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Exploding Horror

Horror Trivia

It's difficult to make a good horror film these days and we know it. The genre has situated itself in retrospective feedback loops of the sequel, the prequel the remake as well as the ironic tragic replay of itself as farce, where horror makes its own antirealist wink into the blood spattered lens and knows the condition of its own constraint to horror.¹ In this sense what we expect from horror and what we often get are very different. Horror promises the experience of the ungrounding of certain norms, the kind of fear that we might be unprepared for, and the kind of experience that comes from nowhere. But more often than not we see horror instead as a labour upon the recuperation of itself as a set of norms, habits and styles reinstated ironically as a claim to the meta-genre of new transgressions *within the genre*.

Films like *Hostel*, (2005 dir. Eli Roth), extrapolate this dance of horror's meta-genre. *Hostel* foregrounds the connections between knowledge and money/power, entangling these discourses in the central narrative framework. Here, the constraints of the horror genre are made equivalent to the administration of neo-liberal economies, where the film features various modes of torture as artistic spectacle that is paid for in full by rich masochists. The victims of such terror are victims only because they are naively unaware of the traditional allegories of the horror genre: Don't trust anyone, don't go backpacking in Eastern Europe, don't go out alone at night, don't be a slut, etc. Horror, in the film *Hostel* is writ as a knowledge based and fiscal centered economy. For the victims this is marked as lack. They meet death precisely because they have not watched enough horror movies. For the masochistic authors of the terror featured

¹ Franchises such as *Scary Movie* (2000, dir. Keenan Ivory Wayans, Dimension Films) exemplify this genre of meta-horror, where the tropes of various horror films and their allegorical content such as the 'easy' girl gets it first, are culled from the history of the genre and replayed or re-enacted as another self-conscious representational form.

in the movie, this knowledge of horror becomes power only through spending money.

Hostel as a film, narrates the limits of the horror genre as something that is regulated as and through capital, and it self-consciously *remakes itself* within this paradigm through this picturing of its own constraint as capitalistic experience. For the globally mobile and endemically bored perverse rich who pay to see and experience horror first-hand as art in the film *Hostel*, another irony is palatable, that we too pay to encounter a version of this artifice. But the complaint we have, that bites us, is that unlike the punters in *Hostel* the horror that we encounter is that a thought of the real is only capable of reiterating itself as a mode of illustrative or representational experience; that culture, if it thinks, has hit the limits of its imagination, and these limits are defined through the bind of money and knowledge that in turn sequester particular traditions of the representational image and subjectivity.

In this way, horror has witnessed and narrated its own exhaustion, it has authored its failure to be horror, and as such has done so to transcend the parameters of its own paradigmatic framework. More than other genres - like the action movie, the spy thriller and the rom-com, where all to some extent have delivered pastiche, parodic and ironic self-referential treatments, and all have in their grasp some narrative of the real, be this the real of power, or true love - horror seems to fail precisely because it specifies a precise and unique claim to the real. This is a political claim, where horror transcends the norm to connect private experience with larger philosophical societal issues that include the question of what it means to be human. It wins this critique through its (ac)claimed mastery and special predisposition to forging a collapse between appearance and reality manifest in sensory experience. These political and philosophical claims alone compel us to explore the horror genre itself in more depth, but alongside this demand more contemplation of how the philosophical where certain forms of thought are claimed as a type and dimension of horror

extends the horror genre to articulate the expanded territory of our thinking the real. Here we see the parallel worlds of the horror genre (defined predominantly an aesthetic paradigm) and a horror philosophy that establishes the visible and experiential realm of world as primary, collapse together in order to locate the aesthetic experience of horror as *the definition* of thought itself.

