Crisis of Action:
Violence and Affect in New Hollywood Cinema

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Abstract

This thesis examines the affective nature of violence in New Hollywood cinema since the abolition of the Production Code in 1966. It begins with the convergence of discourses on violence, the postmodern crisis of meaning, and New Hollywood cinema. If the critical literature concurs that New Hollywood violence has no meaning—because its representations of morality, masculinity, and reality are lost in gratuitous spectacles of violence—then the task of rethinking New Hollywood violence requires looking beyond representation. This thesis explores New Hollywood violence as a problem of spectatorship—a problem that involves the crisis of meaning and the loss of affect across three sites: morality, masculinity, and realism. It asks the question, what is the nature of spectatorial response to cinematic violence, if it is not one based in representation?

The central premise of this thesis is that a Deleuzian framework illuminates the concept of an affective spectator who is immersed and absorbed in the unfolding synaesthetic experience of a violent world. Using Deleuze’s notion of affect from his *Cinema* books, and building on current Deleuzian film theory, this thesis places the affective spectator within New Hollywood’s camera-consciousness. The thesis has three main strands. Firstly, the characterization of violence is examined as a Spinozan ethical force that emanates from the impulse-image. Secondly, the face of violence is analyzed in terms of the affection-image where the face and close-up are traced along moments of power and loss of power. Thirdly, instead of bemoaning the loss of realism in the age of the simulacrum, the violent spectacle is defined as a consciously cinematographic exploration of Kantian beauty and disinterest, or what Deleuze calls the spiritual automaton. Films discussed include *A Clockwork Orange*, *Reservoir Dogs*, *Natural Born Killers*, *A History of Violence*, *Strange Days*, *Monster*, *The Matrix*, *Fight Club*, and *American Psycho*. 
Statement of Authorship

“Except where reference is made in the text of the thesis, this thesis contains no material published elsewhere or extracted in whole or in part from a thesis submitted for the award of any other degree or diploma.

No other person’s work has been used without due acknowledgement in the main text of the thesis.

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Andrea Ariano 27/08/12
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Introduction: Crisis of Action

[T]he crisis which has shaken the action-image has depended on many factors which only had their full effect after the war, some of which were social, economic, political, moral and others more internal to art, to literature and to the cinema in particular. We might mention, in no particular order, the war and its consequences, the unsteadiness of the ‘American Dream’ in all its aspects, the new consciousness of minorities, the rise and inflation of images both in external worlds and in people’s minds, the influence on the cinema of the new modes of narrative with which literature had experimented, the crisis of Hollywood and its older genres. . . . (Deleuze, Cinema 1 206)

In his lectures on Spinoza’s concept of affect, Gilles Deleuze illustrates an important distinction between an idea and its affect. He explains that, according to Spinoza, we are spiritual automata: we are the succession of ideas that are affirmed in us. These ideas, which include perceptions as a type of idea, are constant. An idea or a perception is something: “it has a degree of reality which is proper to it” (Deleuze, “Transcripts”). In addition to ideas, or representational modes of thought, Deleuze explains that affects—the affects that we feel—are in constant variation (Deleuze uses the term variation, not Spinoza). Deleuze cites two successive ideas, the idea of Pierre and the idea of Paul, to demonstrate their respective affects. In the first example, Deleuze states that a chance encounter with Pierre creates a sense of hostility and fear. In the second example, however, Deleuze claims that a subsequent encounter with Paul has an affect of reassurance due to Paul’s charm. Deleuze argues that these encounters form two successive ideas: the
idea of Pierre and the idea of Paul. Yet, at the same time, Deleuze explains that there is also a variation between fear and reassurance:

A variation also operates in me—on this point, Spinoza’s words are very precise and I cite them: (variation) of my force of existing, or another word he employs as a synonym: *vis existendi*, the force of existing, or *potentia agendi*, the power [*puissance*] of acting, and these variations are perpetual. I would say that for Spinoza there is a continuous variation—and this is what it means to exist—of the force of existing or of the power of acting. (emphasis added)

(Deleuze, “Transcripts”)

Furthermore, Deleuze explains that from the idea of Pierre to the idea of Paul, the degree of reality related to the idea of Paul creates a pleasant or joyful affect which results in an increased capacity to act. This Deleuzian-Spinozan concept of affect—as a variation in the capacity to act—is implicit in Deleuze’s work on cinema. It is crucial to Deleuze’s two images of cinematic thought: the movement-image’s classical realism or ‘action-thought’ (*Cinema 2* 161); and the aberration of narrative causality through the affect of modern time-image cinema. In the *Cinema* books, Deleuze defines classical realist cinema in terms of the causal relations that link narrative time and movement: the actions and reactions which bind character, situation, and action. However, the above epigraph introduces Deleuze’s crisis of the action-image, the break from classical realism’s sensory-motor schema of perception, action, and affection images. With this break in causality Deleuze describes the break from causal action-thoughts, or a succession of ideas, to a modern cinema of affect that emphasizes the varying capacity of acting or ‘what it means to exist.’

This thesis uses Deleuze’s work on cinema to rethink how New Hollywood’s use of affect renegotiates classical realist ideas about violence.
The purpose of this research project is to question the idea of violence as a representation of power. My aim is to demonstrate that New Hollywood’s use of time-image affect—as opposed to the movement-image’s causal link between perception, action, and affection—takes the idea of violence beyond the representation of power as a force of domination (i.e., the action or reaction to a determined situation). In Chapter 1, I examine the convergence of discourses between film violence, New Hollywood cinema, and the postmodern crisis of meaning as this convergence relates to Fredric Jameson’s postmodern cultural theory—specifically his emphasis on the ‘waning of affect’ in postmodern culture. This first chapter explores how Jameson’s postmodern cultural theory informs the discourse on New Hollywood cinema and its representation of violence. Jameson’s critique of postmodern culture is important because he is suspicious of capitalism’s utopia of images that efface class consciousness due to the loss of a real historical referent. Similarly, the critical literature dismisses New Hollywood violence because its representations of morality, masculinity, and reality are lost in a pastiche of older genres and the nostalgia for a time when the reality of class consciousness was figurable or representable in the collective imaginary. The review of literature exposes the discourse’s emphasis on a classical realist idea of violence where dichotomous relations between good and evil, masculine power and otherness are resolved in the narratives of classical realist Hollywood cinema. The aim of my Deleuzian methodology is meant to redefine violence from a representational idea of power (an idea of moral good, masculine power, or reality) to the affect of power (one’s varying capacity to act). In sum, my contention is that New Hollywood cinema creates an idea of violence, or power as a force of domination, through its use of a classical realist style, yet its time-image affect explores the ethics of action, the affect of close-ups, and the beautiful spaces, colors, and spectacles of violence which all form affects of power.
If, as Jameson’s postmodern theory suggests, the centered subject, historicity, and referentiality are lost in New Hollywood’s capitalistic reification of images, then the task of rethinking the loss of the subject requires an engagement with preindividuated states of being. Similarly, in order to redefine the spectator’s relation to the cinema and to film violence, an affective framework is a means of making sense of cinema beyond narrative causality and representation. However, my aim is not to create an opposition between representation and affect. Throughout the thesis, I point out how both classical cinema and the discourse on film violence delineate a system of representational meaning for violence. At the same time, my affective engagement with New Hollywood renegotiates these set meanings that define violence. Representation and affect, movement- and time-images, an idea of violence and its power of affect: all are related in their capacity for affect.

The analysis of my case studies focuses on New Hollywood violence as an intersection of powers: the power of representation as it is described in terms of classical realist narrative cinema—Deleuze’s sensory-motor schema of perception, action, and affection images—and the power or capacity [puissance] of time-image affect. But if Deleuze is not concerned with representation, then why is the power of representation important? Deleuze and Deleuzian theorists focus on the affect of representation, or how ideas become representational modes of thought through the capacity for affect. While the existing scholarship on New Hollywood violence emphasizes its postmodern lack of representational meaning, the importance of affect is often overshadowed by the loss of historicity and representation. In Chapter 1, I argue that the affect of violence is often overlooked from a postmodern perspective. Later in this introduction, I will briefly situate my argument, for an affective engagement with violent imagery, in the context of debates by other theorists who have examined violence from a Deleuzian perspective. This thesis argues that the analysis of affect has the capacity to reveal how
images of violence represent power relations on the narrative plane of action-thought or action/reaction. Furthermore, Deleuze’s time-image—its ‘power of the false’—has the capacity to falsify or deterritorialize the classical ideas or representations of narrative realism. The affect of the time-image has the capacity to renegotiate classical ideas about violence because time-image cinema illuminates the virtual plane of affects: the capacity to affect and be affected in time. While classical realism subsumes the affect of the affection-image or close-up according to the causal relations between perception, action, and affection, the time-image opens affect beyond classical realism’s image of rational, causal thought. Therefore, in time-image cinema, perceptions and affects become interchangeable.

In this thesis, I approach New Hollywood violence as a play of affects between movement-images and time-images. This play of affects oscillates between the movement-image’s representation of power and the time-image’s affect in time. According to Deleuze’s Cinema books, classical movement-image cinema creates an indirect image of time where the narrative moves according to the character’s action-thoughts (the character’s action/reactions to situations). Here, narrative reality is defined by causal relations. In modern time-image cinema, however, narrative causality is disrupted by a direct image of time where the character is engulfed by surrounding affects which are disjointed from the linear progression of the narrative. My emphasis on the time-image is aimed at examining how its use of affect renegotiates classical representations of power (i.e., the resolution of moral good and masculine power in classical realist narratives). I am not conflating New Hollywood with the time-image. My main claim is that New Hollywood’s time-image creates an affect of violence through an exploration of ethics, emotion, and beauty which destabilize the representation of action-image violence and power. Deleuze’s theory of affect provides a vocabulary for the ineffable: the gap between conscious thoughts and unconscious affects. This theory allows for an engagement beyond the actual perception
of violence as a site of domination and resistance. It enables an engagement with the capacities for affect that shape systemic power relations in the first place.

My case studies focus on the capacity of New Hollywood to renegotiate action-image cinema, and to redefine violence as a force of affect rather than a narrative system of judgment based on a schema of action/reaction. The tropes of action-image cinema are present in my case studies, from images of heroism and the establishment of the social order to images of aberrant violence as a refusal of the social order. This thesis is an engagement with the tropes of action-image cinema, as they describe an idea of power, and the renegotiation of these tropes through time-image affect. The films under consideration span four decades. Reservoir Dogs (Quentin Tarantino, 1992), American Psycho (Mary Harron, 2000), and Monster (Patty Jenkins, 2004) may be categorized as art house independent films, while Strange Days (Kathryn Bigelow, 1995), The Matrix (Andy and Lana [Larry] Wachowski, 1999), and Fight Club (David Fincher, 1999) tend toward blockbuster or breakout cinema. A Clockwork Orange (Stanley Kubrick, 1971), Natural Born Killers (Oliver Stone, 1994), and A History of Violence (David Cronenberg, 2005) include the vision of an established director and the backing of major studios. As I demonstrate in the following chapter, this mixture of independent and blockbuster productions is central to New Hollywood cinema and the emergence of the package system. The amalgamation of Old and New Hollywood creates a cinema with influences from classical realism and the experimentations of modern New wave cinemas.

In Chapters 3, 4, and 5, I aim to deterritorialize classical cinema’s representations of morality, masculine power, and reality by focusing on ethics, affect, and beauty. In Chapter 3, A Clockwork Orange, Reservoir Dogs, and Natural Born Killers are studied for their characterization of violence. This chapter focuses on Deleuze’s impulse-image, the impulse for
violence, as a Spinozan ethical force. This ethical perspective—the capacity for joy and sadness as the increased or decreased power to act—renegotiates Manichean divisions between good and evil. Chapter 4 on *A History of Violence, Strange Days, and Monster* analyzes Deleuze’s affection-image, the face and close-up, in terms of the desires—affects of love and hate—that form power relations. In Chapter 5, the violent spectacle is explored in relation to Kantian beauty: *The Matrix, Fight Club, and American Psycho* are examined in terms of Deleuze’s pure optical and sound situations, including the affect of color, to view violence as a state of affect rather than a representation of reality. Chapters 3 and 5 reflect one another in the desire to focus on the affect of the time-image while Chapter 4 specifically addresses Deleuze’s affection-image.

Why is Deleuze relevant now and why is his concept of affect applicable to New Hollywood violence? Decades have passed since Deleuze’s crisis of the action-image, so why is this transition still important? Deleuze’s crisis of the action-image has implications that are useful for revisiting J. David Slocum’s “The ‘Film Violence’ Trope: New Hollywood, ‘the Sixties,’ and the Politics of History” in *New Hollywood Violence*. As I demonstrate in Chapter 1, Slocum’s argument is important because it examines how the term ‘film violence’ has become a trope for the moral debates that have shaped the public and critical discourses on New Hollywood violence. The aim of this thesis is not only to redefine film violence, but to use Deleuzian theory as a means of engaging with the power of imagery. According to Deleuze’s observations of American cinema, action-image classicism is based on causal narrativity that is driven by action—specifically the ‘duel’ action sequence and a narrative description of events that moves from the situation, to an action, to a new situation or from action to situation to action (*Cinema 1* 141-69). If the crisis of the action-image defines the breakdown of causal narrative cinema, then action-image
violence can no longer be defined in terms of character, action, and the restoration of social order.

With time-image cinema, Deleuze argues that there is a transition from an image of thought based on causality, to an image of thought that foregrounds the absurd or the irrational break in linear thinking that allows humanity to believe in the world. Deleuze claims that the time-image reconnects humanity to the world. This is because Deleuze’s metaphysics of immanence is about relations ‘in’ life as opposed to relations ‘to’ life that are emphasized in a metaphysics of transcendence (J. Williams 126). If, in a metaphysics of transcendence, “the human realm is seen as transcended by God” (J. Williams 126), then the violence of action-image cinema is delineated in terms of actions that transgress or redeem human value in the eyes of the law or God. With the crisis of the action-image, however, good or bad violence is about the belief in ‘things as they are.’

I emphasize the affect of violence throughout this thesis as a means of engaging with the desires that exceed violent action. My overall aim is to redefine violence beyond connotations of morality, masculinity, and reality in order to complicate the idea that violence is representational, causal, and corporeal or physical. Violence is as much about affect as it is about physicality, especially with regard to an aesthetic of violence. In Understanding Deleuze, Claire Colebrook emphasizes the fact that Deleuze conceptualizes power in terms of desire. She claims that “[w]hat something is is its flow of desire” (Colebrook xv) and that for Deleuze “desire is not something that we need to repress or tame in order to enter society. Desire is always productive; indeed, it produces the very idea of society” (Colebrook xvi). In other words, the capacity or power of affect is a function of desire.

My interest in creating counterpoints—between morality and ethics, the idea of masculine power and the affect of violence, and the sublime and the beautiful—is intended to unveil the production of an idea of violence as a flow of desire.
Film academics are divided in their views on Deleuze because his work stands on the outskirts of film theory—especially Anglo-American film theory. In the 1980s, when his *Cinema* books were published and translated into English, the discipline of cinema studies was firmly establishing itself around psychoanalytic film theory, feminist film theory, cognitive formalism, film history, and cultural studies. Deleuze’s theory of cinema, with its own grounding in French continental philosophy and Euro-centric film theory, seemed at odds with many of these Anglo-American film theories.

However, continued interest in affect, emotion, and cinema creates an important dialogue between psychoanalytic theory, cognitive theories, and philosophical perspectives on spectator experience. For example, Carl Plantinga’s *Moving Viewers: American Film and the Spectator’s Experience* criticizes psychoanalytic film theory because it does not account for the cognitive mechanisms at play in the spectator’s emotional response. Furthermore, in “Interest and Unity in the Emotional Response to Film,” Plantinga and Ed Tan debate the possibility of an overarching theory of affect in spectatorship. While Tan claims that interest is the central emotion that is sustained through narrative stimulus, Plantinga argues against this unified emotional response because it denies the specific responses that may be attributed to style and point of view, for instance. In *Film Theory: An Introduction Through the Senses*, Thomas Elsaesser and Malte Hagener emphasize how these diverse film theories—from psychoanalysis to Deleuze—postulate an ideal spectator and create an implicit relation between the spectator’s body and the film image. Elsaesser and Hagener’s main claim is important. I have chosen to work with Deleuzian theory, as opposed to cognitive theory, because it breaks the Cartesian mind versus body divide that has dominated film theory and its assumptions about spectatorship.
Deleuze’s central claim that ‘the brain is the screen’\(^1\) does not create a correlation between cinema and thought processes, which is a shared assumption among cognitive formalist theories. Rather, Deleuze’s correlation between the brain and the screen is about consciousness beyond thought. Deleuze distinguishes his use of Henri Bergson from Maurice Merleau-Ponty’s Husserl-based phenomenology and emphasizes the fact that consciousness does not illuminate things, things are luminous in themselves. For Bergson and Deleuze, “the eye is in things” (\textit{Cinema 1} 60). With the exception of Laura U. Marks, who finds points of intersection between phenomenology and Deleuze’s Bergsonian position,\(^2\) the distinction between the two is important for myself and many Deleuzian theorists. This is because Deleuze via Bergson advocates for a prepersonal state of things, tied to the idea of camera-consciousness. Although Deleuze does not use the term camera-consciousness, I am using the term with reference to his discussion of cinematographic consciousness (Deleuze, \textit{Cinema 1} 20). This camera-consciousness or cinematographic consciousness relates to the images of thought that are produced by cinema. In the Deleuzian sense, camera-consciousness is neither about ego nor identity, it is at once the material subjectivity (or matter) of the movement-image and the immateriality (or memory) of the time-image. Both types of image, movement-images and time-images, are created among all images or what Deleuze calls the ‘plane of immanence’ (\textit{Cinema 1} 58-59). Camera-consciousness—as I use the term with reference to New Hollywood cinema’s movement-images and time-images—describes the images that are created by cinema in much the same way that the brain forms images. In classical movement-image cinema,


affect is created according to a real or determinate causal image of thought. This consciousness ‘in things’ or in a determinate situation creates an awareness of classical cinema’s material subjectivities—namely perception, action, and affection (Deleuze, *Cinema 1* 61-66), associated with an image of rational thought.

In modern time-image cinema, however, camera-consciousness is a confrontation with the unthought or an image of irrational thought. In this case, camera-consciousness creates an image of thought that goes beyond the idea of a conscious state or a psychological state: it is affect ‘in time’ (Deleuze, *Cinema 2* 79-81). In sum, Deleuze’s notion of prepersonal affect is a state of varying subjectivities that are essentially, as Elena del Río calls them in *Deleuze and the Cinemas of Performance*, ‘subjectless subjectivities’ (24). With this notion of consciousness, where consciousness is in things and not in thought, Deleuze creates an implicit yet radical view of spectatorship that is suspended in affect as it awaits the stimulations of movement and time.

Although the concept of affect may be considered abstract in nature, I argue that affect is concrete in its relation to thought while, at the same time, exceeding thoughts and ideas. The capacity for affect describes the will to live as much as it defines how we relate to the world. In his lectures on Spinoza, Deleuze clearly explains that affect is first and foremost a volition or a force of will: “a will implies, in all rigor, that I will something, and what I will is an object of representation, what I will is given in an idea, but the fact of willing is not an idea, it is an affect because it is a non-representational mode of thought” (Deleuze, “Transcripts’”). This point is crucial to my thesis since I am using Deleuze’s Spinozan concept of affect to examine violence not as an object of representation but rather as an affect. Throughout my many references to Deleuzian affect, I am creating a correlation between this Deleuzian-Spinozan definition of affect, as a variation in the force of will or power of action, and affect as it is described
in the *Cinema* books. The implicit correlation that I am drawing out of the *Cinema* books is described in Chapter 3. Firstly, I correlate Spinoza’s *affectio* or affection (a state of affect) with Deleuze’s affection-image close-up. Secondly, I also associate Spinoza’s *affectus* or affect (the variation in our capacity to act) with time-image affect. When I discuss the affect of the time-image, I am emphasizing the fact that time-image affect is not bound to the sensory-motor schema of action/reaction and the cycle of perception, action, affection. Although Deleuze does not use the term time-image affect, he stresses the fact that affect in unchained from the sensory-motor schema in time-image cinema. I maintain this point with reference to the ‘power of the false’ in Chapter 3 and the ‘pure optical and sound situations’ in Chapter 5. An object of representation and its affect are related, yet they are distinct. While representation focuses on *what* an object represents, an affective framework emphasizes the quality of a representation or the power of a representation—i.e., *how* an idea becomes a representational mode of thought.

Like representation and affect, Deleuze’s movement-image and his time-image are related yet distinct in nature. Deleuze’s movement-image explores classical cinema’s image of thought according to classical realism’s continuity editing techniques where the character and the film world are bound by a sensory-motor schema of perception (establishing shots), action (action shots), and affection (close-ups) images. With the time-image, however, Deleuze examines how new wave cinemas broke away from classicism’s sensory-motor schema with the crisis of the causal action-image. In post-war new wave, time-image cinema, Deleuze claims that the cinema creates a new image of thought through non-linear editing techniques. With the time-image, where the link between the character and the film world is broken (as the link between perception, action, and

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affection is broken), Deleuze argues that the time-image becomes a cinema of attitudes or affects.

However, I am not implying that classical cinema is non-affective. Movement-image affect is expressed in the affection-image and its relation to the causal relations between action and perception. Time-image affect, on the other hand, is free of this sensory-motor schema. For Deleuze, classical narrative cinema explores “Ego = Ego” (Cinema 2 133) or Being = is (Cinema 2 180). This is “the [narrative] form of the true which is unifying and tends to the identification of a character” (Deleuze, Cinema 2 133). With modern cinema’s time-image, however, cinema “has ceased to be One-Being, in order to become the constitutive ‘and’ of things, the constitutive between-two of images” (Deleuze, Cinema 2 180). The affect of time-image cinema is therefore related to the movement-image. Yet, as the movement-image’s historical predecessor, the time-image has the capacity to deterritorialize classical narrative cinema’s image of rational thought that is established according to set meanings such as the conquering of good versus evil in narratives that seek to reestablish the social order. Although there are many significant debates regarding the relation between the movement-image and the time-image,¹ I am arguing that the time-image follows from movement-image cinema because Deleuze discusses the emergence of time-image cinema with reference to the pure optical and sound situations of New Wave cinemas (Cinema 2 3). Nevertheless, I am emphasizing the co-existence of movement-images and time-images in New Hollywood cinema. As Thomas Elsaesser and Warren Buckland suggest in “Feminism, Foucault,

and Deleuze (The Silence of the Lambs),” the application of a Deleuzian framework to the study of mainstream Hollywood cinema is questionable for a few reasons: first, Deleuze “hardly discusses Hollywood films from the 1970s or beyond” (270); second, “[t]here is, furthermore, evidence to suggest that Deleuze himself would not have particularly cared for this new brand of cult, blockbuster, or genre films” (270); and third, Deleuze’s differentiation between the action-image and the crystal or time-image “may also signal a continental divide (between Hollywood and European cinema)” (271). Nevertheless, Elsaesser and Buckland argue that Deleuze’s crisis of the action-image and the rupture of the sensory-motor link between spectator and character are pertinent to New Hollywood as a whole:

this ‘rupture’ of which Deleuze speaks finds itself compensated in the contemporary American cinema by a kind of psychotic hyperactivity, in which the movement and action come at the characters, rather than emanating from them. The consequence[s] are either what could be called the ‘new thinking image’ of characters being inside each others’ minds, or the kind of hysterical action scenario where the natural world (Twister [Jan de Bont, 1996]), a vehicle (Speed [Jan de Bont, 1994]), or a creature-person (Terminator [James Cameron, 1984]) are ‘out of control’ and the protagonists can only react, parry, or otherwise shield themselves from being attacked, assailed, or annihilated. (271)

Elsaesser and Buckland also claim that “apart from a few bold attempts” such as Ian Buchanan’s Deleuzism: A Metacommentary and Patricia Pisters’ Micropolitics of Media Culture: Reading the Rhizomes of Deleuze and Guattari, “examples of Deleuzian analyses of contemporary Hollywood films ( . . . ) are as yet hard to find” (270). Since the publication of Elsaesser and Buckland’s Studying Contemporary American Film, it is evident in the
work of Patricia Pisters, David Martin-Jones, Ian Buchanan and Patricia MacCormack, Barbara M. Kennedy, Anna Powell, and Elena del Rio that there is a marked interest in applying Deleuzian concepts to New Hollywood cinema. This thesis builds on the work of these and other Deleuzian theorists in an effort to redefine the spectator’s relation to New Hollywood violence.

I share many of the aims and concerns of other Deleuzian theorists, especially the need to focus on the affect of imagery. This is not the first attempt at using Deleuze to examine the theme of film violence. Patricia Pisters, Paul Gormley, Marco Abel, and Anna Powell all use a Deleuzian affective framework to explicitly approach the theme of violence.

In *The Matrix of Visual Culture*, which I review in Chapter 2, Patricia Pisters uses a Spinozan ethics to examine how Hollywood films like *Strange Days, Fight Club*, and *Pulp Fiction* (Quentin Tarantino, 1994) may be considered what Deleuze calls modern political films. Similar case studies are found in Paul Gormley’s article “Trashing Whiteness” where he argues that *Pulp Fiction, Se7en* [David Fincher, 1995], and *Strange Days* are examples of what he calls the ‘new-brutality film’ (155). For Gormley, the new-brutality film—a concept that he explores further in *The New-Brutality Film: Race and Affect in Contemporary Hollywood Cinema*—revitalizes affect (specifically Jameson’s loss of affect) that has been lost in postmodern pastiche and nostalgia. He claims that these new-brutality films entail shocking representations of black violence that affect the meaningless pastiche and nostalgia of Hollywood’s white imaginary. According to Gormley, “[m]eaningful or ‘human’ affect is equated here with bodily and emotional depth” (“Trashing” 155). He explains that Hollywood’s meaningful new-brutality violence stems from New Black Realism ‘gangsta’ films—exemplified by *Boyz N the Hood* (John Singleton, 1991) and *Menace II Society* (Allen and Albert Hughes, 1993)—“which have taken the clichés of this ‘action-image’ cinema and recharged them with affective and political meaning” (“Trashing” 156). He therefore uses Deleuze’s definition of affect
as well as Deleuze’s crisis of the action-image to discuss the way in which black ‘gangsta’ violence shocks Hollywood’s white cultural imaginary and creates a crisis of the Hollywood action-image. Ultimately Gormley, like Pisters, uses the Deleuzian concept of affect to illuminate the politics of violence in New Hollywood cinema.

In Violent Affect: Literature, Cinema, and Critique after Representation, Marco Abel argues that the social sciences and its interpretive models of representation assume that violent images are about the moral implications concerning the behavioral effects theories of violence. Abel’s point is that the representational models of interpretation are about judgment not violence. Abel’s argument, that “[r]epresentational studies of violence always insinuate the existence of a nonviolent space” (xiii), reflects Slavoj Žižek’s statement that “subjective violence is experienced as such against the background of a non-violent zero level” (Violence 2). Both Abel and Žižek argue that violence is inescapable since this non-violent backdrop does not exist. Abel’s solution to the problem of representation—the judgment implicit in representational models of interpretation—is to examine how images of violence elicit response. Like Pisters, he uses Deleuze’s Spinozan ethical perspective to view violence as a force rather than a system of moral judgment and representation. In his comparison of Bret Easton Ellis’ book American Psycho to Mary Harron’s film adaptation, he is critical of the film since it does not reproduce the book’s affect of boredom. Abel claims that the film focuses on the meaning of the book: “a critique of capitalist excesses” (55). I disagree with Abel’s analysis of the film because he focuses on the film’s use of satire and the film’s agreeable narrative which, he argues, does not put the subject at stake. However, his emphasis on narrative overlooks the fact that an affective analysis can engage with aesthetics in such a way as to understand violence beyond narrative cues.
My case studies share a common theme of violence and an exploration of violence as affect. They question how an aesthetic of violence blurs the lines between reality and art to form an experience of violent affect. My aim is not to look at a particular genre of violent film, which is what Anna Powell’s *Deleuze and Horror Film* achieves in its analysis. I am also not making any claims about New Hollywood cinema, violence, and national identity in the USA. Still, David Martin-Jones’ *Deleuze, Cinema and National Identity* raises important questions about time-image cinema’s ability to deterritorialize national identity especially in his analysis of American identity before and after 9/11—a topic that lies outside the scope of my study. He concludes that Hollywood’s use of the movement-image reterritorializes the meaning of national identity thereby effacing the efforts of time-image deterritorialization. Martin-Jones’ argument is significant since my own conclusion will need to address action-image reterritorialization.

