



## 2.5 Crazy Cameras, Discorrelated Images, and the Post-Perceptual Mediation of Post-Cinematic Affect

BY SHANE DENSON

With the shift to a digital and more broadly post-cinematic media environment, moving images have undergone what I term their “discorrelation” from human embodied subjectivities and (phenomenological, narrative, and visual) perspectives. Clearly, we still look at—and we still perceive—images that in many ways resemble those of a properly cinematic age; yet many of these images are mediated in ways that subtly (or imperceptibly) undermine the distance of perspective, i.e. the spatial or quasi-spatial distance and relation between phenomenological subjects and the objects of their perception. At the center of these transformations are a set of strangely volatile mediators: post-cinema’s screens and cameras, above all, which serve not as mere “intermediaries” that would relay images neutrally between relatively fixed subjects and objects but which act instead as transformative, transductive “mediators” of the subject-object relation itself.[\[1\]](#) In other words, digital and post-cinematic media technologies do not just produce a new type

of image; they establish entirely new configurations and parameters of perception and agency, placing spectators in an unprecedented relation to images and the infrastructure of their mediation.

The transformation at stake here pertains to a level of being that is therefore *logically prior* to perception, as it concerns the establishment of a new material basis upon which images are produced and made available to perception.[2] Accordingly, a phenomenological and post-phenomenological analysis of post-cinematic images and their mediating cameras points to a break with human perceptibility as such and to the rise of a fundamentally post-perceptual media regime. In an age of computational image production and networked distribution channels, media “contents” and our “perspectives” on them are rendered ancillary to algorithmic functions and become enmeshed in an expanded, indiscriminately articulated plenum of images that exceed capture in the form of photographic or perceptual “objects.”[3] That is, post-cinematic images are thoroughly *processual* in nature, from their digital inception and delivery to their real-time processing in computational playback apparatuses; furthermore, and more importantly, this basic processuality explodes the image’s ontological status as a discrete packaged unit, and it insinuates itself—as I will argue in the following pages—into our own microtemporal processing of perceptual information, thereby unsettling the relative fixity of the perceiving human subject. Post-cinema’s cameras thus mediate a radically nonhuman ontology of the image, where these images’ disconnection from human perceptibility signals an expansion of the field of material affect: beyond the visual or even the perceptual, the images of post-cinematic media operate and impinge upon us at what might be called a “metabolic” level.

In the following, I will discuss post-cinema’s *crazy cameras*, its *disconnected images*, and a fundamentally *post-perceptual mediation* as interlinked parts or facets of the medial ontology of post-cinematic affect. I will connect my observations to some of the empirical and

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phenomenological developments surrounding contemporary image production and reception, but my primary interest lies in a more basic determination of affect and its mediation today. Following Bergson, affect pertains to a domain of material and “spiritual” existence constituted precisely in a gap between empirically determinate actions and reactions (or, with some modification, between the production and reception of images); affect subsists, furthermore, below the threshold of conscious experience and the intentionalities of phenomenological subjects (including the producers and viewers of media images).<sup>[4]</sup> It is my contention that the infrastructure of life in our properly post-cinematic era has been subject to radical transformations at this level of “molecular” or pre-personal affect, and following Steven Shaviro I suggest that something of the nature and the stakes of these transformations can be glimpsed in our contemporary moving-image media.<sup>[5]</sup> Ultimately, these media ask us to re-think the material and experiential forms and functions of the camera, the image, and the mediation of life itself.

### I

My argument revolves around what I am calling the “crazy cameras” of post-cinematic media, following comments by Therese Grisham in our roundtable discussion in *La Furia Umana*.<sup>[6]</sup> Seeking to account for the changed “function of cameras . . . in the post-cinematic episteme,” Grisham notes that whereas “in classical and post-classical cinema, the camera is subjective, objective, or functions to align us with a subjectivity which may lie outside the film,” there would seem to be “something altogether different” in recent movies.

For instance, it is established that in [*District 9*], a digital camera has shot footage broadcast as news reportage. A similar camera “appears” intermittently in the film as a “character.” In the scenes in which it appears, it is patently impossible in the diegesis for anyone to be there to shoot the footage. Yet, we see that camera by means of blood splattered on it, or we become aware of watching

the action through a hand-held camera that intrudes suddenly without any rationale either diegetically or aesthetically. Similarly, but differently as well, in *Melancholia*, we suddenly begin to view the action through a “crazy” hand-held camera, at once something other than just an intrusive exercise in belated Dogme 95 aesthetics and more than any character’s POV. . . .

What is it, precisely, that makes these cameras “crazy,” or opaque to rational thought? My answer, in short, is that post-cinematic cameras—by which I mean a range of imaging apparatuses, both physical and virtual—seem not to know their place with respect to the separation of diegetic and non-diegetic planes of reality; these cameras therefore fail to situate viewers in a consistently and coherently designated spectating-position. More generally, they deviate from the perceptual norms established by human embodiment—the baseline physics engine, if you will, at the root of classical continuity principles, which in order to integrate or suture psychical subjectivities into diegetic/narrative constructs had to respect above all the spatial parameters of embodied orientation and locomotion (even if they did so in an abstract, normalizing form distinct from the real diversity of concrete body instantiations). Breaking with these norms results in what I call the dis-correlation of post-cinematic images from human perception.

With the idea of dis-correlation, I aim to describe an event that first announces itself negatively, as a phenomenological disconnect between viewing subjects and the object-images they view. In her now-classic book, *The Address of the Eye*, Vivian Sobchack theorized a correlation—or structural homology—between spectators’ embodied perceptual capacities and those of film’s own apparatic “body,” which engages viewers in a dialogical exploration of perceptual exchange; cinematic expression or communication, accordingly, was seen to be predicated on an analogical basis according to which the subject- and object-positions of film and viewer are essentially reversible and dialectically transposable. But, according to Sobchack, this basic

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perceptual correlation is endangered by new—or “postcinematic”—media (as she already referred to them in 1992), which disrupt the commutative interchanges of perspective upon which filmic experience depends for its meaningfulness.[7] With the tools Sobchack borrows from philosopher of technology Don Ihde, we can make a first approach to the “crazy” quality of post-cinematic cameras and the disrelation of their images.



Figure 1 – CGI-generated lens flares underscore (but exceed) diegetic realities in *GREEN LANTERN* (Martin Campbell, 2011).

