



Rhythm Beyond the Cinematic Medium/ The Pixel Beyond the Movie Theatre¹

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Gregory J. Seigworth and Melissa Gregg write about Roland Barthes's splendid notion of 'shimmer': an 'exhaustively nuanced space' that may be inventoried as patho-logies (by which to contemplate *pathos*) of bodies (human and nonhuman). In Alex Garland's 2018 film *Annihilation*, a refracting effect — the Shimmer — which has appeared around a lighthouse and is slowly spreading outwards, is being studied. A group of female scientists enter the Shimmer and begin to inventory the strange organic duplicates of form within it. These organic structures, while extraordinarily nuanced, are also pathologies of organic life as they are refracted by the Shimmer. This article will consider the 'exhaustively nuanced space' of cinema and its patho-logies via the conditions of the rhythm of the pixel in cinema, and beyond, in social media. In an examination of the rhythm of the pixel beyond the cinematic medium, I consider the energetic 'becoming' of the spectator/operator and the digital image (text and image in social media) as they act *in relation*. In an examination of the rhythm of the pixel beyond the movie theatre, I consider the infinite intensities in the *aesthetic* encounter of body and text/image in social media and its correlation to the politics of a mass-art.

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An 'exhaustively nuanced space' is the way Roland Barthes describes 'shimmer' in his series of published lectures, *The Neutral: Lecture Course at the Collège de France (1977–1978)*.² In *The Affect Theory Reader*, Gregory J. Seigworth and Melissa Gregg outline the affects that would constitute an 'inventory of shimmers' in 'neutrally inflected, immanent *pathos* or "patho-logy"'.³ In Alex Garland's 2018 film *Annihilation*, the Shimmer is a refracting effect that causes the area around a lighthouse to become populated with organic duplicates of existing organic structures. The Shimmer in *Annihilation* allows for a way of thinking about the shimmering energetic plane in and of the digital image. My interest is in how 'shimmer' as an 'extreme changeability of affective moments, a rapid modification'⁴ characterizes an *aesthetic*, as well as ethical, encounter with the image, and how such an encounter may be considered in spectator/operator interactions with media texts beyond cinema.

With the rise of nationalist movements and authoritarian governments, and digital hostility in social media, a return to the study of the sensory and sensuous body is more important than ever, for in our *aesthetic* encounters



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we may apprehend an ethics beyond a politics of inadequate ideas. Referring to Gilles Deleuze's citation of the Second World War as 'a violent encounter to thought', Nadine Boljkovak, in her book *Untimely Affects: Gilles Deleuze and an Ethics of Cinema*, points to Deleuze's contention that the 'war machine', beyond its violence, comprises 'revolutionary movements' such as are found in art's creative invention and resistances.⁵ Thinking about affect's potential — and the creativity and resistance that it inspires — this article seeks to examine social media text and image through infinite intensities by which we may recognize the conditions for a patho-logical interaction in this 'exhaustively nuanced space'.⁶

This article will consider relations of affect in the development of cinema to the digital image and beyond, in social media, via the rhythm of the pixel. In a consideration of the pixel beyond the movie theatre, that is, in the relocation of the pixel from cinema to social media, it is necessary to recognize the affective and energetic relations that exist between social media text and image and social media operator. The rhythm of the pixel in both cinema and social media generates an energetic relation between the media text and the spectator/operator. I want to consider this energetic relation as an ethical one through the media text and the spectator/operator's 'capacities to affect and be affected'.⁷ To think about relations of affect in the rhythm of the pixel beyond the cinematic medium, I first establish what this means for cinema. I analyse *Annihilation* to understand the affective and energetic force of the pixel in cinema that acts *in relation*. To consider the rhythm of the pixel beyond the cinematic medium is to consider an affective acting *in relation*. Such an acting *in relation* is an energetic exchange between media text and spectator/operator in a mutual 'becoming'.⁸ In my consideration of the place of affect in these encounters, my intention is to locate an ethics of care, compassion, and empathy in our engagement with cinema and beyond, in social media.

ANNIHILATION

In Garland's *Annihilation*, Lena (Natalie Portman) is an academic who works in biology at John Hopkins University. After her husband, Kane (Oscar Isaac), is quarantined at a science facility after a military mission, Lena decides to join the next mission into what is called the Shimmer ([fig. 1](#)). The mission is to reach the purported source of the Shimmer — the lighthouse — enter the lighthouse, acquire data, and return. As Dr Ventress (Jennifer Jason Leigh) explains to Lena, the Shimmer is: 'A religious event, an extra-terrestrial event, a higher dimension. We have many theories, few facts.' Dr Ventress's party consists of five women, all scientists — herself, Cass Sheppard (Tuva Novotny), Anya Thorensen (Gina Rodriguez), Josie Radek (Tessa Thompson), and Lena.

Once inside the Shimmer, the group of women find mutated organic structures — flowers, plants, and animals. The Shimmer provides the conditions and process (is the patho-logy) for the blooming of life. Lena explains the organic structures to Lomax (Benedict Wong) at the science facility on her return: 'The



Fig. 1:
The Shimmer
in *Annihilation*
(Alex Garland, 2018)

mutations were subtle at first. More extreme as we grew closer to the lighthouse. Corruptions of form, duplicates of form.' Lomax: 'Duplicates?' Lena: 'Echoes.' Lomax: 'Is it possible these were hallucinations?' Lena: 'I wondered that myself, but they were shared among all of us. It was dream-like.' Lomax: 'Nightmarish?' Lena: 'Not always. Sometimes it was beautiful.' However, it is Josie who more fully explains the Shimmer and the organic structures that are present within it when she says to Lena: 'The Shimmer is a prism, but it refracts everything, not just light and radio waves, animal DNA, plant DNA, all DNA.' The refracting effect of the Shimmer is observed when Cass is taken by a bear-like creature and after she is found dead, the creature returns with a growl that sounds like Cass's death cries. Josie reflects upon it: 'It was so strange hearing Sheppard's voice in the mouth of that creature last night. I think as she was dying, part of her mind became part of the creature that was killing her.' In consideration of the refraction of DNA through the medium of the Shimmer in *Annihilation*, this article will examine the refraction of affect in cinema and beyond, in social media, via the 'exhaustively nuanced space' of what Barthes calls 'shimmer'.⁹ What is also refracted through this 'exhaustively nuanced space' is the (human and nonhuman) patho-logies of our digital interactions by which media text and spectator/operator engage in a mutual 'becoming'.¹⁰