This thesis is the result of influences from a range of work on Deleuze, affect, and cinema, including, Ronald Bogue, Ian Buchanan, Warren Buckland, Elena del Río, Thomas Elsaesser, Malte Hagener, Barbara M. Kennedy, Erin Manning, Laura U. Marks, David Martin-Jones, Brian Massumi, Patricia Pisters, Anna Powell, D. N. Rodowick, Steven Shaviro, and Lisa Trahair. It also draws on debates regarding ‘film violence’ and New Hollywood as they are explored in Slocum’s “The ‘Film Violence’ Trope: New Hollywood, ‘the Sixties,’ and the Politics of History” in *New Hollywood Violence*. I examine the critique of New Hollywood violence as a problem of spectatorship since the underlying assumption in the critical discourse is that the theme of violence has referential narrative meaning when it represents moral, masculine, and realistic socio-cultural values. A further assumption is that, in the context of film violence, the meaning of spectatorship is lost in the spectacle of violence. If the literature continues to dismiss New Hollywood’s spectacles of violence as meaningless, gratuitous
representations of violence, then New Hollywood violence will continually be defined in terms of what it lacks rather than what it does or how it functions. The significance of a Deleuzian perspective on New Hollywood violence rests in its ability to rethink New Hollywood violence from an affective standpoint: one that focuses on how film violence affects spectatorship.

To recapitulate the purpose of each chapter, as I explore in Chapter 1, the critical literature on film violence and New Hollywood cinema converges around the postmodern crisis of meaning. I use the expression ‘crisis of meaning’ with reference to what Fredric Jameson has described as the ‘waning of affect,’ the loss of a historical referent, and the loss of the centered subject in postmodern culture. When the convergence of discourses on violence, New Hollywood, and postmodern culture concur that meaningful narrative referents are lost in Hollywood’s capitalistic utopia, this convergence assumes that ‘meaning’ centers on moral virtue, masculine power, and the representation of reality. If these classical ideas—the representation of morality, masculinity, and reality—are lost in gratuitous spectacles of violence, then Deleuzian theory is a means of engaging with the power of spectacle since Deleuze is more concerned with the production of affects than with the representation of narrative meaning.

In Chapter 2, I introduce my Deleuzian framework as a tool that allows for an engagement with cinematic affect. Deriving from Deleuze’s Cinema books and current Deleuzian theory, especially Richard Rushton’s article “Deleuzian Spectatorship” in Screen, I propose the concept of an affective spectator: a presubjective spectator who is unchained from humanistic notions of identity and subjectivity where cinema is an encounter with the power of affect. I argue that an affective framework can free film spectatorship from psychoanalysis’ emphasis on gendered subject formation and spectator positioning as a mirror for patriarchal power relations that structure power in terms of anxiety, fear, and lack. My intention is not to
create stringent divisions between Lacanian apparatus theories and Deleuzian theory. My aim is to demonstrate how Deleuze’s concept of affect is able to grasp spectatorship from the perspective of the preindividuated and prepersonal state of power relations. An affective view of spectatorship therefore understands cinema as philosophy: an engagement with concepts of power that are social, ideological, real, and concrete but equally fluid, affective, and subject to time.

In Chapter 3, Characterizations of Violence: Morality in Crisis, my analysis of *A Clockwork Orange*, *Natural Born Killers*, and *Reservoir Dogs* demonstrates that in an ethical framework, the meaning of violence goes beyond the narrative act of violence to include its affects, passions, and desires. The characterization of violence is a means of analyzing the passions of joy and sadness which result in a character’s heightened or diminished capacity for action. I use the term characterization rather than character to focus on the film’s exploration of violence as an experience or event. I specifically examine how time-image affects of joy and sadness renegotiate the spectator’s initial impression of the character’s cruel or immoral action as it is presented in what Deleuze calls the impulse-image—an impulse for violence. In sum, the characterization of violence captures the desires that compel violence, from an impulse for violence to its time-image affects of joy or sadness, i.e., an increased or decreased capacity for action.

Chapter 4, The Face of Violence and the Affect as Entity: Masculinity in Crisis, uses Deleuze’s definition of affect—specifically with regard to his affection-image—to analyze how the close-up removes the idea of violence from the physicality of action to the quality of an idea, sensation or feeling of violence. Here, my aim is to draw a distinction between an idea of power (as it is represented in an act of violence) and its affect, shown in close-up. By drawing attention to what Deleuze refers to as the power-quality or affect of an idea, sensation or feeling, my aim is to discuss the formation of power through desire. My case studies include *A History of Violence*, *Strange Days*,
and Monster. I have chosen these films because they complicate the idea of white male power—specifically the performance of the masculine body—through their use of the close-up as a means of engaging the spectator with the desire for power or loss of power.

In Chapter 5, The Violent Spectacle is Beautiful: The Real in Crisis, I use Deleuze’s implicit concept of Kantian beauty in order to examine the spectator’s aesthetic experience of violence in American Psycho, Fight Club, and The Matrix. I argue that Deleuzian affect—“the affection of the self by self” (Cinema 2 82-83)—is a means of theorizing the spectacle’s disaffection from and disinterest in socio-historical truth, fallacy, reality, and utilitarianism. These films have been selected because their aesthetic engagement with violence complicates the way in which the spectator experiences violent action. From the perspective of classical Hollywood cinema, the character acts or reacts to a violent situation in order to restore the social order. Alternatively, the character is punished for straying from the social order. From the perspective of post-war cinema, and as Jameson’s postmodern theory makes clear, classical interpretations of narrative meaning—that uphold patriarchal ideas of morality, masculine power and the reality of class consciousness—have become skewed. While Jameson’s loss of affect emphasizes the loss of the centered subject and postmodernism’s lost referent, Deleuze’s maintains that there is no centered subject, only the creation of affects.

I want to draw attention to the fact that Deleuze’s crisis of action-image entails the transition from a sublime conception of affect to one based on Kant’s beautiful. In Chapter 5, I will demonstrate that Kantian disinterest allows us to theorize character and spectator from an aesthetic and affective perspective rather than a utilitarian, moralistic one. The crisis of the action-image results in what Deleuze calls modern cinema’s time-image and its pure optical and sound situations where
characters were found less and less in sensory-motor ‘motivating’ situations, but rather in a state of strolling, of sauntering or of rambling which defined *pure optical and sound situations*. The action-image then tended to shatter, whilst the determinate locations were blurred, letting any-spaces-whatever rise up where the modern affects of fear, detachment, but also freshness, extreme speed and interminable waiting were developing. (*Cinema 1* 120-21)

I will demonstrate that the crisis of the action-image marks a departure from an older conception of spectatorship that is aligned with character-motivated action and the overall outcome of the narrative situation. In time-image cinema, the affect of violence is an engagement with a changing definition of violence that is contingent upon the capacity to affect and be affected in time.

This research project began with the desire to rethink violence and the case study chapters reflect this desire by focusing on Deleuzian affect as an analytical tool for film analysis. My aim, in using a Deleuzian methodology, is not simply to redefine violence from an affective standpoint, but rather to understand how the power of imagery creates a violent aesthetic. The conclusion will therefore focus on how Deleuzian affect impacts the concept of film violence.
Chapter 1

New Hollywood Violence and the Postmodern Crisis of Meaning

Characterizing contemporary culture are concerns such as a profound exhaustion, disaffection, crisis, and sense of the apocalypse. In cinema, contemporary films employ intertextual references and pastiche appropriate styles and references freely from throughout film and media history, producing historically ‘depthless’ movies whose simulation of, and nostalgia for, the past are based in existing representations rather than any attempt to re-create a ‘real’ past. They signal a collapse of traditional cultural or aesthetic hierarchies and the concomitant exhaustion of given cinematic forms or modes of production. (Slocum, “Trope” 25)


The central problem of this thesis involves the loss of affect throughout three crises of representation: morality, masculinity, and reality. This introduction will demonstrate that the postmodern crisis of representation is couched in terms of loss—loss of referent, allegory, history, authenticity, affect, morality, masculinity, reality, and regenerative violence. My aim is to revisit the concept of New Hollywood violence outside these connotations of the loss of representation and affect. If the academic discourse continues to view New Hollywood violence as nihilistic and disaffected, then there will continue to be a disconnect between image culture, its means of making sense of violence, and the academic discourse that attempts to understand Hollywood as an industrial art form.
My arguments are inspired by J. David Slocum’s “The ‘Film Violence’ Trope: New Hollywood, ‘the Sixties,’ and the Politics of History” in the anthology *New Hollywood Violence*. In the introduction to this book, Thomas Schatz claims that “[m]ovie violence in America has involved, since its inception, something of a holy trinity of necessary participants: a culture industry determined to depict and exploit it, moviegoers equally determined to experience it and social watchdogs determined to regulate it” (1). In accordance with Schatz’s claim, Slocum’s chapter investigates how the term film violence has been used as a trope for the moral discourse that informs the representation of cinematic violence.

Slocum examines “the process by which the ‘film violence’ trope ascendant in the 1960s has particularized and delimited discourses of film, violence, and film violence with the consequence of privileging certain meanings and contexts and repressing others” (“Trope” 14). His central argument revolves around Eleanor Townsley’s claims in “‘The Sixties’ Trope.” Both authors concur that tropes create their historical impact through the masking of the trope’s inception, institutionalization, and cycle of reproduction (Slocum, “Trope” 25). Slocum’s ‘film violence’ trope has three main aspects:

1. the ‘Sixties’ and ‘New Hollywood’ as an *originary moment* for the presentation of, as well as debate over, film violence; 
2. images, standards, and debates from the period as a *device for normative evaluation* of film and purported instances of film violence; and
3. ‘film violence’ as an *index* for connecting and circumscribing narratives of cultural history and political economy. (“Trope” 15)

Through these aspects of the trope, he argues that the discourse on film violence has converged around the emergence of New Hollywood—the abolition of the Production Code, its demarcation from classical Hollywood,
and the beginning of graphic corporeal violence—as well as the media’s emphasis on the coinciding socio-cultural unrest in America during the 1960s. According to Slocum’s findings, the institutional understanding of film violence created a persistent correlation between the graphic portrayal of screen violence and its socio-cultural impact through the academic funding of social modeling and behavioral effects theories.\(^5\) He concludes that:

> Such readings of film violence as a matter of effects have become naturalized through repetition and the legitimization accorded by funding, policy debates, and even industry pronouncements, though upon closer inspection they can also be seen to rely directly on formulations that were consolidated in the historically specific conditions of the 1960s. (Slocum, “Trope” 24)

His arguments imply that the academic discourse on screen violence subsumes the media’s popular discourse about social violence and mobilizes the meaning of film violence according to moral concerns about its social effects.


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Strangelove (Stanley Kubrick, 1964) as precursors to the bloodshed in post Production Code Hollywood. Secondly, he claims that film violence could be reexamined outside connotations of bloodshed to include systemic power relations. Thirdly, Slocum proposes that researchers investigate the institutional reasons why Hollywood produces violent films. Fourthly, he urges researchers to include the context of popular culture that surrounds particular case studies in order to emphasize electronic media saturation. Despite these suggestions, Slocum claims that the ‘film violence’ trope persists due to the historically decisive breaks between classical Hollywood and New Hollywood as well as the analogous break between modernism and postmodernism (“Trope” 24-25).

Slocum claims that postmodern theory has the capacity to question the media effects discourse due to its critique of the grand unifying narratives that have traditionally integrated the individual, the social, the psychological, and the moral debates on film violence (“Trope” 25-27). On this point, he cites Stephen Prince’s Savage Cinema: Sam Peckinpah and the Rise of Ultraviolent Movies. Prince is relevant to Slocum’s argument because Prince argues that Sam Peckinpah’s stylized violence, which underlines the moral and psychological impact of violence, is a bridge between classicism’s emphasis on morality and postmodern Hollywood’s stylistic graphic violence (“Trope” 24-25).

Slocum’s arguments also suggest that the literature’s emphasis on the loss of a classical narrative framework, which foregrounds morality, is at the heart of the dichotomy separating classical representations of film violence and New Hollywood cinema’s gratuitous representations of violence. In the opening epigraph for this chapter, I quoted Slocum’s main point regarding the crisis of meaning that binds the discourses on postmodernism and New Hollywood cinema. Here, he argues that a postmodern perspective on film violence emphasizes the nostalgia for an unrepresentable past, the loss of historical depth, and a pastiche of genres. Slocum claims that, in addition to
nostalgia and the loss of historical referent, the postmodern characteristics of exhaustion, disaffection, crisis, and apocalypse are associated with the fact that ritual sacrifice, in the American experience of violence, “appears to some postmodern critics as no longer able to redeem individual or community or to restore equilibrium to society” (“Trope” 25). This point is central to so-called crisis cinema.

In regard to crisis cinema, Slocum refers to Christopher Sharrett’s afterword, “Sacrificial Violence and Postmodern Ideology,” in his anthology Mythologies of Violence in Postmodern Media and Catherine Russell’s “Decadence, Violence and the Decay of History: Notes on the Spectacular Representation of Death in Narrative Film, 1965 to 1990” in Sharrett’s Crisis Cinema: The Apocalyptic Idea in Postmodern Narrative Film. Slocum argues that both Sharrett and Russell “locate such a transformation in changing stylistics and images, while also challenging the integrity of moral, psychological, social and mythical formations upon which continuities or discontinuities might be based” (“Trope” 25). What is at stake in postmodern Hollywood cinema, for Russell as for Sharrett, is the capacity for the (violent) image to be against representation because narrative is lost in the commodification of the image.

In my understanding of Sharrett’s and Russell’s claims, both argue that postmodern crisis cinema is apocalyptic not only in its themes but also in its excessive stylized violence. What is lost in postmodern crisis cinema, for both Sharrett and Russell, is a narrative mythology of violence, its sense of historical grounding, and the meaning of sacrifice. In Mythologies of Violence, Sharrett correlates the political and cultural discourse of the ‘end of history’ with the victory of capitalism over socialism. He finds a shared utopian undertone in views expressed by neoconservatives in American politics, the apocalyptic violence in Hollywood cinema, and the postmodern theories of Jean Baudrillard and Jean-François Lyotard:
I suggest that the dismissal of radical and dialectical thinking, the embrace of apocalypticism by dominant culture, and much of postmodern theory (I say ‘much’ to emphasize that there are sectors of radical and progressive activity among postmodern thinkers) become plausible when we see sacrifice as predominant in postmodern culture, and pose a stalemate long discussed by Marxian analysis of capitalist culture, one that accounts for the particular approaches to violence within representation, and perhaps violence within the social sphere. (Sharrett, *Mythologies* 421)

Furthermore, Sharrett argues that although postmodern cinema bombards spectators with rituals of sacrifice—which he views as apt representations of the patriarchal symbolic order—he maintains that these representations of violence are essentially emptied of their historical meaning because they are merely self-referential (*Mythologies* 422).

In comparing and contrasting the pertinence of structural anthropology as a means of understanding postmodern cinema’s empty rituals of sacrifice, Sharrett reviews René Girard’s and Georges Bataille’s respective views on ritual sacrifice. Sharrett rejects Girard’s concept of the scapegoat in *Violence and the Sacred*, since his view of history is couched in sacrifice (*Mythologies* 426-27). According to Sharrett, Girard posits a dialectic of myth and history where sacrificial violence is a cyclical solution to the failure of mimetic desire. Here, “[v]iolence becomes a way of restoring consensus (concerning what is valued), totemism, and a language system, all of which are circumscribed by myth through the will-to-meaning” (Sharrett, *Mythologies* 426). He acknowledges that Girard’s scapegoat is emblematic of postmodernism’s nostalgia for class consciousness since the bourgeois ideology is totalized—throughout the history of civilization—through the sign of the scapegoat that masks the process of sacrificial violence by blaming the other, the scapegoat. Still, Sharrett takes issue with Girard’s
framework because sacrificial violence is reduced to the process of scapegoating and the failure of mimetic desire.

By contrast, for Sharrett, Bataille’s notion of sacrifice in *Visions of Excess* accurately describes the postmodern sacrificial crisis because of its nihilistic implications. For example, he argues that:

the film *Taxi Driver* [Martin Scorsese, 1976] locates the protagonist’s identity (significantly shaped by media culture, particularly by media renditions of the American male as regenerative savior) in a divinely ordained errand of ‘mission.’ The self, vulnerable under this figuration, fluctuates between self-abasement and violent assertion until a crisis point (apocalypse) is reached, which falls short of revelation, since myth collapses as the mediated self evaporates. (Sharrett, *Mythologies* 425-26)

Sharrett claims that Bataille’s view of sacrifice, as a site of transgression, aptly describes the failure of ritual sacrifice in postmodern culture. Since Bataille’s notion of sacrifice is emblematic of the social tendency towards waste and excess, Sharrett argues that sacrificial transgression is a sign of social chaos (*Mythologies* 427-28). He therefore concludes that:

With Bataillean economy incorporated into the logic of neoconservatism, postmodern sacrifice looks very much like the suicidal nihilism always implicit in the American millen nic vision. Destruction as a validation of power ‘proves’ wealth in the primitive sense as it depends on the magic of regenerative violence. (Sharrett, *Mythologies* 432)

The implication is that the collapse of the social into a cultural economy of waste and excess creates an environment where social meaning is futile
because it is sacrificed for the pursuit of power; power that is predicated on violence and destruction.

In Russell’s “Decadence, Violence and the Decay of History,” she argues that since the terminology of biblical apocalypse is formulated in terms of vision—visions of catastrophe and revelation—the representation of apocalypse in cinema is ‘difficult to articulate’ since the film medium is bound to the image and its ontological implications (174). She explains that: “[b]ecause the image always belongs ontologically to the past, and narrative realism involves a disavowal of this historical difference, cinematic apocalypticism has displaced the revelation of historical difference with the visual excess of catastrophe” (Russell, “Decadence” 174).

Using Walter Benjamin’s definition of allegory in The Origins of German Tragic Drama, she claims that Weekend (Jean-Luc Godard, 1968), Wild at Heart (David Lynch, 1990), and The Cook, the Thief, his Wife and her Lover (Peter Greenaway, 1989) are allegorical “insofar as each is a ‘written’ form of cinema: highly intertextual, codified, displaced from naturalistic, realistic or symbolic representation, but nevertheless ‘theological’” (Russell, “Decadence” 188). According to Russell’s reading of Benjamin: “the latent promise of allegory is its structural representation of historical transformation and its failure is its capitulation to the romance of resurrection” (“Decadence” 188). Throughout her chapter, she maintains that Godard’s Weekend and Pierrot le fou (Jean-Luc Godard, 1969) unveil the latent promise of allegory because Godard’s overt attack against the representation of death, cinema, and history signifies the failure of narrative’s ability to redeem historical meaning, myth, and reality. Russell offers similar arguments in Narrative Mortality: Death, Closure, and New Wave Cinemas.

As opposed to her view of Godard’s attack on representation, Russell argues that Lynch’s and Greenaway’s allegorical violence fails because it remains in the present, in the romance of resurrection and redemption due to
the way in which bodies are eroticized in these films. She claims that both Lynch’s *Wild at Heart* and Greenaway’s *The Cook, the Thief, his Wife and her Lover* entail an aesthetic of excess that represents an allegory of the decadence of late capitalism. In sum, for Russell, neither Lynch nor Greenaway is “capable of cinematic mortification” because the body remains a site of transcendence (“Decadence” 196-97).

Russell’s arguments concur with Sharrett’s, when she states that Hollywood’s post 1960s spectacle of violence is one where Girard’s mimetic desire fails and merely creates a repetitive cycle of sequels and narratives of vengeance (“Decadence” 185). On this point, she compares Penn’s *Bonnie and Clyde* and Peckinpah’s *The Wild Bunch* (1969) to Godard’s *Pierrot le fou*. She argues that Penn’s final spectacle of death and violence, in *Bonnie and Clyde*, does not question myth, representation, or history because it remains caught in the nostalgia for the Great Depression and the mythology of gangsters. According to Russell, the final slow-motion spectacle of balletic violence in *Bonnie and Clyde* “does not become a form of ‘writing’ because it says nothing, except that this is the end” (“Decadence” 180). She therefore concludes that Penn’s allegory of violence remains closed in its nostalgia for the past.

Furthermore, Russell states that Peckinpah’s allegory of violence in *The Wild Bunch* is a celebration of violence as ritual sacrifice. She claims that the slow-motion suicide of the bunch perpetuates the values of the outlaw (Russell, “Decadence” 182). She also argues it is erroneous to view Peckinpah’s spectacles of death in *The Wild Bunch* as an allegory for Vietnam’s My Lai Massacre (Russell, “Decadence” 182; Cook 632). According to Russell, Peckinpah’s allegory of violence fails because “[t]he lingering faith in the image and its myths of pleasure, desire and closure is quite removed from the horrifying televisual imagery” of the Vietnam War (“Decadence” 183). Russell argues that, in Peckinpah’s violence, “the possibility of regenerative violence remains in the desire to see, a desire
encouraged by the careful cinematography of cameras, bodies and blood” (“Decadence” 183). She concludes that Peckinpah’s balletic vision of violence “is linked to an apocalyptic historiography in which social change resides, however awkwardly, with repetition” (Russell, “Decadence” 183).

By contrast, for Russell, in Godard’s Pierrot le fou “the traces of modernism [are] still potent, instilling a memory of materialism, the hint of an historical referent informing its apocalypse” (“Decadence” 178). She acknowledges that Godard’s references to the Vietnam War are contemporaneous to the release of Pierrot le fou. However, she claims that Godard’s allegory of violence is one that centers on the inability to represent death and history. Russell therefore states that “Godard uses great amounts of red on static, motionless bodies to signify death, as well as the impossibility of signifying death” in Pierrot le fou (“Decadence” 179). Ultimately, for Russell, Godard succeeds in his allegory of violence because his work echoes Bataille’s transgression of the sacred, of desire, since “[t]he body of the film [Weekend] itself, signified by the rabbit, whose lifeless eye returns our gaze as fixedly as those of the immigrant laborers, is the auteur’s sacrifice and signature of historical transformation” (“Decadence” 190).

Implicit in Russel’s argumentation is the death of cinema, death of the auteur, and the loss of narrative meaning in American apocalypticism where “[d]eath and closure converge more teleologically in the American apocalypse, as crisis is institutionalized as commodified spectacle” (“Decadence” 179). Her analysis of Penn’s and Peckinpah’s nostalgic visions of violence is echoed in her view of Lynch’s Wild at Heart. Finally, for Russell, since the 1980s, crisis cinema exhibits a mythology of violence that is based on aesthetics, authorship, and patriarchal values (“Decadence” 174). Although Russell does not use the term New Hollywood, she traces postmodern Hollywood’s loss of narrative meaning—from the 1960s to the 1990s—to the commodified spectacle of violence. She claims that despite Hollywood’s images of transgression, its allegories of violence remain
largely self-referential, nostalgic, and locked in a commodification of the image and its mythmaking powers of pleasure in spectacle. I do not mean to imply that Russell’s arguments are against pleasure. In fact, she claims that, in “The Terror of Pleasure,” “Modleski is quite right to point to the terror of pleasure as a radical gesture” (Russell, “Decadence” 196; Modleski 155-66).

I have begun with a review of Slocum’s “The ‘Film Violence’ Trope,” Sharrett’s afterword to Mythologies of Violence in Postmodern Media, and Russell’s “Decadence, Violence, and the Decay of History” because they are emblematic of the conflation between New Hollywood, film violence, and the postmodern crisis of meaning. For Slocum, the crisis of meaning centers on the fact that the ‘film violence’ trope constantly refers to the same privileged meanings: the end of the Production Code and the beginning of New Hollywood, the socio-cultural importance of the 1960s, and the behavioral ‘effects’ research that imbues ‘film violence’ with tropes regarding moral implications. For Sharrett and Russell, the postmodern crisis of meaning is a crisis of representation where New Hollywood’s representations of violence lose their historical, sacrificial, and mythmaking abilities to the mere spectacle of violence as one of consumption. Slocum concludes that “[t]o expand a discussion of ‘film violence,’ postmodern critics thus posit different assumptions concerning cinema, society, psychology, and violence – or, at least, a greater willingness to interrogate traditional assumptions” (“Trope” 26). Yet, the problem that I find with the conflation between film violence, New Hollywood, and the postmodern crisis of meaning is that the academic discourse on New Hollywood violence consistently emphasizes its gratuitous spectacles of violence, lack of historical referent, loss of moral and narrative meaning.

Like Slocum’s aims in “The ‘Film Violence’ Trope,” this thesis is an attempt to redefine film violence. Unlike Slocum’s project, however, I am not tracing the historical indexical meanings of film violence. While Slocum problematizes the recurrent association between the periodization of New
Hollywood and the beginning of graphic film violence, I do not take issue with this historical demarcation of New Hollywood violence. In accordance with Slocum, I am arguing that the convergence of discourses between New Hollywood violence and the postmodern crisis of meaning occurs as a result of the conflation between the concepts of New Hollywood and postmodern cinema due to their coinciding post 1960s periodization. My central claim is that the postmodern crisis of meaning, as Sharrett and Russell aptly describe it, has played a key role in the literature on New Hollywood violence. When I use the phrase ‘crisis of meaning,’ I am referring to what Fredric Jameson had deemed the ‘waning of affect’ in postmodern culture, and the ensuing disaffection that is associated with New Hollywood’s representations of violence.

Firstly, in order to delineate this convergence of discourses, I will define New Hollywood violence, and describe the literature’s distinction between the modern auteurs of the 1960s and early 1970s and the postmodern celebrity auteurs—following the introduction of blockbuster cinema from 1975. It is not within the scope of this chapter, or this thesis as a whole, to engage with the concept of authorship. Yet, the distinction that the literature makes between modern and postmodern ideas of authorship is significant because it ties into the disaffection that is associated with New Hollywood violence. Secondly, I will examine Jameson’s notion of the ‘waning of affect’ as it relates to New Hollywood violence’s crisis of morality, masculinity, and reality. Finally, as a bridge to the next chapter, I will argue that a framework based on affect is the best means of understanding New Hollywood violence and its affect on the spectator.
New Hollywood Violence: A Question of Crossovers

Although 1967 is commonly cited as the beginning of New Hollywood’s graphic representations of violence, since it follows the abolition of the Production Code in 1966, the literature on New Hollywood forms a dichotomy between the significance of New Hollywood violence in the late 1960s and early 1970s and New Hollywood violence after 1975. The central opposition that I will emphasize, between these periodizations of New Hollywood violence, is one based on the meaning of authorship. While the auteurs of New Hollywood’s early experimentation of violence are often considered modern and political in their representations of graphic violence, the post 1975 auteurs tend to be considered postmodern, commercial, and conservative in their return to happy narrative resolutions.