Take the example of the digitally simulated lens flare, featured ostentatiously in recent superhero films like *Green Lantern* or the *Ghost Rider* sequel directed by Neveldine and Taylor, who brag that their extensive use of it breaks all the rules of “what you can and can’t do” in 3D (see Figures 1 and 2).[8] Beyond the stylistically questionable matter of this excess, a phenomenological analysis reveals significant paradoxes at the heart of the CGI lens flare. On the one hand, the lens flare encourages what Ihde calls an “embodiment relation” to the virtual camera: by simulating the material interplay of a lens and a light source, the lens



Figure 2 – Directors Mark Neveldine and Brian Taylor use CGI lens-flares to push the limits of 3D in *GHOST RIDER: SPIRIT OF VENGEANCE* (2011).

flare emphasizes the plastic reality of “pro-filmic” CGI objects; the virtual camera, which enables our view of these objects, is to this extent itself grafted onto the subjective pole of the intentional relation, “embodied” or “incorporated” in a sort of phenomenological symbiosis that channels perception towards the objects of our visual attention.<sup>[9]</sup> On the other hand, however, the lens flare draws attention to itself and highlights the images’ artificiality by emulating (and indeed foregrounding the emulation of) the material presence of a (non-diegetic) camera. To this extent, the camera is rendered quasi-objective, and it instantiates what Ihde calls a “hermeneutic relation”: we look *at* the camera rather than just *through* it, and we interpret it *as a sign or token of verisimilitude* or “realisticness.”<sup>[10]</sup> The paradox here, which consists in the realism-constituting *and* realism-problematizing undecidability of the virtual camera’s relation to the diegesis—where the “reality” of this realism is conceived as thoroughly mediated, the product of a simulated physical

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camera rather than defined as the hallmark of embodied perceptual immediacy—points to a more basic problem: namely, to a transformation of mediation itself in the post-cinematic era. That is, the undecidable place of the mediating apparatus, the camera's apparently simultaneous occupation of both subjective and objective positions within the noetic relation that it enables between viewers and the film, is symptomatic of a more general destabilization of phenomenological subject- and object-positions in relation to the expanded affective realm of post-cinematic mediation. Computational, ergodic, and processual in nature, media in this mode operate on a level that is categorically beyond the purview of perception, perspective, or intentionality.<sup>[11]</sup> Phenomenological analysis can therefore provide only a negative determination “from the outside”: it can help us to identify moments of dysfunction or disconnection, but it can offer no positive characterization of the “molecular” changes occasioning them. Thus, for example, CGI and digital cameras do not just sever the ties of indexicality that characterized analog cinematography (an empirical or epistemological-phenomenological claim); they also render images themselves fundamentally processual—at once inextricably bound up in computational processes and simultaneously initiating a volatile feedback loop between these and the spectator. Such post-cinematic images, which fail to “settle” or coalesce into a fixed and distant position, thus displace the film-as-object-of-perception and uproot the spectator-as-perceiving-subject—in effect, enveloping both in an epistemologically indeterminate but materially quite real and concrete field of affective relation. Mediation, I suggest, can no longer be situated neatly *between* the poles of subject and object, as it swells with processual affectivity to engulf both.

Compare, in this connection, film critic Jim Emerson's statement in response to the debates over so-called “chaos cinema”<sup>[12]</sup>:

It seems to me that these movies are attempting a kind of shortcut to the viewer's autonomic nervous system, providing direct stimulus to generate excitement rather than simulate any comprehensible

experience. In that sense, they're more like drugs that (ostensibly) trigger the release of adrenaline or dopamine while bypassing the middleman, that part of the brain that interprets real or imagined situations and *then* generates appropriate emotional/physiological responses to them. The reason they don't work for many of us is because, in reality, they give us nothing to respond *to*—just a blur of incomprehensible images and sounds, without spatial context or allowing for emotional investment.

Now, I want to distance myself from what appears to be a blanket dismissal of such stimulation, but I quote Emerson's statement here because I think it correctly and neatly identifies the link between a direct affective appeal and the essentially post-phenomenological dissolution of perceptual objects and bypassing of perception itself. If we take it seriously, though, this link marks the crux of a transformation in the ontology of media, the point of passage from cinematic to post-cinematic media. Whereas the former operate on the "molar" scale of perceptual intentionality, the latter operate on the "molecular" scale of sub-perceptual and pre-personal embodiment, potentially transforming the material basis of subjectivity in a way that cannot be accounted for in traditional phenomenological terms.[\[13\]](#) But how *do* we account for this transformative power of post-cinematic media, short of simply reducing it (as it would seem Emerson does) to a narrowly positivistic conception of physiological impact? In order to answer this question, it will be helpful to turn to Maurizio Lazzarato's reflections on the affective dimension of video and to Mark Hansen's expansions of these ideas with respect to computational and what he calls "atmospheric" media.

## II

According to Lazzarato, the video camera captures time itself, the splitting of time at every instant, hence opening the gap between perception and action where affect (in Bergson's metaphysics) resides.[\[14\]](#) Because it no longer merely traces objects mechanically and fixes them as discrete



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photographic entities, but instead generates its images directly out of the flux of sub-perceptual matter, which it processes on the fly in the space of a microtemporal duration, the video camera marks a revolutionary transformation in the technical organization of time. The video camera, writes Lazzarato, “modulates the flows of electromagnetic waves. Video images are contractions and dilations, ‘vibrations and tremors’ of light, rather than ‘tracings,’ reproductions of reality. The video camera’s take is a crystallization of time-matter” (111). The mediating technology itself becomes an active locus of molecular change: a Bergsonian body qua “center of indetermination,” a gap of affectivity between passive receptivity and its passage into action. The camera thus imitates the process by which our own pre-personal bodies synthesize the passage from molecular to molar, replicating the very process by which signal patterns are selected from the flux and made to coalesce into determinate images that can be incorporated into an emergent subjectivity.

This dilation of affect, which characterizes not only video but also computational processes like the rendering of digital images (which is always done on the fly), marks the basic condition of the post-cinematic camera; this, then, is the positive underside of that which presents itself externally as a negative, discorrelating incommensurability with respect to molar perception. As Mark Hansen argues in “Ubiquitous Sensation,” the microtemporal scale at which computational media operate enables them to modulate the temporal and affective flows of life and to affect us directly at the level of our pre-personal embodiment. The categorically invisible operation of computation

impacts sensory experience *unconsciously, imperceptibly—in short, at a level beneath the threshold of attention and awareness*. It impacts sensory experience, that is, by impacting the sensing brain microtemporally, at the level of the autonomous subprocesses or microconsciousnesses that . . . compose the infrastructure of seamless and integrated macroconscious [or molar] experience (70)

In this respect, properly post-cinematic cameras, which include video and digital imaging devices of all sorts, have a direct line to our innermost processes of becoming-in-time, and they are therefore capable of informing the political life of the collective by flowing into the “general intellect” at the heart of immaterial or affective labor. According to Lazzarato, “[b]y retaining and accumulating duration, machines to crystallize time may help to develop or to neutralize the ‘force to feel’ and the ‘force to act’; they may contribute to our ‘becoming active’ or to our being held in passivity” (96). This political dimension, in short, is contingent upon the post-cinematic camera’s ability to dilate and transform the pre-individual space of molecular affect.

The *Paranormal Activity* series makes many of these claims more palpable through its experimentation with various modes and dimensions of post-perceptual, affective mediation.<sup>[15]</sup> After using hand-held video cameras in the series’ first installment and closed-circuit home-surveillance cameras in *Paranormal Activity 2*, and following a flashback by way of old VHS tapes in part 3, *Paranormal Activity 4* intensifies its predecessors’ estrangement of the camera from cinematic and ultimately human perceptual norms by implementing computational imaging processes for its strategic manipulations of spectatorial affect (see Figures 3-6, above). In particular, *Paranormal Activity 4* uses laptop- and smartphone-based video chat and the Xbox’s Kinect motion control system to mediate between diegetic and spectatorial shocks and to regulate the corporeal rhythms and intensities of suspenseful contraction and release that define the temporal/affective quality of the movie. Especially the Kinect technology, itself a crazy binocular camera that emits a matrix of infrared dots to map bodies and spaces and integrate them algorithmically into computational/ergodic game spaces, marks the disconnection of computational from human perception: the dot matrix, which is featured extensively in the film, is invisible to the human eye; the effect of rendering the matrix visible is only made possible through a video camera’s night vision mode—part of the post-perceptual sensibility of the (digital) video camera that

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Figure 3 – Hand-held cameras mediate between diegetic and extra-diegetic spaces in *PARANORMAL ACTIVITY* (Oren Peli, 2007/2009).