AESTHETICS AND ETHICS

The aesthetics, and even ethics, of the digital image (text and image in social media) — as an affective and energetic force — can be found in the organic rhythms of life. In an early scene in the film, Lena describes the evolution of a cell/of all life to her classroom of students:

This is a cell. Like all cells it is born from an existing cell. By extension, all cells were ultimately born from one cell. A simple

organism alone on Planet Earth, perhaps alone in the universe. About 4 billion years ago, one became two, two became four. Then 8, 16, 32. The rhythm of the dividing pair, which becomes the structure of every micro blade of grass, sea creature, plant creature, and human. The structure of everything that lives and everything that dies. [...] The cell we are looking at is from a tumour.

The rhythm of the dividing pair is an organic rhythm (fig. 2). Thus, the rhythm of the dividing pair has a 'thisness' found in relations of movement and affect. Such a 'thisness' is the way Deleuze and Félix Guattari describe a body as a 'mode of individuation very different from that of a person, subject, thing, or substance'.¹¹ Deleuze and Guattari write: 'They are haecceities in the sense that they consist entirely of relations of movement and rest between molecules or particles, capacities to affect and be affected.'¹² Thus, a body, for Deleuze and Guattari, is defined by haecceities:

A body is not defined by the form that determines it nor as a determinate substance or subject nor by the organs it possesses or the functions it fulfils. On the plane of consistency, a body is defined only by a longitude and a latitude: in other words, the sum total of the material elements belonging to it under given relations of movement and rest, speed and slowness (longitude); the sum total of the intensive affects it is capable of at a given power or degree of potential (latitude).¹³

The organic structures in the Shimmer are mutations of form precisely because they are first of all *a relation*: the refraction of 'animal DNA, plant DNA, all DNA'. The voice of the bear-like creature is the sign of a relation and an intensive affect having taken place: the sonic intensities of Cass's death-cries have affected the bear-like creature in the same moment that Cass has been affected by the bear-like creature, which has also resulted in her death. Equally, it could be said that the rhythm of the pixel has a 'thisness' found in relations of



Fig. 2:
The rhythm of the dividing pair in *Annihilation*
(Alex Garland, 2018)

movement and affect. The intensities of the digital image affect the spectator/operator, and the expression of the affect in the spectator/operator is the sign of a relation and an intensive affect having taken place. For cinema, 'capacities to affect and be affected' are found in the 'automatic movement' of the movement-image.¹⁴ As Deleuze writes:

*It is only when movement becomes automatic that the artistic essence of the image is realized: producing a shock to thought, communicating vibrations to the cortex, touching the nervous and cerebral system directly.*¹⁵

Thus, what is found in the 'automatic movement' of cinema — in the vibrations of movement that '*touch[...] the nervous and cerebral system directly*'¹⁶ — is a communicating ripple of affective intensities '*producing a shock to thought*'.¹⁷ Deleuze gives as examples the work of Dziga Vertov, Sergei Eisenstein, Abel Gance, and Élie Faure.

In Vertov's 1929 film *Man with a Movie Camera*, the use of shot and montage constructs a 'rhythmic montage'.¹⁸ The operation of Eisenstein's montage is not simply one of the 'communication of movement in images', but of the development of montage 'from the image to thought'.¹⁹ Montage has the capacity to produce a '*shock to thought*', which gives rise to what Deleuze calls the 'spiritual automaton' in the spectator.²⁰ The '*spiritual automaton*' does not come about through 'logical or abstract' thought by 'formally deducing thoughts from each other' to think 'determinate substance or subject'.²¹ Just as a body has 'capacities to affect and be affected',²² '*[a]utomatic movement* gives rise to a '*spiritual automaton* in us, which reacts in turn on movement'.²³ That is, the '*spiritual automaton*' comes about in 'the circuit into which they [the spectator] enter with the movement-image, the shared power of what forces thinking and what thinks under the shock; a *nooshock*'.²⁴

The intensive vibrations of the movement-image ripple outwards, causing change, like the rippling outwards of the Shimmer's refractions that is causing, as Lena says, 'giant waves in the gene pool'. The '*shock to thought*' of the movement-image can be conceived as an encounter with energetic and material qualities in the image/world that 'gives rise to sensibility'.²⁵ As Deleuze writes in *Difference and Repetition*:

*Something in the world forces us to think. This something is an object not of recognition but of a fundamental encounter. [...] The object of encounter [...] really gives rise to sensibility with regard to a given sense. It is not an aisthêton but an aisthêteon. It is not a quality but a sign. It is not a sensible being but the being of the sensible. It is not the given but that by which the given is given. It is therefore in a certain sense the imperceptible [insensible].*²⁶

When 'something in the world forces us to think' it is to think the 'unthinkable in thought'.²⁷ That is, it is a 'thinking' in haecceities — an encounter with the sensible, and even imperceptible — 'the grey, the steam and the mist' in Akira

Kurosawa's *Cobweb Castle* (also known as *Throne of Blood*, 1957).²⁸ Such an encounter is an *aesthetic* encounter: that is, an encounter with sensation prior to our recognition of it, where subject and object are instead engaged in a mutual 'becoming'.²⁹ As Boljkovak writes: 'This shattering of stable constructions by force enables intensive perception and new approaches to life, seeing and being.'³⁰ Haecceities of 'movement and rest, speed and slowness' while 'unthinkable in thought' 'touch[...] the nervous and cerebral system directly'.³¹ In the *aesthetic* encounter, a body — defined not by 'form', 'substance or subject' — has the potential for 'becoming-intense, becoming-animal, becoming-imperceptible'.³² In *Annihilation*, the voice of a bear becomes Cass's voice, leaves grow from the skin of Josie's arms and as she disappears amongst a stand of human-shaped trees we understand that she becomes a tree, and energy pours from Dr Ventress's mouth until she becomes the imperceptible energy that swirls around Lena to form a throbbing vortex.