According to Elsaesser, film historians—such as Thomas Schatz, Janet Staiger, Kristin Thompson, David Bordwell, Douglas Gomery, Robert C. Allen, Janet Wasko, Tino Balio, Timothy Corrigan, Jon Lewis, and David
Cook—focus on economic, industrial, demographic, and institutional factors that shaped New Hollywood during the 1970s (“Auteur” 43). Despite the package system—which focused on smaller independent productions with auteur, producer, and actor collaborations that became niche marketing schemes—Elsaesser emphasizes the consensus among film historians that by the 1980s, major Hollywood studios maintained control of production, distribution, and exhibition:

The net result of focusing on these developments is to argue that by the mid-to-late 1980s, Hollywood had effectively undone the consequences of the post-war decartelization, and had – in somewhat different forms, and in a quite different media environment – de facto re-established the business practices once known generically as vertical integration, i.e. the controlling of ownership of the sites (studios) and means (stars, personnel) of production, (access to) all the relevant systems of delivery and distribution, and (programming power over) the premier exhibition outlets. (“Auteur” 44)

King makes a similar argument in *New Hollywood Cinema* since he traces the commonalities between New Hollywood I and II as well as their grounding in the studio system. While King, like Slocum, acknowledges that the term New Hollywood is bound by contradictory breaks between the modern and postmodern, the classical and postclassical, he views New Hollywood as a single historical periodization in which there are two central phases (1-3). His periodization of New Hollywood I begins with *Bonnie and Clyde* in 1967 (12) and ends with the beginning of New Hollywood II with the emergence of the first blockbuster, *Jaws* (Steven Spielberg, 1975) (King 54). All the while, King claims that New Hollywood is part of a broader history that dates back to the 1950s because the studios have essentially retained control of film distribution by fragmenting the studio system into
the package system (59-60). His examination of New Hollywood is an analysis of this evolving package system, which revolves around auteur or director marketing, genre convention and revision, star power, and the combination of spectacle and narrative in an ever expanding Hollywood industry of corporate mergers and media convergence.

Elsaesser’s inquiry into New Hollywood attempts to complicate what he refers to as the ‘canonical’ story of New Hollywood which includes its two central phases: the creativity and independence from 1967-1975, and the return to conservatism in the 1980s. He therefore emphasizes what he calls ‘crossover auteurism’ (Elsaesser, “Auteur” 44). The term crossover refers “to the various levels of analysis (historical, political, institutional)” and it is “invoked in order to explain the moves and manoeuvres from Old Hollywood to New Hollywood, and from New to New New or Contemporary Hollywood” (Elsaesser, “Auteur” 45). Elsaesser claims that while the canonical story of New Hollywood persists, most investigations into authorship and New Hollywood “contradict and modify it” (“Auteur” 45). For example, he cites certain crossovers:

the New Hollywood links with European art cinema (Rosenbaum, Horwath); the contacts with the (New York) avantgarde (Rosenbaum, Hoberman, Reynaud); the hybridisation of genres (Hoberman, Hampton, Jameson); the Godfathers of New Hollywood and the impact of Roger Corman (King, McDonough, Jones); the political dimension of Vietnam and the Nixon years (Thomson, Hoberman, Keathley); the macho codes and troubled gender relations (Jones, Martin, Reynaud); the implications for narrative structure and story motivation (Elsaesser, Martin), and finally, the philosophical-phenomenological dimension (Robnik, Polan, Keathley). (Elsaesser, “Auteur” 45)
In addition to these crossovers, Elsaesser also mentions exhibition crossovers. Here, he focuses on the arguments presented in Jonathan Rosenbaum’s *Moving Places* as well as James Hoberman and Jonathan Rosenbaum’s *Midnight Movies*. Elsaesser emphasizes Hoberman and Rosenbaum’s claim that many canonical *auteur* films of New Hollywood did not receive a theatrical release and were exhibited in academic contexts, art house cinemas, or on late night television broadcasts (“Auteur” 48). Elsaesser also emphasizes the fact that the first blockbuster film, *Jaws*, also incited Hollywood to focus on ancillary products, *auteur* marketing, and home video distribution (“Auteur” 49). His main point is that Hollywood increasingly focused on distribution and exhibition as the means of dictating production. Ultimately, Elsaesser concludes that it is imperative to complicate the discourse’s division between art and commerce within the canonical history of New Hollywood.

Another *auteur* crossover, which I would add to Elsaesser’s list, is the crossover of violent *auteurs*. I understand that Elsaesser’s crossovers focus on the historical, political, and institutional influences that shaped New Hollywood. Yet, with regard to ‘the Godfathers of New Hollywood,’ he discusses the fact that the New Hollywood *auteurs*—with the exception of Barbara Loden who directed *Wanda* (1970)—are male and follow a generational line of emulation (Elsaesser, “Auteur” 50). He cites, for example, Hitchcock’s influence on the French New Wave as well as Roger Corman’s mentoring of Martin Scorsese, Francis Ford Coppola, George Lucas, Peter Bogdanovich, Bob Rafelson, and Monte Hellman in America (Elsaesser, “Auteur” 51-53).

In this chapter’s brief introductory literature review, it is evident that Prince’s *Savage Cinema* and Russell’s “Decadence, Violence, and the Decay of History” both place Sam Peckinpah at the threshold of the dichotomy between meaningful authorship and an authorship based on nostalgia and film style. Although Prince claims that his book on Peckinpah attempts “to
sidestep the epistemological pitfalls of the old-fashioned auteurism which tended to treat a director as a transcendent motive force” (Savage 9), his argument creates a romantic auteur-inspired interpretation of Peckinpah’s work. For example, Prince makes associations between Peckinpah’s use of violence—he emphasizes the way in which Peckinpah interrupts the spectacle of violence with its impact on characters—and the influence of Akira Kurosawa. Prince also stresses Peckinpah’s disapproval of the media’s desensitized images of violence: pre Production Code violence, and the horrific images of the Vietnam War that were interspersed with television commercials. According to Prince, all these factors inspired Peckinpah to depict the real, moral implications of violence. In fact, Prince creates a clear moral dichotomy between Peckinpah’s use of violence and what Prince calls ultraviolence. While the term ultraviolence is not explicitly defined by Prince, he gives examples of gratuitous violence. He cites, for example, Quentin Tarantino’s Pulp Fiction and argues that the graphic violence “is without any serious emotional consequences for the characters of the film, for the filmmaker who has created it, and for the viewer who need only laugh at the ensuing comedy” (Prince, Savage 239). By contrast, Prince asks the question: “[w]hat contemporary filmmaker would weep, as Peckinpah did, when filming a scene of violence?” (Savage 253).

For Russell, on the other hand, Godard is the epitome of meaningful authorship because his work is a sign of “sacrifice and signature of historical transformation” (“Decadence” 190). Meanwhile, her arguments suggest that both Penn’s and Peckinpah’s inability to create an allegory of violence—because their representations of violence celebrate past genres and the myth of regeneration through violence—marks them as precursors to an authorship, like Lynch’s “that is being preserved from the threat of history” (Russell, “Decadence” 196). On this point, Russell argues that Lynch’s authorship was sustained through his work on the television series Twin
Peaks where belief in the image is perpetuated as “belief for belief’s own sake” (“Decadence” 201).

In addition to Peckinpah, Hitchcock is also placed at the threshold of old and new, modern and postmodern violent auteurs. In Schatz’s *Old Hollywood/New Hollywood*, he claims that Hitchcock’s work marks the shift from Old Hollywood to New Hollywood because *Psycho* introduced the mutilation thriller and exploitation markets, “which provided the training ground for many of the American auteurs of the 1970s, including Coppola, Scorsese, and DePalma” (22). Linda Williams makes a similar argument, in “Discipline and Fun: *Psycho* and Postmodern Cinema,” when she claims that although *Psycho*’s 1960 release date corresponds to the end of Bordwell, Thompson and Staiger’s *The Classical Hollywood Cinema*, it is “a quintessentially postmodern film” (351). According to Williams, *Psycho* breaks away from the notion of classical visual pleasure, which “might be understood judgmentally as transparent realism’s support of bourgeois ideology (as in most 1970s’ film theory) or, somewhat more neutrally, as a dominant style and mode of production” (“Discipline” 353). She claims that *Psycho* introduced the idea of sensorial and spectatorial ‘fun,’ which is associated with what Miriam Hansen calls ‘popular modernism,’ and what others associate with contemporary Hollywood postmodern cinema (L. Williams, “Discipline” 358; Hansen). She associates *Psycho* with:

an array of dislocations – between normal and psychotic; between masculine and feminine; between Eros and fear; even between the familiar Hitchcockian suspense and a new, frankly gender-based horror – [which] are what make it an important precursor of the thrill-producing visual attractions Schatz discusses as crucial to the New Hollywood and which [L. Williams] identifies as postmodern. (“Discipline” 360)
Despite the overlapping violent *auteurs*, there is a consistent emphasis placed on the visceral and commercial nature of postmodern, New Hollywood cinema.

King, among others,⁶ argues that there is no simple correlation between postmodernism and New Hollywood (139). While this is true, there is a clear dichotomy between the nostalgia for a modern notion of authentic authorship, narrative morality, and allegorical meaning versus a marketable, commercial view of authorship, violence, and the spectacles that bind New Hollywood’s package system. In fact, in Yvonne Tasker’s “Approaches to the New Hollywood,” she argues that the concepts of nostalgia and pastiche are common in the discourses on New Hollywood and postmodernism. While surveying the main assumptions concerning the newness of New Hollywood—its post studio era, post classical periodization, and its new aesthetic—Tasker uses postmodernism as a means of defining the New Hollywood aesthetic.

Tasker emphasizes the emergence of two New Hollywoods: the New Hollywood of artistic *auteurs*, highly influenced by European cinema, and the New Hollywood of conservative politics, conglomeration, and blockbuster receipts (“Approaches” 220). She argues that:

Different periodizations and interpretations of new Hollywood can be understood in terms of the different historical moment in which the idea is invoked, and as associated with particular trends in film studies – from auteurism to an analysis of the market as a key determinant of production, to the political interpretation of popular cinema.

(Tasker, “Approaches” 220)

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Referring to Bordwell, Thompson, and Staiger’s *The Classical Hollywood Cinema* and Noël Carroll’s “The Future of Allusion,” she argues that “[t]wo aspects of the new Hollywood films save them from being mere pastiche. The ‘almost complete conservatism of style’, and a dependence on genre bind these films into the classic Hollywood tradition” (Tasker, “Approaches” 221). While Tasker admits that postmodernism and New Hollywood are “rarely brought together,” and that there is no “easy equation of ‘new Hollywood’ with postmodern cinema,” she claims that both concepts “draw on similar language” (“Approaches” 215): “the irreverent recycling of genres, the prevalence of pastiche and nostalgia, as well as the reciprocal relationship between consumer and art cinemas” (“Approaches” 225).

Tasker uses the term nostalgia as a “defining term for both new Hollywood cinema and postmodernism” because Jameson’s account of nostalgia film style parallels James Monaco’s emphasis on 1970s nostalgia in *American Film Now*, and Collins’ attention to “a critical nostalgia” in his essay “Genericity in the Nineties” (“Approaches” 225). She claims that “accounts of both referentiality and the operation of nostalgia are overwhelmingly negative” because for both New Hollywood and postmodernism “it is the attention to surface and spectacle over character and narrative, the ahistoricism of contemporary cinema . . . that is stressed” (Tasker, “Approaches” 226). Tasker therefore suggests that a complete account of New Hollywood cinema should take into consideration “an awareness of the interaction between film and other media and the proliferation of cultural commodities, rather than exclusively in terms of a relationship to the cinematic past” (“Approaches” 227). While her short essay cannot detail the resonance between Jameson’s postmodern cinema and New Hollywood, Tasker offers an important entry into the common vernacular of both concepts.

The above literature review suggests that the concept of New Hollywood is riddled with crossovers between classical Hollywood cinema,
modern, and postmodern cinema. I will not detail the classical, modern, or postmodern features of the case studies presented in this thesis. I want to point out that the academic discourse on New Hollywood violence forges a division between an authorship that has individual, historical, stylistic meaning and one that is postmodern and commercial.

At the same time, however, there is a continuum that is drawn within the Hollywood industry as a whole. Timothy Corrigan’s “Auteurs and the New Hollywood” highlights the fact that the academic concept of authorship is romantic and nostalgic in that “the romantic roots of auteurism [Sartrean demands for ‘authenticity’ in personal expression] need to be taken another step toward recontextualizing them within contemporary industrial and commercial trajectories” (42). For example, although he claims that “[t]his idea of the auteur-star vaguely harks back to earlier versions of auteurism that ranked directors, from Orson Welles to Robert Bresson, in aesthetic and intellectual pantheons fitting the distinctions of their films,” he argues that postmodern auteurs, like Lynch and Tarantino, are instantaneous celebrity auteurs who do not have the durability of modern auteurs such as Bergman, Buñuel, Antonioni, Godard, Penn, Bogdanovich, and Altman (Corrigan 43). Corrigan’s notion of authorship and duration stems from Dudley Andrew’s arguments in “The Unauthorized Auteur Today”:

Following Gilles Deleuze’s suggestions about the relation between an auteur’s signature and a temporal ‘duration,’ Andrew puts forward the idea that the largely spatial description of the commerce of auteurism laid out here—one which plays across public and private space—forgets or is asked to forget about a crucial dimension of temporality as a figure of the auteur. (59)

Corrigan’s argument suggests that while there is a certain continuity from Old to New or modern to postmodern, in terms of marketing an auteur, the
transition from star *auteur* to celebrity *auteur* explains the literature’s emphasis on the ephemeral temporality of the New Hollywood *auteur* within the context of the collapse of private and public space that is attributed to postmodern culture.

I am arguing that in addition to what Elsaesser refers to as the canonical story of New Hollywood, there is a canonical list of violent *auteurs*. Hitchcock, Penn, Peckinpah, Scorsese, Kubrick, Lynch, and Tarantino are the most commonly cited as Hollywood’s violent *auteurs*. While the meaning of Hitchcock, Penn, Peckinpah, Scorsese, and Kubrick is most often associated with a modernist notion of authorship, Lynch and Tarantino are singled out as postmodern *auteurs* due to their celebrity status and gratuitous violent representations. I have focused on the meaning of authorship and violence in order to highlight the fact that the meaninglessness, associated with New Hollywood violence, includes the dismissal of celebrity, spectacle, and the visceral affect of violent film spectatorship.

My emphasis on New Hollywood violence, from Slocum’s “The ‘Film Violence’ Trope” to the crossovers of violent authorship, is meant to delineate the concept of New Hollywood violence as a single period from 1967 onwards. While the literature focuses on what has been lost in the transition from the classical to the modern, and the modern to the postmodern, the notion of loss that is maintained throughout these classifications revolves around structuralism’s hermeneutics of meaning—the integration between the spectator, text, and the author’s intentions as they either speak to or transgress the dominant ideology. If the academic literature continues to dismiss New Hollywood violence due to its association with postmodernism’s lost referent, then representational meaning—or, lack of meaning—will continue to delineate the meaning of screen violence.

New Hollywood violence, as I refer to it throughout this thesis, encompasses the debates and crossovers that have defined violence in terms
of its representation from the abolition of the Production Code onwards. My aim, throughout this thesis as a whole, is to redefine New Hollywood violence in order to include the affective tonalities and connotations that cannot be accounted for by representation.

**Jameson’s ‘Waning of Affect’**

The crisis of meaning that I am referring to stems from the influence of Jameson’s “Postmodernism, or The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism.” Jameson’s postmodern theory emerged in the 1980s at a time when cinema studies was grappling with the dispersal of theory due to the influence of poststructuralism, the death of cinema, the death of the author, an emphasis on intertextual meaning and discourse theory. His cultural theory speaks to these changes in academia, art, and culture. I will not dwell on Jameson’s postmodern theory, since my aim is to contextualize his concept of the loss of affect as it resonates with the discourse on New Hollywood violence. This section will delineate Jameson’s concept of the ‘waning of affect’ in terms of the deconstruction of expression in postmodern culture. Although Jameson’s “Postmodernism, or The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism” is not explicit about the concept of affect, he emphasizes the loss of the relationship between surface and depth in the aesthetic of expression itself. Jameson therefore focuses on the postmodern loss of “expression of that kind of affect” (“Postmodernism, or” 61) inherent in high modern art and culture. As a result, Jameson creates a dialectic between the affective intensities of postmodern culture and its loss of high modernist expression.

He notes that the ‘waning of affect’ does not mean the end of all feeling or emotion in postmodern art and culture (Jameson, “Postmodernism, or” 61). The feeling or emotion that is dominant in postmodernism, for Jameson, is the intensity of surfaces, of pastiche, which “means the end of
much more—the end for example of style, in the sense of the unique and personal, the end of the distinctive individual brushstroke (as symbolized by the emergent primacy of mechanical reproduction)” (“Postmodernism, or” 64).

Jameson’s “Postmodernism, or The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism” describes the loss of affect in terms of five main characteristics: first, the loss of the human figure; second, the loss of high modernism’s artistic expression; third, the loss of the centered subject; fourth, the loss of hermeneutics or what Jameson calls depth models; fourth, the end of the bourgeois ego (style); and fifth, the end of temporality. All of these characteristics revolve around the loss of the centered subject. He explains that the loss of affect is, in essence, the loss of expression as it has been explored through high modernism.

Equally lost, for Jameson, is the arts and humanities’ hermeneutic dialectical methods for interpreting the meaning of art. He defines hermeneutics as “the sense in which the work in its inert, objectal form, is taken as a clue or a symptom for some vaster reality which replaces it as its ultimate truth” (Jameson, “Postmodernism, or” 59). The dialectical models of interpretation or the depth models, as Jameson calls them, include: the hermeneutic of inside and outside, the dialectic of essence and appearance regarding ideology or false consciousness, Freud’s latent and manifest repression, existentialism’s authenticity and inauthenticity, and the semiotic signifier and signified (“Postmodernism, or” 62).

Jameson’s loss of affect is not a negative value judgment about postmodern art and culture. He explains that contemporary Marxist theory misunderstands Marx’s concept of materialization as it relates to contemporary art:

the misunderstanding is dramatized by the pejorative emphasis of the Hegelian tradition (Lukács as well as the Frankfurt School) on
phenomena of aesthetic reification—which furnishes the term of a negative value judgment—in juxtaposition to the celebration of the ‘material signifier’ and the ‘materiality of the text’ or of ‘textual production’ by the French tradition which appeals for its authority to Althusser and Lacan. (Jameson, *Signatures* 16)

Jameson claims that this negative value judgment creates “the false problem of value (which fatally programs every binary opposition into its good and bad, positive and negative, essential and inessential terms) into a more properly ambivalent dialectical and historical situation in which reification or materialization is a key structural feature of both modernism and mass culture” (*Signatures* 16-7). He argues instead that modernism can only be understood through the commodity because the commodity is its “prior form in terms of which alone modernism can be structurally grasped” (Jameson, *Signatures* 16). Jameson therefore concludes that the commodity, and its reification or materialization, are “the very terms of its solution” (*Signatures* 16). In *Signatures of the Visible*, he creates a dialectic of reification and utopia in order to forego the binary oppositions between modernism and postmodernism, high art and mass culture.

Reification is essential to Jameson’s film analysis because he argues that the central consequence of the loss of affect in postmodern culture is the production of pastiche. In “Postmodernism, or The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism,” he defines pastiche as ‘blank irony’: irony “without any of parody’s ulterior motives, amputated of the satiric impulse, devoid of laughter and of any conviction that alongside the abnormal tongue you have momentarily borrowed, some healthy linguistic normality still exists” (Jameson, “Postmodernism, or” 65). Furthermore, in *Signatures of the Visible*, Jameson explains that Jean Baudrillard’s postmodern cultural theory has revised Søren Kierkegard’s notion of repetition to create the concept of the simulacrum:
simulacrum (that is, the reproduction of ‘copies’ which have no original) characterizes the commodity production of consumer capitalism and marks our object world with an unreality and a free-floating absence of ‘the referent’ (e.g., the place hitherto taken by nature, by raw materials and primary production, or by the ‘originals’ of artisanal production or handicraft) utterly unlike anything experienced in any earlier social formation. (17)

According to his postmodern film theory, Hollywood cinema exhibits what he calls ‘nostalgia film’ style (Jameson, “Postmodernism, or” 67) where contemporary films reify images of the past, yet these images are merely a simulacrum of reproduction since they reproduce the nostalgia for older genres. This nostalgia is also, for Jameson, the allegory for a time when class consciousness was figureable or representable to our collective imaginary.

For example, in his chapter on “Reification and Utopia in Mass Culture” in *Signatures of the Visible*, Jameson argues that *Jaws* and *The Godfather* (Francis Ford Coppola, 1972) entail the mythology and ideology of late capitalism because both narratives suppress class consciousness and ultimately celebrate the renewal of the social order. Furthermore, in “Historicism in *The Shining*” also in *Signatures of the Visible*, he examines genre pastiche as a means of suppressing the reality of class consciousness in Stanley Kubrick’s *The Shining* (1980). Jameson claims that the film’s generic framework—the ghost story—implacably demystifies the nostalgia film as such, the pastiche, and reveals the latter’s concrete social content: the glossy simulacrum of this or that past is here unmasked as possession, as the ideological project to return to the hard certainties of a more visible and rigid class structure; and this is a critical perspective which includes but transcends the more immediate
appeal of even those occult films with which The Shining might momentarily have been confused. (Signatures 95)

Ultimately, for Jameson, what is lost in postmodern Hollywood cinema is not only the representation of class consciousness but the artist’s and the artistic object’s ability to be political and critical of the logic of late capitalism.

Late capitalism is a term and a historical periodization that Jameson borrows from Ernest Mandel’s Marxist interpretation of the evolution of technology in relation to the development of capital in his book Late Capitalism. According to Mandel’s delineation of the three phases of capitalism—market (from 1848), monopoly (from 1890), and late or multinational capitalism (from the 1940s)—Jameson creates an analogous dialectic between the artistic production of realism, modernism, and postmodernism (“Postmodernism, or” 77-78). He maintains that his argument foregoes moral denunciations of postmodern culture because he proposes a historical dialectic where postmodern culture exists as a cultural dominant. For Jameson, postmodern cultural production dominates modern aesthetics because aesthetic production has become commodified and institutionalized through the cultural logic of late capitalism.

In my view, Jameson’s emphasis on the loss of affect and the abolition of critical distance in postmodern culture creates an emphasis not only on what has been lost in the commodification of aesthetic production; it has implications about what art should represent in order to resonate with the spectator’s experience of the world. This is evident when he claims that although Andy Warhol’s art works “ought to be powerful and critical political statements” because his silk screen paintings of Campbell’s soup cans, for example, “explicitly foreground the commodity fetishism of a transition to late capital” (Jameson, “Postmodernism, or” 60). He concludes that if postmodern art is not political, “one would want to begin to wonder a
little more seriously about the possibilities of political or critical art in the postmodern period of late capital. (Jameson, “Postmodernism, or” 60)

I do not mean to suggest that Jameson’s loss of affect is entirely negative or judgmental in its connotations. I want to emphasize that his Marxist dialectic, “namely to think this development positively and negatively all at once” (Jameson, “Postmodernism, or” 86), emphasizes the alluring yet empty spectacles of style in postmodern culture and the loss of high modernism’s politics of representation. Here, affect is divorced from expression; it is “a liberation from anxiety” and “a liberation from every other kind of feeling as well, since there is no longer a self present to do the feeling” (Jameson, “Postmodernism, or” 64). In essence, Jameson’s concept of affect centers on the loss of modern art’s sense of alienation and anxiety that Jameson finds in “abstract expressionism in painting, existentialism in philosophy, the final forms of representation in the novel, the films of the great auteurs,” or the modernist school of poetry (“Postmodernism, or” 53).

Jameson’s solution is to create what he calls a ‘cognitive map’ in order to “renew the analysis of representation on a higher and much more complex level” (“Postmodernism, or” 89). His epistemological framework for grasping the unrepresentable in postmodern culture includes Althusser’s and Marx’s conceptions of ideology because “Althusser’s formulation remobilizes an older and henceforth classical Marxian distinction between science and ideology” (Jameson, “Postmodernism, or” 91). Jameson also forms a correlation between Althusser’s and Lacan’s existential positions regarding the individual subject, whose experience of life is opposed to abstract knowledge: “a realm which as Lacan reminds us is never positioned in or actualized by any concrete subject but rather by that structural void called ‘le sujet supposé savoir’, ‘the subject supposed to know’” (“Postmodernism, or” 91). He argues that while the postmodern condition

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7 He associates the great modernist auteurs of cinema with the work of Hitchcock, Fellini, Bergman, and Kurosawa; see Fredric Jameson, Signatures of the Visible (New York: Routledge, 1990) 159.
may not be representable, it is still knowable because ideology is a means of bridging existential experience and scientific knowledge (Jameson, “Postmodernism, or” 91). Furthermore, Jameson’s historicist definition of the late capitalist ideology is meant to point out that “the production of functioning and living ideologies, is distinct in different historical situations” and, most importantly, “that there may be historical situations in which it is not possible at all—and this would seem to be our situation in the current crisis” (“Postmodernism, or” 91). The following section will demonstrate how Jameson creates a cognitive map, which explains postmodernism’s loss of affect and its loss of historical referent, through allegorical narrative analysis.

Jameson’s Loss of Affect: Morality, Masculinity, and Reality Lost

It is clear, in my brief summary of Jameson’s loss of affect, that the central consequence of the postmodern crisis of meaning is postmodern art’s inability to represent its historical moment in time or what Jameson refers to as the crisis of historicity. In this section, I will demonstrate how Jameson’s loss of affect results in an allegorical reading of violence where narrative meaning is lost—as moral Manichean divisions between good and evil are lost, masculine power is lost, and reality is lost—in the spectacle of image culture.

Concerning morality, the loss of affect or the loss of representational meaning harks back to the loss of narrative meaning and moral representation. For example, one of Jameson’s main discussions about the theme of violence and evil is found in his chapter on “Historicism in The Shining” in Signatures of the Visible:
*The Shining*, then, though not an occult film, nonetheless envelops the new ideological genre of occult of its larger critical perspective, allowing us to reinterpret this still ‘metaphysical’ nostalgia for an absolute Evil in the far more materialistic terms of a yearning for the certainties and satisfactions of a traditional class system.

(*Signatures* 96-97)

The lack of Manichean principles, to which Jameson refers in his analysis of *The Shining*, is about the nostalgia for a time when class consciousness and utopia were representable. He states: “[t]hink, for example, of the earlier wave of fifties horror and science fiction films, whose ‘peacetime’ or ‘civilian’ context—generally the American small town, in some remote Western landscape—signified a ‘provinciality’ which no longer exists in consumer society today” (Jameson, *Signatures* 87). In *Signatures of the Visible*, and within his postmodern cultural theory as a whole, Jameson argues that nostalgia film style is the empty free-floating referent that entails nostalgia for a representable, figurable past when classical Hollywood genres represented class consciousness.

Jameson makes a similar argument about the loss of masculine power, specifically the loss of class consciousness, in *The Shining*. Here, his dialectic of affect includes the exhilaration of the simulacrum as it is embodied in Jack Nicholson’s star persona and the loss of class consciousness through the representation of his character. On the one hand, Jack Nicholson is, according to Jameson, “[a] post-contemporary hero, [which] makes the same point by its very distance from the older generation of new rebels (Brando, James Dean, Paul Newman, and even, transitionally, Steven McQueen)” (*Signatures* 93). On the other hand, when Jameson references Nicholson’s character, Jack Torrance, and his inability to write, he
claims that “‘Jack’ has nothing to say” (Signatures 94).⁸ He explains that Jack’s lack of expression is related to his broken social relations: “the family unit of which he is a part has been reduced to a kind of stark isolation, the coexistence of three random individuals who henceforth represent nothing beyond themselves, and those very relations with each other [are] thus called (violently) in question” (Jameson, Signatures 94). Jameson therefore argues that Jack’s desire for class consciousness compels the meaningless violence against his family. He maintains that Jack’s son Danny (Danny Lloyd) “strikes a link with the motif of the black community” and “offers some fantasmatic figure or larger social relationships” due to his telepathic relation with Hallorann (Scatman Crothers) (Jameson, Signatures 94). He concludes that Jack’s only ‘knowable community’ is in the past (Jameson, Signatures 94).