Figure 4 – Closed-circuit home surveillance cameras capture the action in *PARANORMAL ACTIVITY 2* (Tod Williams, 2009).



Figure 5 – *PARANORMAL ACTIVITY 3* (Henry Joost and Ariel Schulman, 2011) presents itself in the form of VHS found footage.

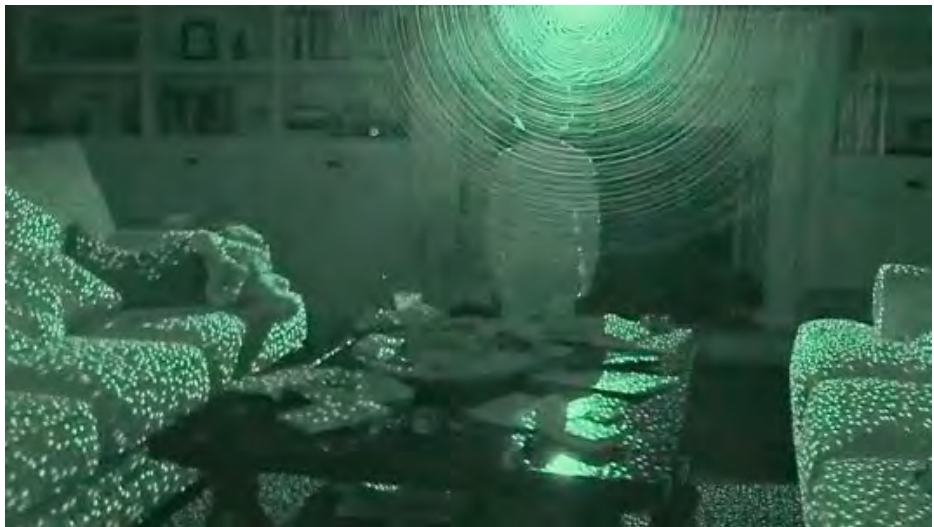


Figure 6 – The Xbox Kinect exemplifies the nonhuman agency of post-cinematic cameras in *PARANORMAL ACTIVITY 4* (Henry Joost and Ariel Schulman, 2012).

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distinguishes it from the cinema camera. The movie (and the *Paranormal Activity* series more generally) thus provides a perfect illustration for the affective impact and bypassing of cognitive (and narrative) interest through video and computational imaging devices. In an interview, co-director Henry Joost says the use of the Kinect—fittingly enough inspired by a YouTube video demonstrating the effect—was a logical choice for the series: “I think it’s very *Paranormal Activity* because it’s like, there’s this stuff going on in the house that you can’t see.”[\[16\]](#) Indeed, the effect highlights all the computational and video-sensory activity going on around us all the time, completely discorrelated from human perception, but very much involved in the temporal and affective vicissitudes of our daily lives through the many cameras and screens surrounding us and involved in every aspect of the progressively indistinct realms of our work and play. Ultimately, *Paranormal Activity 4* points toward the uncanny qualities of contemporary media, which following Mark Hansen have ceased to be contained in discrete apparatic packages and have become diffusely “atmospheric.”[\[17\]](#)

This goes in particular for the post-cinematic camera, which has shed the perceptually commensurate “body” that ensured cinematic communication on Sobchack’s model and which, beyond video, is no longer even required to have a material lens. This does not, of course, mean that the camera has become somehow immaterial, but today the conception of the camera should perhaps be expanded: consider how all processes of digital image rendering, whether in digital film production or simply in computer-based playback, are involved in the same on-the-fly molecular processes through which the video camera can be seen to trace the affective synthesis of images from flux. Unhinged from traditional conceptions and instantiations, post-cinematic cameras are defined precisely by the confusion or indistinction of recording, rendering, and screening devices. In this respect, the “smart TV” becomes an exemplary post-cinematic camera (an uncannily flat domestic *Kammer* or “room” composed of smooth, computational space): it executes microtemporal processes ranging from compression/

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decompression, artifact generation and suppression, resolution upscaling, aspect-ratio transformation, motion-smoothing image interpolation, and on-the-fly 2D to 3D conversion. Marking a further expansion of the video camera's artificial affect-gap, the smart TV and the computational processes of image modulation that it performs bring the perceptual and actional capacities of cinema—its receptive camera and projective screening apparatuses—back together in a post-cinematic counterpart to the early Cinématographe, equipped now with an affective density that uncannily parallels our own.

Especially in 100Hz/200Hz motion-smoothing processes, where the television inserts completely new, computationally generated images between the frames of the source signal, the smart TV demonstrates its post-cinematic quality as an imaging device radically dis-correlated from human perception and perceptual technologies (including the analog camera, the lens of which is correlated with that of the human eye); the interpolation of computational processes disrupts the circuit of perception formerly mediated through the camera—a fact which announces itself to the viewer first and foremost on an affective level, in the form of the so-called “soap-opera effect”: the images seem paradoxically too real, too close, too plastic; they have an uncanny quality about them, something not quite right—though it is exceedingly difficult to pin down this quality and express it in words. Such pictures have been described as “ridiculously ‘sharp,’” “like an old *Dr. Who* episode where the action on screen is smoother than the background, creating a jarring disparity when watching movies with lots of movement,” or where “you essentially see the ‘moving’ objects on a different plane than the background, as if they were cut outs moving on a painted background” (Biggs). There's something pornographic about the images—movies filmed in 35mm suddenly look like a video-based telenovela or low-budget reality show. Surfaces stand out, and to this extent we might appeal to the vocabulary of Ihde's “hermeneutic relation”: the medium begins to obtrude on the objective side of the noetic arrow, as an object or quasi-object of perceptual intentionality. But in fact, the situation is more

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extreme, as this is just the affective side of a perceptual (or cognitive) *non-relation* to the technological infrastructure, which renders images on the fly, sub-perceptually “enriching” the images by multiplying them twofold, fourfold, or even more. This is a significant case, I think, because it displays a more general truth about the post-cinematic era: it is widely accepted that cameras are everywhere today, and even that this ubiquity is an important marker of our historical and technological situation today—but we usually think about surveillance cameras and the proliferation of cameras in hand-held devices like smartphones. We do not usually think of our *screens* as cameras, but that is precisely what smart TVs and computational display devices of all sorts in fact are: each screening of a (digital or digitized) “film” becomes in fact a *re*-filming of it, as the smart TV generates millions of original images, more than the original film itself—images unanticipated by the filmmaker and not contained in the source material. To “render” the film computationally is in fact to offer an original *rendition* of it, never before performed, and hence to *re*-produce the film through a decidedly post-cinematic camera.