Cinema provides a valuable resource for challenging ways of thinking. *Aesthetic* encounters with media texts, bodies, characters, and social and cultural situations, can provoke consideration of how we can engage ethically with others and the world. In *Expressionism in Philosophy: Spinoza*, Deleuze invokes what Baruch Spinoza says in his book, *Ethics*: 'We do not even know of what a body is capable.'³³ In consideration of 'intrinsic determinations' such as intensities of colour,³⁴ we can begin to understand an ethics whereby the expression of a body may affect other bodies. While the rhythm of the dividing pair sets 'intrinsic determinations' or 'intensive qualities' for a body that may be affected by other bodies/the world,³⁵ it also announces the potential whereby the expression of a body may also affect other bodies. According to Spinoza's *Ethics*, it is in the expression of, and relations between, bodies where communities are formed. As Bruce Baugh writes, 'a community or an association, corresponds to a collective power of being affected, and results in collective or communal affects'.³⁶ It is through intensities of colours and the qualities, sounds and textures of moving bodies, that cinema can express the power that bodies have to affect other bodies, and also, an ethical engagement with others and the world. My article seeks to understand 'communal affects' through intensity's difference in cinema and beyond, in social media.³⁷

THE *AISTHETIC* ENCOUNTER AND MASS-ART

How do we understand the *aesthetic* encounter that attends mass-art as entertainment? In this article, the convergence is represented by the affective force of cinema in communication with its spectators via a sensory manifold. I contend that the image and the spectator are components in the flow of energy and are simultaneously invested: in the circuit of the movement-image, the image and the spectator each have 'capacities to affect and be affected'.³⁸ And yet, precisely because of this affective relation between the spectator and the image, mass spectatorship retains heterogeneity. As Deleuze writes: 'What

theatre and especially opera had unsuccessfully attempted, cinema achieves (*Battleship Potemkin, October*): to reach the Dividual, that is, to individuate a mass as such, instead of leaving it in a qualitative homogeneity or reducing it to a quantitative divisibility.³⁹ The *aesthetic* encounter with the image is a heterogeneous experience. The viewer of cinema *thinks* and *feels* intensities in a particular way. As Deleuze notes in *Expressionism in Philosophy*: 'Intensive quantity is infinite, and the system of essences an actually infinite series. We are here dealing with infinity "through a cause."⁴⁰ On the other hand, the capacity of bodies 'to be affected' can only be in 'a very great number of ways'.⁴¹ Thus, the particularity of intensities *thought* and *felt* by the viewer is of intensities in the *aesthetic* encounter — the event as 'cause' — for spectators of mass art.

In light of these intensive quantities, we may understand the cinematic event as 'cause' for the conditions, or patho-logies, that arise in the encounter between body and image/world. According to Seigworth and Gregg in their introduction to *The Affect Theory Reader*, patho-logies are accounted for in an 'inventory of shimmers':

What should follow as critical practice, Barthes argued, is a neutrally inflected, immanent pathos or "patho-logy" that would be an "inventory of shimmers, of nuances, of states, of changes (pathè)" as they gather into "affectivity, sensibility, sentiment," and come to serve as "the passion for difference."⁴²

In this 'exhaustively nuanced space' 'of shimmers, of nuances, of states, of changes (*pathè*)' as they are inventoried, we may further consider the viewer's relation to — and the patho-logies that would be an inventory of — the shimmers, nuances, states, and changes of the pixel in the digital image.⁴³

And yet, in thinking about cinema as the 'cause' for infinite patho-logies, Eisenstein's work on *pathos* in cinema suggests something more about the empathic bond that is formed between the film and the spectator. Eisenstein notes that this bond of *pathos* is not one of mimesis, that is, of 'impelling the spectator to reproduce the perceived action, outwardly'.⁴⁴ Rather, Eisenstein suggests that 'the affect of a work of pathos consists in whatever "sends" the spectator into ecstasy [...] *ex-stasis* — literally, "standing out of oneself", which is to say, "going out of himself", or "departing from his ordinary condition"'.⁴⁵ In this sense, *ex-stasis* in cinema, for Eisenstein, implies more than a patho-logy in the 'departure from a condition'.⁴⁶ As Eisenstein writes: 'To go out of oneself inevitably implies a transition into something else, to something different in quality, to something opposite to what was.'⁴⁷ In *Annihilation*, the refraction of Lena's DNA for the formation of the Lena double (Kristen McGarrity) implies a transition of Lena out of herself. The refractions caused by the Shimmer are a 'breaking up', deflection or a 'change in direction' of DNA as in the *Oxford English and Spanish Dictionary* definition of refraction: 'light, radio waves, etc. being deflected in passing obliquely through the interface between one medium and another or through a medium of varying density'.⁴⁸ The 'transition into something else', it could also be said, is a 'power or degree of potential' of the

body in its affective 'becoming'.⁴⁹ In *Annihilation*, the 'transition into something else' of the body in its affective 'becoming' is even an annihilation of the self.