The loss of realism, according to Jameson’s postmodern cultural theory, is about the loss of a real historical referent—loss of class consciousness and the loss of history—couched in terms of the loss of affect. His overall emphasis on the loss of historicity revolves around the loss of narrative historical meaning. Jameson asks the question: “how to project the illusion that things still happen, that events exist, that there are still stories to tell, in a situation in which the uniqueness and the irrevocability of private destinies and of individuality itself seem to have evaporated?” (Signatures 87). The sense of disaffection, which Jameson describes in the works of postmodernism, is based on the collapse of a collective public history in favor of a private temporality that is schizophrenic in its pursuit of the literal materiality of the image. He argues that:

the breakdown of temporality suddenly releases this present of time from all the activities and the intentionalities that might focus it and

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⁸ Jameson makes a similar argument when he examines both the exhilaration and agony in Pacino’s performance in Dog Day Afternoon (Sidney Lumet, 1975), see Signatures of the Visible 35-54.
make it a space of praxis; thereby isolated, that present suddenly engulfs the subject with undescribable vividness, a materiality of perception properly overwhelming, which effectively dramatizes the power of the material—or better still, the literal—Signifier in isolation. (Jameson, “Postmodernism, or” 73)

It is for this reason that Jameson maintains the fact that postmodern art and culture are fraught with the “impossibility of realism” or “the impossibility of a living culture which might speak to a unified public about shared experience” (Signatures 87). Essentially, Jameson’s loss of affect illustrates the incommensurability between postmodern art’s nostalgic style, the production of pastiche, and the reference to a genuine history (“Postmodernism, or” 67).

The implication of Jameson’s brief discussion of the theme of violence is that Hollywood’s capitalist reification of genres subsumes the meaning of Manichean good and evil, the meaning of masculine power, and the meaning of socio-historical reality.9 If the solution to the postmodern crisis of meaning, or what Jameson refers to as the ‘waning of affect,’ is a cognitive map that restores latent allegorical meaning to film narratives, then the meaning of New Hollywood violence will continue to reiterate the crisis of representation.10 Consequently, film violence will constantly be defined in terms of what it cannot provide for the spectator.

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10 Thomas Elsaesser makes a similar argument when he claims that trauma theory merely allows the hermeneutic historian to see trauma in the traces of postmodernism’s anxieties over representation. While he argues that trauma theory helps film theorists recover postmodernism’s lost referent, he suggests that both trauma theory and postmodern film theory are limited to older modern paradigms of cultural theory; see Thomas Elsaesser, “Postmodernism as Mourning Work,” Screen 42.2 (2001): 200-01.
Disaffected: Morality, Masculinity, and Reality in Crisis

In what follows, I will briefly demonstrate that the discourse on New Hollywood violence, as it relates to Jameson’s postmodern cultural theory, concurs that New Hollywood’s representations of violence are meaningless because its representation of morality, masculinity, and reality are lost in the conservative utopia of late capitalism: a utopia that marks aberrance outside representation and narrative meaning to maintain an epistemological relation between the spectator and neo-conservative socio-cultural values. When the literature concurs that New Hollywood’s representations of violence are meaningless, the underlying assumption is that representation must be critical and political in its moral stance against the cultural logic of late capitalism. However, the literature equally maintains that since representation is impossible in postmodern culture—because all representation is subsumed in an image culture of exploitation and consumption—then violence is inherently meaningless because it is imbricated in this cultural logic.

Loss of Morality

I have already mentioned the literature’s emphasis on morality in my reference to Slocum’s “The ‘Film Violence’ Trope” and the discourse’s recurrent correlation between ‘film violence,’ New Hollywood’s graphic violence since the abolition of the Production Code, and the ensuing academic funding of moral and behavioral effects theories in communication studies departments. Although I am using the abolition of the Production Code as a historical marker for the beginning of New Hollywood, it is not within the scope of this study to discuss the moral regulations that governed
the Production Code’s censoring of violence.\textsuperscript{11} I am invoking the idea of morality, associated with the representation of violence, as a counterpoint to Deleuze’s Spinozan ethics that will be explored in Chapter 3.

\textbf{Masculinity Lost}

For many, the postmodern crisis of masculinity is evident in New Hollywood’s representation of violent men since their aberrant violence remains outside neo-conservative happy endings. For example, in his chapter concerning Martin Scorsese’s dramatization of real-life boxer Jake La Motta (Robert De Niro), “Raging Bully,” Frank P. Tomasulo argues that the film typifies Robin Wood’s notion of the incoherent text due to its contradictory views of masculine violence (177). For Tomasulo, Hollywood’s postmodern film violence favors spectacles of violence and neglects Aristotelian catharsis: the emphasis on “a mere simulacrum of horror, a ritual without redemption” leads to an “unexplained violence [which] has become not only a dominant motif in recent American screen entertainment but a powerful mythology that constitutes its own meaning as part of a reactionary social and political agenda” (176). His argument suggests that ‘unexplained’ violence is violent action without the narrative’s emotional catharsis.

His analysis of \textit{Raging Bull} (Martin Scorsese, 1980) supports his claims of contradiction. Tomasulo’s arguments suggest that the audience’s fear of La Motta’s strong, masculine violence is literally outweighed by the pity the audience feels at the sight of an emasculated, overweight, ‘has-been’ by the end of the film. His point is that the specificity of La Motta’s violence, which is framed within stereotypes of ethnicity, class, and gender.

renders the film’s plight for the ‘angry white male’ impotent (Tomasulo 192-94). His conclusion is significant since it assumes that La Motta’s aberrant violence is not in line with the conservative mythology of the American hero, which he describes with reference to Susan Jeffords’ *Hard Bodies*:

In that era, when advocates for women, gays, and minorities had a growing voice in American culture, U.S. foreign policy seemed unable to control ‘uprisings’ and ‘terrorism’ by people of color around the globe, and the domestic and international economies were as flabby as Robert De Niro in his last scenes. In the wings waited a superhero, the strong, manly patriarch Ronald Reagan, to rectify the national ‘lack’. Once Reagan assumed office, male movie heroes . . . reverted to mythic types such as Indiana Jones, Rambo, the Terminator, and Rocky Balboa, who defeated black upstarts and a ferocious Russian in the ring. (Tomasulo 192)

Tomasulo concludes that La Motta’s violence is meaningless, or in his words unexplained, because it is explained within a stereotype of masculinity that is rendered powerless.

In “Postmodernism and Cinema,” Val Hill makes an analogous argument about the aberrant white male whose violence is not evil but elusive. She argues that postmodern Hollywood cinema marks aberrant violence outside the film text:

One of the great cinematic villains of this period, Keyzer Soze [Kevin Spacey] (*The Usual Suspects* (1995)), walks away, disappears, having constructed himself from random images, words and things that surrounded him in the police station. It is Soze who provides the link between the increasingly anonymous serial killers and Hollywood’s, the West’s, new villain, who, having had a past is now hesitating on
the edge of representation (in both the film world and the ‘real’ world, given the elusiveness of Bin Laden and other ‘usual suspects’), due to the events of 9/11 and the subsequent War against Terror: the terrorist. (V. Hill 99-100)

In her conclusion, Hill states that while Tyler Durden (Brad Pitt) of Fight Club is equally marked outside representation, the representation of white masculinity in crisis is anxious and contradictory in its relation to violence (V. Hill 101).

Tomasulo’s and Val Hill’s emphasis on the contradictory representation of masculinity in crisis is consistent with Jameson’s dialectic of affect as well as Sharrett and Russell’s crisis cinema. Russell’s “Decadence, Violence, and the Decay of History,” echoes Jameson’s loss of affect and the crisis of masculinity, when she argues that Lynch and Greenaway refuse to “violate representation” (196). She explains that:

The discourse of gender in the two films [Wild at Heart and The Cook, the Thief, his Wife and her Lover] also suggest that the crisis at hand is one of male mastery, and the abstraction of belief that the narratives strive to salvage from the ruins of representation is, on some level, a belief in patriarchy. (Russell, “Decadence” 196)

Jameson alludes to the violence of the cultural logic of late capitalism when he states that “postmodern culture is the internal and superstructural expression of a whole new wave of American military and economic domination throughout the world: in this sense, as throughout class history, the underside of culture is blood, torture, death and horror” (“Postmodernism, or” 57). Similarly, the implication of the discourse on masculinity in crisis is about the fear of aberrant violence and the mainstay of patriarchal, neo-conservative values.
The crisis of masculinity emphasizes the powerlessness of revolt because the cultural logic of late capitalism subsumes the transgression of the modernist avant-garde. As Jameson claims:

As for the postmodern revolt against all that [modern art], however, it must equally be stressed that its own offensive features—from obscurity and sexually explicit material to psychological squalor and overt expressions of social and political defiance, which transcend anything that might have been imagined at the most extreme moments of high modernism—no longer scandalize anyone and are not only received with the greatest complacency but have themselves become institutionalized and are at one with the official culture of Western society. (“Postmodernism, or” 56)

The persistent correlation, in the literature, is that the meaninglessness of the postmodern experience as a whole—the loss of affect—is the expression of masculinity lost. What I mean by this is that lower-to-middle class male rebellion—from Jack in *The Shining* to Tyler in *Fight Club*—is emptied of signification as much as the neo-conservative heroes of Jeffords’ *Hard Bodies* are emptied of resistance due to their allegiance to Hollywood’s late capitalist utopia.

According to the literature, both the rebellious man and the strong hero are essentially subsumed by the spectacle of masculinity itself. In fact, the same can be said about the postmodern discourse’s discussion of the representation of the violent woman. The representation of female violence is either aberrant and remains outside the limits of representation,¹² or

¹² Neroni uses a psychoanalytic Marxist framework to argue that the representation of the violent woman “is either ideological or revolutionary on the basis of the [narrative] relation it takes up to antagonism,” see Hilary Neroni, *The Violent Woman: Femininity, Narrative, and Violence in Contemporary American Cinema* (Albany: State U of New York P, 2005) 10-11. Like the legacy of psychoanalytic feminist film theory before her, Neroni places the representation of the violent woman outside the symbolic order as a source of anxiety and antagonism to patriarchal ideology.
subsumed into the spectacle of performing the masculine body.\textsuperscript{13} What is implicit in the dichotomy, between the neo-conservative heroic male body and the disaffected revolt of otherness, is an essential dichotomy between the idea of masculine power and the weakness of femininity and otherness.

Empty Spectacles

The discourse’s focus on the spectacle of violence, as it relates to Jameson’s concept of the loss of affect, involves the loss of a narrative historical referent, the loss of a centered subject, and the loss of temporality in favor of space. According to Jameson’s “Postmodernism, or The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism,” the loss of historicity leaves the postmodern subject with ‘intensities’ or “the lived experience of built space” due to the mutation in the cultural sphere and the collapse of public History in favor of personal temporalities (58). Similarly, concerning postmodern Hollywood violence, Jameson’s emphasis on space—an emphasis on the mise-en-scène and spaces of nostalgia film style—translates into an emphasis on spectacle at the expense of narrative meaning.

By and large, in this postmodern context, the spectacle of violence—as Russell’s and Sharrett’s crisis cinema makes clear—results in the loss of the politics of representation. For example, Russell claims that while Godard’s excess of blood and violence “insists on going beyond the end of the film and the end of history towards historical transformation” (“Decadence” 174). She views Godard’s statement, “Not blood. Red,”\textsuperscript{14} as a means of “exploiting the discursive potential of fictional death,” which is “aligned with some of the central tenets of poststructuralist apocalypticism”

\textsuperscript{13} I am referring to Tasker’s concept of ‘musculinity’ and the performance of the masculine body by female action heroines in Yvonne Tasker, \textit{Spectacular Bodies: Gender, Genre and the Action Cinema} (New York: Routledge, 1993).

\textsuperscript{14} This is a phrase borrowed from Jean-Luc Godard in \textit{Godard on Godard}, eds. Jean Narboni and Tom Milne, trans. Tom Milne (New York: Da Capo, 1972) 217.
(Russell, “Decadence” 175). For Russell, Godard’s work and his spectacle of violence is about the impossibility of representation.

Furthermore, in crisis cinema, postmodern cinema’s emphasis on the materiality of the text—as a site of the gratuitous ritual consumption—implies the death of narrative historical meaning since spectacle is aligned with the capitalist utopia in image culture. Russell argues, for example, that Lynch’s *Wild at Heart* involves a redemption of popular culture romance and utopianism” since the film “is unable to articulate a future free of the trappings of American bourgeois nationalist ideology” (“Decadence” 175). Apocalyptic crisis cinema, as Russell and Sharrett describe it with allegiances to Fredric Jameson’s postmodern cultural theory, understands the spectacle of violence in terms of the end of historiography.

According to the discourse on New Hollywood violence, Hollywood’s representations of violence are inherently gratuitous because they are aligned with what Justin Wyatt and R. L. Rutsky have called ‘high concept’ cinema. In “High Concept: Abstracting the Postmodern,” Wyatt and Rutsky claim that both classical and postmodern Hollywood cinema abstract images. Yet, in postmodern Hollywood’s high concept cinema, the narrative is emptied of its significance due to its emphasis on abstraction, fetishization, and objectification. What they refer to as “the aesthetic of high concept” is a spectacle of “striking visual imagery” that is akin to fashion, style, and the advertising industry and its attempt to grasp the attention of youth markets (Wyatt and Rutsky 44-46). They analyze the films of Adrian Lyne who worked in advertising before directing Hollywood films. For example, they claim that in Lyne’s *Flashdance* (1983) high tech and high concept converge to reduce the image to décor and lighting techniques. They also argue that the high tech striptease in the film objectifies the female body for the

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pleasure of the male spectator (Wyatt and Rutsky 47). Still, they conclude that postmodern abstraction is liberating:

If it [late capitalism] cannot confine its images within the ‘iron cage’ of stable, rational values, then it begins to lose the ability to legitimate itself. Thus, the contradiction of capitalist rationalization is apparent in high concept; the desire to reduce everything to abstractions, to images, to ‘concepts,’ has resulted in an overproduction of images which threaten to overrun all rational values: truth, falsity, reality, utility etc. (Wyatt and Rutsky 49)

My point is that if Hollywood’s images of violence become a concept of violence—and, according to the postmodern discourse, it is a purely aesthetic concept—then we need a new means of engaging its spectacles to understand its affect on the spectator.

What is implicit, in the discourse on New Hollywood violence, is the inability to question the ideology of late capitalism because the ideology subsumes ‘real,’ narrative, historical violence in an abstraction of images (of violence) that are inherently gratuitous. If, in a postmodern context, the excess of violent imagery represents a literal capitalist utopia—at the expense of real historical conditions of existence—where there is neither transformation nor transgression but only a belief in the image, then it is imperative that academics find a means of engaging with the affect of imagery rather than reiterating its lack of representational meaning.
Conclusion: Affect from Jameson to Deleuze

I want to acknowledge the jump in this thesis from the problematization of Jameson’s loss of affect to a framework using Deleuzian affect as a solution to this problem. It is not within the scope of this thesis to compare and contrast the intricacies of Jameson’s postmodern cultural theory, Deleuze’s philosophy, and their relation to Marxism. While some might argue that Jameson’s and Deleuze’s notions of affect are incommensurable due to their divergent methodologies and backgrounds, they both define affect as an intensity that remains outside the notion of a centered subject. The important point is to situate their definitions of affect according to their respective frameworks.

Jameson’s engagement with image culture reveals ties to a Hegelian dialectic, humanism, and romanticism. Accordingly, Jameson’s definition of affect entails a Hegelian dialectic between postmodernism’s euphoric affect of surface styles and the loss of high modernism’s personal style and its reference to a real historical context. For Jameson, postmodern intensities “are now free-floating and impersonal, and tend to be dominated by a peculiar kind of euphoria” (“Postmodernism, or” 64). At the end of his essay, Jameson argues that these new postmodern intensities, which result in the ‘waning of affect’ associated with high modernism’s authentic style, “can best be grasped by a return to older theories of the sublime” (“Postmodernism, or” 58). Here, Jameson refers to the works of Edmund Burke and Immanuel Kant. In sum, Jameson’s recourse to the sublime—as a means of explicating postmodern affect—speaks to his use of a Hegelian dialectic.

Deleuze’s approach to image culture is anti-Hegelian, anti-humanist, non-Althusserian, and non-psychoanalytic. For Deleuze, affect is a prepersonal intensity. Deleuze’s definition of affect stems mainly from

Spinoza. Brian Massumi explains Deleuze’s Spinozan definition of affect in his translation of *A Thousand Plateaus*:

L’affect (Spinoza’s *affectus*) is an ability to affect and be affected. It is a prepersonal intensity corresponding to the passage from one experiential state of the body to another and implying an augmentation or diminution in that body’s capacity to act. L’affectio (Spinoza’s *affectio*) is each such state considered as an encounter between the affected body and a second, affecting, body (with body taken in its broadest possible sense to include ‘mental’ or ideal bodies). (“Notes on the Translation” xvi)

Deleuze’s engagement with affect as a prepersonal intensity speaks to his anti-humanist philosophy because it emphasizes the capacity to differentiate oneself from the notion of a centered subjectivity.

While Jameson’s definition of affect—its relation to the sublime—presupposes postmodern cinema’s incapacity to represent the vast technological complexities of late capitalism, Deleuze’s definition of affect—its relation to Kantian beauty—is a confrontation with the powerlessness of thought and representation. The importance of Deleuzian affect rests in its ability to become aware of cultural conditioning, through the awareness of thought: “[affect] can become a material thing, and as such, as Deleuze describes, it can compel systems of knowledge, history, memory and circuits of power” (Colman 11-12). The power of affect, for Deleuze, is the ability to distance oneself from a humanist notion of individuality, rationality, and the power structures that have been founded on these values. As Melissa McMahon explains in “Beauty: Machinic Repetition in the Age of Art,” “Kant’s beautiful presents the individual as necessarily working from a fragment, a ‘cut’, not exactly removed from the whole, but from which the whole is itself removed” (7). Similarly, Deleuze’s movement and
time images represent two images of thought: classical cinema’s sublime dialectic of thought where cuts represent the whole; and, modern cinema’s time-image where the whole is removed from the cut to create an irrational image of thought (Cinema 2 181-88). According to Deleuze, “[w]hat constitutes the whole is the relation between automatism, the unthought and thought” (Cinema 2 178).

Ian Buchanan and Ronald Bogue, who both make correlations between Jameson’s postmodern cultural theory and Deleuze’s philosophy, concur that Deleuze’s theorization of difference is a unique philosophical theory. Difference, in the Deleuzian use of the term, is tied to Deleuze’s concern with “the primacy accorded to identity and representation in western rationality” (Stagoll 72). Deleuze’s primacy of difference, the capacity to distinguish oneself from this rational mode of thought, “challenges two critical presuppositions: the privilege accorded [to] Being and the representational model of thought” (Stagoll 72). Deleuzian difference creates a unique view of utopia, based on the differentiation from the humanist illusion of subjectivity, which can be distinguished from Jameson’s concept of utopia that is aligned with the ideology of late capitalism.

In Deleuzism, Buchanan argues that Deleuze’s theorization of difference is his “most utopian idea” because it means that “one can think differently” (117) and beyond subjectivity. Considering the fact that Jameson uses a Hegelian dialectic to examine the impossibility of utopia in postmodern culture, his emphasis on the ‘waning of affect’ reflects postmodern cinema’s limitations of figurability and representation. For example, Jameson states that “conspiracy theory (and its garish narrative

17 In Signatures of the Visible, Jameson’s chapters on Hollywood cinema examine the reification and utopia dialectic in Spielberg’s Jaws (1975), Coppola’s The Godfather and The Godfather: Part II (1972 and 1974), Lumet’s Dog Day Afternoon (1975), and Kubrick’s The Shining (1980). In each analysis, Jameson exposes Hollywood’s reification of class consciousness through the narrative’s utopian ‘resolution’ of class strife, which results in the impossibility of class consciousness in postmodern cinema and culture. For Jameson, these narratives express nostalgia for a time when class consciousness was figurable, representational, and accessible to our collective imagination.
manifestations) must be seen as a degraded attempt—through the figuration of advanced technology—to think the impossible totality of the contemporary world system” (“Postmodernism, or” 80). Jameson maintains that the postmodern sublime is the only means of theorizing this ‘impossible totality’ of late capitalism (“Postmodernism, or” 80).  

18 However, Deleuze’s definition of affect—as a prepersonal intensity and a capacity to shock rational thought—reveals the capacity to create utopia through a new type of thought and a new capacity to act. Utopia, for Deleuze, is the awareness of difference—a becoming-other, other than ‘I’—that results in the potential to change actual or representational systems of domination such as political ideologies.

In Deleuze’s *Wake*, Bogue argues that although Deleuze does not offer any theory of postmodernism, he “modifies our concept of postmodernity” (29). For Bogue, “since Benjamin’s ‘Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction,’ it has been something of a commonplace in cultural criticism to remark on the derealizing effects of the mass media, advertising, and the proliferation of images in Western societies” (*Wake* 35). He concludes that although Deleuze is postmodern in the sense that “he abandons, and occasionally challenges, the *grands récits* [grand narratives] of the Enlightenment; he thinks the unthought, but with no nostalgia for a missing whole” (Bogue, *Wake* 40). Furthermore, he associates Deleuze’s notion of the time-image with Jameson’s “‘postmodernist experience of form’” where “the viewer or reader is expected ‘to rise somehow to the level at which the vivid perception of radical difference is in and of itself a new mode of grasping what used to be called relationship’” (qtd. in Bogue, *Wake* 39-40; Jameson, “Postmodernism, or” 76).

As Bogue and Buchanan suggest, Deleuze allows us to rethink postmodernity by engaging with its disorienting intensities—its affect—as

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something that allows us to think difference. While Jameson emphasizes the loss of affect in postmodern culture, Deleuze uses affect as a means of rethinking the self in the world. Their respective views on affect and image culture stems from their different backgrounds. Jameson’s Anglo-American background is structuralist, while Deleuze’s work is concurrent with the French poststructuralist movement. Although Deleuze’s philosophy is contemporaneous with poststructuralism, I would not classify his cinematic theory as poststructuralist since it does not partake in deconstruction.

Deleuzian theory is constructivist in the sense that empirical knowledge is experienced affectively or, as Claire Colebrook states in Understanding Deleuze: “[t]he post-1968 nature of Deleuze’s thinking lies in its rejection of a politics that explains the relations among rational individuals in favour of a micropolitics that explains the construction of individuals from pre-personal forces” (xxxiii). She goes on to state that, for Deleuze, consciousness is not the origin of thought. Consciousness is inherently differentiated: “Deleuze will not accept that there just ‘is’ a structure of differences” since he “insists on thinking the genesis or emergence of difference” (Colebrook 13). Here, Colebrook stresses one of Deleuze’s central questions: “[h]ow did we come to think of ourselves as differentiated from the world, as subjects?” (13). This implies that he does not deny subjectivity, yet he views it as an error or illusion that has dominated Western philosophy. Instead, he urges us to engage with difference: “Deleuze insists that we have to confront this problem by thinking difference positively. Only positive difference can explain the emergence of any differentiated thing, whether that be the system of differences of a language or the differentiated human individual” (Colebrook 13). According to Colebrook’s argument, for Deleuze, the primacy of difference creates an engagement with the presubjective force of affect as the creation of difference itself.
In cinematic terms, thinking the unthought or thinking difference is not about meaning, it is about sense. In Deleuze’s *Wake*, although Bogue claims that Deleuze’s notions of difference and simulacra are not unique to postmodern culture, these terms engage with “a context in which the existence of simulacra becomes increasingly undeniable” (34). As Buchanan notes, “the fundamental nature of language,” for Deleuze and Guattari “resides in the realm of indirect discourse, or rather the copy of the copy realm of the simulacra, and consists in the production of sense not the conveyance of meaning” (*Deleuzism* 123). Deleuze’s time-image’s affect engages with “the abandoning of figures, metonymy as much as metaphor” (*Cinema 2* 173). Deleuzian affect, its difference, is about grasping the material image of thought as a “universal variation or an asubjective plane of movement where matter=image” (Rodowick 175). Deleuzian affect is about the creation of sense rather than the representation of meaning.

As a result, Deleuze’s engagement with ‘difference’ in cinema acknowledges two types of affect. Firstly, the cliché of affect relates to movement-image classicism (perception, action, affection). In this case, Deleuze argues that “metaphors are sensory-motor evasions, and furnish us with something to say when we no longer know what to do: they are specific schemata of an affective nature” (*Cinema 2* 20). He calls this a cliché because it is “a sensory-motor image of the thing” that is perceived according to “interests, ideological beliefs and psychological demands” (Deleuze, *Cinema 2* 20). Secondly, with the crisis of the action-image and in time-image cinema, the affect of the pure optical and sound situation “brings out the thing in itself, literally, in its excess of horror or beauty” (Deleuze, *Cinema 2* 20).

My aim, in using Deleuzian affect to make sense of New Hollywood violence, is to bring out the affect of violence as an engagement with ethics, emotion, and beauty. This engagement with affect is a confrontation with
common sense thoughts about violence: the representation of morality, masculinity, and reality. The affect of the time-image, as Buchanan explains, doesn’t make thought visible, instead it brings us face-to-face with thought’s impossibility and in that way induces thought in the very place it had been absent. But it is only able to do this to the extent that it breaks with the structures of what Deleuze calls the movement-image, which in this context might be defined as cinema’s power of common-sense, but it can also be regarded as its innate tendency towards fascism. (‘Five’ 8)

According to the conflation of discourses on film violence, New Hollywood, and postmodernism, the ideological power of late capitalism is equated with violence: a violence that cannot be represented due to the loss of a historical referent and the loss of the centered subject. In order to illuminate how power functions, the following chapters will demonstrate that a framework based on Deleuzian affect is a means of engaging with violence as a force of affect rather than a representation of action. Deleuze’s crisis of the action-image—the break from a rational image of thought and classical action-oriented narratives—and the emergence of time-image cinema illuminate the irrational desires that form power relations. If the power of image culture is equated with violence, then the affect of image culture—the capacity to affect and be affected—is important since it is an engagement with the production of sense experience.
Chapter 2

The Deleuzian Framework and the Affective Spectator

“Every kind of cinema (and every kind of film theory) presupposes an ideal spectator, and then imagines a certain relationship between the mind and body of that spectator and the screen” (Elsaesser and Hagener i).

Introduction

In this chapter, I will explore Deleuzian affect as a means of theorizing the spectator’s experience of film violence. My aim is to redefine the concept of film violence, specifically New Hollywood violence, beyond notions of narrative meaning and representation. It is clear in the literature review (Chapter 1) that the crisis associated with New Hollywood violence and postmodern cinema refers to the loss of a historical, narrative referent. As a result, the conflation of discourses on violence, postmodernism, and New Hollywood emphasizes the cinema’s meaningless and gratuitous spectacles of violence. Within my Deleuzian framework, however, affect replaces notions of meaning and signification because it is an experiential, transient state that changes along with what Deleuze calls movement-image shots and time-image editing. In an effort to theorize the nature of the spectator’s relation to screen violence, I will review Deleuze’s influence on cinema studies while forging a theory of the affective spectator.

Firstly, I will briefly situate Deleuze’s concept of affect as it relates to his claim that ‘the brain is the screen,’ and to his concepts of the classical movement-image, the crisis of the action-image, and the time-image. Secondly, following Richard Rushton’s question in his article “Deleuzian
Spectatorship” in Screen, I will ask: what constitutes a Deleuzian theory of film spectatorship? Thirdly, I will examine the way in which many Deleuzian film theorists implicitly and explicitly discuss masochistic spectatorship when they describe the affect of cinematic imagery as a body that affects the spectator’s body. Fourthly, I will explain my theory of the affective spectator as I delineate the key concepts for the following chapters of this thesis. Finally, I will conclude that Deleuze’s definition of affect, as a prepersonal intensity, illuminates New Hollywood’s conscious awareness of violent imagery, its affect, and our spectatorial relation to image culture.