This production of unanticipated and unanticipatable images renders such devices strangely vibrant, uncanny—very much in the sense exploited by *Paranormal Activity*. The dilation of affect, which introduces a temporal gap of hesitation or delay between perception (or recording) and action (or playback), amounts to a modeling or enactment of the indetermination of bodily affect through which time is generated, and by which (in Bergson’s system) life is defined. A negative view sees only the severing of the images’ indexical relations to world, hence turning all digital image production and screening into animation, not categorically different from the virtual lens flares discussed earlier.<sup>[18]</sup> But in the end, the ubiquity of “animation” that is introduced through digital rendering processes should perhaps be taken more literally, as the artificial creation of (something like) life, which is itself equivalent—following Lazzarato following Bergson—with the gap of affectivity, or the production of duration through the delay of causal-mechanical stimulus-response circuits; the interruption of photographic

indexicality through digital processing is thus the introduction of duration = affect = life. Discorrelated images, in this respect, are autonomous, quasi-living images in Bergson's sense, having transcended and gained a degree of autonomy from the mechanicity that previously (in cinema's photochemical processes) kept them subservient to human perception. Like the unmotivated cameras of *District 9* and *Melancholia*, or the uncanny environmental ones of *Paranormal Activity*, post-cinematic cameras generally have become "something altogether different," as Therese Grisham put it: apparently crazy, because discorrelated from the molar perspectives of phenomenal subjects and objects, cameras now mediate post-perceptual flows and confront us everywhere with their own affective indeterminacy.

### III

Another way to put this is to say that post-cinematic cameras and images are *metabolic* processes or agencies, and their insertion into the environment alters the interactive pathways that define our own material, biological, and ecological forms of being, largely bypassing our cognitive processing to impinge upon us at the level of our own metabolic processing of duration. Metabolism is a process that is neither in my subjective control nor even confined to my body (as object) but which articulates organism and environment together from the perspective of a pre-individuated agency. Metabolism is affect without feeling or emotion—affect as the transformative power of "passion" that, as Brian Massumi reminds us, Spinoza identifies as that unknown power of embodiment that is neither wholly active nor wholly passive.<sup>[19]</sup> Metabolic processes are the zero degree of transformative agency, at once intimately familiar and terrifyingly alien, conjoining inside/outside, me/not-me, life/death, old/novel, as the basic power of transitionality—marking not only biological processes but also global changes that encompass life and its environment.<sup>[20]</sup> Mark Hansen usefully defines "medium" as "environment for life" in order to foreground the infrastructural role of media in relation to the material powers of perception, action, and thought<sup>[21]</sup>; accordingly, metabolism is as much a process of media transformation as it is a process of bodily



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change. As Elena del Río has described it, the shift from a cinematic to a post-cinematic environment is a metabolic process through and through:

Like an expired body that blends with the dirt to form new molecules and living organisms, the body of cinema continues to blend with other image/sound technologies in processes of composition/decomposition that breed images with new speeds and new distributions of intensities.

To the extent that metabolism is, as I have claimed, inherently affective (or “passionate,” in a Massumian-Spinozan vein), post-cinematic affect has to be thought apart from feeling, certainly apart from subjective emotion. What I have been trying to do is to situate us in a position from which we might grasp the post-cinematic image itself not as an objective entity or process but as a metabolic agency, one which is caught up in and defines the larger media-ecological process of transformation that (dis)articulates subjects and objects, spectators and images, life and its environment in the transition to the post-cinematic. This metabolic image, I suggest, is the quintessential image of change, and it speaks to a perspective that is the immersed, undifferentiated (non-)perspective of metabolism itself—a material affect that is distributed across bodies and environments as the very medium of transitionality.

As I have outlined it here, this perspective builds upon a view of video and above all computation as technologies of microtemporal processing and modulation. But emphasizing this level of material-technological functioning, which subtends any identifiable “content” of mediation, points to the inadequacy of many of the more narrowly “technical” determinations of the transition to a post-cinematic regime. Thus, many discussions concentrate on whether editing styles today are overly chaotic or whether they embody a merely intensified form of continuity. But as Steven Shaviro points out in his discussion of what he calls “post-continuity,” compliance or non-compliance with the rules of classical continuity is often simply beside the point in post-cinema.[\[22\]](#) The central

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spectacle of Michael Bay’s *Transformers* series—a series that is clearly full of hectic, non-continuity editing patterns—demonstrates this essentially secondary role of formal editing (see Figure 7, below). The transformations themselves embody a certain outstripping of human perceptual faculties, dis correlations that are staged in continuous takes, without the need for explicit violations of continuity. These transformations offer concise examples of a “hyperinformatic” cinema: they overload our capacities, giving us too much visual information, presented too fast for us to take in and process cognitively—information that is itself generated and embodied in informatic technologies operating at speeds well beyond our subjective grasp. Hence, the transformation’s visualization does not simply produce images that give objective form to boys’ and men’s childhood fantasies and playtime imaginations; instead, it is precisely their *failure* to coalesce into coherent objects that defines these images as metabolic “spectacles beyond perspective”—i.e. as ostentatious displays that categorically deny us the distance from which we might regard them as perceptual objects. It is the processual flow and speed of algorithmic processing that is put on display here, and indeed *put into effect* as the images are played back on our computational devices.



Figure 7 – The central spectacles of TRANSFORMERS (Michael Bay, 2007) are “hyperinformatic” images that outstrip human perception.

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But so long as we underestimate the meaning of the images' animation, so long as we reduce it to a merely technical effect of CGI's severing of photographic indexicality, we fail to grasp the significance of post-cinematic affect as a more global event, an environmental shift or "climate change" precipitated by the condensation and flow of affect in our increasingly lively machines. Through the discorrelating effect that post-cinematic cameras have on intentional relations, we as subjects are effectively consumed by/with affect and transformed along with the would-be objects of algorithmic images; in a manner of speaking, these images do nothing less than devour and metabolize *us*. We are bound up in and transformed by the processual experience of digital mediation, which unlike the ideal closure of classical cinema is proximal and open to (rather than separate from) our computational lifeworld. In other words, there is no clear encapsulation of the movie experience as distinct from the digital infrastructures of our daily lives.[\[23\]](#) There is contiguity, involvement—always an *inescapable involvement* that marks the "participatory culture" of the convergence era as far less benign than some critics might hope.[\[24\]](#) Buy the game, buy the toys, download the app, stream it on Netflix, watch at home, at work, on the train: at stake is a literal capitalization of our attention, and the hyperinformatic dissolution of perspective is central to this undertaking. Affecting us on a molecular, sub-perceptual level of micro-temporal embodiment but imbricating us in an expansive, diffuse network of nebulous agencies and transactions, the post-cinematic dispositif operates by metabolizing subject-object relations, transforming and re-creating them by setting us and our affective machines in novel relations to one another and to the larger emergent flows of bits, bodies, and other material units of exchange.

