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Existentialism and Art-Horror

Abstract

This article explores the relationship between existentialism and the horror genre. Noël Carroll and others have proposed that horror monsters defy established categories. Carroll also argues that the emotion they provoke - 'art-horror' – is a 'composite' of fear and disgust. I argue that the sometimes horrifying images and metaphors of Sartre's early philosophy, which correlate with nausea and anxiety, is a non-coincidental commonality with art-horror explained by existentialism's preoccupation with the interstitial nature of the self. Further, it is argued that, as is the case with some of the more sophisticated examples of the horror genre, the way for existential protagonists like Roquentin and Gregor Samsa to meet the challenge of the horrifying involves an accommodation of these features of the existential condition within their developing identity, and in so doing appear monstrous to others. Lastly, it is claimed that the association between existentialism and art-horror can explain the (paradoxical) appeal of horror.

Keywords

Horror, disgust, interstitial, nausea, anxiety, paradox of horror, monster.

Contact & Biographical Note

Stuart Hanscomb
University of Glasgow, Dumfries Campus
Rutherford McCowan Building
Dumfries, DG1 4ZL. UK
s.hanscomb@crichton.gla.ac.uk

Stuart Hanscomb originally studied philosophy and psychology, and later took a Ph.D. in existentialism. His working life has been based the North East of England, London and Scotland, and he now teaches philosophy and communication at the University of Glasgow's Dumfries Campus. His teaching and research interests have branched out from existentialism into philosophical psychology and psychotherapy, virtue theory, education, emotions and aesthetics. He also has a separate set of interests that include rhetoric and informal logic.

Existentialism and Art-Horror

‘It doesn’t take much for the world to fall apart does it?’ (Ben in *Night of the Living Dead*)

‘I am no one’ (Regan MacNeil’s possessing demon in *The Exorcist*)

‘What filth! What filth!’ (Sartre, *Nausea*)

I: Introduction

In their bid to disrupt everyday assumptions, writings classed as ‘existential’ tend to trade in the unusual and the unexpected. Most of the fictional works (and sometimes the non-fiction as well) evoke an uncanny atmosphere; many portray extreme situations (*Fear and Trembling, Thus Spoke Zarathustra, Crime and Punishment, Heart of Darkness, Sisyphus, The Plague, The Flies, The Reprieve, Dirty Hands*), and some include elements of surrealism (*Metamorphosis, The Trial, Nausea, No Exit*). This oddness has generated comparisons with subversive, extreme and nihilistic art forms such as absurdist theatre,¹ film noir,² and beatnik literature,³ but so far very little has been written on its relationship with the horror genre.⁴

My aim here is to show that existentialism and horror share some important features, and that an investigation of this connection can enrich our understanding of both. More precisely, in the first instance I want to highlight the close association between some concepts and imagery of the early Sartre and the horror genre. Then I want to argue that this association is understandable if we realise that the notion of the interstitial – that which falls between established categories – is a central concern in both cases. A development of this point identifies what might be called a ‘narrative of awakening’ in existentialism that is mirrored in horror fictions. This sees protagonists overcoming their initial rejection of threatening and repelling circumstances and replacing them with a form of acceptance that, crucially, requires a shift in their sense of identity in the direction of the monstrous. Finally, I want to claim that this shared concern helps explain the appeal of horror, and in so doing contributes a solution to the ‘paradox of horror’ – the question of why we are drawn to films, stories and images designed to provoke emotions we would normally seek to avoid.

II: The nature and paradox of art-horror

I take my lead on the nature of the horror genre from Noël Carroll’s seminal work *The Philosophy of Horror*.⁵ In this he argues for a particular definition of horror and then goes on to address some riddles of aesthetic emotions, including the paradox of horror. There are three aspects of his theory that are of particular relevance to my aims here. The first is his analysis of what quality or qualities horror monsters will typically possess in order to affect the audience in the appropriate ways. The second is the matter of identifying the particular emotions that are provoked by these monsters and by the narratives in which they are situated. Since the elicitation of strong emotions in its audience is a defining feature of horror, an understanding of what precisely these responses are and what they mean should expedite a deeper understanding of the genre. Third is Carroll’s discussion of the ‘paradox of horror’;

the problem of why we seek out stories and images that provoke these negative feelings. This last aspect will be the focus of the final section of this article ('Explaining Horror's Appeal'), and in what follows the first two aspects will be explored.

On the question of what makes a monster horrifying, Carroll's view is that they are 'interstitial' or 'impure'. They are not entirely alien to us, but rather fall between familiar categories: for example, living and dead (vampires, zombies, Frankenstein's monster), human and beast (werewolves, Kurt Neumann's / David Cronenberg's *The Fly*), human and supernatural entity (William Peter Blatty's / William Friedkin's *The Exorcist*, Richard Donner's *The Omen*, Alan Parker's *Angel Heart*), the intelligent and the inert (Stephen King's *Christine*, James Herbert's *The Fog*), the intelligent and the unintelligent organic (golems, Hitchcock's birds, Wyndham's triffids, killer tomatoes, blobs), innocence and corruption/insanity (King's *Misery* and *The Shining*, child possessions and poltergeists), the young and the old (the 'child' vampire in Tomas Alfredson's recent Swedish art-house horror *Let the Right One In*).⁶

It is not hard to find broad support for this kind of position. Timothy Beal has theorized around a similar 'betwixt and between' account of the nature of horror monsters and their origins in Judeo-Christian religion,⁷ and citing among others Nietzsche and Foucault, Richard Kearney explains how

[c]reatures which hang around borders, and disrespect their integrity are traditionally described as monsters. They comprise a species of sinister miscreants exiled from the normative categories of the established system. A species of non-species, as it were. Alien monsters represent the 'unthought' of any given point of knowledge and representation, the unfamiliar spectre which returns to haunt the secure citadel of consciousness.⁸

However, since fairytales and science fiction also commonly involve interstitial entities (dwarves, elves, androids, alien species etc.) this element becomes a necessary but not sufficient condition. To complete the definition Carroll claims that a film or book's membership of the horror genre is also determined by the emotions it engenders in its audience. They must of course frighten us, but there is also the

tendency in horror novels and stories to describe monsters in terms of and to associate them with filth, decay, deterioration, slime and so on. This monster in horror fiction ... is not only lethal but ... also disgusting.⁹

'Art-horror' is the name Carroll gives to this 'compound' emotion.¹⁰ Highlighting fear is uncontroversial, but making disgust so central to the emotionality associated with this art form requires some justification.