**Deleuzian Affect: ‘The Brain is the Screen’**

Deleuze’s cerebral model of the cinema stems from Eisenstein who “already identified the cinema with the process of thought as this necessarily develops in the brain, as it necessarily envelops feeling or passion” (Cinema 2 210). He relegates Eisenstein’s film theory to a classical view of the brain-world: a Hegelian synthesis between the law of the concept and the law of the image (Deleuze, Cinema 2 210-11). Here, a synthesis is created between ideal knowledge and a harmonious image of thought because the concept is developed according to movements of integration and differentiation that express changes in the status of the whole—the relation between thought and unthought. The integration of image and concept is formed according to the montage of attractions: the law of the concept and the law of the image intersect to form “the identity of image and concept” where “the concept as whole does not become differentiated without externalizing itself in a sequence of associated images, and the images do not associate without being internalized in a concept as the whole which integrates them”

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(Deleuze, *Cinema 2* 210). For Deleuze, this classical dialectical relation between image and thought is associated with his movement-image.

However, Deleuze’s time-image exhibits a new image of thought that has evolved with new scientific knowledge about the brain. The time-image therefore creates “a topological cerebral space, which passed through relative mediums [*milieux*] to achieve the co-presence of an inside deeper than any internal medium, and an outside more distant than any external medium” (Deleuze, *Cinema 2* 211). This new image of thought foregrounds the gap in time, in affect, between stimulus and response in the brain and on screen. In Deleuzian thought, this gap or interval is a non-rational or non-causal link between the actual present that passes, its virtual past, and projected future. Here, affect is singular in its capacity or power because it is the virtual coalescence of past and future that actualizes the present. Although Deleuzian affect and Deleuzian theory is often criticized for being too relativistic in its principles and applications, I will demonstrate the concrete nature of Deleuze’s philosophy through an exploration of New Hollywood cinema’s camera-consciousness, its relation to spectatorship, and our engagement with violence through this topological relation between the actual and the virtual within the immanence of images. Deleuzian film theory gives researchers the tools to engage with the affect of cinematic imagery in order to make sense of the cinema as an affective medium that reveals the mechanisms of desire and power at work in our brains as on screen.

While many theoretical frameworks tend to focus on the cinema’s representational system, Deleuze and Deleuzian film theorists attempt to use the cinema as a means of showing us how we affectively experience the world. The implication, here, is that the cinematic world is real because it is an affective reflection of the world of ideas, images, and thoughts that exists

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20 Deleuze refers to Gilbert Simondon’s arguments, when he claims that a Euclidean model of the brain has been replaced with a topological one; Gilbert Simondon, *L’individu et sa genèse physico-biologique* (Paris: PU de France, 1964) 260-65.
in our brains. As D. N. Rodowick explains in *Gilles Deleuze’s Time-Machine*, “the question informing Deleuze’s cinema books is this: How does a sustained meditation on film and film theory illustrate the relation between images and thought?” (5). According to Rodowick, “Deleuze follows V. N. Vološinov’s argument in *Marxism and the Philosophy of Language* that ‘consciousness itself can arise and become a viable fact only in the material embodiment of signs. . . . The individual consciousness is nurtured of signs; it derives its growth from them; it reflects their logic and laws’” (qtd. in Rodowick 6).²¹ It is important to note that, for Deleuze, ‘signs’ must not be reduced to a linguistic, structural, representational model. He criticizes Metz’s use of Saussurean linguistics for reducing the cinema to an utterance because this semiotic framework ignores cinematic movement and time (Deleuze, *Cinema 2 27*).

Accordingly, Deleuze’s topology of movement and time uses Peirce’s semiotics combined with Bergson’s theses on time. In *Cinema 1: The Movement-Image*, Deleuze creates an analogy between Bergsonian-influenced images (perception, action, affection) and Peirce’s semiotic logic of signs (firstness, secondness, and thirdness). Yet, in *Cinema 2: The Time-Image*, Deleuze inverts Peirce’s logic (the whole of firstness, secondness, and thirdness) because the time-image breaks this unity. Deleuze therefore uses the opsign, the pure optical image, and the sonsign, the pure sound image, as a non-linguistic semiotics of the time-image to describe a subjectless image of thought: an intolerance of “everydayness itself” where “aberration is now valid in itself and designates time as its direct cause” (*Cinema 2 41*). This shift—from classical cinema’s movement-image to the aberrance of the modern time-image—is Deleuze’s examination of “how mutations in the history of the cinematic signification have produced our contemporary ‘audiovisual culture’” (Rodowick 7).

Deleuze’s *Cinema* books are what he calls a natural history of cinema. Rodowick calls Deleuze’s philosophy a “thinking-through” cinema (6), while Elsaesser and Hagener discuss Deleuze’s thinking with cinema (8). For Rodowick:

Deleuze depicts image practices as social and technological automata where each era thinks itself by producing its particular image of thought. In turn philosophy can map this image in mental cartographies whose coordinates are given as ‘noosigns.’ This is an implied image of the brain with its internal wirings, connections, associations, and functionings. In its largest sense, then, the image describes historically specific cinema practices as ‘spiritual automata’ or ‘thought machines.’ (7)

Through his taxonomy of Bergsonian-influenced images and Peircian-influenced signs, Deleuze chronicles the transition from the classical movement-image to modern cinema’s time-image. Using Bergson’s *Matter and Memory*, a philosophy of consciousness whose tenets oppose Husserl-based phenomenology, Deleuze discusses camera-consciousness. I am using the term camera-consciousness as one hyphenated word in order to emphasize the fact that Deleuze defines consciousness in relation to the images that the cinema produces in movement and in time. In *Cinema 1*, he explicitly states that “the sole cinematographic consciousness is not us, the spectator, nor the hero; it is the camera – sometimes human, sometimes inhuman or superhuman” (Deleuze 20). This is an important point because Deleuze’s exploration of cinema’s natural history begins with Bergson’s metaphysical solution to the late nineteenth century’s psychological crisis in the wake of modernity. With the advent of cinema, Deleuze claims that: “[m]ovement, as a physical reality in the external world, and the image, as a psychic reality in consciousness, could no longer [metaphysically] be
opposed” (*Cinema 1* xiv). Through Deleuze’s taxonomy of shot-types, which relate to camera-consciousness, and his discussion of the way in which *auteurs* are thinkers of time and movement, his natural history rethinks crises in terms of what they can enlighten for the spectator.

Deleuze’s correlation between the brain and the screen confronts the Cartesian mind versus body divide that has dominated Western thought since the Enlightenment. His concept of affect, the capacity to affect and be affected by camera-consciousness, creates an implicit concept of spectatorship that is unchained from subjectivity. In other words, the concept of a subjectless spectatorship may be derived from Deleuze’s emphasis on affect as a prepersonal or presubjective state that varies due to the capacity to affect and be affected in life. All theories of spectatorship may be criticized for assuming that the spectator is ideal and removed from a socio-cultural context. Yet, as Elsaesser and Hagener suggest in this chapter’s opening epigraph, every theory of film spectatorship posits an ideal spectator in its assumptions about the mind and body, and the spectator and the screen. For Deleuze, affect is a precognitive, prepersonal mind-body connection that exceeds thought. In other words, for Deleuze and Deleuzian theorists, sense affects the body and the brain faster than cognitive processes. If, according to Deleuze, ‘the brain is the screen,’ affect is the immaterial relation of the mind-body connection.

Deleuze’s engagement with the mind-body connection unveils the desires that produce representation—the perceptions, actions, and affections that form sensory-motor schema of the world—and the irrational thoughts—pure affects—that cannot be represented by the mind, but felt in the mind-body connection. The latest of Deleuzian theories, exemplified in *Deleuze and the Schizoanalysis of Cinema*, develops a theory of the cinema as a desiring machine. Ian Buchanan’s “Five Theses of Actually Existing

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Schizoanalysis of Cinema” argues that a theoretical framework based on Deleuze and Guattari’s *Anti-Oedipus* illuminates the mechanisms of desire that the cinema produces when it cannot produce thoughts or ideas: “[Deleuze] argues that cinema’s purpose as an artform is the engendering of ideas, but I want to argue that his implication is that when it fails to produce ideas it leaves us with a heterogeneous muddle of desiring-machines” (8). This heterogeneous muddle to which Buchanan refers is, I would argue, the affect of images rather than their representation. Buchanan’s suggestion regarding the failure of the cinema to produce ideas relates to the transition that Deleuze describes from *Cinema 1: The Movement-Image* to *Cinema 2: The Time-Image*.

According to Deleuze, the crisis of the action-image entails the crisis of classical cinema, the end of cinema as a sensory-motor schema, and the beginning of the time-image. The importance of the time-image rests in the dissolution of character-motivated actions in favor of a cinema of affects and purely optical and sound situations. Deleuzian affect is a confrontation with conscious thought—thoughts real and imagined—as a confrontation with the unthought.

As Buchanan observes, and as I will show in the following sections, Deleuzian film theory deals with the real (conscious) of the cinema while psychoanalysis “either pretends that what’s on screen is a pseudo-dream or it assumes that to enjoy a film the viewer must somehow insert themselves into the drama by identifying with one of its protagonists, but either way it emphasizes the imaginary and the symbolic at the expense of the real” (“Five” 8). The transition from movement to time-image, Deleuze’s crisis of the action-image, is crucial to my argument. It describes the affect of modern cinema—including Deleuze’s mention of Hollywood’s crisis and departure from classical cinema with the influence of new wave cinemas (*Cinema 1* 206)—which, in my view, is the beginning of New Hollywood. The strength of New Hollywood, and the power that I see in its use of imagery, is its
combination of movement-image and time-images, which deterritorialize one another to provoke a conscious exploration of screen violence.

**The Deleuzian Spectator**

My examination of an implicit notion of spectatorship in Deleuze’s work on cinema is indebted to Richard Rushton who makes a case for this argument in his article “Deleuzian Spectatorship.” In this essay, featured in *Screen’s* 50th anniversary issue, Rushton claims that while early 1970s *Screen* theory posits the ideal of an active spectator, “where spectators remain in control of their senses and thoughts” (48), he considers Deleuze’s notion of spectatorship as “one that eschews activity” (46). He asks the following questions:

> if Deleuze seems to offer something beyond the notion of a passive spectator, what kind of spectator does he presume? Does Deleuze demonstrate some of the active capabilities of the cinema spectator? Or, more pertinently, does Deleuze even have a notion of a cinema spectator – a viewer or audience member who watches and listens to a film – at all? (Rushton 45)

Rushton’s point of antagonism, between *Screen* and Deleuzian theories, revolves around the question of the passive spectator. Radicalism, for Rushton, is the notion of passivity itself since:

> Very few scholars in film studies have ever defended a passive spectator, from the politically motivated call for active responses to society’s contradictions, through David Bordwell’s defence of the active cognitive activities of the beholder, to cultural studies’
articulations of the complex interactions of which viewers are capable. (48)

He also argues, admittedly in a general sense, that *Screen’s* aversion to passivity stems from its association with mainstream cinema while the ideal of an active spectatorship is aligned with the avant-garde (Rushton 47). For Rushton, it is the Deleuzian philosophical involvement in embodiment versus *Screen’s* Althusserian theory of ideology and distance from the text that is at the heart of these diverging views of passive spectatorship (49). Rushton’s implication, here, is that the Deleuzian spectator is at one with his or her sense perception of the cinema rather than distanced from any emotional or affective investment in the text.

In order to underline the importance of Deleuze’s radical passivity, Rushton distinguishes two categories of spectatorship. The first mode of spectatorship is immersion where “the film comes out to the spectator so as to surround and envelop her/him” (Rushton 49). He associates immersion with, for example, Linda Williams’ work on body genres (Rushton 50). He also aligns immersion with the current work on Deleuzian affect and the affection-image [the close-up] (Rushton 50). Rushton cites Shaviro’s *The Cinematic Body*, Kennedy’s *Deleuze and Cinema*, Pisters’ *The Matrix of Visual Culture*, and Marks’ *The Skin of the Film* as Deleuzian theories of immersive embodiment (46). For Rushton, immersion is a process where “the film is entering your own space” (50). He therefore equates immersion with Bergson’s definition of affect: “‘that part or aspect of the inside of my body which we mix with the image of external bodies’” (qtd. in Rushton 50; Bergson 58). Rushton’s immersion is what I would call an outside-in process, since the film affects and immerses the spectator’s senses, from the film to the spectator. The second mode of passive spectatorship is absorption. Rushton argues that while Deleuzian theories are associated with what he calls immersion—because they take Bergson’s definition of affect
“to mean that for affection, external bodies come out towards me so as to mix with my own body”—he claims that absorption is a more appropriate means of describing the “affective participation” of Deleuzian spectatorship (50). Absorption where “the spectator goes into the film” (Rushton 49), what I would call an inside-out process, describes “the way that a body can be imaginarily projected into the image” (Rushton 50). Rushton borrows the term absorption from art historian Michael Fried who uses this term in his book Courbet’s Realism (Fried 153). He states that Fried’s analysis, of Gustave Courbet’s painting The Wheat Sifters (1853-54),

convincingly argues that the figures in the painting are in some sense surrogates for those viewing the painting, but also that the two sifters who are engaged in the activity of sifting are not there merely to represent those people and those actions. In other words, they are not merely there to be looked at. (Rushton 50)

In Rushton’s conception of absorption, the Deleuzian “spectator is fused with the film” (48).

Rushton derives this model of absorption from Deleuze’s assertions about non-subjectivity and consciousness. He argues that, for Deleuze, “[t]here is no prior ‘subject’ to be posited as existing anterior to the happening of the filmic event; or if there is, then this subjectivity is thoroughly dismantled by the film that unfolds in front of this spectatorial entity which, for all intents and purposes, is a ‘non-subject’” (Rushton 48). Furthermore, Rushton argues that—if, for Deleuze, consciousness is in things—Deleuze’s concept of ‘the brain is the screen’ means that the spectator’s “consciousness is formed by what happens in the film” (48). He therefore concludes that in a Deleuzian model of absorption, the spectator imagines him or herself as other.
In the final section of his essay, Rushton contrasts Laura Mulvey’s *Death 24 x a Second*, a mode of active immersion, to Deleuze’s passive absorption. He claims that Mulvey’s discussion of the manipulation of the film text, via the DVD remote control, is an apt example of immersion because the text is actively manipulated by the spectator (Rushton 52). According to Rushton, this act of immersion reinforces the spectator’s subjective distance from the text (52). He therefore implies that, with immersion, the cinema’s ability to absorb the spectator is impeded by the bounds of subjectivity. Using Mulvey’s argument, Rushton seems to pose a dichotomy between passive theatre-going and the active manipulation of the film’s digital format on a domestic console. Furthermore, this dichotomy feeds into the dichotomy he is equally creating between absorption, “the promise of becoming other,” and immersion, which “offers only the option of remaining firmly within the bounds of one’s own selfhood” (Rushton 51).

Rushton’s conclusions perpetuate the rift between *Screen* theory and Deleuzian theory, albeit in a minor sense, since he claims that Mulvey’s argument foregrounds the spectator’s activity and subjectivity, whereas Deleuzian spectatorship favors a passive letting go of subjectivity altogether.

I want to call attention to the fact that Rushton’s use of Mulvey’s *Death 24 x a Second* equates the spectator’s activity with a literal distance from cinema especially with regard to the use of a remote control to manipulate the text. This is an extra-textual view of spectatorship that allows the spectator to engage with various facets of textuality—intra, extra, and intertextuality—and intermediality. In the concluding chapter, I will claim that Deleuze’s implicit notion of spectatorship allows for an engagement with the intermedial affect of images.

I take issue with a couple of Rushton’s claims. Firstly, I believe that his recourse to painting—as a means of defining absorption and approaching Deleuzian spectatorship—is incommensurable with Deleuze’s philosophy of cinema as images of movement and time. Secondly, as noted above, his
argument suggests a dichotomy between active immersion and passive absorption. I believe that the distinction he is drawing between immersion and absorption seems dichotomous because, according to Rushton’s claims, immersion is actively tied to subjectivity while absorption is passively freed from subjectivity and open to otherness. The implication of Rushton’s arguments is that active immersion is grounded in a sense of separation between the spectator’s body and the film text, yet absorption breaks the mind versus body divide in its fusion with the film. Ultimately, Rushton’s claims about the Deleuzian spectator’s becoming-other would be better illustrated through movement and time images.

The distinction that Rushton makes between immersion and absorption is, in my view, akin to Deleuze’s distinction between the classical realist movement-image and the modern time-image. Although Rushton equates spectatorial immersion with the notion of a centered subjectivity, I am arguing that the concept of an immersive spectator may be derived from Deleuze’s three material aspects of subjectivity: perception, action, and affection (Cinema 1 61-66). The use of the term subjectivity with reference to Deleuze’s movement-image must not be confused with the concept of a centered subject. When Deleuze uses the term subject, it is in reference to a center of indetermination (Cinema 1 65). The center of indetermination and its material subjectivities are prepersonal because they are formed in time. For Bergson and Deleuze, “the only subjectivity is time, non-chronological time grasped in its foundation,” since “[s]ubjectivity is never ours, it is time, that is, the soul or the spirit, the virtual” (Cinema 2 82-83). In the movement-image, perceptions of space are totalized according to a chronological image of time, or rational thought, in the causal link between perception, action, and affection images. These material aspects of subjectivity form the plane of movement-images which “is a mobile section of a Whole which changes, that is, of a duration or of a ‘universal becoming’” (Deleuze, Cinema 1 68). Deleuze’s movement-image creates an implicit notion of immersive
spectatorship through his description of the movement-image’s mobile material subjectivities.

At the same time, however, his concept of the time-image, which arrests time as the only subjectivity, creates an implicit passive model of spectatorship based on absorption. In time-image cinema, the crisis of the action-image breaks the movement-image’s causal image of time and thought. This break in causality foregrounds the irrational cut—the break in the link between perception, action, and affection—and leads to the time-image’s aberration of the idea or representation of chronological time. Although Rushton is correct in noting that if Deleuze has a notion of subjectivity, it is “thoroughly dismantled by the film” (48), Deleuze’s center of indetermination is always dismantled by the virtual capacity for affect. For Deleuze, the brain-screen “is not a centre of images”; “it constitutes a centre of indetermination [material subjectivity] in the acentred universe of images” (Cinema 1 62-63). Furthermore, according to Deleuze, the brain-screen occupies the interval between action and reaction (Cinema 1 62). If the crisis of the action-image breaks this causal link, of action/reaction, then the brain-screen constitutes a new irrational image of thought according to Deleuze’s time-image. With the time-image, Deleuze theorizes the cinema’s confrontation with thought’s inability to represent the whole: its becoming-other in the gaps in between images.

Contrary to Rushton’s claims, the Deleuzian spectator is both immersed in and absorbed by cinema because Deleuze’s ‘the brain is the screen’ involves two relations to the cut. Firstly, in movement-image cinema, the cuts between perception, action, and affection express an integral relation between the spectator and the screen, the character and the film world. Secondly, in time-image cinema, the cut becomes an interstice or gap: an irrational break from causal subjectivities that are related to action/reaction. In the time-image, Deleuze explains that “[i]nterstices thus proliferate everywhere, in the visual image, in the sound image, between the sound
image and the visual image” (Cinema 2 181). Still, he is careful not to create a dichotomy between movement-image continuity and the time-image’s tendency towards discontinuity because “the cuts or breaks in cinema have always formed the power of the continuous” (Deleuze, Cinema 2 181). Deleuze’s point is that, in modern time-image cinema, false continuity breaks away from the classical realist illusion of rational causal thought—in the sensory-motor schema of perception, action, and affection images. This point is emphasized when Deleuze distinguishes classical cinema’s rational cut from modern cinema’s irrational cut:

sometimes the cut, so-called rational, forms part of one of the two sets which it separates (end of the one or beginning of the other). This is the case with ‘classical’ cinema. Sometimes, as in modern cinema, the cut has become the interstice, it is irrational and does not form part of either set, one of which has no more an end than the other has a beginning: false continuity is such an irrational cut.
(Deleuze, Cinema 2 181)

The cut either goes along with or breaks away from this ‘power of the continuous.’ Similarly, in my view, Deleuze’s affective spectator is formed by the immersive acentered subjectivities of perceptions, actions, affections, and fused with absorption or the capacity of the time-image’s becoming-other.

**Masochistic Spectatorship**

Although Rushton claims that Deleuzian frameworks of cinematic engagement tend toward immersion (50), I believe that they focus on absorption and immersion in their emphasis on masochism. Shaviro’s The
Cinematic Body, Pisters’ The Matrix of Visual Culture, and del Rio’s Deleuze and the Cinemas of Performance all refer to masochism. In this model of a Deleuzian masochistic spectatorship, the underlying assumption is that the cinematic image assaults the spectator’s sensibilities and creates a shock to the realm of ideas and the thinking mode’s representational system.

Shaviro’s masochistic model of spectatorship is based on Leo Bersani’s The Freudian Body and Deleuze’s Masochism. He takes both Bersani’s reinterpretation of Freudian sexuality and Deleuze’s rejection of the psychoanalytic paradigm to argue that “the violent stimulation of the body and the loss of ego boundaries that are foregrounded in masochism, but that characterize sexual play in general, are at once desirable and threatening” (Shaviro, Cinematic 55). He criticizes both Kaja Silverman and Gaylyn Studlar’s views on masochism because they “posit masochism as what psychoanalysis calls a mechanism of defense” (Shaviro, Cinematic 58). Shaviro argues “instead for an active and affirmative reading of the masochism of cinematic experience” (Cinematic 59). His implication, here, is that any reference to psychoanalytic masochism is a passive view of spectatorship because it perpetuates the reaction to sexual difference rather than actively theorizing masochistic desire as an affirmative force and passion. Shaviro also implies that his use of the terms ‘active’ and ‘affirmation’ do not connote positiveness but rather a direction, vector, or force: “[t]he masochism of the cinematic body is rather a passion of disequilibrium and disappropriation. It is dangerous to, and cannot remain the property of, a fixed self” (Cinematic 59). At the heart of Shaviro’s view of masochism is Deleuze and Guattari’s definition of desire as power. Shaviro asks film academics to “revel in cinematic fascination, rather than

distance ourselves from it with the tools of psychoanalytic reserve and hermeneutic suspicion” (Cinematic 64).

Taking Shaviro’s words further, I would argue that the central point of contradistinction between the psychoanalytic spectator and the Deleuzian spectator is their diverging positions on desire and power, which form two different views of spectatorship. The Freudian and Lacanian psychoanalytic concept of subjectivity is based on desire as “unconscious wishes, bound to indestructible infantile signs” (Laplanche and Pontalis 482). Oedipal desire and the castration complex—which are at the heart of the gendered power relations in Freudian and Lacanian theories of spectatorship—are concepts that define power and lack of power in terms of the representation of the phallic, patriarchal socio-symbolic order. However, in the Deleuzian model of an asubjective spectatorship—spectator as a center of indetermination—desire is a power that has the capacity to affect movement(s) across time. In other words, the divided ‘I’ or subjectivity of psychoanalysis becomes, for Deleuzian theory, the conscious ‘eye’ of the screen and the brain. The early psychoanalytic Althusserian apparatus theories of Baudry, Metz, and Mulvey “emphasized the crucial importance of the cinema as an apparatus and as a signifying practice of ideology, the viewer-screen relationship, and the way in which the viewer was ‘constructed’ as transcendent during the spectatorial process” (Creed 79).\(^24\) Furthermore, within this psychoanalytic process, subjectivity is constructed through the Oedipal desire for power or through the anxiety related to a lack of power. The psychoanalytic notion of transcendence refers to the subject’s desire to transcend his or her own lack of power. Yet, this very definition of desire—a desire for power over

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‘otherness’—is confined to the meaning and representation of male, phallic power. For Deleuze, however, desire and power are pre-Oedipal, prepersonal, and therefore precede the subjectivities of gendered subject construction. While the psychoanalytic paradigm remains within the realm of gendered difference, the Deleuzian spectator is, in a sense, indifferent. This does not mean that sexual difference does not exist in the Deleuzian framework, it means that desire is not defined in terms of sexual difference. Deleuzian masochism, in other words, has the power and capacity to transcend notions of (sexual) difference because desire is the capacity and force that creates all difference (sexual or otherwise).

Masochism and Transcendental Empiricism

Pisters and del Río explicitly use Deleuze’s transcendental empiricism in their use of a Deleuzian masochistic spectatorship. Any theory of Deleuzian spectatorship must take into consideration his ontology of transcendental empiricism because it ties into his rejection of the individual subject. For Deleuze, a skeptic of epistemology, the common sense notion of difference as ‘other’ is the great illusion of Western thought. As Ronald Bogue explains in Deleuze’s Wake, Deleuze’s early writings reveal his belief that a common sense notion of difference, which is based on the ‘otherness’ from one’s primary subjectivity, is a transcendental illusion (31). To overcome this illusion of subjectivity, Deleuze proposes ‘transcendental empiricism’:

in which the various mental faculties are not engaged in a common functioning, a sensus communis, but in a disjunctive functioning, each faculty experiencing that which it alone can encounter and which the faculties in their common employment discount as error, illusion, or madness. The faculty of sensibility is jolted by intensities, the faculty
of imagination by fantasies, the faculty of memory by the virtual past, the faculty of reason by problems.25 (Bogue, *Wake* 31)

Deleuze’s ontology of becoming therefore seeks the ways in which the cinema masochistically jolts any single sense of subjectivity. Deleuze’s asubjective spectator is contingent upon the variations in affect. In the movement-image, Deleuze theorizes the assemblages of material subjectivities—perception, action, and affection—that are formed (and vary) according to the gaps, the centers of indetermination, between affection and perception (*Cinema I* 62-65). In time-image cinema, where this causal link is broken, Deleuze theorizes cinema’s break from narrative realism, a break from the rational image of thought, in terms of the conflation of subjects and objects where ‘I’ becomes another.

Masochism is a term that Pisters uses sparingly, yet it ties into her discussion of spectatorship as a means of transcendental empiricism. In *The Matrix of Visual Culture*, she forges a theory of camera-consciousness as an alternative to apparatus theory. For Pisters, apparatus theory participates in what Bogue describes as the transcendental illusion of difference because it “conceives the image as a representation that can function as a (distorted or illusory) mirror for identity construction and subjectivity” (*Matrix* 4). Pisters argues that Deleuzian theory offers a “[n]ew camera consciousness [that] is fundamentally related to ‘a life’ that is nonpersonal and nonsubjective and yet highly specific and individuated, always part of a concrete assemblage” (*Matrix* 4). This concrete assemblage is the ‘process of crystallization’ between the Deleuzian actual and the virtual (Pisters, *Matrix* 4). The actual is the passing present, and the virtual is the preserved past (Pisters, *Matrix* 4). According to Pisters’ explication, the intersection of the actual and virtual is assembled on the plane of immanence that contains “not just filmic images but all images relating to ‘a life’” (*Matrix* 4). This ‘a life,’ to which

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Pisters refers, is the Deleuzian plane of immanence or a plane of consistency—i.e., Deleuze and Bergson’s “all consciousness is something” (*Cinema 1* 60).

Pisters examines desire through Deleuze’s transcendental empiricism. Her section on “Transcendental or Immanent Desire” in *The Matrix of Visual Culture* is about the illusion of difference between an individuated subjectivity and the object world (18). She states that “Deleuze distinguishes between the *transcendental field*, for instance, a subject, an object, consciousness, which is defined by a plane of immanence, and the *transcendent*, which is taken as universal, such as a subject (‘I’) or an object in general to which immanence is attributed” (Pisters, *Matrix* 12). The implication here is that the transcendent ‘I’—what Deleuze would consider the transcendental illusion of subject versus object difference—is part of a transcendental field that includes all consciousness. As Pisters explains, “[t]he transcendental field is a consequence of immanence, a life, and hence is situated within the same world of images but on a different field” (*Matrix* 12). In a Deleuzian framework, desire is transcendental and immanent because it is a process within immanence; it is one particular process or one image of thought among all images. Desire is a force of life, a force of immanence.