Considering this comprehension of horror as a form of aesthetic thought, a perennial problem that both the horror film and horror philosophy faces is how to think the real without putting to work some standard correlate at its base. We can see the problem exemplified in the standard structure of horror that is made up of re-enacting a methodological traversal from the known to unknown, organic to the technological, meat to flesh, human to alien, subject to object: In other words, horror is our encountering in-diverse tales of threat to 'the known'. The popular success of these narratives in film has meant that horror has undergone modifications within the genre, rather than any radical shift in redefining the standards that it goes to work with; from William Castle's *The House on Haunted Hill* (1959, William Castle Productions) where parlour games that host the dark side of human nature are eclipsed by the real of these psychological forces; Roger Corman's *Masque of the Red Death* (1964 AltaVista Productions) telling tales of the dark arrangements between aristocratic decadence and barbaric powers of both earthly and transcendental nature; the films that took center stage in the late 1970's and early 1980's with the master-horror moments in films such as John Carpenter's *The Thing*, (1982 Universal Pictures) and Tobe Hooper's *Poltergeist* (1982 Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer), and the relatively more recent foray into horror as social realism with films like *Paranormal Activity* (dir. Oren Peil 2009, Blumhouse Productions). Horror, as the aesthetic experience that would in avant-gardist fashion lead the antagonism and circumvention of our own beliefs, our institutions and our ground, seems to have written itself out through its own institutionalisation.

This comprehension of horror understands the genre itself as a form of institutional critique of the artistic kind,² and this relation reminds us moreover of the connection between horror and its institutions, namely, what is being defended rather than prosecuted in these stories. Whilst horror advocates the presence of anterior forces in our lives, the allegory of horror is often situated around conservative values of neo-liberal democracy and the family that replicate the familiar paranoia of the cold war era. Increasingly, what our movies tell us is that horror is conservative and repressive in many senses and also challenged when it comes to understanding another structure of world. But, it is important to slow this down a little, because we should not lay the blame purely at the level of horror's language, stylisation or script, but rather the invariant structure of horror itself, and within that we must interrogate how we define and understand the parts that make up that structure. This is not only a matter then for the horror genre as cultural form, but horror philosophy and its immanent humanism. If horror functions by blurring the distinction between the human and the inhuman, appearance and reality, organic and inorganic, then how are these forms identified from the start? The blurring that horror relies upon to exact horror describes the problem that this erasure of difference is only temporary, a special effect, and that this erasure itself does not produce any possibility of understanding these base categories differently, or another structure without these categories. Nor does it allow us to imagine a life without a standard hierarchy of the image since the non-standard effect of horror is mastered as standard expectation. Rather, horror tells us that in certain times and spaces that these categories of the 'norm' may be under threat.

² I am referring to the standard modalities of institutional critique in the mid-twentieth century where conceptual artists strategized various critiques of power by identifying power as located in the walls and structures of the institutions of the 'art world'. The emergence of post institutional critique recognised the way in which these practices were part of and absorbed within the institution of art and therefore witnessed behaviours that moved across the tragic recognitions of the failure of critique, tongue-in-cheek ironies that went to work with failure in mind, or other practices that expressed an actively nihilistic surrender to the 'status quo'.

How a phenomenology of horror as a form of 'horror philosophy' might escape or redefine the problems that I have described in horror films is significant here. I will explore next how phenomenological re-visionings that seek to engage horror more thoughtfully within a non-humanist philosophy and via a multiplicity of non-hierarchical perceptual registers that exceed and expand the frame of representation, the human, and the referent, often come up against the dead-end of the genre itself, primarily at the interface of horror as cause and effect.

I will argue that for horror to surpass the frame of its own constraint then it must risk surpassing the dyadic structure of horror itself, which in turn rests upon a particular triad of subjectivity, knowledge and the image. Whilst we might argue that there can be room for a 'good horror' film, we have to ask what conditions present us with horror, what is the real horror here? Is horror necessarily tied to the primacy of subjective perception? And, if we are to rescue horror at all then is it necessary that we unbind its very structure from these traditions? If horror is dying then why resurrect or reanimate this corpse?