Carroll cites two main sources of evidence for this claim. The first is simply the appearance and behaviour of the monsters. A quick survey yields multiple examples of creatures that contain, say, the corpse-like and insect-like aspects of everyday life that typically disgust us. Monsters must of course have the power to threaten – to be strong, violent, deadly, aggressive, malicious, and so on - but also they are outwardly vile and grotesque. Take, for example, the rotting bodies of zombies and the decaying visage of Freddy Kruger; the saliva and slime-smearred eggs of the Alien; the green vomit in *The Exorcist*; Cronenberg's hairy vomiting *Fly*, his slug-like blob in *Shivers* and exploding heads in *Scanners*. Then there is the blood-injection-injury phobia inducing sight of Clive Barker's Pinhead (in *Hellraiser*); the multiple blood-baths and

gore-fests of the splatter sub-genre; the common use of worms, maggots, slugs, spiders, snakes and slime in gentler teenage series and films like the BBC's *Dr Who*, Tim Burton's *The Nightmare before Christmas*, Joss Whedon's *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* and Ivan Reitman's *Ghost Busters* through to more adult features like Ron Underwood's *Tremors*, Stephen King's *The Mist*, Sam Raimi's recent *Drag Me to Hell* and Umberto Lenzi's horror exploitation film *Cannibal Ferox*.

Horror monsters, it seems, are disgusting on two counts. On the one hand they are interstitial, and whether in stories or in real life that which we find disgusting is typically something that cannot be located within stable, familiar classifications. Carroll cites a number of everyday life examples, including certain cultures' avoidance of 'ambiguous' animals like flying squirrels and lobsters, and our dislike of things like false teeth, spittle, blood, sweat, nail and hair clippings, that transgress the categories of 'me/not me, inside/outside, and living/dead'.¹¹ In this respect a threat need only be chimerical to be potentially monstrous, but it is also the case that animals (and other, usually organic, objects) we typically find threatening and disgusting (such as spiders, insects and snakes), but which are not themselves - or at least not in any obvious sense - category-defying, can enhance the monstrousness of the fictional entity (hence a giant intelligently predatory spider is more effective than a giant intelligently predatory sheep¹²).

The second piece of evidence is grounded in the observation that the expressions and feelings of the audience of art-horror tend to 'parallel' those of its characters. This is an unusual feature of the genre. As Carroll points out, we do not feel jealous when Othello does, and 'when a comic character takes a pratfall, he hardly feels joyous',¹³ but he claims that the aim is for horror audiences to feel a version of what the victims and witnesses of horror monsters feel. This presents a 'methodological advantage' in that in order to identify the responses of the audience it is possible to step beyond introspection and seek to identify the responses of the characters. And through analysing 'expressions and gestures' the emotion Carroll finds 'regularly recurring' alongside fear is disgust.¹⁴

In the novel *Dracula*, for instance, Bram Stoker writes,

As the count leaned over me and his hand touched me, I could not repress a shudder. It may have been that his breath was rank, but a horrible feeling of nausea came over me, which do what I would, I could not conceal.¹⁵

Disgust has been categorized as a universal emotion by virtue of a methodology of cross-culturally recognizable facial expressions.¹⁶ Like fear therefore, it ought to be easy to identify on the faces of characters in films. In *The Exorcist*, for example, the mother of the possessed girl Regan puts her hand to her mouth and looks sick on several occasions, perhaps most obviously when, with Regan under hypnosis, the possessing demon makes its first unambiguous appearance. Here she backs off, staggering, her hand fixed over her mouth with a stare of intense fear. But instead of the rounded sockets of alarm her eyes are framed by eyebrows that tilt slightly upwards, indicating distress, curiosity, and essentially disgust.

A further argument (not Carroll's) supporting the view that disgust is a defining component of art-horror concerns the future-oriented nature of fear. Horror (in its narrative form) is about build-up and suspense, the fearful anticipation of what is to come. But what about when it does come? What about when the victims are confronted by the creature in all its horrific reality? Usually of course fear remains – much of the time when the victim is alive there are worse things that can happen

(though this is not true of, for instance, the cocooned people in the Alien's human larder), but there is also something that *is* happening. One response can be anger, others can be despair, pain and loss, but one we do indeed typically see – and indeed one that is fairly specific to the horror genre – is disgust. In short, fear and (some forms of) anxiety correspond to what is to come, disgust corresponds to what is in the present.

Before turning to an examination of horror imagery and themes in Sartre's existentialism I want to briefly mention another angle on art-horror that is given less space by Carroll – the *unknown*. 'To make any thing very terrible,' says Edmund Burke in his *Enquiry*,

obscurity seems in general to be necessary. When we know the full extent of any danger ... a great deal of the apprehension vanishes. Every one will be sensible of this, who considers how greatly night adds to our dread, in all cases of danger, and how much the notions of ghosts and goblins, of which none can have clear ideas, affect minds, which give credit to the popular tales concerning such sorts of beings.¹⁷

In a sense the unknown can be understood as another term for the interstitial; an entity is unknown (as in not understood and perhaps not previously encountered) by virtue of not adhering to familiar categories. As Carroll discusses at length, as far as narrative construction goes the mystery surrounding a monster prior to its full exposure is a key ingredient of horror plots, but it is also the case that some horror texts – albeit possibly fringe members of the genre – play on adversaries that are *so* distant and mysterious that they are unable to disgust us.¹⁸ Fear and anxiety are instead predominant, as are feelings of awe that tie art-horror to religious experience (and indeed the sublime). Carroll discusses H. P. Lovecraft's ideas on our fearful yet 'awed listening' to what lies beyond 'the known universe's utmost rim',¹⁹ but most monsters do not invoke such feelings, and at best he sees this as typifying only a sub-category of the genre.

In this article I am primarily limiting myself to the existentialism-horror themes apparent in Sartre's work, and the mystery and otherness of 'Being' is not one of them. However, in the work of other existentialists – particularly of course the Judeo-Christian variety, but also Heidegger – mysticism does have a place, and thus affective responses to what is radically other could present another possibility for an investigation of this type.

III: Sartre and art-horror

I want to argue that at the heart of the connection between existentialism and horror is the deeply interstitial nature of human existence. Horror ideas and imagery occur in existentialist writings – particularly those of Sartre – because both genres deal with life forms that disturb us by defying familiar categories. If Carroll is right and the defining emotions of art-horror are disgust and fear, then the role of anxiety and nausea as two central concepts revealing the self's relationship to itself and the world in Sartre's early philosophy is significant.²⁰ It is under these two headings that I will investigate Sartre and existentialism's connection with horror before, in the last two sections of this article, discussing, firstly, how this relationship throws light on the nature of authenticity, and secondly how it can help explain the appeal of the horror genre.

