quoting into paper, and writing down in reference lists. The research data comes from both Samatar's flash fiction and Levi-Strauss theory. Each of them is read then broken down into its every element. The discourses of the short story are mainly included to pinpoint significance of superiority complex through the premises and

logics used in Levi-Strauss' myth theory. Here, Samatar's flash fiction is the object while Levi-Strauss' theory is a tool to analyze.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Fear and Its Continuation in *The Huntress*

The Huntress by Sofia Samatar immerses the reader into a world where fear is a force that permeates every aspect of city life, and not just emotions. The story takes place in an environment where the city is always silent and gloomy (Samatar, 2013). Later, the story depicts a stranger who defies social norms of fear by daring to enter the stage as the moon shines through the tightly closed windows.

Fear expression is associated with increased prosocial responding—specifically, reported sympathy and desire to help the expresser (Juntilla, et al., 2023; LeDoux, 2013). In this story, there are three main sections that show the expression of fear in Sofia Samatar's *The Huntress*. The first section emphasizes how a town, fearful of the hunters, shuts itself down like an eye. People's attempts to seek safety in places like beds and basements are manifestations of their fear. An atmosphere of tension and anxiety is created by the scent of fur, the trail of shadows, and the ever-watchful presence of the huntress. The second section is the fear as shown in people's experience. The open window and the presence of the huntress physically affects the narrator and leaves a black mark (Samatar, 2013). The narrator has strong fear and anxiety upon realizing this state, and this is seen in the responses of the hotel owner and staff. The third section is the reactions to stress and fear that describe how courage is visible around the mouth (Samatar, 2013). This section expands knowledge of the main character's relationship with fear by discussing the narrator's personal and psychological traits.

The first aspect includes the various conditions that expand the reader's imagination of the fears that exist in the city. This is clearly highlighted in the story as seen below:

Data 1: *"For fear of the huntress the city closed like an eye."* (Samatar, 2013)

There is a strong metaphor in this line. The line explains that the town portrays the fear that grips its inhabitants by closing up like an eye that closes when it senses something dangerous and threatening (Samatar, 2013). In other words, the analogy of closing the eyes conveys the meaning of an immediate instinctive response to a threat. The eye's natural defense mechanism is to close when one is frightened or feels attacked. Thus, this sentence conveys the idea that the city as a whole closes its eyes as a protective mechanism due to the overwhelming and terrifying terror of the huntress.

Data 2: *"In the morning the eaves would drip with pinkish foam."* (Samatar, 2013)

This statement builds tension in the narrative and provides an eerie visual image. The sight of the roof covered in pink foam conjures up an enigmatic atmosphere (Samatar, 2013). The pink hue of the foam creates an appearance that could allude to a supernatural impact or an unexpected plot point. This phenomenon highlights an unexpected and interesting component in the text and gives the reader a sense of strangeness, rather than a normal or usual state of affairs (LeDoux, 2013; Oktafiani, et al., 2023). Samatar then provides visual images and metaphors that emphasize the abnormality of the Huntress' presence, causing the readers to feel fear, by showing the ceiling filled with reddish-colored foam.

Data 3: *"A stench of fur came in at the window."* (Samatar, 2013)

The scene above refers to the unpleasant scent coming in through the window and is specifically focused on the smell of fur (Samatar, 2013). Because of this, the reader can visualize the presence of the huntress or some vague creature that could be the source of the smell, creating a highly sensitive environment. The scent of fur can indicate the arrival of the huntress, animals, or dangerous objects that

cause fear in the smeller (LeDoux, 2013; Oktafiani, et al., 2023). The fur could also symbolizes the clothes that the huntress fear as those come from the skin of anything that she has hunted before

Data 4: *"I went to slam it shut, but instead I stood there, fingers gripping the edge of the frame."* (Samatar, 2013)

This sentence describes the narrator's instinctual response, which is to forcefully close the window in reaction to something that might be dangerous. However, the narrator does not perform this action and simply stands with his fingers gripping the edge of the window frame (Samatar, 2013). This gesture produces a tense and unsure moment, indicating the narrator's fear that grips him so strongly that he stops acting in a way that was initially anticipated as a natural reaction and chooses to remain silent.