As I move through this material, I want to put some pressure on this traversal from the thought of horror as a form of abstract material to the affectual register of the horror genre, particularly in television and cinema. I will explore the structure of horror, where the concept secures its affect in particular connections between the subject, image and knowledge.

Genre as fate: Horror as Repression

I start with three central conditions of horror:

1. Aesthetic and affectual: Horror is an experience *and* an image.

2. Political: Horror is a recognition of the limits of our mastery, the place at which we no longer control our environment as a totality, or our future, and therefore horror educates us to existing inequalities.
3. Philosophical: Horror is an articulation of 'the real' and stands for that which we do not have access to.

Following these points, horror becomes emblematic of 'the nothing', 'the void', 'the unrepresentable' and 'the impossible', and this knowledge is understood as inevitable and real. John Mullarkey's essay "Spirit in the Materialist World: Revisionary Metaphysics and the Horrors of Philosophy" speaks to this directly.³ Key to his argument is that there is no single bridging theory to produce or enable a unification of the sciences that would enable the kind of Meillasouxian sovereignty of reason that would map the world. Other alternative hopes for an interdisciplinarity of the sciences in one egalitarian framework are also evacuated because the thought of horror is the work of recognising the *real of inequalities*. As such, for Mullarkey, both sovereignty and equality are denaturalised as incorrect mythologies in favour of the real nature of an inequality that is accessed through experience. In this *inequality*, he outlines a concept of horror as the collision of two forms of thought. The first is the thought that recognises the real disunity of world. This is the thought that thinks the 'never' (that is, we will *never* be unified, and there will *never* be one unifying theory to rationalise world). The second mode of thought is that made up of the empirical evidence that leads to this conclusion: The various antagonisms that vie for this status of their unilateral sovereignty guarantees and perpetuate this truth of the never, precisely because they do not believe in it. Together as opposing poles they configure an apperceptual recognition of horror as locked into and as definitive of a status quo that configures horror as a space of irony. This transcendent moment of thought

³ I want to thank John Mullarkey for his exposition of this text and others as well as his generosity time and energy spent discussing his ideas as part of his role as CalArts Critical Studies Theorist-in-Residence as part of the MA Aesthetics and Politics Program, 2013.

is figured as a deeper and more real horror where we recognise something of the root of the human condition as being equally or potentially *inhuman*.

For Mullarkey, this philosophical thought of horror takes place as abstract material in the world, but at the same time harnesses and owns the rights to the 'never'. It is here when we see that horror is a referential term that ironically is capable of invoking a relation to the thought of *the inaccessible or non-relational* within the parameters of the given. This contradiction of such a lived horror is bound up with the recognition of ourselves as already non-human.⁴ A first and key problem of horror then (and one that is more general than that proposed in Mullarkey's argument though it is present within it) is that horror uniquely and singularly understands and expresses our fate as discordance.

The thought of horror and the anti-image

This determination of horror as *fate and nature*, asks us how we can speak of absolute alterity without reproducing this as 'presence as form' or as the 'horror genre' that re-captures the status quo that I have outlined here from the start; that is, without reconditioning horror to *another form* of finitude. It is here where we must explore a second problem; that is, the material and aesthetic presence of the thought of horror. What I will look to first is how our experiences of this negatively conditioned thought project an isomorphy of the real that demands a particular understanding of the role and place of the image. Images that reside in horror must invoke the unsayable, the un-filmable, the un-representable and the unconscious. Ironically, this negative invocation of the real actually conditions

⁴ Situating the grounds of the object as the case for our horror entertains other problems within this theory, since the distinction between the inhuman and the human, which is essentially a philosophical set, can easily be over-determined as another political/moral distinction; between the inhuman and the *inhumane*. Here, we face the Jekyll and Hyde moment of horror philosophy and the production of specific dyadic forms that characterise an uncivilised other at the heart of mankind in an equality of violence; a state of pre-political uncivilised nature that would actually be the opposite to the condition of real inequality that is set out here within the political.

