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Abstract:

**In lieu of conclusion: the bloodless *coups* of *White God***

*It is dawn, the dawning of one knows not what, life or death, pardon or execution, the abolition or perpetuation of the death penalty, also the perpetration of the death penalty. […] we will have to think ceaselessly, taking ourselves there by way of the heart and the imagination, by the body as well, of the early morning of what is called an execution. At the dawn of the last day.*

- Derrida, *The Death Penalty*, V 1

The *mise-en-scène* of a slaughterhouse opens and closes *White God* (dir. Kornel Mundruczo, Hungary, 2015). The film opens with fragile domestic relations: a girl and her dog are left in the care of her father, left jarringly at the place of work that is his ‘house,’ the slaughterhouse, while her mother travels with her new lover. The father’s identification with a carno-phallogocentric economy cannot be missed: not just another worker, he is an inspector of what is ‘good to eat.’ This economy is accentuated through his abandonment of the girl’s dog to the streets of a eugenically charged Budapest in which ‘mixed-breed mutts’ are no longer welcome. Yet, in lieu of a conventional narrative ending, and by means of the girl’s gestural intervention into the virile axis of carno-phallogocentrism, the slaughterhouse as the very place of the technology of conclusion is redrawn and the film arrests its own apparent promise of animal revolution. In the heart of the city, not banished to its outskirts like most modern architectures of the animal industrial complex, the slaughterhouse courtyard becomes courtroom and the ‘ordeal of the decision’ as death sentence comes before the audience become jury.

For the purposes of *Derrida Today*, this paper will bring attention to the various investments of *White God* in either shielding us from or exposing us to the flow of blood. Shifting between industrial exsanguination and totemic consanguinity before suspending both their logics, the film speaks to Derrida’s seminars on both *The Beast and the Sovereign* and *The Death Penalty* as well as his work on the ethics of ‘eating well’ and the force, or the blow, of law. As such, it pressures the question of who or what stands before the law, who or what it is forbidden to kill, who or what faces death ‘as such’.