CINEMA BEYOND THE CINEMATIC MEDIUM: THE SHIMMER

Beyond the cinematic medium of celluloid, 'shimmer' characterizes the pixel in digital cinema. In *The Cinema Effect*, Sean Cubitt writes of the pixel: 'Movement starts in non-identity, the unstable zero pixel at origin.'⁵⁰ In *Annihilation*, the Shimmer refracts; that is, the Shimmer is the deflection of light waves, radio waves etc. as it passes through different mediums.⁵¹ In his series of lectures published as *The Neutral*, Barthes writes of the 'shimmer' as an 'exhaustively nuanced space' 'whose aspect, perhaps whose meaning, is subtly modified according to the angle of the subject's gaze'.⁵² As a 'conjunction of intellect and affect', Barthes further writes about the 'shimmer' that it is a 'hyperconsciousness of the affective minimum, of the microscopic fragment of emotion [...] which implies an extreme changeability of affective moments, a rapid modification, into shimmer'.⁵³ Seigworth and Gregg develop Barthes's notion of shimmer in 'An Inventory of Shimmers': 'It becomes then a matter of accounting for the progressive accentuation (plus/minus) of intensities, their incremental shimmer: the stretching of process underway, not position taken.'⁵⁴ Like the 'shimmer' as 'process' rather than 'position taken', the pixel 'starts in non-identity'.⁵⁵ For Cubitt, 'pixels are temporal, not spatial. That cinematic present, like the point of origin of graphs, can be given a number: zero. Zero is not a quantity so much as a relation.'⁵⁶ It is the energetic relation between the image and the viewer that I am interested by which we can describe the digital image. I am particularly interested in the way the energy of the pixel — as a 'stretching of process underway' — acts *in relation*.⁵⁷

Rosalind E. Krauss characterizes the energetic renewal of each pixel that makes up the image of the television set as the electric 'pulse' of the (analogue) televisual image.⁵⁸ Seigworth and Gregg's description of 'shimmer' as a 'progressive accentuation (plus/minus) of intensities' is much like the on/off of pixels that Krauss describes, where plus/minus determines the progress of pulsing intensity and its relation.⁵⁹ The digital image, composed of moving (vibrating) and energetic pixels and sound, has the force of an energetic field. The digital image does not have the indexical recuperability of the photographic image, rather, in its moving pixel terrain, it has the behaviour and expression of an *opening out* of the energetic plane.

Garland's film *Annihilation* demonstrates the force of intensity that opens out the body to the image/world. When Lena enters the lighthouse, she finds a deep pit surrounded by a coral-like webbing and makes her way inside. She finds Dr Ventress in a cave at the bottom of the pit. As Dr Ventress says to Lena before energy begins to pour from her open mouth: 'Our bodies and our minds will be

fragmented into their smallest parts until not one part remains: annihilation.' Dr Ventress's body disperses in a cloud of swirling energy and, as the energy swirls around Lena, it forms a vortex that opens like an eye in front of Lena (fig. 3). The vortex is composed of throbbing energetic and material particles. The throbbing vortex draws a drop of blood from Lena's eye, and, within the opening of the vortex, the blood cells divide and multiply until a Lena double is formed.

Cinema is found in these throbbing energetic and material particles. In a 1927 issue of *Close Up*, the poet and cineaste H. D. refers to cinema as having the therapeutic powers of a mind cure.⁶⁰ H. D. describes the experience of cinema spectatorship: 'We depended on light, on some sub-strata of warmth, some pulse or vibration [...] We sank into this pulse and warmth and were recreated.'⁶¹ The encounter with cinema is an encounter with vibrations of energy — as light — that 'recreates', which we can see extending, for H. D., from the nineteenth-century belief in the restorative powers of electricity. It is interesting to note the similarities in the mind cures alluded to in H. D.'s description of cinema as 'pulse or vibration' and what Deleuze says about the vibrations of 'automatic movement' that 'touch[...] the nervous and cerebral system directly'.⁶² The behaviour and expression of an *opening out* of an energetic plane in cinema and beyond, in the digital image, coincides with what Seigworth and Gregg call a 'bloom-space' for 'affectivity, sensibility, sentiment'.⁶³ They write: 'In fact, as much as anything, perhaps that is what such a "neutral" bloom-space offers: the patho-logy of a body intersecting with the pedagogy of an affective world.'⁶⁴ What is found in the *patho-logy* of a body in its intersection with the world, indeed, at the intersection of spectator/operator and media text, is, as Barthes writes, 'the passion for difference',⁶⁵ or what Deleuze calls 'infinity "through a cause"'.⁶⁶

Thinking about cinema beyond the cinematic medium of celluloid is a thinking about event as opposed to narrative.⁶⁷ The digital event is a *relation*. Cubitt writes: 'The verb "relates", however, should be understood to mean "establishes

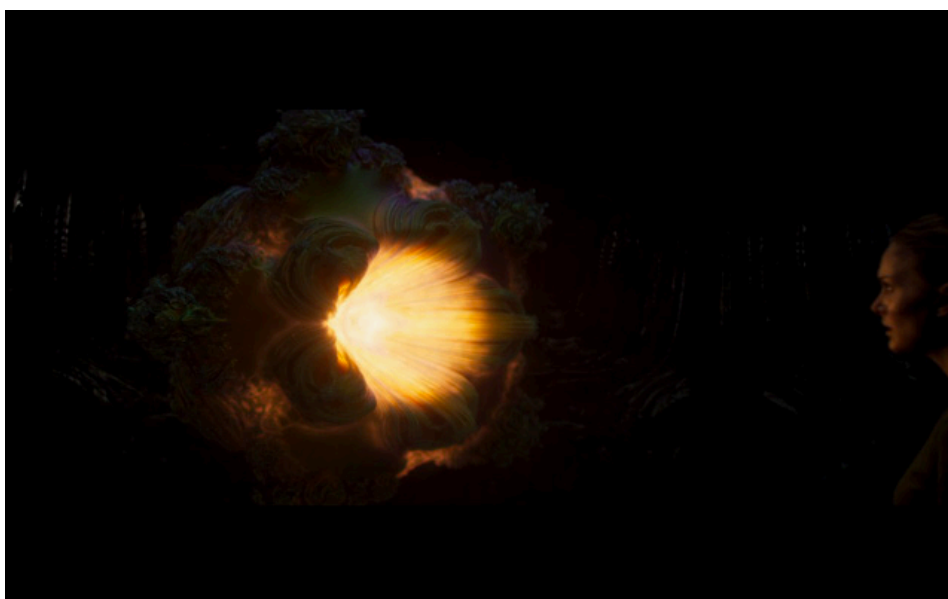


Fig. 3:
The throbbing vortex of energetic and material particles in *Annihilation* (Alex Garland, 2018)

a relationship", not as "tells a story."⁶⁸ Working within the digital event as a relation, the encounter with the digital image is an encounter with the energy of the pixel. The pixels that form the throbbing vortex in *Annihilation*, alongside the pulsing electronic soundscape takes cinema beyond the cinematic medium to something like a music video. As Cubitt writes: 'It is important to recognize that narrative is neither primary nor necessary to cinema, and it forms no part of any putative essence of the medium.'⁶⁹ The importance of the digital event as a medium is of *relation* and not of story.