Data 5: *"I closed my eyes in the searching heat."* (Samatar, 2013)

This line adds rich emotional depth by describing the narrator's blindfold response to heat. It is widely seen that the narrator closes her eyes in an attempt to protect herself from situations or events that frighten or scare her. The term of searching heat conveys a sense of burning like heat-seeking missiles, which makes the narrator feel panicked or confused (Samatar, 2013). Samatar exposes the narrator's emotional depth to examine the effect of tension or fear in the situation the narrator is facing, and digs further into the main character's psychological experience by describing the narrator's response to this heat.

Data 6: *"All over the city people were taking shelter in their cellars and under their beds."* (Samatar, 2013)

The way the people within the city as a whole responded to the threat posed by the huntress is described as very tense in this sentence. The differences around the city caused panic, which made people naturally seek shelter (Samatar, 2013). People's choice to seek shelter in different parts of the city, such as

basements or beds, shows a sense of discomfort and anxiety among the residents. These locations became symbols of safety from the threat posed by the huntress, as if the entire city was besieged by terror (Samatar, 2013). This coordinated effort instills a sense of unease in the whole situation of everyday life.

Data 7: *“The leaves outside my window shrank and smoked”* (Samatar, 2013)

This expression shows that the leaves are shrinking or shriveling outside the window. The word shrink suggests that the leaves have changed in size or shape. This can be seen as the narrator's normal reaction to the presence of the huntress (Samatar, 2013). It is the result of her terror changing her view of the outside world. The shrinking of the leaves creates a feeling of confinement and limitation, as well as a sense of threat and fear. The addition of this sentence adds another layer of meaning to the sentence. Smoked conveys a sense of gloom and mystery. Smoke is often associated with things that are enigmatic, secret, or even magical (Samatar, 2013). Smoke can create the illusion that an area that was once clean and bright has become dark and mysterious.

Data 8: *“I feel like I'm turning into this fierce person. A taskmaster to myself, like a ballet dancer or a monk.”* (Samatar, 2013)

This statement shows that the narrator has changed herself as a result of her encounter with the Huntress. The narrator's self-description as fierce suggests that he has adapted to the anxiety and fear he experiences. The analogy with a fierce monk or ballet dancer highlights the self-control and discipline that is required in the face of frightening circumstances (Samatar, 2013). The narrator views these changes as necessary, and claims that stress and anxiety have made her stronger and more in control.

Myth and Its Prolonging Attributes on Fear

Mythology is a phenomenon that circulates on various platforms, inspiring belief in

surrounding events. There are myths in every community, in various forms. There are remarkable similarities between events, narrative styles, and even structural tones (Marsh & Ambady, 2017; Riva, 2017). Every myth has a common language. Claude Levi-Strauss indicates that mythology is a language. It is due to its existing meanings which indicate that myths are ingrained in the way the different components of the story are put together rather than coming from outside sources. Myths are interconnected because of the role language plays in them. Mythological language is far more complex than language used in regular structural studies (Marsh & Ambady, 2017; Riva, 2017).

Levi-Strauss indicates myth in the two main fundamentals. The first one is that myth is about being structural. It lives and is lived by people through experience. Myth has been known by people as has been the structure of everyday life (Peters et al., 2018; de Groot, et al., 2021). In this sense, myth is not something coincidental but socially constructed and individually habituated. Then, myth is how imagination intertwines with history. It is not outside of humans' everyday life, but myth is the life itself (Kok, et al., 2018; Burleigh, et al., 2022). Myth works not only in legends or folklore, but also how any kind of cliché in everyday life moves around.