### IV

In a very different vein, Shane Carruth's recent film, *Upstream Color*, gestures towards the atmospheric and environmental aspects of post-cinematic metabolism, encompassing the sub- and supra-personal

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dynamics, the micro- and macro-levels and confusions of within and without, in an audiovisual and narrative construct that displaces centered human perception in both directions at once. *Upstream Color* is about agencies that infiltrate the body, but that remain ecologically distributed throughout a network of hosts and environmental transport mechanisms: a river, plants, pigs, people, power lines, music, and money—all of these carry and are in turn carried by the parasitic maggots at the center of a story ostensibly about a couple, ruined professionally, financially, and perhaps psychologically, as they find their way to one another and ultimately to a greater sense of connection with the world. I say that it is “ostensibly” about this, but it is certainly about much more than this. I hesitate, however, to offer an “interpretation” per se, as narrative and signifying functions seem secondary to the experience the film propagates, both diegetically and medially, of indissoluble and multidirectional interlinkage—an experience, in short, of metabolism as the sub-perceptual nexus of growth and decay. (I wish to say that the film offers us an *experience* of metabolism itself, not a *metaphor* for metabolism. [25])



Figure 8 – Unexplained CGI images challenge us to scan the frame for information in UPSTREAM COLOR (Shane Carruth, 2013).

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The basic affective tone (or *Grundton*) of the film is alternately dark and hopeful, but it is not really about the characters' (or even our) hopes or fears at all, it would seem. It feels more accurate to say that the film is simply about the material flows it traces, which are marked as decidedly post-cinematic early in the movie. Without any sort of contextual situation, we are presented with a sequence of digitally composited images, complete with hexagonal lens flares and some sort of unfinished-looking CGI creature (see Figure 8). These are then shown to belong to a diegetic screen, that of the female protagonist Kris, who advances and reverses the images in a step-wise manner, clicking through the frames as she searches for a shadow or a gaffer's foot that apparently went unnoticed by the effects team (Figure 9). If you've seen the film, you'll know that this brief scene—is indeed these images can be said to constitute a “scene”—is quite marginal in many respects. We'll never learn about the project that Kris is working on here, and she'll be fired from her job anyway when a man feeds her the parasite, sets her in a hypnotic state for some indefinite number of days, and cleans out all her assets. Yet the scene remains significant in situating the film in this context of computational labor and image production, where the human perspective that Kris brings (and that we bring) to these images is not central and focused, not the focusing vision that defines coherence in classical cinema, but a dispersed, “scanning” form of regard. The images compel us to interrogate them likewise, in this manner of scanning, as we are unable to identify anything of significance in the brief time given to us. In any case, Kris's vision is not a masterful or even directed gaze but more of a stop-gap designed to mop up around the post-cinematic vision machine; in her job, Kris herself embodies mere biopower in the service of algorithmic functions.

Her infection with the parasite will extract her from this assemblage, to a certain extent, but only by effecting a further splitting and dispersal of agency. Indeed, both Kris and the male protagonist Jeff, whom she is drawn to by some unknown force, and who has apparently undergone the same ordeal as she has, will more or less cease being individuals as their



Figure 9 – Female protagonist Kris (Amy Seimetz, *UPSTREAM COLOR*) shares our perspective with regard to the post-cinematic vision machine.

relationship develops. Their childhood memories merge, and it is unclear whose past belongs to whom. Moreover, this erasure of individual identity, the overt emergence of what Deleuze calls “dividuality,” is mediated through free-floating dialogues that attach themselves to various locales and various times, impossibly bridging spatial and temporal distances that no embodied speaker could span.<sup>[26]</sup> So what sometimes resembles a Terrence Malick-style voiceover is in fact something quite different, as it is occasionally anchored in an image of a character speaking in one place, but that speaking character can disappear and reappear at a distant location within the space of a single ongoing dialogue, itself apparently presented in real time. We are in the realm of the virtual rather than the actual, it would appear, and the flow of images and sounds effectively involves the viewer in the dispersal of agency described in the diegesis.<sup>[27]</sup>

And it is the music, above all, that ties everything together. Semi-diegetic in nature, the musical counterpart of a free indirect discourse, perhaps, the film’s synthetic music weaves back and forth between the status of background music and source music; the Sampler, as the unnamed character is called in the film’s credits, synthesizes natural and

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technological sounds (running water, a drain pipe, the hum of a power line) into electronic music, effecting a sort of metabolic recombination of environmental materials. He sells his music on CD, but he also uses his sound compositions to attract the parasite's human hosts to a field where he extracts and transplants the worms from the people and into pigs. Playing simulated "rain" sounds on an amped-up PA system, the sampled sounds bypass the hosts' subjectivities, working on them sub-perceptually and impinging upon their bodies via the parasites, which compel their hosts' actions. And the music works on us as well by splitting our attentions between organic source and technical modulation, between reality and simulation, and between diegesis and medium. It thus continues, in a different register, the arc begun with the CGI images that Kris and we scan together for information, gesturing nebulously towards the conditions of life in the age of post-cinematic mediation. Driving both the narrative and the larger experience of the film in essential ways, the Sampler's music neatly sums or summons, gathers together the environmental and medial, sub- and supra-personal levels of metabolic action for characters and spectators alike. Underscoring and linking images of cellular decomposition, the computerized labor of image production, of worms making their way through human and nonhuman bodies, bodies succumbing to decay, individual selves giving way to various forms of control and dividuality, and microscopic processes of interspecies transfer, the Sampler's music marks the time of the environment and its interconnections. Together, sound and image mediate an experience of the expanded realm of affect which swallows up, discorrelates, and metabolizes subjective perception and perspective in the space of the post-cinematic ecosphere.

### V

Ultimately, what *Upstream Color* points to is the way that biological, technological, phenomenological, and economic realities are all imbricated with one another today in a total media environment—that of post-cinema, which is unified and propagated not by cognitive

but by decidedly post-perceptual means. Cameras are irrational, neither subjective nor objective but radically ambiguous and volatile. Images are dis-correlated, incommensurate with human subjectivities and perspectives. Media generally are post-perceptual, transductively mediating new forms of life by modulating the metabolic processes through which organisms such as ourselves are structurally coupled with our (biotic, technical, material, and symbolic) ecospheres. By insinuating themselves into the molecular flows of affect, prior to the possibility of perception and action, post-cinema's metabolic images have a direct impact on "the way we tick"—i.e. on the materially embodied production and modulation of time and temporal experience. In other words, these images radically *articulate* the conditions of life itself in the contemporary technosphere: not only do they "express" these conditions and our experiences of them, but they are in part responsible for enabling our experience in the first place; by articulating together the organic (the material substrate out of which human subjectivities are formed) and the technical (computational processes in particular) at a categorically pre-personal and non-cognitive level of microtemporal becoming, metabolic images are involved in *generating* the conditions for molar experience in the post-cinematic world. Finally, these techno-organic processes point us beyond our individual experiences, towards the larger ecologies and imbalances of the Anthropocene.[\[28\]](#) Ultimately, we might speculate, what post-cinema demands of us by means of its dis-correlated images is that we learn to take responsibility for our own affective dis-correlations—that we develop an ethical and radically post-individual sensibility for the networked dividualities through which computational, endocrinological, socio-political, meteorological, subatomic, and economic agencies are all enmeshed with one another in the metabolic processing and mediation of life today.