language as the signifier of its own failure - let us say that the privileging of the realm of material experience in horror demands a concept of the anti-image.⁵

This leads to my assertion that a comprehension of a world of affect, phenomena and experience struggles to account for the self-conscious modality of perception of self as a discreet entity 'in itself' that situates horror, nor does it deal fully with how the non-teleological plane of experience seems to persist in, and invite the organising of, particular hierarchies of image-thought-experience through the thought of horror. (Some image-experiences are more real than others.) Our last problem emerges when we begin to associate this condition of the real as capable of revealing to us the real condition of inequality as ground. The question must be asked here regarding the affectual property of knowing horror since this knowledge does not transcend horror. Alternatively, knowledge adds to the regressive character of thought and the image and re-insinuates a concept of a defined subjectivity.

The consequences at stake here are not only present in philosophy or cinema. Many art works tell us that a nonrepresentational image can coalesce with reality through embodying images *as a form of nature*, but a representational image *cannot* because it cannot escape its mediating function. We can see this when built into this logic of horror is the notion that the image can allow us access to a reality only if it is unfettered by the 'heaviness' of mediation and context by which it can then approach the level of the direct sensory encounter. An effect of this

⁵ I'd like to make a distinction here between the anti-image and the non-representational. The anti-image in this inquiry has a particular character; that it is resistant to accounting for how images produce meaning through contextual relations. The anti-image then privileges the experience of images as autonomous objects set against the real, over and above the contextual and interpretative conditions of images as experiences, languages, structures and objects. The non-representational account of images that I put forward here does not presuppose such autonomy, and evacuating 'reference' does not evacuate realism. The problematic belief set out in the anti-image is that one can exorcise the demon of representation to acquire the conditions of a more pure experience economy.

paradoxical thinking *against the image with the image* is that the empirical world is made strange, since this presence of the nothing is immanent to it, lurks within it and is something that happens to us. Our given reality has an alienating quality that we cannot fathom. So, we live with a dilemma of the image, we cannot trust the given, but that is all we know.

This anti-image as experiential presence must somehow incorporate this self-denial, this retraction of representation, so as to take its place within the schema of the real and the world. The contradiction in horror then is that images are understood as inadequate to the real, in that they are ghostly projections from it and at the same time they are asserted as real in their material substance and affectual power to contain the real of inaccessibility. They must do so within the constraints of 'the never' of horror. This reality is instructive since it narrates our oppression, but it also figures our failure to think beyond our repression.

Entering the horror genre

The types of image-thought that respond to horror in this way must be poetic. They must master the rhetoric of presence and absence in a match of tensions in an aesthetics of constraint. This is made clear in Graham Harman's essay "Horror of Phenomenology"⁶, where a '(one legged) realism grasps the weird tension in the phenomena themselves.'⁷ For Harman, this is a realism that misses the 'genuine hiddenness of things', and in that sense the virtual world can only be that place of weird metaphoric-poetic phenomena. Whilst this virtual world built on a material plane does not provide access to the metaphysical dimension, it is nevertheless important to note that the whole point of this aesthetics of a cubist-styled processional phenomenon of aesthetic experience acts as an isomorph of this metaphysical dimension, and that it is explicitly set in relation to it. This correlation is the manifestation of a parallel world, where the

⁶ (Collapse Volume IV 2008)