The second one is that myth is located in the unconscious level of human beings. Indeed, myth works like a language. It is in line with Lacan's psychoanalytic sense (Marsh & Ambady, 2017; Riva, 2017). The development of human beings are not mentioned in their whole autonomous structure, but fragmented through language. Language in this idea is not merely a matter of mode of communication, but it is the wholeness of signs and meanings of people's life. Through language, culture comes to life. Therefore, myth does not stand alone, but it works like a rhizome in Deleuzian understanding that works like a network and multitude of people's continuous surroundings (Peters et al., 2018; de Groot, et al., 2021).

From the sense of myth, fear could be underlined as a way in which people react to any threat. The sense of fear could be spontaneous or habituated, but both of those may involve both rational and irrational reasons. People call fear as phobias; a rational feeling of being afraid due to any irrational feeling. However, fear is so common that it is not always severe at all. Fear could be as light as a feather as a common reaction. It could reflect a severe one if it is related to any cultured one, including myth. Then, there are three main aspects of fear; the common, the physical, and the visual ones (Andersen, 2020; Obradovic, 2021). Those are described as follows.

Common fear is the most extensively studied emotion. This one is more spontaneous, but could also be known as a result of any afraid feeling beforehand. The idea of being common here means two aspects. On the one hand, it reflects the idea of being general. Fear is common in people's lives since everyone may always feel it constantly (Andersen, 2020; Obradovic, 2021). It is such an unpleasant emotion due to the incoming threat. Somehow, fear is also coming to forwarding pain since the threat could be so dangerous for the sufferers. On the other hand, the common aspect is in line with being popular. It involves many people both as part of societies or in attributive matters. This common idea emphasizes instinct understood and embraced by everyone (Kok, et al., 2018; Burleigh, et al., 2022). In many aspects, fear is about imagination. Therefore, the idea to lower the sense of fear is imitating the relaxed feelings.

Physical fear is a reaction to something real. What is feared is related to any real object such as persons or places (Andersen, 2020; Obradovic, 2021). This fear is real since it will only be triggered if reality really brings a feeling of being afraid to someone. If the cause is absent, the fear could be gone. However, it will also stay but not as the physical one. It stays as psychological fear in which values of reality are planted in humans' minds. Physical fear is more familiar since it revolves around people. Related to myth, the reality of fear is the physical one, but the reality is also supported

by the psychological one either (Alt, 2018; Weekes-Shackelford, 2021). Then, physical fear is only known if only someone is already afraid of such reality. If it stays out of any people's experience, it will never come to any fear.

Visual fear is indeed such fear sensed by people. The visual one is about imagery of the feared object. In this aspect, the visual one is present if it exists before someone's eyes. It is quite different from physical fear although both underline matters of fear regarding the reality (Kok, et al., 2018; Burleigh, et al., 2022). Visual fear is the matter of totally being present before any human. It does not relate to any concept of being afraid. It is more sudden and quite unknown before. Indeed, any visual will mean nothing without any previous value. Nevertheless, the visual aspect shows that it does not have to be rational (Alt, 2018; Weekes-Shackelford, 2021). It is not because it is irrational, but it does not have to come to mind. It comes to humans' senses first and is reacted as a fear.

The Fear of Shadow in *The Huntress*

Samatar's flash fiction is related to expression of fear as it portrays a general feeling of discomfort into its very structure. The fear expression appears to facilitate predominantly approach from perceivers (Alt, 2018; Weekes-Shackelford, 2021). The mood of the story's setting provides a backdrop for the various ways that fear manifests itself. Samatar's depiction of darkness becomes a representation of the humiliation that the villagers must endure, and the huntress represents a predator who inspires panic like that of a roaring lion (Samatar, 2013). However, in the middle of this disquiet, a youthful stranger shows up, challenging the villagers' deep-seated dread and encouraging them to embrace bravery.