In *Annihilation*, the Shimmer refracts. Like the energy of the pixel that acts *in relation*, what is found inside the Shimmer is an acting in relation via duplicates of form and refractions of movement and sound. The Shimmer is a reification of Jenelle Troxell's explanation of how Henry Wood's 1893 manual *Ideal Suggestion through Mental Photography: A Restorative System for Home and Private Use* describes: 'invisible threads, which connect us with each object which makes up our environment. Vibrations are ever passing over these connections, backward and forward, and it is for us to control their purpose and quality.'⁷⁰ Like the vibrations of 'automatic movement' that 'touch[...] the nervous and cerebral system directly',⁷¹ the 'invisible threads, which connect' in *Annihilation* are of movement, force, and pressure. When a Lena double is formed in the pit beneath the lighthouse, Lena runs for the door. The Lena double in mirroring her movements, produces a corresponding pressure against the door, such that Lena is pressed between the door and the Lena double. It is only when Lena releases her own pressure against the door and *falls* that the Lena double falls with her. However, this acting *in relation* is also what leads to the Lena double's demise. In corresponding movement with the Lena double, Lena places a grenade between their hands — a gift given — and pulls the pin with her thumb. She runs as it explodes. Fire engulfs the Lena double. As the lighthouse catches alight, the Shimmer surrounding the lighthouse dissipates and the organic structures begin to collapse.

THE PIXEL BEYOND THE MOVIE THEATRE

With the rise of nationalist movements and authoritarian governments that give way to digital hostility in social media, we can begin to consider the energetic power of the pixel beyond the movie theatre. Indeed, in 1985 in *Cinema 2: The Time-Image* (translated into English in 1989) Deleuze identified the effects of the rise of nationalist movements in the treatment of the cinema spectator:

*Cinema is dying, then, from its quantitative mediocrity. But there is a still more important reason: the mass-art, the treatment of the masses, which should not have been separable from an accession of the masses to the status of the true subject, has degenerated into state propaganda and manipulation, into a kind of fascism which brought together Hitler and Hollywood, Hollywood and Hitler.*⁷²

How might the effects of cinema as mass-art be aligned with social media? What is interesting to consider is the ways that social media may be aligned with 'bad cinema', which, according to Deleuze, *represents* violence to produce shock. Deleuze writes: 'The shock would be confused, in bad cinema, with the figurative violence of the represented instead of achieving that other violence of a movement-image developing its vibrations in a moving sequence which embeds itself within us.'⁷³ We could, however, ask of Deleuze what happens when the 'figurative violence of the represented' and the 'violence of a movement-image' are both at once in the image?⁷⁴ What happens when the 'violence of a movement-image' — the vibrations of the energetic pixel '*touching the nervous and cerebral system directly*' — is the affect of the image (as well as text in social media), precisely because it appears in a violent representation?⁷⁵ This is to extend the consideration of 'bad cinema' and indeed, social media, beyond the 'violence of the represented' to consider its *thought* and *felt* vibrations: vibrations that constitute, for Deleuze, the 'automatic movement' of the movement-image.⁷⁶ The importance for me in this argument, is the way by which violence is perpetuated in social media then, not simply in a representation of violence, but in the *thought* and *felt* vibrations of violence as an outcome of the energetic relation in digital communication. Certainly, social media has the potential for representing violence, such as the violence in the case of the raping of Legba and Starsinger by Mr Bungle in the text-based virtual world LambdaMOO.⁷⁷ The 'violence of the movement-image' in social media is also in the rhythm of vibrations and the energetic relation — the 'shock to thought' of text and image.⁷⁸ Such a '*shock to thought*' is as Deleuze notes: 'a recognition of powerlessness [...]. What cinema advances is not the power of thought but its "impower."⁷⁹ The *aesthetic* encounter, in its sounds, textures, rhythms, movements, and affects, is the source of an 'unthinkable in thought'.⁸⁰ As Deleuze writes: 'if it is true that thought depends on a shock which gives birth to it (the nerve, the brain matter), it can only think one thing, *the fact that we are not yet thinking*, the powerlessness to think the whole and to think oneself, thought which is always fossilized, dislocated, collapsed'.⁸¹ In *Annihilation*, thinking is not found in a thinking of the whole from the outside, but in the encounter: 'Unfathomable mind', Dr Ventress says with her eyes sealed shut by skin to Lena. 'We spoke. What was it we said? That I needed to know what was inside the lighthouse. That moment's passed. It's inside me now.'

The affective nature of 'bad cinema' — and the same could be said of social media — suggests a philosophising potential as it relates to the kind of subject-spectator/operator generated in the encounter; that is, in the energetic relation of the pixel in communication with its spectators/operators. Just as Kieran J. O'Meara contends that feminism should be understood as a tradition rather than an ideology, *thinking* and *feeling with* cinema, or social media for that matter, cannot be found in an 'all-encompassing logic of life and history'.⁸² The pixel communicates. However, what the pixel communicates is an affective force in the *aesthetic* encounter of body and image. In our *aesthetic* encounters we may apprehend an ethics beyond a politics of inadequate ideas. As O'Meara writes:

'the Feminist tradition challenges us to think corporeally, to consider life as a bodied subject, where norms collide to cluster around our bodied existence, and how our experiences of these bodies encounter "the political"'.⁸³ Sensory images do not produce metaphorical allusions or engage in politically divisive debate, but 'demonstrate' the power of affect in their political dimension.⁸⁴ An attention to the *aesthetic* encounter suggests a kind of affirmative (rather than divisive) politics, whereby care, compassion, and empathy may be considered as an outcome of the affective intensities and connectives of the movement-image.