⁷ Ibid, 364

image is an effect of the causal power of this space, and its presence must be that of the altered and strange. In that sense, Harman's 'weird realism' tells us that images are non-relational in one sense, but that these forms of images – the works of Lovecraftian architectures, for example – are capable of representing some form of relationship to the real. Grasping the phenomena of 'inaccess' is the horror that Harman invokes, and this privileging of phenomenal experience in the processional unfolding of images in time assumes that this form of image production can (and also that one must) surpass the problems of representationalism. What it does not account for are the mediating properties of this type of image production, their properties of semblance. As such, rather than being a 'weird realism', this theory of the image as being multi-perspectival, disorientating and time-based seems moreover to occupy the standard definitions of a claims for a contemporary realism in artistic practice (or what should be termed naive idealism) following the logic of a tragic phenomenology that I have just narrated. Here, the image is seen to function by accessing its own internal reality, demonstrated outwardly in an aesthetics of multiple forces co-existing in one plane; that is, its essential qualities which are actually defined by, are actually an effect of, and are actually set in relation to the reality of 'the great outdoors'.

What Harman perhaps misses here is that his theory is a theory of the image, and this tends to reside in simile rather than metaphor. This ends up neutralising the potential that the image may have since it remains attached to the real as its negative referent, which is a special and alien product of reality.

John Mullarkey's essay "The Tragedy of the Object"⁸ foregrounds another type of phenomenology inherited from Nagel's Objective Phenomenology. His theory of horror philosophy is careful to expand the definition of horror as something that

⁸ "Tragedy of the Object: Democracy of Vision and the Terrorism of Things in Bazin's Cinematic Realism," *Angelaki Journal of the Theoretical Humanities*, Routledge, Vol. 17 Number 4 December 2012. 39-58

takes place in the expanded field that exceeds the horror genre specifically.⁹ However, in this text horror provides the vehicle through which the irruption of the real is made present. The cinema of recent Japanese horror films in the genre of J-Horror provide the description of the 'dark other' in horror appearing at the edge of the frame or the cinematic screen: "The opticality of the peripheral monster in films such as *Ringu* (1998), *Ju-On* (2002) *Honogurai mizo no soko kara* (2002) and their sequels affords us a new vision of background and depth of field." Mullarkey connects the experiential 'vagueness' of the cinematic image with an the audience's experience of doubt. Together these elements succeed in revealing "the actual presences of normally unseen or marginalised visibilities."¹⁰ Here "the edge of human vision" is used to refer to both the limits of human knowledge and the frame of the cinematic screen itself as if the human as a concept is transposed to the frame of cinema life and vice versa. In this re-visioning of the cinematic life-world "the violence immanent within our everyday perceptual judgements" is disclosed,¹² but it is not wholly clear how this assertion is made between the vagueness, or flicker of the monster at the edge of the screen, the doubt that this experience might manifest perceptually, and the political assertion that those that are unaccounted for in society undergo some revelation of what other life might qualify as life. This is crucial when we consider that doubt is very much the fore-grounded paradigm of mastery rather than a undoing of particular forms of knowledge in the tradition of a liberal humanist subjectivity. Importantly, this effect is purchased by the moving, glitching, interrupted image, which is no longer an amalgamated hybrid form of a blending and clashing type, but another dominant form all of its own genre.

⁹ Mullarkey takes this notion of horror in cinema more generally, where he observes the point at which the representation of things in motion pictures are capable of traversing the limits of the frame.

¹⁰ Ibid, 49.

¹² Ibid, 49

How horror constrains us to particular modes of representation now generates the question of how the limits of perception and the territory of the visible, writ as such, now constrain the potential of what the political might be.