In the sentence of "*For fear of the huntress, the city closed like an eye*" (Samatar 2013), the flash fiction presents a metaphorical picture of anxiety that includes an enigmatic female hunter. The figure is a myth for people to be feared. It is in line with Levi-Strauss' idea that

myths provide symbolic frameworks for arranging human experience and expressing essential truths about the universe (Juntilla, et al., 2023; LeDoux, 2013). In this instance, the sentence shapes a mythical picture of a city closing like an eye in reaction to the huntress's dread, reflecting the dynamics of shared fear throughout the narrative.

The word huntress is also a mythological emblem for a power or threat that terrorizes a civilization (Samatar, 2013). The huntress woman incites conflict between the city, which represents civilization, and the enigmatic or perilous outer world. Then, the idea of the city "*closing like an eye*" captures the way people react to terror collectively. The city can be viewed as a social construct that represents safety and human civilization. Shutting one's eyes is such refusal to see or face terror (Alt, 2018; Weekes-Shackelford, 2021). This gives rise to a legendary story in which the city is threatened by an unstoppable force that is used to express fear and struggle against unknown or threatening entities.

The quote of "*In the morning the roof of the house would drip pink foam*" (Samatar, 2013) shapes a vivid image in the context of visual fear that is created in the morning by the pink foam dripping from the roof. When the word "*foam*" is used, it conjures up the idea of froth, a liquid that may be unfamiliar. The color pink may evoke thoughts of something artificial. In this piece, visual tension is created by the contrast between the anticipated brightness of the morning and the roof dripping with pink froth. This can be seen as an illustration of the opposite of what is expected, suggesting the strangeness or possible threat that may arise in the morning (Samatar, 2013). Samatar wants to play with the reader's idea of natural beauty or routine by introducing an aspect of visual dread in this excerpt. This indeed creates a confusing mood and induces unexpected visual fear.

In data three, the visual element of terror by describing the "*stench of fur*" produces a visual picture that triggers a sense of the feel and scent of fur. The word "*stench*" which refers to an unpleasant smell, makes an invisible

atmosphere of being uneasy or threatening (Samatar, 2013). The scent of fur coming through the window can be seen as a warning sign or symbol that should make one feel fear. It is also a sign of the presence of an unknown object or a possible threat from the outside world.

Data four of "*I went to slam it shut, but instead I stood there, fingers gripping the edge of the frame*" (Samatar, 2013) highlights instances of physical fear in the story. According to this excerpt, the closing causes significant physical reactions, such as gripping the edges of the frame. This behavior can be seen as a representation of physical fear when feeling threatened. In addition, this physical act has a symbolic meaning, representing a deeper problem in society or within the character. Gripping the frame can be interpreted as an attempt to confront fear, but it can also be interpreted as an inability to completely avoid or hide that anxiety (Samatar, 2013). Through the combination of the context of this quote and the analysis of Levi-Strauss' myth theory, the physical action becomes a symbolic expression of the fear that is omnipresent in the story, adding an intricate layer to our understanding of the character's physical fear (Degenaar, 2007; Yuliastuti, et al., 2021).

Data five of "*I closed my eyes in the searching heat*" (Samatar, 2013)." conjures up a tense and horrifying scene with vivid sensory details. Based on Levi-Strauss' myth theory, this excerpt can be seen as a metaphor for physical fear since it is a matter of afraid feelings being experienced. The act of closing the eyes is an innate reaction to physical fear that can arise from unfamiliar or dangerous circumstances (Samatar, 2013). In this particular context, the quote is interpreted as a segment of the mythical story that presents physical tension and anxiety as fundamental components of the tale. The hot quest can be seen as a test or challenge that the characters must overcome, resulting in a dramatic interplay between physical courage and fear (Degenaar, 2007; Yuliastuti, et al., 2021). In addition, closing the eyes can also be associated with the idea of avoiding or refusing to look at something

frightening. This is a metaphor of people's attempts to avoid or face physical fear by closing their eyes to potentially frightening facts, in accordance with Levi-Strauss' theory of myth.