DIGITAL HOSTILITY

Like mass spectatorship in cinema, it is possible to see how social media retains heterogeneity. The particularity of image and text is the cause of infinite intensities in the *aesthetic* encounter. The iterative and participatory qualities of social media — which is also the cause of the energetic relation in social media — means that the pixel is more event than narrative.⁸⁵ For multi-user dimensions (MUDs) or MOOs (MUD, Object-Orientated) on the internet such as LambdaMOO, textual descriptions of the virtual world and the commands given for how you want your character to appear and act, puts your character in energetic relation with other characters. However, the energetic relation in social media — via the affective force of the virtual and energetic pixel — is one of emotional entwinement with our real-life selves. Thus, we may think about the affective force of virtual intensities in the way that Boljgovak writes:

Deleuze again insists upon an act of replaying or redoubling, upon foldings, unfoldings and refoldings that expose not only the actual events of our lives but also their underlying virtual intensities and affective significances.

To counter-actualise, then, is to refold, break open and recombine thought, not to sense a totalising, homogeneous world but to strive to explore fragmentary, imperceptible relationships, to become imperceptible, neither actual nor virtual, this nor that, but always becoming, differing.⁸⁶

Such 'fragmentary, imperceptible relationships' are the stuff of haecceities in the *aesthetic* encounter — of sounds, textures, rhythms, movements, and affects that do violence to thought.⁸⁷

In *Annihilation*, Lena describes to her husband, Kane, the rhythm of the dividing pair by which the cell becomes immortal and never dies, whereby the cell is coded with its own destruction — a fault in the genes with old-age as the result. Equally, our interaction with social media could be said to be coded with its own self-destruction wherein digital hostility arises. Self-destruction is the sentiment with which the film *Annihilation* sets its biological premise. As Dr Ventress says to Lena: 'Almost none of us commit suicide, and almost all of us self-destruct in some way, in some part of our lives. We drink or we smoke.

We destabilize the good job or the happy marriage. These aren't decisions, they are impulses. [...] Isn't self-destruction coded into us, programmed into each cell?' The 'violence of a movement-image' is a violence to ourselves — as one of self-destruction; however, it is also the vehicle for violence by and to others.⁸⁸ Deleuze writes: 'the movement-image was from the beginning linked to the organization of war, state propaganda, ordinary fascism, historically and essentially'.⁸⁹ Moving from mass-art to ubiquitous social media and the effect of digital hostility on bodies, I want to argue that the violence of the movement-image when imposed by others can also be recognized as wrapped up in a politics of inadequate ideas when affect is exchanged for passion.

Greta Olson writes in her essay 'Love and Hate Online: Affective Politics in the Era of Trump' about how the Trump campaign inspired hate as well as love in Trump's followers: the Trump campaign was an affective one.⁹⁰ As Olson writes: 'political sentiments are determined by viscerally experienced sentiments and a physically imagined sense of rightness or wrongness, rather than one that is worked out through rational means'.⁹¹ In a politics of inadequate ideas it would not simply be affective engagement that forestalls such ideas — in fact, they may be made up of it — but rather an ethics that extends from 'capacities to affect and be affected'.⁹² We must be careful to note that, as Deleuze writes:

*An affection is not a passion, except when it cannot be explained by the nature of the affected body: it then of course involves the body, but is explained by the influence of other bodies. Affections that can be completely explained by the nature of the affected body are active affections, and themselves actions.*⁹³

Where Trump's campaign is considered to be an affective one that inspired hate as well as love, to confuse affect with the passion inspired is to limit the ethical relation in affect. The Trump campaign was built on a politics of inadequate ideas by conjuring a divisive binary of winners and losers — 'us' versus 'them' (where the 'them' is often the media).⁹⁴ What is refracted through our digital interactions in social media is patho-logies of passion found in divisive debate. In Spinoza's *Ethics*, it is not simply that the body has a power for being affected:

*The more power a thing has, or the greater its power of existence, the greater number of ways in which it can be affected. Bodies are affected by different things, and in different ways, each type of body being characterised by minimum and maximum thresholds for being affected by other bodies: what can and what cannot affect it, and to what degree.*⁹⁵

What can be noted is that, as Baugh writes: 'a body's power of acting and being affected' is also a 'relation of parts'.⁹⁶ In consideration of what defines a body's potential, Deleuze writes: 'A body's structure is the composition of its relation. What a body can do corresponds to the nature and limits of its capacity to be affected'.⁹⁷ For a community, as Baugh writes, this is the 'collective power of being affected, and results in collective or communal affects'.⁹⁸ Thus, a

thinking and *feeling with affect* — the 'unthinkable in thought'⁹⁹ of affect — is not a depiction of a particular kind of speech act as exemplified by Andrew Anglin when he writes: 'One of the unifying marks of the Alt-Right sensibility is the assumption that no speech act is beyond the pale.'¹⁰⁰ A *thinking* and *feeling with affect* is an ethical engagement for a harmonious collective.

In her book *Untimely Affects*, Boljgovak considers the events of the Holocaust and Hiroshima in an examination of films by Chris Marker and Alain Resnais. Boljgovak describes a kind of 'creative becoming' through art's resistance to violence.¹⁰¹ She writes: 'As Deleuze and Guattari repeatedly insist, destructive forces double each possibility for flight; caution must be taken to pursue the line of greatest resistance and creativity.'¹⁰² Thus, there is another way by which we might consider mass-art as a 'war machine'. Vertov's *Man with a Movie Camera* is just one example of a 'revolutionary movement' in cinema's creative invention.¹⁰³ Revolution is also the revolving action of transport and industrial machinery in Vertov's film and entails new perceptive capacities for the spectator. However, 'revolutionary movements' also require resistance. Deleuze writes: 'The work of art is not an instrument of communication. [...] The work of art strictly does not contain the least bit of information. To the contrary, there is a fundamental affinity between the work of art and the act of resistance.'¹⁰⁴ When considering affect and the body's potentials, it is worth considering what the body is *open* to, or indeed, where there is resistance. As Seigworth and Gregg write: 'affect is persistent proof of a body's never less than ongoing immersion in and among the world's obstinacies and rhythms, its refusals as much as its invitations'.¹⁰⁵ Beyond a politics of inadequate ideas, we can take affect's 'demonstration' to mean a revolution of sorts: a revolution by which care, compassion, and empathy may be considered as a resistance — or refusal — to hostility.¹⁰⁶ For Boljgovak, art's potential is found in Marker's 'things that quicken the heart': perhaps an energetically pulsating pixel by which we may consider affect in all its ethical compassion.¹⁰⁷