1. Nausea

Carroll discusses how ‘objects can raise categorical misgivings by virtue of being incomplete representatives of their class, such as rotting and disintegrating things, as well as by virtue of being formless, for example, dirt’.²¹ Formless monsters (or monsters that dwell in or emerge from formless habitats) are surprisingly common: think of Irwin Yeaworth’s *The Blob*, and the palpably threatening quality of darkness, fog, and murky water. In frequent association we find spit, saliva, slime, vomit, wetness and, of course, blood (e.g. Stanley Kubrick’s *The Shining*, Stuart Rosenberg’s *Amityville Horror*, Brian De Palma’s *Carrie*),²² and the oozing quality engendered by swarms of insects or a mass of worms or maggots is effective partly because it creates the impression of formlessness.

By this measure Roquentin’s existential crisis in Sartre’s *Nausea* resembles a horror story.²³ He experiences episodes in which the material world threatens to invade and engulf him. Things become monstrous - rather than merely, say, hazardous or dangerous in the everyday sense - because they reach beyond the routine and functional boundaries of everydayness. They are seen in an ‘other-worldly’ way. Objects ‘stir to a new and ghastly life of mindless, boundless abundance, shaking off their previous availability’.²⁴ Crawling beneath its ‘thin green film’ the ‘*real* sea is cold and black, full of animals’.²⁵ Lurking at the fringes of the town is vegetation that has crept towards it ‘for mile after mile’, waiting for its chance to ‘grip’ the paving stones and ‘burst them open with its long black pincers ... and hang its green paws everywhere’.²⁶ The object Roquentin is sitting on metamorphoses into a kind of dead animal, refusing to be normalised by its name – ‘seat’ – which Roquentin incants in a vain attempt at an ‘exorcism’ of its raw existence.²⁷ The individuality of things melts away ‘leaving soft, monstrous masses ... with a frightening, obscene nakedness’.²⁸

Things have broken free from their names. They are there, grotesque, stubborn, gigantic, and it seems ridiculous to call them seats or say anything at all about them: I am in the midst of the Things, which cannot be given names. Alone, wordless, defenceless, they surround me, under me, behind me, above me. They demand nothing, they don’t impose themselves, they are there.²⁹

This transformation applies to our bodies as well. Roquentin finds his hand is ‘alive’ (a scene that, importantly for my thesis, also incorporates blood, sweat and finger nails); looking like ‘an animal upside down’ - a ‘crab’ or a ‘fish’. ‘The fingers are the paws’ and he amuses himself ‘by making them move about very quickly’.³⁰ Such surrealism illuminates the ontological status of the material world, and in so doing illuminates the ontological status of consciousness. Thus viewed, the for-itself is exposed as insubstantial, ungraspable and fragile, vulnerable all the time it is not creatively engaged with the world.

Roquentin insists that,

Objects ought not to *touch*, since they are not alive. You use them, you put them back in place, you live among them: they are useful, nothing more. But they touch me, it's unbearable. I am afraid of entering in contact with them.³¹

In *Nausea* this sinister absurdity is vividly signified by viscous, sticky, sugary substances; substances that are neither liquid nor solid, that are overflowing, unruly and clingy; existence is 'that huge presence ... gumming everything up, all thick, a jelly'.³² Things that 'threaten to grow, to spread, to swarm over us', that 'ooze' and are 'like paste',³³ are for Sartre the most potent symbol of a trespassing over the boundary of the for-itself and the in-itself, and it is art-horror's affinity with what oozes that presents one of the strongest connections with Sartre's existentialism.

The underlying cause of Roquentin's nausea, as he discovers towards the end of the novel, is the 'superfluity' of objects. They are ultimately unexplainable; they 'overflow' the categories we must inevitably impose on them. They are without final purpose, and it would ultimately make no difference if they did not exist. But exist they do, unavoidably. The absurdity or senselessness of the material world is transformed into a kind of horror. We are creatures that desire sense, and yet this most permanent and nonnegotiable aspect of the world, when abstracted from everyday functionality, has none. At bottom existence is unquestionably *there*, in many ways so familiar, and yet at the same time unknowable. Things are 'thoughts which stopped half way'.³⁴

Even more revealing of this aspect of Sartre's philosophy is his 'psychoanalysis of things' in Part Four of *Being and Nothingness*.³⁵ His main interest is in the symbolic meaning of 'slime' or 'sliminess'; something he takes seriously enough to describe it as 'a great ontological region'.³⁶ The reason for its importance is its 'ambiguous', 'metamorphic' nature.

Sartre's phenomenological ontology allows for the 'moral' qualities of substances to be as primary as their physical ones,³⁷ and the immediate response 'inspired' by sliminess is one of fear and disgust.³⁸ This immediate, emotional response we can trace to a form of ambiguity possessed by slime that is powerfully symbolic of the for-itself's peculiar relationship with the in-itself. Firstly it is an 'imitation of liquidity', an 'aberrant fluid'. Liquid for Sartre is symbolic of the for-itself (clear, formless etc.), but slime is a 'triumph of the solid over the liquid';³⁹ in other words of the 'indifferent' in-itself over the for-itself. In contrast with water, '[n]othing testifies more clearly to its ambiguous character as a "substance in between two states" than the slowness with which the slimy melts into itself.'⁴⁰ Essential to the disgust evoked by slime is its 'softness' which is

leech like. If an object which I hold in my hand is solid, I can let go when I please; its inertia symbolizes for me my total power; I give it its foundation, but it does not furnish any foundation for me. ... Yet here is the slimy reversing the terms; the for-itself is suddenly *compromised*. I open my hand, I want to let go of the slimy and it sticks to me ... sucks at me.⁴¹

It is also seductive, it holds our attention,⁴² a 'poisonous possession' that threatens to control or 'compromise' us. At this point Sartre's description has a particularly strong kinship with a horror narrative:

The slime is a liquid seen in a nightmare, where all its properties are animated by a sort of life and turn back against me. Slime is the revenge of the in-itself. A sickly-sweet, feminine revenge which will be symbolized on another level by quality of "sugary" ... A sugary sliminess is the ideal of the slimy; it symbolizes the sugary death of the for-itself (like that of the wasp which sinks into the jam and drowns in it.)⁴³

Basic to our feelings about the slimy is its lack of stability. With little encouragement it is on the move, like quicksand. Quicksand (though not an example that Sartre himself uses) is indeed insidious. It is only muddy sand, but it is deceptive; it is deep and shifting, and it sucks. It is animated in a sense that allows it to easily become a monster in the imagination. Sartre says,

If I sink in the slimy I feel that I am going to be lost in it; that is, that I may dissolve in the slime precisely because the slimy is in the process of solidification. ... In the very apprehension of the slimy there is a gluey substance, compromising and without equilibrium, like the haunting memory of a *metamorphosis*.⁴⁴

At its heart what it symbolizes for Sartre is ‘an ideal being in which the foundationless in-itself has priority over the for-itself’.⁴⁵ If meaning inheres in all intentional objects, *this* truth must also have a meaning, and here lies the roots of our nausea. The meaning of a necessarily meaning-filled world is, firstly, that there is an external world that exists independently of intentionality, and secondly that the humanly dependent phenomenological world is subject to radical alternation. The result is the antithesis of that other ideal being – the in-itself-for-itself – an antithesis that Sartre calls an ‘*antivalue*’.