Data six of "*All over the city people were taking shelter in their cellars and under their beds*" (Samatar, 2013) describes the widespread structured panic as the fear of the myth comes to reality. Referring to the quotation, the actions of seeking safety underground and under their mattresses together produce a form of common fear. Seeking safety in groups demonstrates solidarity in the face of dangerous or frightening circumstances. The act of seeking shelter across the city becomes a representation of the community's reaction to a perceived threat (Samatar, 2013). It also captures a universal or common anxiety that many people can relate to. Individuals and groups as a whole are affected by the collective response to threats, indicating a shared concern or fear that binds people in their community. The expression fear is the expression indicates the expresser to be weak, helpless, subordinate, and naturally afraid (Abigail A. Marsh, Nalini Ambady, 2007). Therefore, this statement illustrates how the collective action of individuals seeking safety creates a symbolic representation of shared anxiety within the city in the analysis of Claude Levi-Strauss' myth theory.

Data seven of "*The leaves outside my window shrank and smoked*" (Samatar, 2013) reflects that visual cues associated with dread are present in this quote. The phrase describes the leaves outside the window shrinking and smoking, creating a powerful visual representation. The quotation can clearly show pictures of anxiety or approaching danger as a result of this visualization (Miller, 2014; Smith, et al., 2023). Samatar's use of language gives the mood of a visual component. A sense of unease or peril is evoked by the image of smoking and shrinking leaves. The way the leaves are wilting and the smoke there is connected to danger or emergency scenarios. The image of smoldering and fading leaves contrasts with images that are

typically connected to freshness and energy. Tension and discomfort are created by this contrast to highlight significant shifts or unusual circumstances (Miller, 2014; Smith, et al., 2023). This analysis, which draws on Levi-Strauss' myth theory, shows how the quotation is understood as a component of a story construction that represents human mind structures when faced with dread or difficult situations.

In data eight, the quote of "*I feel like I'm turning into this fierce person. A taskmaster to myself, like a ballet dancer or a monk*" illustrates how a person's identity and emotions can drastically shift (Samatar, 2013). This quotation can be examined in light of Levi-Strauss's theory of myth, particularly with regard to the idea of competence or skills developed from common fear. The human drive to make meaning of shared experiences and get over group concerns frequently leads to the creation of myths. This remark describes how a person's attempt to face their anxiety or react to a group fear by taking on a demanding and self-disciplined position can be interpreted as their transition towards being a formidable and stern figure (Menezes, 2019; Taschereau-Dumouchel, 2022).

The transition in this quotation from being a "fierce person" to a "taskmaster to myself" represents the adoption of a strong and disciplined character, which works like a reaction to common anxieties or difficulties the person is facing (Samatar, 2013). A monk seeks enlightenment via self-control and dedication, but a ballet dancer needs a high level of skill and discipline. The ideas of competence and discipline are highlighted in both parallels as potential remedies or means of overcoming common anxieties. This quotation underlines a person's attempt to face common anxieties by taking on a strong and disciplined position. This is related to Levi-Strauss' theory of myths since it shows how myths emerge in reaction to societal worries and how efforts to create social fears might involve one's own identity (Menezes, 2019; Taschereau-Dumouchel, 2022).

CONCLUSION

The flash fiction of Samatar indeed shows about types of fear known by individuals and societies. The fears involved in the story are expressions of common, physical, and visual. The common aspect is known by all people in the city representing a shared sense of apprehension. The physical fear revolves around the presence of the huntress, whose activities cast shadows and darkness over the city, creating an aura of discomfort and fear. The third is the visual fear shown in the story. The huntress intertwines the visual aspect to evoke terror visual elements to evoke fear. The assumption that fear and myth are linked is reinforced by all three of these factors. The myth of the huntress turns into a metaphor for society anxieties, reflecting the cultural background and popular imagination. Essentially, the narrative illustrates fear as both individuals and societal matters that live among the structure of human life.

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