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### Notes

[1] The distinction between “intermediaries” and “mediators,” as I employ it here, derives from Bruno Latour, who writes in *We Have Never Been Modern*:

An intermediary—although recognized as necessary—simply transports, transfers, transmits energy from one of the poles of the Constitution [i.e. the system by which modernity separates all entities into either cultural or natural, subject or object, obscuring the role of hybrid quasi-objects]. It is void in itself and can only be less faithful or more or less opaque. A mediator, however, is an original event and creates what it translates as well as the entities between which it plays the mediating role. (78)

Mediators thus instantiate “transductive” relations in Gilbert Simondon’s sense of the term, viz. relations in which the related terms do not precede or exist outside of those relations:

Following the same path as the dialectic, transduction conserves and integrates the opposed aspects. Unlike the dialectic, transduction does not presuppose the existence of a previous time period to act as a framework in which the genesis unfolds, time itself being the solution and dimension of the discovered

systematic: *time comes from the preindividual just like the other dimensions that determine individuation.* (“The Genesis of the Individual” 315)

Adrian Mackenzie’s *Transductions: Bodies and Machines at Speed* provides a useful introduction to, and an interesting exploration of, Simondon’s concept.

[2] More generally, what is at stake here is a transformation at the level of what I have elsewhere termed the “anthropotechnical interface”: “a realm of diffuse materiality . . . , the relational substrate which underlies the socially, psychically, and otherwise subjectively or discursively organized relations that humans maintain with technologies” (*Postnaturalism* 26). The anthropotechnical interface is

a material pivot in a realm of historical change that both exceeds and grounds our perceptual, conceptual, and linguistic faculties to register change or write history. Accordingly, embodiment—conceived as distinct from and ontologically prior to the discourses and social subjectivities founded upon it—is historically variable, and it varies in response to technological change; the affective body itself is decomposed and reconstituted when inserted into novel technological circumstances. Seen thus, embodiment (and, *a fortiori*, subjectivity) is not separable from these circumstances but is born (and re-born) from out of them; technological and human embodiment are co-constitutive, for the former redefines the shape of the latter as it opens new means of contact with the world as environment, while, on the other hand, the technological environment is meaningless or ineffectual without a body thus “enviored” and affected. We are approaching here a theory of transitionality as the monstrous (re) birth of the anthropotechnical body in its movement *between* a given material environment and another. (*Postnaturalism* 182-183)

[3] Framed by an engagement with philosopher Bernard Stiegler’s

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discussion of cinema as a neo-Husserlian “temporal object,” Mark B. N. Hansen makes an important argument about the contemporary breakdown of “objectal” forms of mediation in his “Living (with) Technical Time.” According to Hansen, the move from objectal to more thoroughly processual forms of media and art gives rise to a changed experience of time itself—and ultimately to an experience of time divorced (or “discorrelated,” as I put it) from the temporal scale of human perception.

[4] Henri Bergson defines affect as “that part or aspect of the inside of our bodies which mix with the image of external bodies” (*Matter and Memory* 60); pertaining to the Bergsonian image of the body as a “center of indetermination,” affect thus describes an intermixture of inside and outside, and an intensity experienced in a state of “suspension,” outside of linear time and the empirical determinateness of forward-oriented action. It thus corresponds to a major emphasis in film theory conducted in the wake of the so-called affective turn—namely, a focus on privileged but fleeting moments, when narrative continuity breaks down and the images on the screen resonate materially, unthinkingly, or pre-reflectively with the viewer’s autoaffective sensations. Such moments are, of course, central to Deleuze’s conception of the “time-image” (cf. *Cinema 2*), which marks a break with the phenomenology of the “movement-image” of the pre-WWII era (cf. *Cinema 1*). My argument about post-cinema’s discorrelated images tries to envision a further transformation on this affective terrain of human-technological interaction.

[5] I speak of a “properly” post-cinematic era in recognition of the fact that the entire second half of the twentieth century, following the rise of television and the decline of classical film style, might with some justification be claimed already to have been post-cinematic. Nevertheless, it seems reasonable to identify a period of transition that has only recently given way to a more fully or genuinely post-cinematic era. In his *Post-Cinematic Affect*, Steven Shaviro gestures in a similar direction: recognizing the media-technical and other changes taking place since the mid-twentieth century, Shaviro refuses a “precise periodization” (1) but maintains that “these changes have been massive enough, and have

gone on for long enough, that we are now witnessing the emergence of a different media regime, and indeed of a different mode of production, than those which dominated the twentieth century. Digital technologies, together with neoliberal economic relations, have given birth to radically new ways of manufacturing and articulating lived experience” (2).

[6] [“Post-Cinematic Affect: Post-Continuity, The Irrational Camera, Thoughts on 3D”](#) was the second roundtable discussion (with Therese Grisham, Julia Leyda, and myself) on the topic in *La Furia Umana*, following one devoted to [“The Post-Cinematic in Paranormal Activity and Paranormal Activity 2”](#) (with Therese Grisham, Julia Leyda, Nicholas Rombes, and Steven Shaviro). Both discussions are reprinted in this volume.

[7] Sobchack’s reference to “postcinematic” media occurs in the concluding pages of *The Address of the Eye*, where she writes:

Postcinematic, incorporating cinema into its own techno-logic, our electronic culture has disenfranchised the human body and constructed a new sense of existential “presence.” Television, video tape recorders/players, videogames, and personal computers all form an encompassing electronic system whose various forms “interface” to constitute an alternative and virtual world that uniquely *incorporates* the spectator/user in a spatially decentered, weakly temporalized, and quasi-disembodied state. (300)

These ideas, which Sobchack had previously articulated at greater length at the “Materialität der Kommunikation” conference in Dubrovnik in 1987, appeared in a number of versions throughout the years: first in German, as “The Scene of the Screen: Beitrag zu einer Phänomenologie der ‘Gegenwärtigkeit’ im Film und in den elektronischen Medien” (1988); then in English, in the journal *Post-Script*, as “Toward a Phenomenology of Cinematic and Electronic Presence: The Scene of the Screen” (1990); then in a revised version included in Sobchack’s *Carnal Thoughts* (2004); which, finally, is [reprinted in the present volume](#).



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[8] Responding to an interviewer's suggestion that *Ghost Rider: Spirit of Vengeance* "looks a lot more conventionally edited than your usual hyperkinetic style," Mark Neveldine states that "there's a lot of places in the movie where, if we have a trademark style, I think you'll see it. Certainly the action is really fast-paced, we move the camera a lot, we broke every rule that supposedly was written about 3D and what you can and can't do." The interviewer follows up later in the same discussion: "One of the supposed rules of 3D is that a shot has to be held a certain length in order to be perceived in 3D. Is that one of the rules you guys broke in *Ghost Rider*, and/or would break in a 3D *Crank* sequel?" Neveldine replies: "Yeah, we didn't find any of the so-called rules of 3D were actually real rules. Through a process of testing and trying out different things and finding workarounds, we pretty much found we could shoot exactly the kind of thing we like to shoot, and it works great for 3D. We haven't had any complaints of people getting headaches from 3D, or puking. We expect to get that on *Crank 3*, but not because of the 3D." Brian Taylor adds, proudly: "Yeah, but we have more lens flares in our movie than most 2D movies have, so we're happy with it." Many reviewers were less enthusiastic, however, complaining about the overuse of lens flares, as generally gratuitous and sometimes nonsensical, and as the only thing that occasionally floats in 3D space in front of a basically flat surface picture. Generally, this use of lens flares fits with what I am theorizing as the irrationality of the post-cinematic camera: Neveldine and Taylor's lens flares are positively insistent on the materiality of the camera, while being used to foreground the supposedly gritty (because "against the rules") potential of 3D *as* 3D; in other words, the technical infrastructure of 3D is foregrounded rather than rendered invisible or natural, all the more so as the lens flares occupy a different plane than the rest of the images.