Just as the for-itself pursues the in-itself-for-itself, so it ‘flees’ the possibility of antivalue. We are afraid of and repulsed by slime because it symbolizes a disturbing ontological polarity. It incorporates the tension between freedom and facticity; a tension that cannot be overcome or undone, but which nevertheless ‘haunts’ consciousness. And thus, for example, ‘the horror of the slimy is ... that facticity might progress continually and insensibly and absorb the for-itself’.⁴⁶ For Roquentin an inversion occurs: ‘I am the thing. Existence, liberated’ (now a ‘nothing’) ‘surges over me’.⁴⁷

Such absorption is a fiction – it is as impossible as the realization of the in-itself-for-itself – and yet it is meaningful. An overwhelming nausea might be transitional as an authentic response to the in-itself, but it is not merely irrational. It signifies a host of ontological truths, one of which – one that is at the heart of Sartre’s ontology of the for-itself - is the notion of movement, or instability. Sartre, says Bernd Jager,

seeks to empty consciousness of all weight, all opacity, all self-sufficiency, to take from it all possibility of absolute rest, to make it movement through and through.⁴⁸

And this is what the slimy gives us; it is ‘ambiguous’, shifty, ‘without equilibrium’.⁴⁹ In terms of its materiality it is neither one thing nor another, and this symbolizes something categorically fishy. Only the for-itself should have this fluid quality, and to find it in the in-itself is threatening and disgusting. In the next section I further discuss why the for-itself should feel threatened, but here it is enough to identify this link in Sartre’s philosophy between the ontologically ambiguous and the revolting.

2. Anxiety

Most who write on the subject agree that, in contrast with fear, we experience anxiety in the face of something ‘indefinite’, ‘diffuse’ or ‘uncertain’.⁵⁰ Its source might be felt or intuited rather than perceived or understood, or it might be ambiguous. In traditional psychoanalysis the aim is to discover what eludes us in the form of repressed memories, and though there is a partial analogue to this structure in existential philosophy and psychology – anxiety is in part caused by our avoidance of our condition – the origin of anxiety must in some sense always remain slippery. There are several reasons why this is the case, some of which were explored in the previous section, but perhaps most fundamental is the insubstantial, free and changeable nature of the self. If in nausea the in-itself reveals by way of contrast the fragility of the for-itself (unstable, impermanent, intentional), then in anxiety the for-itself is confronted more directly.

Boundaries between one ontological category and another are fundamental to existentialism as a whole. It might be facticity and freedom; being and non-being; past, present and future; or, in its religious forms, the finite and the infinite.⁵¹ Broadly understood, we might say ‘we both belong and do not belong in the world’.⁵² Sometimes dualisms are ‘dissolved’;⁵³ sometimes we are haunted (and sometimes tempted) by the ideal of such dissolution; sometimes (such as in bad faith) we artfully conflate categories; sometimes we ‘dangle’ between commitments;⁵⁴ sometimes we peer over the edge, balanced on a ‘dizzying crest’;⁵⁵ most commonly we deliberately choose not to until, thinking we are ‘safe on the ground’, anxiety catches up and we ‘suddenly ... look down and notice that we are ‘standing on a narrow girder a thousand feet above the pavement.’⁵⁶ Critically though, these boundaries imply fluidity. Being-for-itself is profoundly interstitial; it is the space, the nothingness, between other modes of being which it temporarily ‘haunts’ as they become subject to its freely chosen intentional gaze.

The result is that we are ‘threatened’ by our past and its implications; ‘disturbed’ by our insubstantial self.⁵⁷ We look for ‘reassuring myths’.⁵⁸ We are a ghostly freedom – essentially homeless but always requiring a base from which to act in the world.

As a being which is ‘what it is not, and which is not what it is’,⁵⁹ the for-itself must avoid two kinds of trap. One is illustrated by Roquentin’s remarks on the people in the café who each have ‘his little personal obstinacy which prevents him from noticing that he exists; there isn’t one of them who doesn’t think he is indispensable to somebody or something’.⁶⁰ We seek refuge in a fictional self (a ‘little god’⁶¹); in socially prescribed roles – treat ourselves as if we were some ‘other’ or some ‘thing’.

The other trap is illustrated when in *The Age of Reason* Marcelle says of Mathieu,

You’re so absurdly scared of being your own dupe ... that you would back out of the finest adventure in the world rather than risk telling yourself a lie.’ ... you are beginning to sterilize yourself a little ... you want to be nothing.⁶²

The uncontainable quality of the for-itself is its anxiety. It is a self-supporting nothingness that must inhabit intentional stances (commitments) that it can never wholly identify with. But only through the lens of these stances can it attempt to understand what it is.

[I]n what we shall call the world of the immediate, which delivers itself to our unreflective consciousness, we do not first appear to ourselves, to be thrown subsequently into enterprises. Our being is immediately “in situation”; that is, it

arises in enterprises and knows itself first in so far as it is reflected in those enterprises. We discover ourselves then in a world peopled with demands, in the heart of projects “in the course of realization”.⁶³

Anxiety is the implicit recognition of this state of affairs. It is attuned to the blurry boundaries and ‘comet’s tails’⁶⁴ that signify contingency amidst the fore-grounded urgency of our commitments. It is anxiety that enables the authentic fluidity of thought, action and responsibility that is the essence of the for-itself; anxiety that is alive to the paradoxical condition of a being which is ‘what it is not’ and ‘not what it is’. In anxiety we encounter our ontology as one that is disruptive and sometimes threatening. It tells us that wherever we are standing is not stable, and, as importantly, not as stable as we usually take it to be. This instability reveals itself in a number of ways: in feelings of uncanniness, in a sense of the ineffable, in ambiguity, and in various forms of alienation.⁶⁵