Exit Wounds

The arguments in Mullarkey's and Harman's different treatments of phenomena share and elucidate the problem of the image and the legitimacy of horror in its ability to think and manifest contingency as a medium of experience. In doing so they draw attention to the exact problem of the medium of contingency as thought material and how this abstraction takes place within the vista of other thought-material forms. Despite the expansionist vision of the real as potentialising the unknown in all possible forms, the structure of horror as it is proposed - where the thought of horror can become *generic* and successfully exit itself as *horror genre* - suffers its own exit wounds from this extraction. Bearing this in mind, it is not so much the spectre of an aesthetic condition that haunts horror, but the methodological habituation of a kind of aesthetic theory that has determined it. Horror philosophy in such case, risks always the spontaneous predetermination to connect the thought that thinks the real to the dualism making itself an aesthetic category. In other words, when phenomenological and vitalist theories think the connection between horror and the real of inequality, they come face-to-face with two forms of horror: between horror as image/experience and horror as the thought that thinks this experience. In this moment of choice, we have seen the contradiction that a philosophy that privileges the visible can only go to work with the undisclosed caveat that the visible is not enough. In this contradiction of the visible the thought of horror risks re-producing an ontology of horror that would condition any multiplicity to a one-world theory, where the world is horror (genre). The thought of a different and real inequality now transforms itself to the sovereignty it dreaded; that is a form of knowledge that can think the all. Horror does not transcend horror, as we know it. Instead, an ontological relativity is produced despite claiming its empirical impossibility, and despite the aim to think backwards from the point of the

unformulated experience, from the object and from the point of the non-human. Philosophy-horror in such case resides as a mirror for the complex condition of humanity as a particular kind, a kind that expresses the struggle of thinking beyond or escaping the standard definitions of human life and society. If we take this to its political claim, whether this is made implicitly or explicitly we can see that this registers as a form of transcendental/institutional critique that would seek to emancipates us from 'the given' (institutional critique).

A consequence of reading Harman's work is that we are reminded that the horror of real inconsistency remains significantly different to the horror that is used to describe this 'non' or even 'weird' relation that he identifies as taking place in the space of literature. Mapping an experience to the claim that this (horror) is the manifest condition of our 'lived irreality' is difficult since however 'open' or groundless the experience might appear to be it does not avoid the figuration and institutionalisation of this experience as type, and this 'type' in turn reflects upon the certain and specific political and philosophical claims that help determine the normativity of horror through its instrumentalisation. This problem is made more clear when the effect of horror cannot be underdetermined in this case by re-treating to its abstract and empty qualities, since abstraction is also and already proposed as material. For Mullarkey, real horror requires the selectivity of an author/reader that produces the erasure of the human as discrete category and which witnesses temporary access to a groundless violence. (We might think of the kind of privileges set out at the beginning of this text with the consumer fantasies in *Hostel*, but in Mullarkey's case we clearly see that there is the potential outcome for a moral good even if this is not directed as instrumental in any particular sense.) However, this groundlessness does not escape the invitation of new forms of power, and with that the construction of an order of things. This is an experiential mapping across the register of horror and non-horror, but such an order can only be set within the (limited) bounds of perception itself.

The aim to produce an object-oriented theory that determines the potential for inorganic forms such as film and literature to think, now begs the question of the type of thinking that is proposed through these objects and how such a thinking insinuates power. Consequently, we must carefully unknot the dimensions of object that thinks from the object that thinks its own subjectivity, in order to explore what other forms of power are potentialized here. This is to ask how we might overcome an anthropocentrism where objects win the right to philosophise, or a theory of the image as a self-theorising entity that provides us with other familiar (subjective) traits of the horror genre: decadence and privacy as well as a marginalisation of the image-experience as spectacle.

If we are asked to think about a Real Horror, then, we could say that this is an oxymoron. It prevents us from thinking a world that is not for us, because it problematically assumes that this world is a world *without* us. In this sense it cannot escape its core humanism. The various images that are invoked here to think horror figure uncertainty, dislocation, disorientation, and are brought to us by forms of dyadic collapse, or through process, temporality, change, and chance. Together they are bound in a thought and form of chaos that struggles to accommodate how representation occurs and is played out in these scenarios, and we struggle to reflect on the hierarchy of representation and non-representation that is imposed through horror.

This problem of value, and the desire to exit the genre of horror so as to think the generic space of horror as new material, is all the more prescient when we can see how horror re-incorporates a theory of difference. By now we can fully comprehend a crisis of *being within difference* resides within and as horror. And, as I discussed at the beginning of this text, this is a concept of difference that is commensurate with the status quo of global financial capital as much as it is associated with the standardisation of artistic critique. It is here where a re-comprehension of language and its politics is urgently called for - not as an effect (either negatively or positively proposed), but rather as cause.