[9] Ihde symbolizes embodiment relations thus: (I—technology) → world. The arrow indicates what Husserl designated the basic noetic relation, whereby a perceiving subject takes up an intentional relation towards some object or aspect of the world. In an embodiment relation, the subject and the mediating technology are bracketed together on the left hand side

of the arrow to indicate their cooperation in establishing the relation. The mediating technology becomes more or less transparent in the intentional act. Classical examples include Heidegger's famous hammer from *Being and Time* and Merleau-Ponty's only slightly less famous blind-man's cane from *Phenomenology of Perception*. Ihde discusses embodiment relations in detail in *Technology and the Lifeworld* (72-80).

[10] In contrast to the embodiment relation, Ihde symbolizes the hermeneutic relation thus:  $I \rightarrow$  (technology—world). Here the mediating technology loses its transparency and becomes an object of interpretation, though still not the ultimate terminus of noetic intentionality, which aims *through* the mediating apparatus towards an object in the world. Thus, whereas an optical telescope tends to instantiate an embodiment relation as it disappears from view, a radio telescope instantiates a hermeneutic relation as a technology that has to be actively interrogated in order to learn about the heavens. Ihde explores hermeneutic relations at length in *Technology and the Lifeworld* (80-97). On the notion of “realisticness,” as opposed to “realism,” see Alexander Galloway, “Social Realism.”

[11] I adopt the term “ergodic” from Espen Aarseth, who uses it to describe the interactive spaces of digital games and electronic literature; combining the Greek *ergon* (work) and *hodos* (path), the concept of ergodicity describes digital games, in contrast to other textual forms, as a type of discourse “whose signs emerge as a path produced by a non-trivial element of work” (32). Thus, a game's narrative “script” is not pre-existent, not just “there” for us to read like a novel, but it is instead generated at the moment of interaction, on the fly and in response to a user's input. Here, I wish to expand the notion of ergodicity to conceptualize the basic processuality of post-cinematic images, including such apparently non-interactive ones as CGI lens flares. Overt interactivity, in other words, might be seen as only one possible expression of an underlying instability at the root of post-cinematic images.

[12] On chaos cinema, see Matthias Stork's [video essay](#) by the same title.

[13] The distinction between “molar” and “molecular” levels derives from Deleuze and Guattari. As with many of the concepts at work in

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Deleuze and Guattari's collaborations, Brian Massumi's *A User's Guide to Capitalism and Schizophrenia* is helpful in understanding the molar/molecular distinction. Massumi writes:

It is crucial for understanding Deleuze and Guattari . . . to remember that *the distinction between molecular and molar has nothing whatsoever to do with scale*. Molecular and molar do not correspond to “small” and “large,” “part” and “whole,” “organ” and “organism,” “individual” and “society.” There are molarities of every magnitude (the smallest being the nucleus of the atom). The distinction is not one of scale, but of mode of composition: it is qualitative, not quantitative. In a molecular population (mass) there are only local connections between discrete particles. In the case of molar populations (superindividual or person) locally connected discrete particles have become correlated at a distance. Our granules of muck [in an example introduced earlier] were an oozing molecular mass, but as their local connections rigidified into rock, they became stabilized and homogenized, increasing the organizational consistency of different regions in the deposit (correlation). Molarity implies the creation or prior existence of a well-defined boundary enabling the population of particles to be grasped as a whole. We skipped something: the muck as such. A supple individual lies between the molecular and the molar, in time and in mode of composition. Its particles are correlated, but not rigidly so. It has boundaries, but fluctuating ones. It is the threshold leading from one state to another. (*User's Guide* 54-55)

Similarly, if there is really a moment of media-ontological transformation associated with the transition to a post-cinematic media regime, it would have to be located in a “meso-level” of human-nonhuman interactions located between an a-centered molecular flux and the situated centeredness of (new and old forms of) phenomenological subjectivity.

[14] Lazzarato mounts his argument in a book titled *Videofilosofia*:

*La percezione del tempo nel postfordismo*, translated into German as *Videophilosophie: Zeitwahrnehmung im Postfordismus*, but as yet untranslated into English. An exception is the first chapter, “Machines to Crystallize Time: Bergson,” which appeared in the pages of *Theory, Culture & Society*, and from which I quote here.

[15] For a fuller reading of the series, see [Julia Leyda’s chapter](#) in this collection, as well as the [La Furia Umana roundtable](#) on “The Post-Cinematic in *Paranormal Activity* and *Paranormal Activity 2*,” [reprinted in this volume](#).

[16] See Kevin P. Sullivan’s discussion with directors Henry Joost and Ariel Schulman:

The Xbox Kinect and its invisible field of tracking dots surprised Joost and Schulman, but provided an opportunity for a new kind of scare. “[The Xbox Kinect scares] started because we were looking around and thinking about how many cameras there are around your house. My laptop has a camera built in. His does. The Kinect is actually two cameras,” Joost said. “We were thinking maybe some of the filming will be done with the Kinect, and then we started researching what it’s capable of and found this video on YouTube where someone was like, ‘Do you actually know how this thing works and how it projects this grid of dots on the room that’s completely invisible to the naked eye, but if you have the right camera, you can see it?’ We were just like, ‘Oh my God, this has to be in the movie. That’s so crazy looking.’” In a weird way, the new technology fits nicely into the tradition of the series. “I think it’s very *Paranormal Activity* because it’s like, there’s this stuff going on in the house that you can’t see,” Joost said. “Now we have a little bit of a window into what those things look like.” Schulman agreed. “The ghost dimension.”

[17] Ubiquitous computing, according to Hansen, “marks the endpoint of a certain trajectory in the dialectic of technics and sensation”—a trajectory that encompasses the transitions from film to video to digital

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technologies. This most recent stage of media-technical development

abandon[s] an object-centered model of media in favor of an environmental one. No longer a delimited temporal object that we engage with focally through an interface such as a screen, media become an environment that we experience simply by being and acting in space and time—which is to say, without in most cases explicitly being aware of it, without taking it as the intentional object or target of our time consciousness. To anticipate a bit here, we can say that ubicomp signals a fundamental modification in our interface with technics: no longer object centered, resolutely personal, individually framed, and of the order of conscious perception, the technical mediation of sensation in ubicomp environments is atmospheric, impersonal, collectively accessible, and microtemporal in its sensory address. (“Ubiquitous Sensation” 73)

[18] There is, indeed, still much to be said in favor of the view that digital imaging processes fundamentally flatten the distinction between live-action cinema and animated film. For an early statement of this view, see Lev Manovich’s “What is Digital Cinema?,” [reprinted in this volume](#).