Hauntings – usually non-slimy metaphysical monsters – perhaps provide the most direct parallel between existential anxiety and art-horror. In films like *Poltergeist* and *The Others* characters cling on to an inexplicable between-world inhabited by ambiguous forms. As with nausea, Sartre’s writing on anxiety is replete with this kind of imagery. Being-for-itself is ghostly. It ‘haunts’,⁶⁶ or ‘possesses’, but never is, and this quality itself can only be grasped in glimpses, out of the corner of an anxious eye. Look at it head on and it slips away (Mathieu) or solidifies (the people in the café). In the section on being-for-others he says, in no uncertain terms, that, ‘to-be-in-the-world is to haunt the world, not to be ensnared by it’.⁶⁷

For Sartre anxiety is central to the for-itself’s authentic self-awareness – it is consciousness of itself as essentially ‘nihilitating’.⁶⁸ It encounters the world via multiple intentional stances including questions, feelings and expectations such that ‘negation’ is woven into its fabric. Anguish is a recognition of ‘being both this past and this future and as not being them’.⁶⁹ The choice of a (very distinctive kind of) affective state indicates on the one hand the difficulty of articulating this near-paradoxical condition, and on the other the importance for Sartre that this is nevertheless a condition we are always aware of (because we are it). What we are, essentially, by virtue of being a nothingness and a locus of freedom, is fluid and unstable. Anxiety indicates constant flux – I am this, yet I am nothing; a ‘being which is its own Nothingness’.⁷⁰ Sartre speaks of ‘an infinite number of realities ... which in their inner structure are inhabited by negation’.⁷¹ These *négatités* are constant possibilities. We do not have to view them as threatening, but they disallow something we might prefer – stable meanings, greater predictability and control; shadows of the *en-soi-pour-soi*.

‘I am no one’, says Regan MacNeil’s possessing demon in *The Exorcist*, and a similar neo-tragic (or at least pitiable) metaphor seems to inhere in certain vampire tales. Neither dead nor alive, explosively allergic to the contour defining sunlight, this reflection-less, liquid-feeding creature is in a sense powerful and independent, but also vulnerable and parasitic. Confined to the shadows, it has no soul, no substance, is unable to form proper bonds with others, and is defined overwhelmingly by its actions, which in the final count can amount to nothing beyond an endless cycle of spontaneous desire and fulfilment.

IV: Monsters and authenticity

Existential protagonists like Roquentin usually end up striving to come to terms with their condition. In other words they look for ways to answer Nietzsche's call to affirm 'all that is questionable and terrible in existence'.⁷² Although forms of nausea and anxiety can never be absent from our condition, they can in a sense be accepted rather than denied via a metaphysical honesty and courage that preserves and stimulates a basic passion for life. Often this takes the form of an engaged and committed creativity applied to personal desires and values, but it can take more meditative forms as well. Considering the categorical gymnastics involved in this process, it is not surprising that when our existential hero approaches this state *he* can play the part of the monster. To the extent that our hero has managed to accommodate life's oddness, he will appear odd, in particular to those unaware of the nature of the challenge faced.

A graphic representation of this dynamic is found in Kafka's *Metamorphosis*. If Gregor's transformation can be understood as a symbol of self-creation amidst the pressures of an alienating and 'levelled' social existence, then his grotesque and unfathomable appearance is an analogue of the fear and confusion of those around him. In his authentic shift he becomes unclassifiable and threatening, and hence horrifying.

However, it is revealing to consider how these immediate others – his family in particular – deal with this apparent threat. Whereas authentic characters like Roquentin and Conrad's Marlow change to accommodate it, those surrounding Gregor attempt to assimilate him within their pre-existing schemas. At various points he is seen, for example, as unwell (chief clerk), as something to be cared for (sister), as aggressive (father), or as his past self (mother). Through this process life's ambiguity as expressed by Gregor's horrifying presence hardens into contempt as he is made the scapegoat for the family's ills. Gregor becomes an 'it',⁷³ just a cockroach. In bad faith the monster is defeated.

An implication of this is that authenticity involves allowing *being* to reveal itself in its uniqueness and peculiarity. Although the other, or existence, will always retain a degree of mystery, the individual is required to open up to it, or else remain in an alienated state of horror or denial. Horror or nausea like Roquentin's as a response to the world and its inhabitants should be a temporary state; a stage or a reminder of the possibility, or the forgotten possibility, of authenticity.

In some of the best horror fictions we find a similar process. The employment of the usual means of overcoming threats (medicine, guns) fail, and a categorical shift is required for effective confrontation, a shift that can require a change in the protagonists as well. In *The Exorcist*, for example, only the religious categories of faith and sin, rather than science and medicine – Enlightenment thinking if you like – can make a dent on Regan's condition. Religion aside, the implication is that there is a category mistake at the heart of our dealings with the world, and moreover one that is motivated by a desire to escape our ambiguous condition. The persistence of this world view causes a nausea that crystallizes and erupts in the form of Regan's possession. The threat remains all the time we refuse to see existence for what it is. In Adrian Lyne's *Jacob's Ladder*, Jacob Singer is only released from his nightmare when he accepts death's ultimate 'claim' on life. Buffy (the vampire slayer) is strengthened by her exposure to the monstrous and morally ambiguous qualities of herself and those close to her. In the *Alien* series Ripley develops characteristics of the monster: firstly its psychology, then its biology. In *Alien Resurrection* in particular the

‘intimate otherness of Ripley and the alien’ is expressed in Ripley’s clone’s ambivalent understanding of and response to her hybrid identity.⁷⁴

In these instances and others we find that an immense amount of effort, anguish, courage and time is needed to create this transformation. And even when it is achieved it is never stable; anxiety remains and (should the plot, especially its ending, allow for this) - as for Sartre’s gambler, Kierkegaard’s Abraham and Nietzsche’s Zarathustra - there are constant challenges and temptations, and new reserves of these energies and virtues are periodically called upon.

V: Explaining horror’s appeal

So far the aim of this article has been to establish that the presence of markedly art-horrifying ideas, metaphors and imagery in the philosophy and literature of existentialism results from their shared preoccupation with the interstitial. From this point I would like to consider two hypotheses that can be derived from this shared concern. The first is that the ‘fascination’ element of monsters could in part be explicable by our concern for our own ambiguous ontology. The second, more contestable, suggestion is that part of art-horror’s appeal is that it allows for a partial expression and exploration of repressed, undeveloped or forgotten existential sensitivities.