In her section on ‘transcendental or immanent desire,’ Pisters explains that in Deleuze and Guattari’s definition of desire, desire neither relates to an object nor a subject (*Matrix* 20). Desire, instead, relates to the force or capacity to live, to act, that is associated with Spinozan passions (Pisters, *Matrix* 20). In his lectures on Spinoza, Deleuze explains that Spinoza’s ‘fundamental passions,’ joy-sadness, constitute affect throughout a ‘line of continuous variation’ between these two poles: “[s]adness will be any passion whatsoever which involves a diminution of my power of acting, and joy will be any passion involving an increase in my power of acting” (Deleuze, “Transcripts”). Furthermore, Deleuze explicates that these
passions allowed Spinoza to view morality and politics in terms of the exercise of power or dominance (Deleuze, “Transcripts”). According to Deleuze, Spinoza concluded that “[i]nspiring sad passions is necessary for the exercise of power” (Deleuze, “Transcripts”). Desires associated with joy results in an increased capacity to live and act, while desires associated with sadness result in the decreased capacity for action therefore leading to manipulation and domination. Pisters’ argument suggests that, in a Deleuzian-Spinozan model of power and desire, sadness is the way in which domination, or the exercise of power, functions.

Once Pisters establishes the concept of ‘transcendental or immanent desire,’ she compares Peeping Tom (Michael Powell, 1960), as a film that exhibits the apparatus theory’s negative desire (as lack), to Strange Days, a film that allows the spectator to become both the subject and object at the same time—thereby erasing the difference between subject and object, and creating a subjectless spectatorship. The common theme between the films is their exploration of voyeurism through a medium: a 16mm camera in Peeping Tom and a digital visceral playback machine, called SQUID, in the futuristic action film Strange Days. Ultimately, for Pisters, Strange Days allows the spectator to experience and become the force of desire rather than contain it within a concept of gendered lack.

Pisters argues that Peeping Tom is a film that does not challenge subject to object opposition because the film’s serial killer, Mark Lewis (Karlheinz Böhm)—who films women as he kills them with a dagger concealed in his camera’s tripod—ultimately ends up killing himself and films his own death. For Pisters, a psychoanalytic reading of Peeping Tom emphasizes split subjectivity, between the subject and his object of desire:

Although a shift is possible between subject position and object position, there is no solution for the full subject except in death. One must choose either distance (voyeurism, power) or the proximity
(masochism, death). *Peeping Tom* is a strong but sad film that demonstrates in a critical way the (hidden) implications of psychoanalysis and the cinematographic apparatus. (*Matrix* 30)

It is important to note that throughout her use of the term masochism, Pisters distinguishes between psychoanalytic and Deleuzian masochism. She explains that according to Deleuze and Guattari’s *A Thousand Plateaus*, masochism is a line of flight “that it is related to the creation of a Body without Organs (BwO) and a becoming-animal” (*Matrix* 68). Still, within Pisters’ line of argumentation, Freudian masochism is associated with sexuality “(caused by the death drive and the pleasure-out-of-pain principle, which is a punishment for forbidden desire for one of the parents)” (*Matrix* 68). The sadness that Pisters finds in *Peeping Tom* underscores the overarching power structure of Oedipal desire.

Rather than conceiving of desire and masochism in sadomasochistic sexual terms as Freud does, Deleuze’s *Masochism* and Deleuze and Guattari’s *A Thousand Plateaus* attempt to theorize masochism on its own (*Matrix* 159, 271). Masochism, in the Deleuzian sense, is a form or process of desire that does not exist solely in the context of sexual pleasure or punishment. It is instead, as Pisters explains, a process of bodily intensities or a desire for affects:

> The BwO is desire, a process of a body that does not want to depend on the functions and places that organs traditionally have. . . . The BwO makes new connections that are not limited to the self-same organism. A BwO is a field of intensities that works purely on the sensitive, the invasion of the affect, that constitutes an ‘I feel.’

(*Matrix* 68)
In the case of Pisters’ reading of *Peeping Tom*, her arguments point to the fact that Mark is limited to a self-same system because he appropriates his desire for female otherness by becoming his own victim. Pisters’ criticism of psychoanalytic desire ultimately echoes Shaviro’s because she maintains that *Peeping Tom* is emblematic of the psychoanalytic apparatus theory’s compartmentalization of desire into an unattainable gendered binary opposition, which remains bound to representations of ‘lack’ and otherness.

Pisters’ analysis of *Strange Days*, although it does not explicitly address notions of Deleuzian masochism or the BwO, discusses a new form of camera-consciousness that is tied to this concept of desire, affect, and power. She claims that the film presents a more complex view of spectatorship than the psychoanalytic paradigm because it offers multiple subjectivities that challenge subject versus object and male versus female oppositions. Pisters stresses the fact that, for Deleuze, desire is a positive term or force rather than a negative ‘lacking’ one. In comparing *Strange Days*’ central voyeuristic rape and murder scene to the killings in *Peeping Tom*, Pisters argues that while Mark identifies with his victims’ terror, Lenny Nero (Ralph Fiennes) of *Strange Days* is disgusted by the rape and murder that he views and viscerally experiences through a SQUID receptor. She claims that *Strange Days* blurs subject and object positions because Lenny’s SQUID experience is taken from the point of view of a rapist and murderer who plugs his receptor into his victim so that she experiences the killer’s sadistic point-of-view as he rapes and kills her. As a result, Lenny is placed in the position of rapist, murderer, and victim of violence.

While Pisters acknowledges that the violence in *Peeping Tom* is terrifying and tragic, she states that the complexity of multiple subjectivities in *Strange Days*’ central rape scene, which is interspersed with “Lenny’s horrified face” and results in him vomiting, has an affect that “‘contaminates’ the spectator . . . without leaving any room for safe distance” (*Matrix* 30). Pisters’ implication here is that desire and multiple
subjectivities, as they are presented in *Strange Days*, are a masochistic assault on the spectator and character alike. Here, desire, rather than being confined to Freud’s death-drive and its dialectic of pleasure and pain, is a process of mingling affects. According to Pisters’ argumentation, *Strange Days* redefines the spectator-apparatus relationship where desire is a process that results in Lenny’s and the spectator’s diminished capacity for action through the affect of sickness, sadness, and pain.

Like Shaviro and Pisters, del Río’s *Deleuze and the Cinemas of Performance* uses Deleuze’s ontology of transcendental empiricism as well as his affirmative definition of power, desire, and affect to redefine spectatorship. She specifically attempts to rethink film performance and spectacle using affect as a means of exploring the cinema as an incorporeal body. Del Río argues that while Mulvey confines the female body to an extra-narrative spectacle and a fetish of disruption, Judith Butler equally limits gendered performance to identity-formation as a process of mimesis (5; Mulvey, “Visual”; Butler). She is also critical of Linda Williams’ work on body genres and emotional excess in melodrama because it confines the spectacle of emotion to the melodramatic genre (L. Williams, “Film Body”; “Film Bodies”; “Melodrama”). Del Río’s project seeks to cross the boundaries of representational molar (narrative) structures through her theory of ‘the affective-performative’ plane of molecular intensities of affect. Del Río’s affective-performative is about the power of performance and its capacity to challenge representational, molar, narrative, generic, and ideological structures.

In order to emphasize the affective power of performance, and by extension its affect on the spectator, del Río emphasizes two types of power that are crucial to Deleuze:

*puissance* – the form of power that operates within the virtual plane of consistency – is the kind of power embedded in affect, whereas the
concept of power as *pouvoir* operates within the actual plane of organization where subjects dominate or resist one another in social, ideological, or political relations and systems. (24)

To be clear, *puissance* refers to power and affect as the capacity to act; yet, *pouvoir* entails a more common sense notion of power as an interplay of relations between domination and resistance. Del Río maintains that within Deleuze’s Spinozan ethics, power is equated with the potential of a body to act in a positive way: “Deleuze’s alignment of affect/power with positivity is not meant to restore power to the subject in a traditional humanist sense; on the contrary, the notion of affect as intensity or power rests upon the conception of bodies as subjectless subjectivities” (24). All the while, for del Río, an ethics of the Spinozan Deleuzian body has the capacity to act or express itself beyond social, ideological, or political power relations of dominance.

The aim of del Río’s film analysis is to negotiate these interweaving modes of power by discussing an expressive ethics of the body as “*capable of doing* with, in excess of, its cultural positioning” (7). In an effort to examine the relation between structural concepts of power and an affective, expressive, performative view of power, del Río distinguishes between two planes (16-27). First, what del Río calls ‘the molar plane of unified subjects’ includes the narrative plane of rational or causal relations that Deleuze associates with the movement-image’s cinema of action (16). Second, what she calls ‘the molecular plane of subjectless intensities’ describes events—del Río’s affective-performative—that relate to Deleuze’s time-image (16). The affective-performative deterritorializes the movement-image’s sensory-motor schema (del Rio 16-27).

This break from causality, which Deleuze ascribes to the time-image, is especially crucial to del Río’s chapter on “Powers of the False”—a concept from Deleuze’s time-image—where she examines how David
Lynch’s *Mulholland Drive* (2001) and *Blue Velvet* affectively expresses what she calls an ‘aesthetics of the false’ (179). In her analysis of both films, del Río focuses on two scenes of literal performance: the Club Silencio scene in *Mulholland Drive* and Ben’s (Dean Stockwell) lip-synchronized performance of Roy Orbison’s “In Dreams” in *Blue Velvet*. Del Río demonstrates the way in which the crystal-image, or the time-image, deterritorializes concepts of cognitive or moral truth (180). She explains that while a representational mode of thought is “indebted to an outside reality or referent,” her concept of the affective-performative in Lynch’s work entails an “unconscious stream [that] fundamentally unsettles the hierarchical relation between truth and falseness” (del Río 180). Throughout her analysis, del Río examines how both films affectively exceed the conventions of genre.

Referring to Deleuze’s view of genre as a “free power of reflection” (*Cinema 2* 184), she argues that Betty/Diane’s (Naomi Watts) convulsing body in *Mulholland Drive*, during her viewing of Rebekah Del Río’s performance at Club Silencio, has no conventional generic meaning (del Río 200-01). Betty/Diane and Rita/Camilla (Laura Elena Harring) watch the singer repeat the words, “silence, silence: there is no band, there is no orchestra,” in her eerie performance at the club. According to del Río’s analysis of the Club Silencio scene, it “constitutes the pivotal point in the film’s twisted narrative, marking the transition from Diane Selwyn’s (Naomi Watts) dream of reciprocated love and [a] successful Hollywood acting career to the nightmarish reality [that] she in fact inhabits” (181). Although del Río points out that there is no cognitive, rational, or subjective reason for the sorrow that is visible on Rita’s and Betty’s faces, she claims that it is an affective transition to sorrow within the narrative (181). For del Río, the Club Silencio performance and the sorrow on their faces is “a spectacle of the face and the voice” (184).
Similarly, del Río points to the affective speed and agitation in the scene when Frank Booth’s (Denis Hopper) palpable melancholy overwhelms Ben’s rendition of “In Dreams” in Lynch’s *Blue Velvet*. She argues that this sequence constitutes such an ineffable and shocking moment for the viewer precisely because the affect invoked by the song is actualized through the gestures and gazes of such unlikely characters: a melancholy longing for intimacy and love is embodied by two men who are demonstrably incapable of either. (del Río 196)

Throughout her analysis, del Río implies that Lynch’s use of the affective-performative is a means of destabilizing the audience’s expectations of melodramatic intensity because emotion is not tied to narrative causality and moral character development.

Although del Río employs the term sadomasochism with respect to her analysis of *Imitation of Life* (Douglas Sirk, 1959), her arguments relate to her analysis of Lynch’s use of performance and affect. Regarding *Imitation of Life*, she claims that, “[i]n Sirk’s melodramas, a violent and transformative energy is felt through an affective montage that forces together the speeds and rhythms of contagious disparate scenes or of disparate bodies within a single scene” (del Río 47). In her analysis of Sirk’s and Lynch’s use of melodrama, del Río’s use of the term sadomasochism is a condition through which affect arises. She argues that “sadomasochistic situations to give rise to affect in a Deleuzian sense – affect as productive of new thoughts or feelings – a certain displacement of familiar values and beliefs is required” (del Río 48). Similarly, as she notes later in her chapter on Lynch’s ‘powers of the false’ “affect is the very quality that challenges the image to move away from any immediately recognizable meaning” (del Río 202). The central implication of del Río’s arguments is that the cinema’s
molar narrative structure and its molecular intensities of affect coalesce in such a way as to deterritorialize representational meaning, genre conventions, and socio-cultural ideological ideas.

There are two important underlying assumptions that can be gleaned from del Río’s notion of the affective-performative powers of the cinema. Firstly, contrary to Rushton’s argument—that “Deleuze’s spectator cannot be said to exist prior to the film” (48)—the spectator’s ideas about genre and ideology are renegotiated through the film’s powers of affect. Secondly, it is this performative (non representational) capacity of affect that allows the film medium to violently shock or challenge conventions whether they are socio-cultural or cinematic in nature.

Shaviro’s *The Cinematic Body* was the first to implicitly theorize Deleuzian spectatorship in terms of a cinematic, masochistic body rather than a Freudian or Lacanian subject position. As evidenced by Pisters and del Río’s arguments, many Deleuzians continue to pit psychoanalytic subjectivity against a Deleuzian view of subjectless bodies or intensities of formation. Reducing both paradigms to their views on subjectivity runs the risk of making a reductive argument. However, Deleuze’s anti-humanist stance on subjectivity is essential to his implicit notion of spectatorship since it is the presubjective or prepersonal intensities of affect, the capacity-power to affect and be affected in life, that create desires—including the desires that forms power relations of resistance and domination. As I have shown, the central divergence between the psychoanalytic spectator and the Deleuzian spectator is their respective views on power and desire. The psychoanalytic view of power and desire implies a hierarchical relation of transcendence where forbidden desire, Oedipal desire, is redeemed and transcended by the Law and/or God. In the Deleuzian view, however, power is not defined according to the humanist transcendental illusion. For Deleuze, “all things . . . are posited as complete only through their relation to an immanent transcendental field of pure differences (Deleuze’s ‘virtual’)”
In sum, Deleuzian desire defines relations in life where the virtual plane of consistency, the capacity [puissance] for affect, influences the actual plane of organization that defines power [pouvoir] relations according to social, political, and ideological modes of representation.

I have lingered on Deleuze’s concept of masochism and transcendental empiricism because, within a Deleuzian framework, desire, power, and affect are interrelated terms in that they refer to the capacity for action, for life. My discussion of Deleuzian masochism is a means of demonstrating that although Deleuze rejects humanistic notions of subjectivity, his concept of the non-subject as a center of indetermination is important because it informs his view of affect as a prepersonal force which creates the desires that define intensive subjectivities of formation that are constantly deterritorialized through variations in affect. The concept of Deleuzian spectatorship, which can be derived from this notion of the non-subject, is the awareness of prepersonal or presubjective states of becoming: a process of bodily—mental, physical, and psychic—intensities that form power relations.

What I, along with Rushton, Shaviro, Pisters, and del Río, want to emphasize is that the Deleuzian spectator is—to use Rushton’s term—a ‘spectatorial entity’ (48) that is formed in conjunction with the film’s affect. The following case studies chapters will demonstrate that the Deleuzian spectator is formed according to two coalesced types of affect: the affect of the movement-image expressed in the emotional system of the close-up and the deterritorializing shock affect of the time-image. This shock affect of the time-image deterritorializes affect from its causal relation—from classicism’s perception, action, and affection images—thereby emphasizing Deleuze’s becoming-other, other than ‘I,’ in his ontology of transcendental empiricism.
In my view, the Deleuzian spectator is both actively immersed in movement-image cinema and passively absorbed in time-image cinema. My point is that Deleuze’s concept of affect—as a presubjective force—describes the cinematic immersion into various states or subjectivities that are qualified through affection. Yet, at the same time, his concept of affect—as it is explored in the time-image—removes affect from causal action to emphasize the becoming-other of absorption. As Shaviro states, in his discussion of masochism, “the agitated body multiplies its affects and excitations to the point of sensory overload, pushing itself to its limits: it desires its own extremity, its own transmutation” (Cinematic 59). One question remains pertinent to this discussion of masochism. If Deleuzian film theory emphasizes the cinema’s capacity to affect or shock the spectator’s sensibilities, does this imply that the film is a violent medium?

**Becoming-Violence**

Throughout this thesis’s exploration of the affective spectator, violence is defined as a force, an affect, a power, and a desire. This definition frees violence of its moral connotations in order to view violence as a vector, a direction, and a potential for change. If cinema has the capacity to affect the spectator’s central nervous system, then it is in a sense violent because it has the potential to disrupt the spectator’s current state of being. In other words, becoming-violence involves a stirring of passions through camera-consciousness. Deleuze’s ontology of becoming opposes any fixed identity, being, or subjective state because the capacity for affect is a continuous variation in our force of existing:

Deleuze uses the term ‘becoming’ (devenir) to describe the continual production (or ‘return’) of difference immanent within the constitution
of events, whether physical or otherwise. Becoming is the pure movement evident in changes between particular events. This is not to say that becoming represents a phase between two states, or a range of terms or states through which something might pass on its journey to another state. (Stagoll 21)

Affect is the means by which Deleuze describes becoming in cinematic terms because it is at the heart of the film event or the asubjective confrontation with the cinema’s manipulation of time and space.

The difference that Deleuze finds between an ontology of being versus his ontology of becoming is akin to his differentiation between the movement-image and the time-image. As noted above, Deleuze distinguishes between the emotional affect of the affection-image or close-up and the shock affect of the time-image. The movement-image’s affection-image close-up is part of Deleuze’s three material aspects of subjectivity: the perception-image, the action-image, and the affection-image (Cinema 1 63-66). These three images form classical cinema’s rational, classical-realist, sensory-motor schema. The first movement-image, perception, is a subtractive or selective state that focuses on an aspect of total objectivity (Deleuze, Cinema 1 57-58). Cinematically, this refers to the way the camera frames and establishes the screen space (Deleuze, Cinema 1 62). The second movement-image, action-image, refers to a character’s action/reaction to a situation (Deleuze, Cinema 1 65). The third movement-image, affection, is the interval: a pure state that cannot be established in perception or actualized in action because it is the ‘expressed’ quality of a feeling, thought, or idea (Deleuze, Cinema 1 70, 98). Once this affective state is thought, articulated, expressed, and specified it becomes an emotion. Affect itself is a power-quality that exceeds emotional articulation. Affect is therefore a continuous force that holds the potential for the transition towards a new experience, thought, perspective, epiphany, or perception. In
other words, the affection-image close-up expresses or qualifies a state of affect, yet it also has the power or capacity to move from one quality to another.

This is where the second type of affect is pertinent because the affect of the time-image disrupts set states of being or thinking. As such, the shock affect of the time-image breaks the binary oppositions of classical cinema: good versus evil, masculine versus feminine, reality versus spectacle. According to Deleuze’s crisis of the action-image, the older classical narrative paradigm of action is replaced with a new attitude, a new cinema of automatism (Cinema 2 276). For Deleuze, the action-image crisis blurs the determined spaces of classical cinema because time-image editing introduces pure optical and sound situations. The loosening of the sensory-motor schema and the loss of action oriented characters initiates modern time-image cinema (Deleuze, Cinema 2 3). The time-image creates what Deleuze calls a ‘power of the false’ by questioning classical realism’s image of rational thought. This power of the false breaks away from classical cinema’s organic or truthful narration: logical and causal time-space relations and the tendency toward character identification (Deleuze, Cinema 2 133).

The shock affect of the time-image—its assault on the senses—challenges conventional ways of thinking. Deleuze claims that time-image cinema entails two main aspects: first, “the break in the sensory-motor link (action-image), and more profoundly in the link between man and the world (great organic composition)”; and second, “the abandoning of figures, metonymy as much as metaphor” (Cinema 2 173). Deleuze defines the organic composition of classical realism—the movement-image relations between perception, action, and affection—as a system consisting of two opposite poles: “linkages of actuals from the point of view of the real, and actualizations in consciousness from the point of view of the imaginary” (Cinema 2 127). With modern cinema’s time or crystal image, however, he
explains that this causal relation, between the real and its actualization, is broken. As a result, the real and the imaginary, and the actual and the virtual are indiscernible because virtual affect— affect beyond actualization—is singular and “valid for itself” (Deleuze, Cinema 2 127). He also states that in time-image cinema, both spectator and character are entwined in pure optical and sound situations:

the character has become a kind of viewer. He shifts, runs and becomes animated in vain, the situation he is in outstrips his motor capacities on all sides, and makes him see and hear what is no longer subject to the rules of a response or an action. He records rather than reacts. He is prey to a vision, pursued by it or pursuing it, rather than engaged in an action. (Deleuze, Cinema 2 3)

Here, Deleuze suggests that the time-image destabilizes character-identification because the image itself is characterized by a melding of the subjective and objective, the imaginary and real, physical and mental (Cinema 2 6-7). He argues that, in time-image cinema, these distinctions “are still valid in relation to the action-image, which they bring into question, but already they are no longer wholly valid in relation to the new image that is coming into being” (Deleuze, Cinema 2 6-7). The importance of the time-image rests in its ability to challenge older modes of binary thinking that are based on the Cartesian mind versus body divide. With Deleuze’s time-image, affect is unhinged from action-image violence to become a characterization of violence, an image and a capacity for violence in and of itself, which is informed by the actualizations of action-image cinema.
The Affective Spectator Becomes a Characterization of Violence

In Chapter 3, my main concern is the rethinking of character beyond a moral persona in order to discover the affect of the film’s characterization of violence in the images themselves. I am using the term characterization in order to clearly detach the concept of character from the protagonist. Elsaesser and Buckland as well as Patricia Pisters have also attempted to redefine character in such a way as to think of it as a becoming-other.

In Elsaesser and Buckland’s “Feminism, Foucault, and Deleuze (The Silence of the Lambs),” they use four Deleuzian concepts to engage with character at an affective level. Firstly, the crisis of the action-image is a means of rethinking how New Hollywood has disrupted classical cinema’s sensory-motor schema and integrated the spectator into the film (Elsaesser and Buckland 271). Secondly, the body without organs (BwO) is a means of engaging with the character as an intensity: “in much contemporary cinema the dividing line between inside and out, but also the boundaries between bodies, have become difficult to draw, and in any case no longer refer to a (psychic) interiority and a (physical) externality, but to two sides of the same surface or extension” (Elsaesser and Buckland 272). Thirdly, Elsaesser and Buckland claim that “[i]n a universe such as Deleuze’s which is in constant flux, and where identities are neither fixed nor intersubjectively determined, a character’s mode of being is a permanent Becoming” (272). They explain that:

Instead of being unique and individual, we are all bad or imperfect copies, simulae or automata, so that our most ethical state of being in the world is neither ‘being true to oneself’ nor ‘becoming the same’, but a ‘becoming-other’, in which one’s encounter with the world develops along different ‘segmental lines’ – hard line,
molecular line, and line of flight – indicative of the difficulties of having such an encounter at all. (Elsaesser and Buckland 272)

In regard to *Silence of the Lambs* (Jonathan Demme, 1991), this becoming-other is “the process as at once physical and bodily, rather than metaphoric or semiotic, and it is political, violent, affecting minorities whose state of oppression, suffering, and abjection bars them from most other forms of action and communication” (Elsaesser and Buckland 272). The fourth term is the fold, which refers to the pure optical and sound situation of the time-image. Elsaesser and Buckland stress that the fold, which is the opposite of the sensory-motor schema, brings about a new perception. They caution that this is not a cognitive perception, it is instead “an enveloped perception, at once continuous and plural, active and passive, directional and surrounding” (Elsaesser and Buckland 273).

In their analysis of Hannibal Lecter (Anthony Hopkins) as a BwO, a becoming, and a folding of spectatorship, they analyze the way in which Lecter’s cannibalism becomes a literal BwO: a devouring ‘incorporator’ of other characters within the film. Elsaesser and Buckland’s central motif for the film is that of metamorphosis, a melding of “brain, mind, and flesh” (281) among the three central characters: Clarice (Jodie Foster), the strong, female FBI agent; Hannibal—an imprisoned former psychologist helping Clarice track a serial killer— a “dandy-aesthete-connoisseur, for whom murder is a fine art” (252); and Buffalo Bill (Ted Levine), the transgender serial killer. Through this literal exploration of metamorphosis and cannibalism where Buffalo Bill dresses in his female victims’ skin and Hannibal eats his victims, Elsaesser and Buckland argue that the film forms a “micro-schizo-politics of body and skin” because all three characters are entangled in cerebral, cognitive, and corporal sacrifices of slaughter (277-78). Through the motif of metamorphosis—where Clarice’s past trauma and insecurities are covered in an FBI uniform, Hannibal incorporates the bodies
and psychological minds of those around him, and Buffalo Bill dresses in his victims’ bodies—Elsaesser and Buckland emphasize the film’s becoming-other. According to their conclusion, the spectator’s becoming-other involves becoming Hannibal’s brain and screen since the spectator does not see all of Hannibal’s transgressions or even his final escape from jail, yet the viewer is left to imagine these moments of Hannibal’s power (Elsaesser and Buckland 280).

In Pisters’ “Cinema’s Politics of Violence,” in *The Matrix of Visual Culture*, she implicitly discusses a becoming-other of violent characters—although she does not use this term exactly—when she explores what she calls the ‘class of violence.’ Her ideas are based on Deleuze’s politics of the time-image and its capacity to produce a modern political cinema that explores a missing, minor people (*Cinema 2* 217). She claims that Deleuze’s time-image introduced a political modern cinema that opposed classical cinema and its “representations of the people and political ideals” (Pisters, *Matrix 3*). According to Pisters’ reading of Deleuze, the representation of ‘a people’ is no longer possible within the cinema of the time-image because the time-image is non-judgmental. What was previously unthought in the classical cinema of the movement-image, for Pisters, is the fabulation of this missing people including the class of violence. According to Pisters, the class of violence takes part in Deleuze and Guattari’s ‘violence of the war machine’—a concept from *A Thousand Plateaus*. For Pisters, the war machine engages in a violence of refusal, the refusal of the state apparatus (*Matrix* 87-88). She is careful to note that the class of violence is not a social class; it is beyond class consciousness and expresses an original impulse, a desire to refuse society (Pisters, *Matrix* 89-92). She examines the class of violence.

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26 Deleuze uses the term ‘class of violence’ with reference to Marguerite Dura’s films *Nathalie Granger* (1972) and *India Song* (1975). He explains that the class of violence “fulfils the function of circulating between the two kinds of image, and making them connect, the absolute act of speech-desire in the sound image, the unlimited power of river-ocean in the visual image: the beggar woman of the Ganges at the crossing-point of the river and the song,” see Deleuze, *Cinema 2* 259.
violence in the following films: *I Can’t Sleep* (Claire Denis, 1994), *Brothers* (Olivier Dahan, 1994), *Fight Club*, and *Pulp Fiction*.

Although Pisters does not use the term New Hollywood, she examines three central characteristics of the modern political film in New Hollywood’s *Fight Club* and *Pulp Fiction* while extending her arguments to the films: *Strange Days*, *Boyz N the Hood*, *Menace II Society*, *Do the Right Thing* (Spike Lee, 1989), and *Falling Down* (Joel Schumacher, 1994). She argues that these New Hollywood films entail a class of violence “which show[s] the ‘impossibilities’ of the middle-class white man, confronted for the first time (ever) with the feelings of becoming a minority” (Pisters, *Matrix* 95). Pisters’ three characteristics of the modern political film include: first, becoming a (violent) minority; second, a merging of the private and the political through images of exhausted characters in dead-end situations as well as the literal slowing of images; third, filmmaker and character engage in a double-becoming of what Deleuze calls ‘the speech act’ where fabulation is a power of the false since storytelling is neither from the personal *auteur* or the impersonal character (*Matrix* 90-92). Instead, for Deleuze, “it is a word in act, a speech-act through which the character continually crosses the boundary which would separate his private business from his politics, and which *itself produces collective utterances*” (*Cinema 2* 222).