[19] Massumi defines affect as “a suspension of action-reaction circuits and linear temporality in a sink of what might be called ‘passion,’ to distinguish it both from passivity and activity” (28). See also my discussion in *Postnaturalism*, particularly 186-93.

[20] In Chapter 5 of *Postnaturalism*, I draw on Dutch phenomenological psychologist J. H. van den Berg’s quirky “metabolic” treatment of the Industrial Revolution (in his *The Two Principal Laws of Thermodynamics*) in order to theorize metabolism as the ground and model of human-technological coevolution:

Just as an animal devours dead or living organic matter and, through processes outside its control, integrates it into a body that grows, maintains itself, reproduces, and dies within shifting ecological parameters, so too does the anthropotechnical

body mutate non-deterministically by absorbing into itself environmental materials of the most diverse sorts, synthesizing them into new structures and functional pathways that, viewed from above, constitute nodes in an evolving network of relations between apparatic innovations, cellular and organic changes, and other internal and external exigencies. As a metabolic process, anthropotechnical evolution is an a-centric and non-hierarchical process of transformation that is not only indifferent to consciousness but cannot be said to favor the organic or the natural either. It is spatially liminal and temporally transitional, always outside and in-between the molar ‘situations’ of human experience and empirical nature. (259)

[21] See Hansen’s “Media Theory,” where he explains that

Such a conceptualization [i.e. medium as environment for life] draws explicitly on the implications of recent work in biological autopoiesis (which, among other salient claims, demonstrates that embodied life necessarily involves a “structural coupling” of an organism and an environment), but it does so, importantly, in a way that opens the door to technics, that in effect contaminates the logic of the living with the distinct and always concrete operation of technics. From this perspective, the medium is, from the very onset, a concept that is irrevocably implicated in life, in the epiphylogenesis of the human, and in the history to which it gives rise *qua* history of concrete effects. Thus, long before the appearance of the term “medium” in the English language, and also long before the appearance of its root, the Latin term *medium* (meaning middle, center, midst, intermediate course, thus something implying mediation or an intermediary), the medium existed as an operation fundamentally bound up with the living, but also with the technical. The medium, we might say, is implicated in the living as essentially technical, in what I elsewhere call “technical life”; it is the operation of mediation—and perhaps

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also the support for the always concrete mediation—between a living being and the environment. In this sense, the medium perhaps names the very transduction between the organism and the environment that constitutes life as essentially technical; thus it is nothing less than a medium for the exteriorization of the living, and correlatively, for the selective actualization of the environment, for the creation of what Francisco Varela calls a “surplus of significance,” a demarcation of a world, of an existential domain, from the unmarked environment as such. (299-300)

[22] See Shaviro’s “Post-Continuity,” [reprinted in this volume](#), where he differentiates and positions his views in relation to those of David Bordwell and Matthias Stork.

[23] I have discussed this lack of closure in the roundtable discussion “Post-Cinematic Affect: Post-Continuity, the Irrational Camera, Thoughts on 3D,” [reprinted in this volume](#).

[24] In his book *Convergence Culture*, Henry Jenkins explores the intersections of popular-cultural phenomena of transmedia storytelling with an apparently democratizing impulse towards participation and creativity on the side of contemporary media consumers. Felix Brinker’s chapter in this volume offers an alternative, somewhat more pessimistic view of these developments.

[25] With reference to J. H. van den Berg’s notion of “metabletics,” Bernd Jager makes an important distinction between “metabolism” and “metaphor” as two types of transformation. Metaphor, today as in the ancient Greek *metapherein*, refers to reversible passages that connect two realms and preserve similitude; on the other hand, metabolism, from *metaballein*, refers to abrupt and radical changes which efface, digest, or absorb all traces of an earlier state (van den Berg 4-9). Metabolic changes do not occur on a human scale, are not commensurate with human perception or discourse, and are therefore not subject to social or cultural construction (or deconstruction, for that matter); in contrast

to metaphorical changes, which leave intact a humanly accessible context within which such changes may be cognized and recognized, metabolic processes are properly sub-conceptual, sub-phenomenal, and literally material. It is my contention that *Upstream Color*'s metabolic images are not just *about* metabolic processes but that they literally *enact* such material processes; and though the experience of watching Carruth's film is so utterly different from watching, say, a Michael Bay film, it is on the basis of this sub-conceptual affective impact, which bypasses cognitive processing or "metaphor," that I would claim both as properly post-cinematic.

[26] In his "Postscript on the Societies of Control," Deleuze describes the shift from Foucault's "disciplinary societies" of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries to the new "societies of control" in terms of a reorganization of agency under the respective political-economic systems:

The factory [of the disciplinary society] constituted individuals as a single body to the double advantage of the boss who surveyed each element within the mass and the unions who mobilized a mass resistance; but the corporation [in societies of control] constantly presents the brashest rivalry as a healthy form of emulation, an excellent motivational force that opposes individuals against one another and runs through each, dividing each within. (4-5)

Thus, in societies of control: "We no longer find ourselves dealing with the mass/individual pair. Individuals have become '*dividuals*,' and masses, samples, data, markets, or '*banks*'" (5). Kris and Jeff are exemplary figures of the control society: I have already pointed out that Kris's original career (in an anonymous neoliberal media corporation) positions her as "biopower in the service of algorithmic functions," but even after her transformation she continues to work in digital image production, printing large-format posters and signage for corporate customers. Jeff, on the other hand, originally worked in the world of high finance, and it is unclear whether embezzlement was part of his job or



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the reason why he lost it. Quite possibly, Jeff committed his crimes under the hypnotic influence of the mysterious “Thief” (as he is called in the film’s credits), who infected both him and Kris with the parasite, and who caused Kris to sign over all her assets to him. In any case, Jeff takes responsibility for his actions, much as a neoliberal society expects us all to take responsibility for (or accept as “natural”) events that are beyond our control or comprehension: for example, we are not to assign blame to banks or corporations for finance crises, as the causal mechanisms are (by design) far too complicated for most of us to understand. And even after his fall (or crisis) Jeff continues to work, off the books, in the more shadowy regions of finance capital. Both Kris’s and Jeff’s occupational activities are therefore inextricably, and exemplarily, bound up in the post-cinematic universes of data that control our lives. And their plights, their transformations, are closely related to our own situations as inhabitants of neoliberal societies. We never learn why, to what end, the Thief went to such lengths to scam his victims out of their savings. As spectators, we are positioned as uncomprehending, unable to comprehend a plot of such complexity, involving such distributed and apparently non-coordinated agencies, similar to the way credit default swaps are just too complicated for most of us to understand and thus didn’t raise enough red flags early on before the financial crisis.

[27] For Deleuze, following Bergson, “the virtual is fully real”—and thus not to be confused with the notion of virtuality according to which “virtual reality” is distinguished from “real life”; the virtual, which concerns the realm of potentialities (as well as the generative experience of duration and memory), is, according to Deleuze in *Difference and Repetition*, “real without being actual, ideal without being abstract, and symbolic without being fictional” (208).

[28] See Selmin Kara, “[Anthropocenema: Cinema in the Age of Mass Extinctions](#),” and Adrian Ivakhiv, “[The Art of Morphogenesis: Cinema in and Beyond the Capitalocene](#),” both of which are included in the present volume.