The first argument runs as follows: although our ontology makes us anxious and nauseous it remains at the same time an issue of interest and curiosity for us. As such, clear expressions of ambiguousness and oddness will serve as a means for exercising these feelings, and of course this is precisely what is provided by horror stories and images. However, this raises the question: why horror in particular instead of science fiction and fantasy? One answer is just to reply that it has no privileged position over these other genres; they are appealing for the same reason. A stronger answer is to highlight the closer association between horror and existential sensitivity that exists precisely because of the presence of fear and disgust. In terms of our emotional engagement, horror is closer to the truth of our existence than are science fiction or fantasy. We often look for truth in art, even if it makes us uncomfortable.

This raises another question. If existential sensitivity is a reason for being drawn to horror, why not just read existential literature (or watch film noir)? Again, one answer is simply to acknowledge this and point out that the oddness of our ontology is one reason for liking horror, but not the only one. Many of us might appreciate horror all the more because of this connection, but we will also read Dostoyevsky, Sartre, Camus etc. There is a more interesting answer as well though, and this brings me to my second hypothesis.

I have already mentioned how fear and disgust are emotionally appropriate for an art form that in certain senses mirrors our ontology, and this point is aligned with Carroll’s solution to the paradox of horror. His ‘co-existential’ (as opposed to ‘integrated’) theory is that we do not enjoy or seek out these negative feelings for their own sake, but rather tolerate them because of our fascination with the monsters themselves, and because of the intensity of the narratives their unknown and interstitial natures generate.⁷⁵

I am sympathetic to this view, but would also suggest (although Carroll would not agree) that there could also be some more ‘integrated’ existential-psychological benefits to experiencing art-horror.⁷⁶ I want to propose that art-horror allows us to release and/or ‘exercise’ inchoate or latent existential feelings through their crystallization in the form of monsters. It has something in common with the dream

theory of Freud⁷⁷ and the aesthetic theories of Burke,⁷⁸ and it corresponds to a point mentioned briefly in the discussion of *Metamorphosis* in the previous section.

The crystallization process is epitomised by the tendency to turn anxiety into fear that has been discussed by, among others, Heidegger⁷⁹ and Paul Tillich. Fear, for Tillich, 'as opposed to anxiety ... can be faced, analysed, attacked, endured'.⁸⁰ Exhausting and disturbing, the roots and implications of our existential nausea and anxiety not only motivate us to avoid these forms of attunement to the world, the nature of these roots and implications makes them in any case elusive and hard to grasp. And yet at the same time they are deep, serious (as opposed to lightweight or fun) and unavoidable.⁸¹

The result is a kind of build up of existential pressure that requires some form of expression, and my suggestion is that art-horror is especially well suited to this purpose. Freud's theory of dreams is a useful analogy. For him events in dreams are partially disguised representations of discomfiting ideas. Their 'manifest' meaning relates only obliquely to their 'latent' meaning in order to protect the dreamer, whilst at the same time allowing some release for their pent-up energy.⁸²

This analogy implies that art-horror is an inauthentic substitute for a more transparent existential awareness; a process facilitating flight from the truth of our condition. Crucially though I do not want to claim that the channelling of existential strain into art-horror is simply the result of bad faith. This may well be one reason, but there are others. One concerns the initial discovery of our condition, an exploration that is perhaps initiated by a resonance between inchoate existential feelings and the weirdness of horror. The individual is searching for something, and the process involves not an escape, or even a respite from, inexorable existential tension, but rather its exploration via a medium in which the interstitial is vividly portrayed. The argument, which corresponds to a feature of Burke's aesthetic theory,⁸³ is this: the awareness of contingency, absurdity, freedom and death, develops in the individual as they become increasingly self-aware. Even for the seasoned and reflective adult these ideas and their ramifications are hard to acknowledge and express, but in the emerging individual (typically, a teenager) they are particularly inchoate. As the person continues to develop they can of course ignore these feelings (assuming forms of bad faith), or they can build towards moments of 'awakening' as Stephen Earnshaw aptly describes them.⁸⁴

Another explanation for the substitutive role of art-horror is a form of non-motivated forgetfulness to which people of more developed existential awareness are prone. The contingency of what exists and the nothingness of the self are ideas that are difficult to call to mind and attain heat for the individual, and thus they readily become buried under the clutter of the everyday. Not only do they deal in categorical ambiguity, but unlike the monsters of art-horror the human condition has no suitable analogue. A vampire or a zombie is, roughly speaking, a development and fusion of known types, but *only* for the self-conscious being does 'existence precede essence' with all that that entails. The upshot is that existential awareness is mostly latent, but as Burke says of these 'finer feeling', they need 'exercise' - to be 'shaken and worked' - to keep them from becoming 'languid'.⁸⁵ It is art-horror that offers, albeit often crudely, this exercise. It is then of course up to the individual as to whether the roots and implications of what is awakened are pursued and refined.

Carroll considers Burke's theory and rejects it because it does not explain why 'horror would be sought out in particular' rather than 'any sort of object of terror'?⁸⁶ I hope that the addition of latent existential emotions provides the missing link. The finer feelings that Burke is discussing here are aligned in particular with horror for all

the reasons previously discussed. The interstitial nature of human existence is mirrored far more precisely in the impure nature of horror monsters than it is in, say, fairground rides, traffic accidents or, for that matter, smelly bins.⁸⁷ Of course, Burke's exercise theory can contribute to an explanation of why we seek out these weird thrills as well, but here we need only combine it with my existential theory in order to challenge Carroll's 'why horror?' critique.

VI: Conclusion

To conclude this article and summarize the arguments and evidence for these links between horror and existentialism I will highlight four points.

First, horror monsters are interstitial, a notion central to many of the defining concerns of existentialism. As with the 'over-flowing' objects of Roquentin's nightmarish experience and the ghostly for-itself of *Being and Nothingness*, in many of its most horrific manifestations the horror monster is likewise present, in some ways familiar, but also profoundly uncanny and unknowable.

Second, the emotions comprising art-horror are fear (and anxiety) and disgust. Anxiety is fundamental to many existentialists, and forms of disgust (such as cynicism and contempt) are also commonly portrayed and explored. A further correspondence, mentioned but not developed in this article, is the presence in horrors of the radically other or unknown, and forms of religiousness or mysticism identifiable in the philosophy of Heidegger as well as some monotheistic religious existentialists.

Overall it can be concluded that the key affective state for both horror and existentialism is anxiety. It captures the sense of threat most obviously associated with fear; a situation's inherent unfamiliarity (or uncanniness) that has been shown to be linked to disgust and nausea, and also a kind of curiosity or anticipation in the face of the unknown and unknowable.