Notes

¹ I would like to thank Luke Robinson for endorsing the publication of my article and Gabrielle Lowe for her feedback on my article, as well as the anonymous peer-reviewers for their very helpful comments on an earlier draft of this article

² Roland Barthes, *The Neutral: Lecture Course at the Collège de France (1977–1978)*, trans. by Rosalind E. Krauss and Denis Hollier (New York: Columbia University Press, 2005), 51.

³ Gregory J. Seigworth and Melissa Gregg, 'An Inventory of Shimmers', in *The Affect Theory Reader*, ed. by Melissa Gregg and Gregory J. Seigworth (Durham, NC and London: Duke University Press, 2010), 1–25 (11); quoting from Barthes, 77.

⁴ Barthes, 101.

⁵ Nadine Boljkovac, *Untimely Affects: Gilles Deleuze and an Ethics of Cinema* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2013), 18, 13; quoting from Gilles Deleuze, *Negotiations, 1972–1990*, trans. by Martin Joughin (New York: Columbia University Press, 1995), 172.

⁶ Barthes, 51.

⁷ Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, trans. by Brian Massumi (Minneapolis and London: University of Minnesota Press, 1987), 261.

⁸ Deleuze and Guattari, 232–309.

⁹ Barthes, 51. It is thought-provoking to compare Barthes's notion of 'shimmer' with the way that Deborah Bird Rose describes 'shimmer' through the event of 'reciprocal capture' in which 'different ways of being and doing find interesting things to do together'. Deborah Bird Rose, 'Shimmer: When All You Love is Being Trashed', in *Arts of Living on a Damaged Planet*, ed. by Anna Tsing, Heather Swanson, Elaine Gan and Nils Bubandt (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2017), G51–G63 (G51). In her analysis, Rose gives the definition of the Australian Indigenous Yolngu term *bir'yun* as: 'shimmer, the ancestral power of life [that] arises in relationship and encounter' (Rose, G52–53). Rose writes: 'The term *bir'yun* — which does not distinguish between domains of nature and culture — is characteristic of a lively pulsating world, not a mechanistic one. *Bir'yun* shows us that the world is not composed of gears and cogs but of multifaceted, multispecies relations and pulses' (Rose, G55).

¹⁰ Barthes, 51; Deleuze and Guattari, 232–309.

¹¹ Deleuze and Guattari, 261.

¹² Ibidem.

¹³ Ibidem, 260.

¹⁴ Ibidem, 261; Gilles Deleuze, *Cinema 2: The Time-Image*, trans. by Hugh Tomlinson and Robert Galeta (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1989), 156.

¹⁵ Deleuze, *Cinema 2*, 156.

¹⁶ Ibidem, 156.

¹⁷ Ibidem.

¹⁸ Anna Lawton, 'Rhythmic Montage in the Films of Dziga Vertov: A Poetic Use of the Language of Cinema', *Pacific Coast Philology* 13 (Oct 1978), 44–50 (49).

¹⁹ Deleuze, *Cinema 2*, 157.

²⁰ Ibidem, 156.

²¹ Ibidem, 156; Deleuze and Guattari, 260.

²² Deleuze and Guattari, 261; Deleuze, *Cinema 2*, 156.

²³ Deleuze, *Cinema 2*, 156.

²⁴ Ibidem, 156.

²⁵ Gilles Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, trans. by Paul Patton (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), 139.

²⁶ Ibidem, 139–40.

²⁷ Deleuze, *Cinema 2*, 168.

²⁸ Ibidem, 169.

²⁹ Deleuze and Guattari, 232–309.

³⁰ Boljkovac, 18.

³¹ Deleuze and Guattari, 260; Deleuze, *Cinema 2*, 168, 156.