With reference to David Rodowick’s *Gilles Deleuze’s Time Machine*, Pisters explains that the speech act is a power of the false because “images and sounds become separate forces where ‘the utterable invokes what cannot be seen and the invisible evokes what cannot be said’” (qtd. in Pisters, *Matrix* 92; Rodowick 159-60). Ultimately, Pisters concludes that although her case studies “share the feeling of the class of violence and the missing people,” she maintains that “the violence in these films has the effect of sadness on the viewer, sadness about the impossibility of living joyful affects and having power to act” (*Matrix* 95).
Pisters then examines the class of violence in Hollywood’s schizophrenic *nouvelle* violence or new violence. Although Pisters does not define the term *nouvelle* violence, she attributes it to the debates concerning screen violence in the 1990s. According to Pisters, *Fight Club* renegotiates violence through its literal attack against symbols of capitalism, and *Pulp Fiction* reconsiders violence through its affect of laughter and absurdity. Pisters correlates Deleuze’s immanence of images, in the *Cinema* books, with Deleuze and Guattari’s concept of surplus in their analysis of an immanent capitalism in *Anti-Oedipus* and *A Thousand Plateaus*. She argues that Deleuze and Guattari’s process of schizophrenization is a violence of “relief and liberation” because it creates an ambiguous politics of violent imagery through the surplus of its affect (Pisters, *Matrix* 95). As I understand Pisters, the affectivity of New Hollywood violence as a cinematic ‘event’ is therefore a commodity of production and anti-production in the world as on screen.

Pisters goes on to explain that schizophrenization involves processes of production and anti-production because the surplus value is constantly re-absorbed into the capitalist system thus creating anti-production. She quotes Deleuze and Guattari’s *Anti-Oedipus*, when she defines surplus value: “‘[i]nstead of simply representing the relations of commodities, it enters now, so to say, into relations with itself. It differentiates itself as an original value from itself as surplus value’” (qtd. in Pisters, *Matrix* 96; Deleuze and Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus* 227). Furthermore, her relation between capitalism and cinema references Jonathan Beller’s “Capital/Cinema”:

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If capital realizes itself as cinema, that is, if industrial capital gives way to the society of the spectacle, one might well imagine cinema, with respect to the body, geography, labor, raw material, and time, to have become the most radical deterritorializing force of capital itself. As production itself moves into the visual, the visceral, the sensual, the cultural, cinema emerges as a higher form of capital.

(qtd. in Pisters, *Matrix* 96; Beller 82-83)

This concept of schizophrenization is, according to Pisters, a means of thinking about cinema as capitalism. Pisters therefore uses the concepts of schizophrenic production and antiproduction to explain how “the violence in their [Fincher’s and Tarantino’s] films presents forms of schizophrenic movements of deterritorialization of the constraints or absurdities of life” (*Matrix* 104-05). She focuses on the absurdity of consumer culture in *Fight Club* and the absurd moments of laughter and violence in *Pulp Fiction*. Pisters’ conclusion suggests that contemporary film violence might only be understood in terms of its affect, which “redefines the subject from a moral being who judges into an ethical individual who loves or hates” (*Matrix* 105).

Pisters’ discussion of the characters in *Fight Club* and *Pulp Fiction* centers on their capacity for love and hate as an ethics of violence. She examines how classical action-image imagery—Deleuze’s cinema of the body—endures a schizophrenic time-image deterritorialization—through Deleuze’s cinema of the brain—with the power of the false. For example, in her analysis of *Fight Club*—where the nameless insomniac Narrator (Edward Norton) forms a masculine underground ‘fight club,’ a class of violence, with Tyler—she argues that the film’s violence “is a literal attack on the beauty and glamour of consumption culture” (Pisters, *Matrix* 97). Pisters therefore suggests that the Narrator’s investment in consumer culture is a love that is replaced with Tyler’s contempt for capitalist symbols.
Yet, when the spectator discovers that the Narrator and Tyler are the same person, the film creates an affective shock, a melding of the actual Narrator and the virtual, his fictitious alter-ego, Tyler. Like Elsaesser and Buckland, Pisters argues that the film’s revision of fight scenes—where the Narrator, rather than fighting Tyler, is actually beating himself up—creates a folding of characters and violence (Matrix 98). She concludes that the film’s violence is both of the body and brain where “physical violence equals the shocks in the brain” as “a strategy of deterritorialization” because “[t]he schizophrenic dimension of Fight Club is determined not only by the fact that the violence is directed towards symbols of capitalism, which produces its own antiproduction, but also by the fact that Jack [the Narrator] produces his own ‘counterimage,’ with whom he fights and forms a class of violence” (Pisters, Matrix 98). Pisters therefore suggests that affect is the surplus value of the Narrator’s violence, which stems from his desire to destroy the source of his pain. She also implies that the only means of understanding his reactive body, both his reactive physical violence and his ensuing psychotic breakdown, is to grasp the synapse of violent affect—in passions of joy and sadness—in the brain-body connection.

Similar to Pisters, my concern is with the literature’s emphasis on the moral meaning of New Hollywood violence at the expense of an affective engagement with images of violence. She argues that the criticism of Hollywood’s nouvelle violence entails two main arguments: “either the films are rejected on moral grounds because the images of violence as such are considered bad or immoral, or the violence is seen as merely a formal genre aspect of the film, comparable to dance in the musical, nothing to bother about” (Pisters, Matrix 79). Although this suggests a polarization between moral narrative meaning and spectacle, Pisters claims that both arguments are unsatisfying because “[v]iolence raises many questions that cannot be

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28 Pisters’ discussion of the fold between the Narrator and Tyler in Fight Club stems from Jennifer Heusen, “The Duration of Oblivion: Deleuze and Forgetting in Fight Club and Lost Highway,” MA thesis, Dept. of Film and Television Studies, Amsterdam University, 2000, 8.
dealt with in purely formalistic or moralistic models” (Matrix 80). As I explained in Chapter 1, there is a similar dichotomy in the critical discourse on New Hollywood violence: between the meaningful politics of representation and morality associated with American auteur films of the late 1960s and 1970s (or New Hollywood I), and the meaningless apolitical immoral and gratuitous spectacles of violence that are associated with New Hollywood II.

Pisters’ solution to the question of morality is to engage with images of violence through an ethics rather than a morality of spectatorship. This is why Deleuze’s use of Spinoza is a pertinent means of reengaging with New Hollywood violence. According to Spinoza’s ethics—where affect and power relate to a body’s capacity to affect and be affected in life—good and evil are not absolute, they are a matter of bodily encounters. As Pisters explains, for example, “[e]vil exists, but it is not an absolute (God-imposed) entity. Evil is a bad encounter, a poisoning” (Matrix 86).

Accordingly, in Pisters’ definition of violence, “[v]iolence is born out of bad encounters that have the affect of sadness” (Matrix 87). In her exploration of the class of violence, and its desire to refuse society (Pisters, Matrix 89-92), this social refusal—its affect of sadness—stems from hate. As I explained previously, the continuous line of variation that constitutes affect moves between joy-sadness. With reference to Deleuze’s Expressionism and Philosophy, she explains that sad passions create desires such as hate, and this desire for hatred is associated with other passions such as “‘antipathy, derision, contempt, and envy, anger and so on’” (qtd. in Pisters, Matrix 87; Deleuze 243-44). Pisters explains that, even if there is joy experienced in the act of violence; violence creates a recurrent cycle of hatred born of pain because “violence is a way of getting rid of the object that causes sad passions” (Matrix 87). She quotes Deleuze again to emphasize the fact that violence cannot get rid of the object that causes sad passions: “[w]e are always determined to seek the destruction of an object
that makes us sad . . . we experience then a joy that increases again our power of action. (But this is, of course, a partial joy, which does not sufficiently disrupt the chain of sorrows and hatred)” (qtd. in Pisters, Matrix 87; Deleuze, Expressionism 243-44). Pisters’ and Deleuze’s argument suggests that the only way out of this cycle of violence, a subject versus object system of domination and resistance, is an engagement with the capacity [puissance] to affect and be affected in life.

If violence, in my use of the term, is considered an affect, then the question is not about the representation of moral characters but rather their affects beyond a single personhood to include the affect of character in the image itself—including the affects of sadness or joy onscreen and off. Substituting judgment and morality for affect and ethics reveals the desires of love-hate that stem from passions of joy-sadness thereby illuminating how power [pouvoir] functions. I am using a hyphen between love and hate, joy and sadness in order to emphasize the spectrum of emotions between love and hate, and the range of passions or affects between joy and sadness. Ethics deterritorializes morality by creating an intermingling of the subject and object of violence that effaces subject versus object difference.

Like Pisters, and Elsaesser and Buckland, I will engage with the spectator’s becoming-violence through the violent characterizations in A Clockwork Orange, Reservoir Dogs, and Natural Born Killers. The characterization of violence is an ethical understanding of violence that entails two central phases. Firstly, I will discuss Deleuze’s impulse-image and the establishing encounters with the violent characters in question. The impulse-image is rarely discussed as one of the avatars of Deleuze’s movement-image because it is a secondary shot-type that falls between action and affection: perception, action, impulse, and affection. When Pisters briefly describes the impulse-image as one of Deleuze’s few discussions of violence in Cinema 1: The Movement-Image, she claims that impulse-images “present original worlds that exist and operate in the depths of a real milieu,
whose violence and cruelty they reveal” (Matrix 80). Accordingly, my analysis of the characters’ impulse for violence reflects their desire to refuse society—his or her joy in violence—which leaves the spectator with an impression of cruelty. This first aspect of the characterization delineates an idea of violence, based on the character’s cruel actions, and leads to the implied moral judgment of the character as evil.

The second aspect of the characterization, however, demonstrates how the time-image’s power of the false deterritorializes our initial perception of the violent characters thereby deterritorializing Manichean notions of absolute good and evil. The central implication here is that the characterization of violence is a process of becoming violent through the impulse-image’s impression of cruelty and its time-image deterritorialization. Within this process of characterization, from morality to ethics, joy-sadness creates a melding of action and affect which detaches the idea of violence from a character’s actions. Here, the how of violence—rather than the what of representation and action—replaces judgment with an ethics of joy-sadness that is not contingent upon action and character, but rather the palpable affect of imagery.

The Affective Spectator Becomes the Face of Violence

In Chapter 4, I will use Deleuze and Guattari’s concept of the BwO in order to rethink violence beyond notions of masculine power. The BwO is the process of desire that will be used to examine the affect of the face and the close-up. As I mentioned in Chapter 1, the critical literature on New Hollywood violence has focused on the crisis of masculine power as a result of the questioning of white masculine power. Pisters’ discussion of white masculinity’s becoming minor explores this very crisis of masculinity. Also stated previously, the BwO is about creating desires outside any single
structure of subjectivity. This does not mean that the patriarchal structure of masculine power does not exist since “the BwO is a process that is directed toward a course of continual becoming, it cannot break away entirely from the system that it desires escape from” (Message 33). The BwO is a means of thinking violence in terms of affect and power which includes the socio-cultural institutional structures of masculine power as well as other forms of power and violence. Rather than equating violence with phallic symbolism or male power, as in the psychoanalytic framework, Deleuze and Guattari’s BwO is a means of rethinking power and violence as a disorganizing, asubjective system. The BwO will be used to examine the desire for violence instead of assuming that violence is structured according to a precept for masculine power.

I will specifically examine how New Hollywood’s use of the close-up, typified in A History of Violence, Strange Days, and Monster, can dismantle a representational idea of power—i.e., an idea of white masculine power—through a focus on the capacity for affect. The central claim is that the affect of the close-up, especially when it is examined outside the context of an action-image sequence, has the capacity to reveal the desires—affects of love and hate—that inform violence and its underlying power relations.

What I am calling the face of violence is the face of power or, alternatively, the reaction to power. My aim is to rethink violence beyond physicality, and beyond the concept of the masculine body, in order to examine violence in terms of emotional affect. I will examine how the camera-consciousness of the affection-image deterritorializes the emotional affect of violence from an action/reaction to the systemic violence of white masculine power. I will demonstrate that, in each case study, the affection-image explores a role of violence as an idea of white masculine power—either in an image of white masculine power as Law or its aberrance. My main claim is that emotional affect—the affect as ‘entity’—exceeds the idea of white masculine power and its social modes of domination and resistance.
Viewing violence as an affective entity reveals that power relations are formed in affect which thereby unites the seeming dichotomy between the representation of white masculine power, as Law, and its aberrance.

The Affective Spectator Becomes the Beautiful, or Disinterested Spectacles of Violence

In Chapter 5, I will engage with New Hollywood’s stylized violence, which the critical discourse often dismisses as meaningless, gratuitous, and apolitical due to its spectacles of blood and destruction. In fact, when del Río’s discusses Lynch’s ‘aesthetics of the false,’ in *Deleuze and the Cinemas of Performance*, she implies that blockbuster cinema is mindless:

> The idea that the emotions are devoid of thought, that their display can only belong within a brainless kind of cinema à la blockbuster, is rejected by both filmmakers [Lynch and Fassbinder] in the surest of terms. From Lynch’s perspective, too, emotion should not be taken for granted, for the cinema has the awesome power to take emotion away from the sentimental level of the known and ideologically sanctioned to the affective level where emotion becomes as creative and self-begetting a force as thought itself. (179)

Although del Río wants to distance Lynch’s work from criticisms of it “as a spectacle of postmodernist irony – a pastiche-like rendition of twentieth-century dysfunctional American culture on the brink of extinction” (178), she assumes that blockbuster cinema remains in the realm of the action-image’s sensory-motor schema. While this is true to an extent, many New Hollywood films have incorporated modern, new wave cinema’s shock
affect as the capacity to go beyond the sensory-motory schema of action/reaction.

It is my contention that New Hollywood’s camera-consciousness allows us to delve into the beauty of the aesthetic experience as an affect that provokes thought rather than judgment. Beauty, in this chapter, is defined in Kantian terms. As McMahon argues, Kant’s notion of beauty—defined as disinterest—is often misunderstood “as a disaffected or causal attitude: the ‘spectator’ removed from the action” (6). Yet, she maintains that Kantian beauty or disinterest means that “[t]he ‘interest’ that is lacking in the aesthetic experience is an investment in the object from a moral, utilitarian or theoretical perspective” (McMahon 6). Throughout her essay, McMahon argues that Kantian beauty solves Benjamin’s problem of modernity—the incommensurability “between a fragmented modernity (carried by mechanization), and a lost pre-modern idyll of holistic coherence (home of the traditional work of art)” (4)—because “Kant creates a third term between the organic and the mechanical which is precisely the aesthetic” (4). She implies that the aesthetic exceeds the organic and the mechanical, while remaining closely related to their means of signification. McMahon claims that:

the removal of the beautiful, in Kant’s aesthetic, from any given cultural or scientific context, by virtue of its lack of a determinate concept and hence an interest, seems also to isolate and mobilize the aesthetic in an affective ineffability. But on the contrary, it is this quality that produces the dynamism of the beautiful, and its capacity to provoke thought. (7)

The capacity to provoke thought is the function of beauty. In other words, beauty is not an object, it is an aesthetic event.
The aesthetic event that is under investigation here is New Hollywood violence. If, as McMahon argues, “Kant’s beauty is much better ‘dramatized’ by Deleuze’s ‘spiritual automaton,’ whose encounter with a chance singularity suspends the world and sets off a chain reaction in which a new power of thought is engendered,” (4) then how does Deleuze’s concept of the spiritual automaton unveil the power to think violence? In my view, the spiritual automaton is synonymous with camera-consciousness since, as Buchanan explains:

In other words, camera-consciousness allows the spectator to be outside the self and in a pure moment of cinematic time. In Gilles Deleuze’s Time-Machine, Rodowick uses “spiritual automata, mental cartographies, and noosigns” (173) synonymously because Deleuze’s time-image examines thought in these terms (177). As Rodowick explains it, the time-image’s power of the false draws all of its power from this quality of incommensurability: indiscernability of the real and the imaginary in the image; inexplicability of narrative events; undecidability of relative perspectives on the same event, both in the present and in the relation of the present and past; and, finally, the incommensurability of narrative worlds, which proliferate as incongruous presents and not-necessarily-true pasts. (179)
Furthermore, Rodowick presents the important caveat that ‘the direct time-image’ is not about the representation of time, the time-image “is the appearance of time as a nonlinear and nonchronological force whose relation to the whole is entirely different from that of the movement-image” (185). The importance of the time-image, as it relates to New Hollywood violence, is its ability to reconsider action-image violence by questioning classicism’s divisions between real and imaginary, causal relations and extra-narrative spectacles of violence.

In Chapter 5, The Violent Spectacle is Beautiful: The Real in Crisis, I will focus on violence as an any-space-whatever of color and a pure optical and sound situation. The any-space-whatever is an affect (a quality-power) of the time-image that Deleuze defines in terms of “empty or disconnected spaces characteristic of modern cinema” (*Cinema 2* 243). He specifies that the any-space-whatever is ‘empty’ in the sense that it is a space without characters or a space in which the characters demonstrate a void (Deleuze, *Cinema 2* 245). Still, Deleuze emphasizes that the any-space-whatever entails a “fullness in which there is nothing missing” (*Cinema 2* 245). Furthermore, he explains that the any-space-whatever is ‘disconnected’ in that “unlinked fragments of space are the object of a specific relinkage over the gap: the absence of a match is only the appearance of a linking-up which can take place in an infinite number of ways” (Deleuze, *Cinema 2* 245). In sum, the any-space-whatever’s emptied and disconnected spaces creates an image that is both read and seen (Deleuze, *Cinema 2* 245). This implies that the any-space-whatever breaks free of the sensory-motor schema to form a camera-consciousness where the ‘eye’ is in things, where perception becomes affect.

The aim of Chapter 5 is to view violence as a pure state, in an affect of color or a pure optical and sound situation, which grasps violence as an event rather than an actualized action. What my case studies—*Matrix, Fight Club,*
and *American Psycho*—share is an engagement with illusions and spectacles of violence that, in the end, are products of the mind. This results in a “division of the I from the ego” (Rodowick 180), a violent shock to thought. In *Deleuze on Cinema*, Ronald Bogue explains that the spiritual automaton is the awareness of thought:

> ‘Thought outside itself,’ the ‘unthought or unthinkable inside thought,’ the ‘alien thinker within the thinker’—all attest to an apersonal, de-realized, ‘other’ thought, the thought of a spiritual automaton. Various figures might represent the spiritual automaton—the robot, the computer brain, the zombie, the alien. . . . Yet what is important, of course, is not the representation of the spiritual automaton, but its activation as a mode of thought. (177)

Rather than bemoaning the loss of reality—the loss of figurability, loss of use-value, and loss of the representation of class consciousness—in the age of the simulacrum, what must be addressed is the affect of the simulacrum itself.

**Conclusion**

I am using Deleuze’s ontology of transcendental empiricism to engage with the affective spectator’s relation to New Hollywood violence. The central underlying assumption of this thesis is that the nature of the spectator’s relation to violent imagery is an affective one. If affect is the surplus value of image culture, then engaging affect is a framework for understanding society’s structural systems of representation and their means of exercising power. In “The Autonomy of Affect,” Brian Massumi argues that contrary to Jameson’s claims about the ‘waning of affect,’ “our condition is
characterized by a surfeit of it” (88). In “Navigating Movements: A Conversation with Brian Massumi,” he explains:

Capitalism starts intensifying or diversifying affect, but only in order to exact surplus-value. It hijacks affect in order to intensify profit potential. It literally valorises affect. The capitalist logic of surplus-value production starts to take over the relational field that is also the domain of political ecology, the ethical field of resistance to identity and predictable paths. It’s very troubling and confusing, because it seems to me that there’s been a certain kind of convergence between the dynamic of capitalist power and the dynamic of resistance. (224)

Here, Massumi suggests that affect is the means by which commodity culture functions, whether it moves with the ideology of late capitalism or resists it. At the very least, theorizing affect is an entry point into understanding how images of violence function in late capitalism.

According to Deleuze’s work on cinema, the affect of the time-image is important because the confrontation with affect, its distinction from ideas and ideologies, is an engagement with the world rather than its ideas. In Cinema 2, Deleuze declares: “Restoring our belief in the world – this is the power of modern cinema (when it stops being bad). Whether we are Christians or atheists, in our universal schizophrenia, we need reasons to believe in this world. It is a whole transformation of belief” (172). Belief, for Deleuze, “is giving discourse to the body, and, for this purpose, reaching the body before discourses, before words, before things are named” (Cinema 2 172-73). Using Deleuze’s ontology of transcendental empiricism, as well as his definition of affect as a capacity, power, and desire for violence, this project seeks to redefine New Hollywood violence beyond and before the discourses on morality, masculinity, and reality. Deleuze’s ontology of becoming—his rejection of a transcendent metaphysics of relations—
therefore gives affective spectators reasons to believe in the world through ethics, affect, and beauty.
Chapter 3

Characterizations of Violence: Morality in Crisis

There’s a fundamental difference between Ethics and Morality. Spinoza doesn’t make up a morality, for a very simple reason: he never asks what we must do, he always asks what we are capable of, what’s in our power, ethics is a problem of power, never a problem of duty. In this sense Spinoza is profoundly immoral. Regarding the moral problem, good and evil, he has a happy nature because he doesn’t even comprehend what this means. What he comprehends are good encounters, bad encounters, increases and diminutions of power. Thus he makes an ethics and not at all a morality. This is why he so struck Nietzsche. (Deleuze, “Transcripts”)

Introduction

The aim of this chapter is to rethink New Hollywood violence from an ethical standpoint. In Chapter 1, I argued that the critical discourse on New Hollywood violence dismisses its representations of violence as gratuitous due to its association with postmodernism’s lost referent. The underlying assumption within New Hollywood’s critical discourse is that classical cinema’s moral representation of violence—a clear Manichean division between good and evil—is lost among New Hollywood’s gratuitous spectacles of violence. The problem with this binary categorization of violence is that it confines the significance of film violence to the representation of a character’s moral integrity and the outcome of the narrative resolution. As a result, the overall cinematic affect of violence—the
violence of the image in excess of violent actions—remains unexamined. In order to forego the discourse’s stringent divisions between good violence and bad violence, or even good and bad cinema, this chapter looks to Deleuze’s use of Spinozan ethics to rethink character as a force of violence rather than a moral personhood of virtue.

A Spinozan ethics of character is implicit in the *Cinema* books, and it is most evident in Deleuze’s chapter on “The Powers of the False” in *Cinema* 2. Although implicit, the presence of a Spinozan ethics in Deleuze’s framework for cinema is important because it defines power as an affect rather than a system of judgment. Deleuze’s power of the false, as it relates to his notion of the time-image, is falsifying in that it replaces a moral system of judgment, of good versus bad, with an ethics of power and affect. Spinozan ethics challenges common sense notions of power because it takes power away from judgment, ideology, morality, representation, and all forms of binary thinking. Power, in the Deleuzian-Spinozan sense, refers to a body’s capacity for affect.

Furthermore, Spinozan affects or passions are associated with the tendency towards joy or sadness, which means that a body’s capacity to live or act is contingent upon its encounters with affects of joy and sadness. For Deleuze, and my own use of Spinozan ethics in this chapter, life is about bodily encounters rather than moral duty. I am neither suggesting a binary division between morality and ethics, nor joy and sadness. Rather, according to Spinoza’s ethics, the spectrum of one’s encounters is founded in passions of joy or sadness where joy results in an increased capacity for action, and sadness a decreased capacity for action. As I explained in Chapter 2—regarding Pisters’ use of a Spinozan ethics in *The Matrix of Visual Culture*—it is this capacity for sadness that creates systemic power relations in the Deleuzian-Spinozan concept of desire. Pisters explains that amidst the several encounters in life:
existing bodies meet, all relations can be combined endlessly, but not all combinations work. Bodies may agree or disagree: they can cause both sad and harmful or joyful and useful affects. So all we can have are good or bad encounters; and bad encounters, encounters with bodies that do not agree with our nature, are like poison: they make us sick, sad, and unable to act. (*Matrix* 86)

This quote is significant because it explicates Spinozan ethics in terms of affect, or the capacity to affect and be affected in life and by cinema. This chapter therefore focuses on the spectator’s experience of a characterization’s ethics, as passions of joy and sadness, rather than the moral representation of character-motivated action.

Although Deleuze makes distinctions between good and bad cinema, as well as good and bad violence,29 his central cause for concern, as well as my own, is the stagnation of representation. In Deleuze’s words:

> When the violence is no longer that of the image and its vibrations but that of the represented, we move into a blood-red arbitrariness. When grandeur is no longer that of the composition, but a pure and simple inflation of the represented, there is no cerebral stimulation or birth of thought. (*Cinema 2* 164)

He implies that for cinematic violence to be truly affective it must come from the affect of the image itself. What is the affect of the image in relation to its representation?

When Deleuze states that the violence of the image is in its vibrations as well as its composition, he suggests that the image has an energy or a

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29 Deleuze claims that “Bad cinema always travels through circuits created by the lower brain: violence and sexuality in what is represented—a mix of gratuitous cruelty and organized ineptitude. Real cinema achieves another violence, another sexuality, molecular rather than localized. The characters in Losey, for example, are like capsules [*des comprimés*] composed of static violence, all the more violent because they don’t move.” See Deleuze, “The Brain is the Screen: An Interview with Gilles Deleuze” 367.
force of affect. Affect therefore refers to the power of an image: its capacity to affect the spectator’s mind, body, and soul. Representation, on the other hand, is stagnant since it is tied to a subjective state. In Adrian Parr’s anthology, *The Deleuze Dictionary*, John Marks claims that Deleuze understands representation as “an essentially moral view of the world” because it is “a particularly restricted form of thinking and acting” (227). The restriction to which Marks refers is not only a binary form of thinking, but also a hierarchical view of human subjectivity. He explains that Deleuze’s “anti-representational orientation” is an overturning of Platonism that is indebted to the influence of Nietzsche and Bergson (J. Marks, “Representation” 227-28). He therefore maintains that Deleuze’s Bergsonian materialism—where the world of matter is conceived as being “‘luminous’ in itself,” rather than illuminated by human consciousness—offers an ontology where “[t]he self comes into contact with the virtual, non-psychological memory, a domain of diversity, difference, and with potentially anarchic associations, that jeopardise the sense of selfhood” (J. Marks, “Representation” 228). Marks concludes that Deleuze’s interest in art and cinema is a means of being “freed from the organising representational framework of perceiving individuals” by accessing “a pre-individual world of singularities” (“Representation” 228). If, in a Deleuzian framework, image and spectator are subjectless bodies, then affect is a confrontation with the powerlessness of rational thought as a representational mode of power. Rational thought is powerless in its ability to represent the power-qualities of affect.

My use of the term powerlessness is positive because, in line with many Deleuzian frameworks, the powerlessness that affect illuminates is an engagement with a loss of the ego or loss of subjectivity. I want to reiterate del Río’s distinction between pouvoir and puissance here because she distinguishes between the power of representation and the power of affect. In *Deleuze and the Cinemas of Performance*, she emphasizes that Deleuze’s
correlation between affect, power, and positivity is not about the restoration of power to the self from a humanist perspective, since Deleuzian affect is prepersonal and therefore non-subjective (del Río 24). Del Río maintains that Deleuze distinguishes between two forms of power: *pouvoir* is the representational power that functions on the plane of organization, and *puissance* is the affective power that functions on the virtual plane of consistency (24). *Pouvoir* refers to a common sense notion of power where power structures are organized according to socio-political and ideological forms of domination or resistance (del Río 24). It is important to note that within a Deleuzian framework, these modes of power—the moral or representational plane of organization [*pouvoir*] and the ethical or affective plane of consistency [*puissance*]—are not dichotomous; rather, they are distinct in nature. The powerlessness that affect illuminates is the capacity [*puissance*] to differentiate oneself from representational structures of power [*pouvoir*]—the ‘I versus other’ of resistance and domination—to engage with the becoming-other of presubjective intensities. Affect is therefore an engagement with the desires that form power relations.