The third point is that besides the recognition of the horror genre's pronounced suitability for expressing existentialism's preoccupation with the unstable and interstitial nature of existence, it can also be hypothesised that this connection can offer a solution to the paradox of horror. Embedded in a graphic narrative and with their very particular form of grotesque threat, horror monsters engage us emotionally, but in a way that serves as a symbol. Like Sartre's slime, they represent the division between major ontological categories, and eventually the anxious nature of the for-itself. Horror not only fascinates with its stories of interstitial life, it releases some pressure on, and allows us to exercise, our existentially intelligent emotionality.

Lastly the various *responses* to the human predicament explored by existentialists can also be identified in horror fictions. Of particular interest is the way that an on-going requirement for the authentic individual to establish terms with, rather than defeat or deny, their condition is mirrored in the narratives of heroic and aware protagonists, particularly in some of the more sophisticated examples of horrors. Further research could usefully assess the possibility that horror plays a transitional role in the Western individual's existential development, and in particular the movement towards disenchantment. Let us suppose that teenagers are typically yet to fully understand our disenchanted world. And let us suppose that supernatural horrors are like fairytales with an edge. And let us suppose further that that edge corresponds to a creeping awareness that life is not what we thought it was, and certainly not what we would like it to be. Still craving and enjoying the simplicity and supernatural promise of fairytales, your wised up teenager can have them only in exchange for

discomfort. In this way the emotions of art-horror correspond to a developing cynicism and scepticism about the world. The next step in existential awareness might then be surreal works like *Nausea* and *Metamorphosis* and the plays of Beckett; then the disillusioned but angry early works of Dostoyevsky, Camus and Bellow (and perhaps noir-ish films) where instead of literal nausea in the face of the world there is another variant of disgust – cynicism or nihilism. Beyond this I can imagine a predilection for less rebellious, more self-reflective works like Sartre's *Roads to Freedom* trilogy, *Heart of Darkness* and Milan Kundera's *The Unbearable Lightness of Being* that signifies increasing authenticity.⁸⁸ Such speculation suggests a potential direction for future research.

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¹ For example Margot Berthold, *The History of World Theatre* (London: Continuum, 1999); Ronan McDonald, *The Cambridge Introduction to Samuel Beckett* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007)

² For example Mark Conard (ed) *The Philosophy of Film Noir* (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 2006).

³ For example Hazel Barnes, *Humanistic Existentialism: The Literature of Possibility* (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 1965); Paul Maher, *Kerouac: The Definitive Biography* (Lanham, MD: Taylor Trade Publishing, 2007).

⁴ Stephen Mulhall's analysis of the *Alien* series is decidedly existential in its consideration of embodiment and identity (*On Film* (London: Routledge, 2002), 126-36), and there is a passing reference to Nietzsche (47). Also, there is a discussion of Nietzsche's ethics in James B. South, ed. *Buffy the Vampire Slayer and Philosophy: Fear and Trembling in Sunnydale* (Chicago: Open Court, 2003). For the sole existential reference in the main theoretical text on horror that informs this article (Carroll, 1990) see note 26, below.

⁵ Noël Carroll, *The Philosophy of Horror* (New York: Routledge, 1990).

⁶ Notice that some 'monsters' are less obviously interstitial – spiders, crocodile, sharks, piranhas, octopuses, snakes etc. Often these are oversized or large in number, but it is pushing it to say that this counts as interstitial. However, perhaps these are they exception that prove the rule since such books and films have a different feel to them – they are closer to disaster movies or thrillers (or comedies) than films that contain truly boundary disrespecting adversaries.

⁷ Timothy Beal, *Religion and its monsters* (London & New York: Routledge, 2002).

⁸ Richard Kearney, *On Stories* (London: Routledge, 2002), 119.

⁹ Carroll, *Philosophy of Horror*, 22.

¹⁰ Noël Carroll, 'The Enjoyment Theory of Horror: A Response to Gaut', *British Journal of Aesthetics*, Vol. 35, No. 3, 67.

¹¹ Carroll, *The Philosophy of Horror*, 32; Noël Carroll, *Beyond Aesthetics: Philosophical Essays* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 245.

¹² Though the crazed, homicidal sheep of Jonathan King's comedy horror *Black Sheep* work well enough.

¹³ Carroll, *Philosophy of Horror*, 18.

¹⁴ Carroll, *Philosophy of Horror*, 30.

¹⁵ Cited in *ibid.*, 17.

¹⁶ Paul Ekman, *Emotion in the Human Face* (2nd Ed.) (NY: Cambridge University Press, 1982).

¹⁷ Edmund Burke, *A Philosophical Enquiry* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, [1757] 1998), 54.

¹⁸ For example James Wong's *Final Destination* in which the adversary is death itself.

¹⁹ Carroll, *Philosophy of Horror*, 162.