- ³² Deleuze and Guattari, 260, 232.
- ³³ Gilles Deleuze, *Expressionism in Philosophy: Spinoza*, trans. by Martin Joughin (New York: Zone Books, 1990), 226.
- ³⁴ Deleuze, *Expressionism in Philosophy*, 196.
- ³⁵ Ibidem.
- ³⁶ Bruce Baugh, 'Body', in *The Deleuze Dictionary*, ed. by Adrian Parr (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2005), 35–37 (37).
- ³⁷ Baugh, 37.
- ³⁸ Deleuze and Guattari, 261.
- ³⁹ Deleuze, *Cinema 2*, 162.
- ⁴⁰ Deleuze, *Expressionism in Philosophy*, 197.
- ⁴¹ Ibidem, 218.
- ⁴² Seigworth and Gregg, 11; quoting from Barthes, 77.
- ⁴³ Barthes, 51, 77.
- ⁴⁴ Jenelle Troxell, 'Mind Cure and Ecstasy on the Pages of *Close Up*', *Screen* 58.3 (Autumn 2017), 349–71 (364); quoting from Sergei Eisenstein, 'Methods of Montage', in *Film Form*, ed. and trans. by Jay Leyda (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1977), 80.
- ⁴⁵ Troxell, 364; quoting from Sergei Eisenstein, 'The Structure of the Film', in *Film Form*, ed. and trans. Jay Leyda (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1977), 166.
- ⁴⁶ Troxell, 364; quoting from Eisenstein, 'The Structure of the Film', 167.
- ⁴⁷ Ibidem.
- ⁴⁸ 'Refraction', in *Oxford English and Spanish Dictionary* <<https://www.lexico.com/definition/refraction>> [accessed 9 March 2021].
- ⁴⁹ Troxell, 364; quoting from Eisenstein, 'The Structure of the Film', 167; Deleuze and Guattari, 260.
- ⁵⁰ Sean Cubitt, *The Cinema Effect* (Cambridge, MA and London: The MIT Press, 2004), 41.
- ⁵¹ 'Refraction', in *Oxford English and Spanish Dictionary*
- ⁵² Barthes, 51.
- ⁵³ Barthes, 101.
- ⁵⁴ Seigworth and Gregg, 11.
- ⁵⁵ Ibidem, 11; Cubitt, 41.
- ⁵⁶ Cubitt, 33.
- ⁵⁷ Seigworth and Gregg, 11.
- ⁵⁸ Krauss writes: 'Or, and why not, there is the television set itself, this impassive eye that nonetheless exudes a constant visual beat since its image is produced by an electric current scanning upward along the hundreds of lines that cross the screen, generating an "image" through the continual renewal of its pulse, becoming all the more apparent when the set goes out of calibration and the whole image is wiped upward again and again as though pushed by an insistently reappearing black, horizontal bar'. (Rosalind E. Krauss, *The Optical Unconscious* [Cambridge, MA and London: The MIT Press, 1993], p. 202).
- ⁵⁹ Seigworth and Gregg, 11.
- ⁶⁰ Troxell, 354.
- ⁶¹ Ibidem; quoting from H. D., 'Cinema and the Classics III: The Mask and the Movietone', *Close Up* 1.5 (1927), 23.
- ⁶² Troxell, 354; quoting from H. D., 23; Deleuze, *Cinema 2*, 156.
- ⁶³ Seigworth and Gregg, 9; Barthes, 77.
- ⁶⁴ Seigworth and Gregg, 12.
- ⁶⁵ Barthes, 77.
- ⁶⁶ Deleuze, *Expressionism in Philosophy*, 197.
- ⁶⁷ Cubitt, 38.
- ⁶⁸ Ibidem.
- ⁶⁹ Ibidem.
- ⁷⁰ Troxell, 356; quoting from Henry Wood's *Ideal Suggestion through Mental Photography: A Restorative System for Home and Private Use* (Boston, MA: Lee and Shepard, 1893).
- ⁷¹ Deleuze, *Cinema 2*, 156.
- ⁷² Ibidem, 164.

- ⁷³ Ibidem, 157.
- ⁷⁴ Ibidem, 157.
- ⁷⁵ Ibidem, 156–57.
- ⁷⁶ Ibidem.
- ⁷⁷ Julian Dibbell, 'A Rape in Cyberspace. How an Evil Clown, a Haitian Trickster Spirit, Two Wizards, and a Cast of Dozens Turned a Database into a Society', *Village Voice*, 23 December 1993, 36.
- ⁷⁸ Deleuze, *Cinema 2*, 156.
- Katleen Gabriels and Marjolein Lanzing also note how 'instances of online vitriol can be conceptualized as onlife violence: violence that transgresses and affects both the offline and online world'. Katleen Gabriels and Marjolein Lanzing, 'Ethical Implications of Online Vitriol', in *Violence and Trolling on Social Media: History, Affect, and Effects of Online Vitriol*, ed. by Sara Polak and Daniel Trottier (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2020), 197–214 (197).
- ⁷⁹ Deleuze, *Cinema 2*, 156, 166.
- ⁸⁰ Ibidem, 168.
- ⁸¹ Ibidem, 167.
- ⁸² Kieran J. O'Meara, 'On Feminism as Tradition, Not Ideology', poLit: *Discussion Political Thought* (10 March 2021), <https://thinkpolit.blogspot.com/2021/03/on-feminism-as-tradition-not-ideology.html?fbclid=IwAR346cmixPHN40632He6uUixqtbc_pT69jTCWkh3nV5NxPzn1FT9-DCSsTE&m=1> [accessed 15 March 2021] (para. 9 of 9).
- ⁸³ O'Meara, para. 9 of 9.
- ⁸⁴ Deleuze, *Cinema 2*, 183.
- ⁸⁵ Greta Olson, 'Love and Hate Online: Affective Politics in the Era of Trump', in *Violence and Trolling on Social Media: History, Affect, and Effects of Online Vitriol*, ed. by Sara Polak and Daniel Trottier (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2020), 153–77 (173).
- ⁸⁶ Boljkovac, 20.
- ⁸⁷ Boljkovac, 20, 29.
- ⁸⁸ Deleuze, *Cinema 2*, 157.
- ⁸⁹ Ibidem, 165.
- ⁹⁰ Olson, 160.
- ⁹¹ Ibidem, 154.
- ⁹² Deleuze and Guattari, 261.
- ⁹³ Deleuze, *Expressionism in Philosophy*, 218–19.
- ⁹⁴ Ibidem, 162–63.
- ⁹⁵ Baugh, 36.
- ⁹⁶ Ibidem, 36–37.
- ⁹⁷ Deleuze, *Expressionism in Philosophy*, 218.
- ⁹⁸ Baugh, 37.
- ⁹⁹ Deleuze, *Cinema 2*, 168.
- ¹⁰⁰ Olson, 172; quoting from Andrew Anglin, 'A Normie's Guide to the Alt-Right', *Daily Stormer*, 31 August 2016.
- ¹⁰¹ Boljkovac, 13.
- ¹⁰² Ibidem, 21.
- ¹⁰³ Ibidem, 13; quoting from Deleuze, *Negotiations*, 172.
- ¹⁰⁴ Gilles Deleuze, 'Having an Idea in Cinema (On the Cinema of Straub-Huillet)', in *Deleuze and Guattari: New Mappings in Politics and Philosophy*, trans. by Eleanor Kaufman, ed. by Eleanor Kaufman and Kevin Jon Heller (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1998), 14–19 (18).
- ¹⁰⁵ Seigworth and Gregg, 1.
- ¹⁰⁶ Deleuze, *Cinema 2*, 183.
- ¹⁰⁷ Boljkovac, 93.