Horror at Hell-Mouth

I would like to think that we can assume a thought of a realism that can think language as capable of thinking this space of the real as a dimension of the non-tragic. This is to say that language is enough, and that it is not understood through an ontological framework, nor is its value negatively asserted. This would mean that we can also think finitude without referent.

I want to head back to a form of horror that would occupy in parts a realm of the non-tragic. Whilst this has been done before and since, the Warner Bros. TV series *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* (Joss Whedon, 1997-2003, Twentieth Century Fox) succeeds in locating a paradigm of the non-tragic that asks us to re-orientate our comprehension of what thought might constitute. Whilst the central axis of *Buffy* focussed on the holding pattern storyline of Sarah Michelle Gellar's character Buffy's on-and-off tragic hero vampire-with-a-soul boyfriend Angel, the series also lays out another form of vampire life that does not worry so much about its human past. Here we see the rather camp world of Spike and pals (yes, it is *Buffy*, so camp is OK in this instance) and here there are no desires to re-engage with humanity, or to reflect on what is gone. Whilst the vampires without souls in *Buffy* have very human traits they do not claim any particular relation of care with 'the human' or with humanity, and moreover life is a kind of game where the series of events that configure it never seems to end. This exposition of another form of life is what this horror as action potentialises, a kind of thought of life *without existing life* as being central to its definition and where the apocalypse is a regular and real threat but one that does not haunt the protagonists' perception of world. There is no definition of self in *Buffy*, and unlike the domestication and bureaucracy of vampires in the HBO series *True Blood*, (2010-present) that adhere to or replicate the kind of administrative rules that we see more than ever in the University, these vampires get on with vampire business for the most part. Joss Whedon's later movie, *Cabin in the Woods* (2012), follows through with this post-human non-sentimentalism, and again it is

teen-geek-life gathered around some kind of hell-mouth that occupies the pivotal space that holds that red button that can annihilate world. Crucially, any decision to end it all is based on the fact that this is now simply necessary.

Buffy's world is a place where the end of the world is always a possibility, but this is life; it is part of life's register and the kind of horror that is met here is not horror as we know it. Whilst all the characters are there - demons, monsters, creeps, unethical teen wannabe's, witches, and other indescribable (in)organic entities that reference horror in some form - the narrative configuration itself is that of violence and the institutionalisation of new forms of order that replace the obsession with defining, escaping or being human. In this sense, *Buffy* does not tell the story of uncertainty, but rather it is a story of commitment, direction and drive. Here, Angel, as the tragic object of the series, is soon de-centered and worn out within the larger *Buffy* narrative and goes on to feature in *Angel*, a spin off series, to become a noir-style LA cop running a haphazard detective agency. Unlike Angel, Buffy gives up her life, as a 'normal teenager', for a life of slaying. Her decisive identity that meets her destiny as the Slayer is in the end mirrored only by the vampire Spike, but in an equality of certainty.

This non-tragic narrative perhaps explains another route by which to comprehend thought as material, and how this material situates the real without being conditioned by a theory of it. This would perhaps be better articulated as a logically inspired form of violence that does not retreat from situating the abstraction of the name but nevertheless does not give up on the real. This shift from horror as dialectical paradigm (since *Buffy* really does not take place within the horror genre as it is proposed in these phenomenological treatments) underscores how horror as we know it struggles to achieve the non-relational non-referential condition to which it is often claimed as being connected as both cause and effect. Instead, we need a realism that can account for the problems of representationalism without giving up on the image itself as correlative to what is there and not there. If horror is determined as the space in which we can

explode the myths of our existence, then it must also include exploding the myth of our precarity – the central axis of horror. It must risk losing the make-up that has defined it: Horror must reject horror.