- ²⁰ ‘An existential grasping of our facticity is Nausea, and the existential apprehension of our freedom is anxiety.’ (Sartre, 1985: 133)
- ²¹ Carroll, *Philosophy of Horror*, 32.
- ²² Horror writer John Halkin wrote a series of books in the 1980s called, in turn, *Slither*, *Slime* and *Squelch*.
- ²³ Two places where *Nausea* and art-horror have been juxtaposed are a brief footnote in Carroll’s book (p.220), and a scene in *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* where the character Angel is seen reading the book (*Lover’s Walk*, Season 3). In this latter case *Nausea* is probably used to signify that Angel is a lonely outsider rather than any connection between this feature of Sartre’s philosophy and art-horror.
- ²⁴ Bernd Jager, ‘Sartre’s Anthropology: A philosophical Reflection on Sartre’s *La Nausee*’ in *The Philosophy of Jean-Paul Sartre*, ed. P. A. Schilpp (La sale, Illinois: Open Court, 1981), 485.
- ²⁵ Jean-Paul Sartre, *Nausea*, trans. Robert Baldick (London: Penguin), 179.
- ²⁶ *Ibid.*, 221-222.
- ²⁷ *Ibid.*, 179-180.
- ²⁸ *Ibid.*, 183.
- ²⁹ *Ibid.*, 180.
- ³⁰ *Ibid.*, 144. Animated yet disembodied hands are immensely ghoulish, clearly interstitial, and common in horror narratives (for instance *The Evil Dead II* and Oliver Stone’s *The Hand*).
- ³¹ *Ibid.*, 22.
- ³² *Ibid.*, 192.
- ³³ Ronald Aronson, *Jean-Paul Sartre – Philosophy in the World* (London: Verso, 1980), 65.
- ³⁴ Sartre, *Nausea*, 193.
- ³⁵ Jean-Paul Sartre, *Being and Nothingness*, trans. H. Barnes (New York: Washington Square Press, [1956] 1966), 765-784.
- ³⁶ *Ibid.*, 779.
- ³⁷ *Ibid.*, 773.
- ³⁸ *Ibid.*, 771.
- ³⁹ *Ibid.*, 774.
- ⁴⁰ *Ibid.*
- ⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 776.
- ⁴² Rather like Kierkegaard’s dizziness before the abyss of infinitude. The synthesis of the finite and the infinite does not just present itself passively, but in the mix we find that the individual wants to look down. ‘Anxiety is the dizziness of freedom’, a freedom in part self-chosen, but also a freedom that the developing individual bulks from, ‘laying hold of finiteness to support itself.’ (*The Concept of Anxiety*, trans. Hong & Hong (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980), 61) Presumably something similar can happen to cope with nausea; the individual lays hold of some form of bad faith to steady herself in the face of the ontological precariousness of freedom.
- ⁴³ Sartre, *Being and Nothingness*, 777. In *Nausea* he describes ‘the sugary taste of the air at the back of my throat.’ (35)
- ⁴⁴ *Ibid.*
- ⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 778.
- ⁴⁶ *Ibid.*
- ⁴⁷ Sartre, *Nausea*, 143.
- ⁴⁸ Jager, *Sartre’s Anthropology*, 478.
- ⁴⁹ Sartre, *Being and Nothingness*, 777.
- ⁵⁰ For example, Kierkegaard, *The Concept of Anxiety*; Sigmund Freud, *Inhibitions, Symptoms and Anxiety*, trans. Alex Strachy (London: Hogarth Press, [1919] 1961); Martin Heidegger, *Being and Nothingness*, trans. Robinson and Macquarrie (Oxford: Blackwell, [1927] 1990); Karen Horney, *New Ways in Psychoanalysis* (New York: Norton, 1966); Paul Tillich, *The Courage to Be* (London and Glasgow: Fontana, [1952] 1962).
- ⁵¹ For example, Kierkegaard, *Concept of Anxiety*; Tillich, *Courage to Be*.
- ⁵² Stephen Mulhall, *Heidegger and Being and Time* (London: Routledge, 1996).
- ⁵³ David Cooper, *Existentialism* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1990), 79-94.
- ⁵⁴ Saul Bellow, *Dangling Man* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1963). The central character Joseph ‘suffers from a feeling of strangeness, of not quite belonging to the world ... he says all human beings share this to some extent. The child feels that his parents are pretenders; his real father is elsewhere and will someday come to claim him. (*Ibid.*, 24)
- ⁵⁵ Albert Camus, *The Myth of Sisyphus* (London: Penguin, 1975),
- ⁵⁶ Thomas Nagel, *The View from Nowhere* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986), 228.

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- ⁵⁷ Sartre, *Being and Nothingness*, 81.
- ⁵⁸ Ibid, 83.
- ⁵⁹ Ibid, 100.
- ⁶⁰ Sartre, *Nausea*, 161.
- ⁶¹ Sartre, *Being and Nothingness*, 81.
- ⁶² Jean-Paul Sartre, *The Age of Reason*, trans. Eric Sutton (Harmondsworth: Penguin, [1947] 1961), 12-13.
- ⁶³ Sartre, *Being and Nothingness*, 77.
- ⁶⁴ Nietzsche's expression (from *The Birth of Tragedy*).
- ⁶⁵ These feelings are related to art-horror, but one writer who understands this instability *in terms of* horror is Stanley Cavell. Horror, he says, 'is a response specifically to being human. To what, specifically, about being human? Horror is the title I am giving to the perception of the precariousness of human identity, to the perception that it may be lost or invaded, that we may be, or may become, something other than we are, or take ourselves for; that our origins as human beings need accounting for, and are unaccountable.' (in Stephen Mulhall, *On Film* (London: Routledge, 2002), 17-18)
- ⁶⁶ 'A necessary condition for our saying *not* is that non-being is a perpetual presence in us and outside of us, that nothingness haunt being' (Sartre, *Being and Nothingness*, 43-4)
- ⁶⁷ Sartre, *Being and Nothingness*, 331.
- ⁶⁸ Ibid, 65.
- ⁶⁹ Ibid.
- ⁷⁰ Ibid, 58.
- ⁷¹ Ibid, 54.
- ⁷² Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Twilight of the Idols* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1968), 39.
- ⁷³ Franz Kafka, *Metamorphosis and other stories* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1961), 56.
- ⁷⁴ Mulhall, *On Film*, 135.
- ⁷⁵ Carroll, *Philosophy of Horror*, 178-195.
- ⁷⁶ The completeness of Carroll's 'fascination' theory is challenged quite convincingly by Berys Gaut's 'enjoyment' theory ('The Paradox of Horror', *British Journal of Aesthetics*, Vol. 33, No. 4. (1993); Noel Carroll, 'Enjoying Horror Fictions: A Reply to Gaut', *British Journal of Aesthetics*, Vol. 35, No. 1. (1995); Berys Gaut, 'The Enjoyment Theory of Horror: A Response to Carroll', *British Journal of Aesthetics*, Vol. 35, No. 3. (1995). Gaut claims that there is no inherent contradiction in our enjoyment of the feeling of fear and disgust, particularly in an aesthetic context of art-horror.
- ⁷⁷ Sigmund Freud, *The Interpretation of Dreams*, trans. James Strachey (London: Penguin, [1900] 1991).
- ⁷⁸ Burke, *Enquiry*.
- ⁷⁹ Heidegger, *Being and Time*.
- ⁸⁰ Tillich, *Courage*, 34.
- ⁸¹ They are in Heidegger's words 'always latent in Being-in-the-world.' (*Being and Time*, 234)
- ⁸² Sigmund Freud, *The Interpretation of Dreams*, trans. J. Strachey (London: Penguin, [1900] 1991).
- ⁸³ Burke, *Enquiry*, 122-3.
- ⁸⁴ Stephen Earnshaw, *Existentialism: A Guide for the Perplexed* (London: Continuum, 2006), 14-17.
- ⁸⁵ Burke, *Enquiry*, 123.
- ⁸⁶ Carroll, *Philosophy of Horror*, 241n.
- ⁸⁷ Ibid, 158.
- ⁸⁸ Clearly more modern equivalents – novels, film and other media - could be substituted for these existential classics. Possibilities might include Douglas Coupland (*Generation X, Girlfriend in a Coma*) and David Fincher's *Fight Club*.