Drawing on these distinct modes of power, this chapter focuses on two central aspects of violent characterization: the impulse for violence as the desire to refuse society, and the deterritorialization of this idea of violence—an impression of cruelty—through the time-image’s power of the false. Firstly, I will describe how the spectator encounters the character’s impression of violence through the impulse-image’s effect of cruelty. Deleuze loosely defines the impulse-image as an animalistic energy of “diabolical intelligence” (*Cinema 1* 124). The ‘diabolical intelligence’ of the impulse-image refers to its capacity for fragmentation and degradation that Deleuze examines in terms of naturalism’s inevitable slope-like narratives of destruction where characters exhaust themselves and the film world that
surrounds them. Deleuze explains that the impulse-image’s naturalism “is like the ‘degenerate’ affect, or the ‘embryonic’ action” (Cinema 1 123) since it is between affect and action. He also states that the impulse-image’s naturalism is “a pure background, or rather a without-background, composed of unformed matter, sketches or fragments, crossed by non-formal functions, acts, or energy dynamisms which do not even refer to the constituted subjects” (Deleuze, Cinema 1 123). The impulse-image does not refer to ‘constituted subjects’ because its energy is an ‘emotional object’ or the “link between the permeating situation and the explosive action” (Deleuze, Cinema 1 159). In sum, the impulse-image leaves an impression of violence in relation to a sign of cruelty—a cruel intention of violence.

Secondly, concerning the affect of the time-image, I will examine how the time-image’s power of the false creates a characterization of violence by deterritorializing the spectator’s initial impression of cruelty or evil. The time-image’s affect—an affect of joy-sadness that goes beyond the character’s action/reaction to a determinate situation—renegotiates the impulse-image’s implied moral representation of cruelty because time-image affect is removed from the causal relations between perception, action, impulse, and affection. In other words, the affect of the characterization has the power to falsify the moral ‘truth’ of what cruelty represents as an idea of violence or a sign of cruelty. The time-image’s power of the false replaces the judgment of what violence represents—an idea of cruelty—by illuminating how violence functions in terms of affects, of joy-sadness. With the affect of the time-image, affect is no longer related to a sensory-motor situation or an action-image. Affect is now a matter of encounters, good or bad encounters, which result in characterizations of violence.

Two central questions guide this chapter’s investigation of violent film spectatorship. First, how does the characterization of violence affect the

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spectator? Second, why is this spectatorial relation ethical rather than moral? Within my Deleuzian framework, the spectator and the cinematic image are subjectless bodies that collide in an engagement with affect. Ethics supersedes morality because affect is a presubjective force whereas morality is inherently subjective. While morality and the consequences of character-motivated action may be observed at the narrative and representational level of cinema, I will maintain that ethics and characterization are felt in the image’s affect of time (or what Deleuze calls the time-image).

Firstly, in the section entitled Characterization as Process, I will define the central concepts for this chapter: character and the impulse-image’s moral judgment; characterization and the Spinozan ethics’ power of the false. Secondly, in the section called The Spiritual Automaton, I will delineate Deleuze’s concept of the spiritual automaton—the capacity to think thought—in terms of his two types of affect: movement-image affection and the shock affect of the time-image (i.e., its power of the false). Thirdly, in Ethics and Violence, I will define the Deleuzian-Spinozan ethical framework for violence by differentiating an idea of violence (as it relates to the representation of an act of cruelty) and its ethical affect (a continuous line of variation between joy-sadness).

There are two subsections of the spectator’s becoming-violence into the process of characterization. Firstly, in the section entitled The Impulse-Image’s Impression of Cruelty, I establish the spectator’s immersion into an idea of violence, which is associated with cruel action-image violence. Secondly, in Violent Shock Affect: The Time-Image’s Power of the False, I examine the spectator’s deterritorialization from the impulse-image’s impression of cruelty. The time-image deterritorialization therefore reinvestigates violence as a process of absorption and a capacity for power—joy-sadness—rather than the representation of a cruel action.

Alex (Malcolm McDowell) in *A Clockwork Orange*, the gangsters in *Reservoir Dogs*, and Mickey and Mallory (Woody Harrelson and Juliette
Lewis) in *Natural Born Killers* are all consumed by their desire and impulse to refuse social law. As a result, the spectator is immersed in a world of violence where the character’s impulse for cruelty implicitly draws a moral division between the violent characters and the lawful world of which they refuse to be a part. When such divisions are drawn, the character is associated with an idea of cruelty and the spectator judges the violent character’s cruel actions. Here, both subjectivities are based on the emotional exploration of a character’s joy and sadness as well as the spectator’s experience and evaluation of these emotions.

In these respective case studies, however, the truth behind an idea of judgment, associated with a cruel act of violence, is renegotiated when the films blur the line between good and bad, subject and object of violence. This renegotiation of truth is the power of the false. The blurring of good and bad here does not refer to the character as antihero; rather, the characterization is the effacement of the difference between subject and object, good and bad, spectator and character with the use of time-image editing. By questioning the cinematic experience of the violent character’s cruel impression—associated, for example, with a character’s joyful violent action and the victim’s reaction—these case studies form a subjectless ethic of violence. The power of the false, as it is explored in this chapter, refers to the characterization’s power to problematize the desire for violence (as power) itself rather than simply judging the representation of violent actions as something cruel or immoral.

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31 As mentioned in the previous chapter, Patricia Pisters examines what she calls the ‘class of violence’ and its impulse and desire to refuse society; Pisters, *Matrix* 77-105.
Characterization as Process: From Character and Impulse to Characterization and Ethics

I am using the term character with reference to Deleuze’s impulse-image and its relation to the representation of a cruel action. Deleuze’s movement-image subjectivities, which form the sensory-motor schema, include: the perception-image (long, establishing-shot), the action-image (duel), the impulse-image (energy), and the affection-image (close-up, emotion). These shot types form an organic logic of classical realist relations. Here, the energy of the impulse-image qualitatively relates to the representation of domination in the form of cruel actions. The impulse-image’s energy of cruelty, as it relates to the representation of dominance, initiates an implied moral position regarding the violent character.

Deleuze explicitly discusses the concept of character in terms of man and his relation to the world. His movement and time images respectively correspond to: the character’s organic narration and the forger’s crystalline narration. According to Deleuze’s Cinema 1, man’s relation to the world—as well as the spectator’s experience of this relation—is organic and unified in its ties to narrative, situation, and milieu. In Cinema 2: The Time-Image, however, spectator and character alike become overwhelmed by the situations they are confronted with. Deleuze explains that the time-image’s falsifying character is a forger of the organic relations of classicism because classical notions of truth, such as Manichean divisions between good and evil, are deterritorialized by time-image aberrance.

Deleuze often uses the term ‘man’ as an extension of his discussion of character. He makes certain gendered distinctions in his discussion of character types. For example, Deleuze claims that classical American cinema explores the impulse-image through the character of the originary woman: the good girl who destroys what she encounters; Ava Gardner’s impulse to marry emasculated men in Pandora and the Flying Dutchman (Albert Lewin, 1951), The Barefoot Contessa (Joseph L. Mankiewicz, 1954), and The Sun Also Rises (Henry King, 1957); and Ruby Gentry (King Vidor, 1952), the vengeful girl of the swamps. Distinctions such as these serve as further examples of the character’s relation to the film world. Deleuze is therefore not making a gendered statement when he examines the character’s or man’s relation to the world. See Deleuze, Cinema I 134.
According to Deleuze, classicism’s organic narration—the narrative development of a sensory-motor schema—is truthful in that the dramatic tensions of the action-image are contained within Euclidean space. This means that “time is the object of an indirect representation in so far as it is a consequence of action, is dependent on movement and is inferred from space. Hence, no matter how disordered it is, it remains in principle a chronological time” (Deleuze, *Cinema 2* 128). The power of the false, as it is related to the character as a forger, breaks this perception of time as it breaks Manichean divisions between good and evil. He explains that the force of time and its power of the false creates a new image, a time or crystal image where

the forger becomes *the character* of the cinema: not the criminal, the cowboy, the psycho-social man, the historical hero, the holder of power, etc., as in the action-image, but the forger pure and simple, to the detriment of all action. The forger could previously exist in a determinate form, liar or traitor, but he now assumes an unlimited figure which permeates the whole film. (Deleuze, *Cinema 2* 132)

Here, Deleuze suggests that the character becomes a characterization of sorts, an affect or force of the crystal-image or time-image, rather than a mere protagonist.

My use of the term characterization refers to the time-image’s renegotiation of morality, character, and representation through an exploration of characterization as an affect of violence rather than a moral effect of character-motivated actions, impulses, and affections. Characterization is therefore a process of immersion and absorption where the spectator is first immersed in the impression of a cruel character and confronted with absorption through the characterization’s affective awareness of the capacity to think violence beyond the idea of cruelty or
evil. The process of characterization, its ethics, is therefore an engagement with the asubjective capacity for joy-sadness—an effacement of the difference between subject and object—rather than an individuated representation of cruelty (i.e., the character’s joy in violence and the spectator’s judgment of this character).

The Spiritual Automaton: Movement-Image Affection and the Time-Image Shock Affect (or Spinozan Ethics)

In “Thought and Cinema” in Cinema 2, Deleuze introduces the concept of the spiritual automaton as the cinema’s power to shock and provoke an image of thought. Deleuze’s spiritual automaton entails two images of thought: classical cinema’s movement-image and modern cinema’s time-image. The spiritual automaton of the movement-image is associated with a dialectic between individuation and collective ‘Dividual’ consciousness that is expressed in the affection-image (Deleuze, Cinema 1 92). The spiritual automaton of the time-image is associated with its shock affect or its power of the false. The concept of the spiritual automaton will specifically be addressed in Chapter 5. For the moment, I am invoking the concept of the spiritual automaton to make a correlation between Deleuze’s spiritual automation of the time-image—the awareness of thought’s incapacity to represent the whole—and Spinozan ethics—the capacity to affect and be affected in life.

Firstly, Deleuze argues that classical cinema entails a dialectic of shock or affect that is akin to Eisenstein’s cerebral model of cinema in his book Film Theory. For Deleuze, the movement-image’s classical affect—within the sensory-motor schema of perception, action, impulse, affection—enters into a dialectical relation between affection and perception. With

33 He traces the spiritual automaton to Spinoza and Leibniz, see Deleuze, Cinema 2 310.
modern cinema, however, Deleuze argues that this organic relation, a unified perception of reality—of action-image realism—is broken. This break from realism, and its power of the false, is a confrontation with the fact that thought is not the same as the awareness of the capacity for thought.

Secondly, Deleuze describes the time-image’s shock affect, the break from the sensory-motor schema, according to Antonin Artaud’s discussion of the cinema’s ability to create a shock to rational thought in his *Oeuvres complètes III*. Deleuze invokes Artaud to make two points. Firstly, the spiritual automaton should not be confused with a dream state (Deleuze, *Cinema 2* 165-67). Secondly, the difference between Eisenstein’s and Artaud’s respective models of cinematic shock is that while Eisenstein relates the cinema’s power to the brain’s capacity to represent the whole, a unity of individual and collective consciousness, Artaud emphasizes the cinema’s and thought’s incapacity to represent the whole (Deleuze, *Cinema 2* 165-67). In sum, Deleuze associates his own notion of the spiritual automaton, as it is described in *Cinema 2: The Time-Image*, to Artaud’s insight regarding the cinema’s capacity to shock thought and realize its incapacity to represent the whole.

Similarly, Deleuze’s spiritual automaton entails two types of affect: movement-image affection and the shock affect of the time-image. Deleuze’s distinction between the affection-image close-up in *Cinema 1* and the shock affect of the time-image’s power of the false in *Cinema 2* correlates with the distinction that he describes between affection (Spinoza’s *affectio*) and affect (Spinoza’s *affectus*) in his lectures on Spinoza’s *Ethics*. According to Deleuze’s explication of Spinoza, there is a distinction to be made between an idea and its affect: an idea is a representational mode of thought, and affect is a non-representational mode of thought (Deleuze, “Transcripts”). In what follows, I will demonstrate that while Deleuze’s affection-image—as it relates to Spinoza’s *affectio*—relates to the sensory-motor representation of an image of thought, Deleuze’s shock affect the
time-image—as it relates to Spinoza’s *affectus*—is purely affective in its non-representational image of thought.

Spinoza’s *affectio* is defined as “a state of a body insofar as it is subject to the action of another body” (Deleuze, “Transcripts”). For example, the statement ‘I feel the sun on me’ is an affection—an interaction of two bodies, the sun and my body—relating to the effect of the sun on me (Deleuze, “Transcripts”). Accordingly, Deleuze’s affection-image close-up expresses a state (a quality or power) in relation to the sensory-motor schema (perception, action, impulse and affection).

Spinoza’s *affectus*, on the other hand, refers to the continuous variation (variation is Deleuze’s term not Spinoza’s) of affect:

according to Spinoza, we are fabricated as such spiritual automata. As such spiritual automata, within us there is the whole time of ideas which succeed one another, and in according with this succession of ideas, our power of acting or force of existing is increased or diminished in a continuous manner, on a continuous line, and this is what we call affectus, it’s what we call existing. Affectus is thus the continuous variation of someone’s force of existing, insofar as this variation is determined by the ideas that s/he has. (Deleuze, “Transcripts”)

In other words, Spinoza’s affectus is the line of variation between an increased or decreased capacity for action that is determined by ideas associated with affections of joy-sadness. Still, Deleuze specifies that ‘determined’ ideas cannot be reduced to their consequential variations:

‘determined’ does not mean that the variation is reducible to the ideas that one has, since the idea that I have does not account for its consequence, that is the fact that it increases my power of acting or on
the contrary diminishes it in relation to the idea that I had at the time, and it’s not a question of comparison, it’s a question of a kind of slide, a fall or rise in the power of acting. (Deleuze, “Transcripts”)

Affect therefore refers to the variation in a body’s capacity to act, exist, and live. Similarly, Deleuze’s shock affect of the time-image deterritorializes affect from the sensory-motor schema because an affection, ‘I am affected by sadness,’ becomes a continuous variation of sadness-joy.

Ultimately, the distinction between Deleuze’s movement-image affection and the time-image’s shock affect distinguishes between the quality of an idea and its affect on one’s capacity for action. While affection is determined and expressed in terms of the movement-image relation between action and perception, affect—the capacity to affect and be affected in life—is free from this sensory-motor schema. According to Deleuze, affect is determined by (yet not reducible to) the ideas that one has because affect cannot represent anything: “[t]ake at random what anybody would call affect or feeling, a hope for example, a pain, a love, this is not representational. There is an idea of the loved thing, to be sure, there is an idea of something hoped for, but hope as such or love as such represents nothing, strictly nothing” (Deleuze, “Transcripts”). The point is that affection qualifies an idea, an idea of violence for example, while affect cannot be represented since it is a variation in the capacity to live and act in a certain way.

**Ethics and Violence: From Moral Judgment to an Ethics of Affect**

In accordance with the previous section’s explication of the spiritual automaton and Deleuze’s Spinozan ethics, this section will briefly explain the distinction that I want to make between the impulse-image’s impression of cruelty, its implied judgment of evil, and the time-image’s power of the
false. In his lectures on Spinoza’s *Ethics*, Deleuze explains Spinoza’s two fundamental passions or affects as the source of all passions: joy involves “an increase in the power of acting” and sadness a “diminution or destruction of the power of acting” (Deleuze, “Transcripts”). Furthermore, Deleuze adds that all things, body or soul, are defined by the power or capacity for being affected (Deleuze, “Transcripts”). With the impulse-image’s effect of cruelty, my aim is demonstrate that the impulse creates an impression of violence in its relation to action-image violence. This impression of violence and its effect of cruelty are qualified according to the sensory-motor schema of perception, action, impulse and affection. As such, the joy or sadness that is associated with the action-image relates to an affection of joy or sadness: for example, ‘I am affected by joy,’ joy in the act of violence. With the shock affect of the time-image, however, my aim is to show that time-image cinema removes affect from states of subjectivity and judgment to create an affect of joy-sadness beyond the determination of character or action.

The shock affect of the time-image does not refer to shocking, graphic, or gratuitous acts of violence. The shock affect refers to the destabilizing affect of the time-image, which breaks away from classical realism’s illusory image of rational thought. Deleuze defines the time-image or crystal-image as “the uniting of an actual [representational] image and a virtual [affective, asubjective] image to the point where they can no longer be distinguished” (*Cinema 2* 335). The falsifying affect of the time-image renegotiates our initial perception of character-motivated violence because any clear-cut subject versus object divisions—violent character versus victim of violence, or spectator versus character—are broken. In this ethical reconsideration of violence, violence is no longer about the character’s immoral acts of violence, but rather the amoral affects of joy-sadness that constitute a continuous line of variation or a force of existing.

My use of Spinozan ethics—to discuss a characterization’s affects of joy and sadness—is indebted to Pisters’ “Cinema’s Politics of Violence” in
The Matrix of Visual Culture. It is not within the scope of this chapter to outline the philosophical connections between Spinoza, Nietzsche, and Deleuze. Yet I want to point out, as Pisters does, that Deleuze refers to a Spinozan ethics in his use of Nietzsche. While Deleuze does not use the term ethics in his discussion of Nietzsche, he references Nietzsche’s *Twilight of the Idols and the Anti-Christ* to explain an ethics, a power of the false, which goes beyond absolute notions of good and evil, truth and fallacy (i.e., the truth of good and the judgment of evil). He explains that when Nietzsche replaces judgment with affect:

> beyond good and evil does not in the least mean *beyond the good and the bad*. This bad is exhausted and degenerating life, all the more terrible, and apt to multiply itself. But the good is outpouring, ascending life, the kind which knows how to transform itself, to metamorphose itself according to the forces it encounters, and which forms a constantly larger force with them, always increasing the power to live, always opening new ‘possibilities.’ Of course there is no more truth in one life than in the other; there is only becoming, and becoming is the power of the false of life, the will to power.

(Deleuze, *Cinema 2* 141)

The power of the false therefore renegotiates set truths, such as Manichean divisions between good and bad, by replacing moral ideas with the ethical capacity for action. This passage is important because Deleuze suggests that affect is a notion of power that is not confined to moral law or absolute truth, an ethics of affect is the capacity for goodness or badness in life.

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Ethics therefore determines how we live. By this rationale, the affection-image close-up—which Deleuze describes as “that which occupies the gap between an action and a reaction, that which absorbs an external action and reacts on the inside” (*Cinema 1* 217)—expresses the power-quality of a subjective experience. It is my understanding that the affection-image close-up, its implication in the sensory-motor schema, represents an idea about lived experience. Yet, the affect of the time-image—its power of the false—expresses a variation in our capacity to act based on “affect as immanent evaluation, instead of judgment as transcendent value: ‘I love or I hate’ instead of ‘I judge’” (Deleuze, *Cinema 2* 141).

I am claiming that while the affection of the movement-image close-up can lead to a judgment related to an action—because the affection-image is the expression of a subjective state related to causal action—the time-image’s power of the false allows affect to break free of qualification. Affect therefore becomes the power or capacity for affect rather than a determinate qualification. The time-image’s power of the false therefore unveils the fallacy of subjectivity by conflating subject and object, and erasing subject and object difference. According to my interpretation of Deleuze, the ‘I’ of ‘I love or I hate’ is immanent and universal because ‘I’ refers to the capacity for love or hate rather than the ‘I’ of judgment, ‘I judge you,’ which forms a firm subject position. When Deleuze argues that modern cinema’s time-image deterritorializes classical cinema’s rational and representational system, he describes modern cinema’s power of the false. This is where Spinoza’s influence is visible because Deleuze explains that when the ideal of truth is lost, the only thing that is left is the power and force of affects (*Cinema 2* 139).

The spectator’s relation to a characterization of violence is ethical because the characterization is not limited to the representation of moral actions. Ethics, here, refers to ‘the capacity to affect and be affected’ as ‘a will to power’ (to borrow Spinoza’s and Nietzsche’s expressions
respectively). Morality, on the other hand, presumes a system of power and judgment in absolute terms because judgment assumes a subjective position regarding the truth of what is good or bad. A moral system might ask the question: what is good or evil? Or, who is good and who is evil? However, as Pisters explains, a Deleuzian, Nietzschean, and Spinozan view of ethics asks: “what are the forces in play?” (Matrix 85). How does the capacity for affect—the capacity to affect and be affect—delineate an ethical power relation? This chapter will therefore analyze to what extent characterizations of violence are expressed as ‘forces in play’ in the affect of a film.

The Impulse-Image’s Impression of Cruelty

I will discuss the spectator’s impression of a character’s cruelty in the context of a character’s establishing scenes. However, the impulse-image is not necessarily presented early in the character’s establishing shots. In A History of Violence, the perfect example of an impulse-image is placed in the middle of the film. When gangsters threaten Tom Stall’s (Viggo Mortensen) family, he turns towards the camera and stares at the gangsters with the wily eyes of a killer dog. He grits his teeth and curls his lip. The animalistic energy and its impression of cruelty are felt in this medium close-up on Tom. It is a pure impulse-image since it leaves the impression of cruelty that will be actualized in action.

Although Deleuze associates the impulse-image with naturalism, he also claims that horror and science fiction genres are part of naturalism because “the originary world may constitute by itself the derived milieu which is assumed to be real” (Cinema 1 234). Here, Deleuze implies that naturalism’s effect of realism—its impression of realism—is based on an organic, representational, and descriptive association between the film setting (the derived milieu) and the violence or cruelty of the character.
Deleuze draws a link between the classical realism of action-image cinema and the derived surrealism of impulse-image cinema where “impulses are extracted from the real modes of behaviour current in a determinate milieu, from the passions, feelings and emotions which real men experience in this [real] milieu” (Cinema 1 124). Deleuze suggests that the surrealism of naturalism may be qualitatively compared to the real of action-image classicism. It is my sense that the difference between the violence of a cruel character and the violence of an action-image hero is one of intensity. It is also my understanding that Deleuze’s impulse-image is an energy that exhausts action-image realism since he explains that the world of naturalism or impulse “is not opposed to realism [action], but on the contrary accentuates its features by extending them in an idiosyncratic surrealism” (Cinema 1 124). The impulse-image goes beyond action/reaction because its behaviors and objects—specifically its primordial fetishes—are in Deleuze’s words ‘supercharged’ (Cinema 1 124). In sum, the violence of the impulse-image is predatory and perverse in its excess of action because the character of the impulse-image is “victim of his [or her] own impulse” (Deleuze, Cinema 1 137).

While Deleuze defines the impulse-image as an energy (Cinema 1 218), I would also define the impulse-image as an exploration of innate violence, which is qualitatively related to the affection and action-images rather than causally related to them. Deleuze claims that the impulse-image is “difficult to reach and even to define or identify” since it is “‘stuck’ between the affection-image and the action-image” (Cinema 1 134). Still, Deleuze is careful to differentiate impulse from action and affection:

An impulse is not an affect, because it is an impression in the strongest sense and not an expression. But neither is it like the feelings or emotions which regulate and deregulate behaviour. Now we must recognise that this new set is not a mere intermediary, a place
of transition, but possesses a perfect consistency and autonomy, with the result that the action-image remains powerless to represent it, and the affection-image powerless to make it felt. (Cinema 1 123)

Although Deleuze specifies that an impulse is not an affect, as per the sensory-motor schema, it is related to perception, action, impulse and affection.

Deleuze also defines the impulse-image as an energy that leaves an impression based on the impulse’s symptoms and fetishes: symptoms “designates the qualities or powers related to an originary world (defined by impulses)”; fetish is the “fragment torn away, by the impulse, from a real milieu, and corresponding to the originary world” (Cinema 1 218). The originary world simply refers to a world of animalistic impulses, which Deleuze examines in terms of the violence and cruelty typified in the naturalist, surreal cinema of Buñuel, Stroheim, and Losey (Cinema 1 123-36). Although Deleuze associates the impulse-image with naturalism, like Pisters (Matrix 82), I am examining the impulse-image in contemporary cinema.

_A Clockwork Orange, Reservoir Dogs, and Natural Born Killers_ are three films where the characters are introduced to the spectator as protagonists that inhabit an originary world and exhibit its impulses. Deleuze explains that naturalistic impulses skew realist milieux or settings and behaviors:

Take a house, a country or a region. These are real milieux of geographical and social actualisation. But it looks as if, in whole or in part, they communicate from within with originary worlds. The originary world may be marked by the artificiality of the set (a comic opera kingdom, a studio forest, or marsh) as much as by the
authenticity of a preserved zone (a genuine desert, a virgin forest). It is recognisable by its formless character. (Cinema 1 123)

He argues that the impulse-image’s milieux or settings are formless because such settings are characterized by “a without-background, composed of unformed matter, sketches or fragments, crossed by non-formal functions, acts, or energy dynamisms which do not even refer to the constituted subjects” (Deleuze, Cinema 1 123). Furthermore, according to Deleuze, the characters of the impulse-image “are like animals: the fashionable gentleman a bird of prey, the lover a goat, the poor man a hyena. (Cinema 1 123). For Deleuze, it is a film world made up of outlines and fragments, heads without necks, eyes without faces, arms without shoulders, gestures without form. But it is also the set which unites everything, not in an organisation, but making all the parts converge in an immense rubbish-dump or swamp, and all the impulses in a great death-impulse. (Cinema 1 124)

Ultimately, he describes this animalistic impulse for violence as one that destroys characters and spaces:

The originary world is therefore both radical beginning and absolute end; and finally it links the one to the other, it puts one into the other, according to a law which is that of the steepest slope. It is thus a world of a very special kind of violence (in certain respects, it is the radical evil); but it has the merit of causing an originary image of time to rise, with the beginning, the end, and the slope, all the cruelty of Chronos. (Deleuze, Cinema 1 124)
The point is that the impulse-image’s violence is not limited to an actual space, or a determinate action, it is an absolute desire that destroys all in its path.

In *A Clockwork Orange*, *Reservoir Dogs*, and *Natural Born Killers*, the violent settings are extracted from action-image realism, yet the convergence of setting and character reveals the cruelty of the originary world where the characters exude the violence of an animal stalking its prey. We first meet Alex of *A Clockwork Orange* in the Korova Milk Bar where his voice-over describes his plans for a night of ‘ultraviolence.’ The bar is a real milieu, yet the setting reveals an impression of Alex’s violence and misogyny. Similarly, we are first introduced to the ensemble of *Reservoir Dogs* gangsters in a restaurant. Again the milieu is real, yet the gangsters’ interactions foreshadow the characters’ destructive actions when they later meet in a warehouse and try to figure out which gangster is an undercover police officer who ruined their jewelry heist. *Reservoir Dogs*’ restaurant setting is not as blatantly expressionistic as *A Clockwork Orange*’s Korova Milk Bar, but the impression of cruelty, as it is developed in the blood-soaked warehouse setting, stems from the ensemble’s interactions in the restaurant. In *Natural Born Killers*, the film’s opening credit sequence—of animals in a nondescript American desert—foreshadows Mickey and Mallory’s rampage of cross-country killings that begin in a diner. Once more, the diner is a real milieu, yet the impression of Mickey and Mallory’s violence reveals a world of cruelty in a televisual and often cartoon-like aesthetic of violence. The impression of cruelty is important because I want to draw a distinction between what violence represents—in terms of an idea of evil—and how violence functions as an asubjective affective force. The Korova Milk Bar in *A Clockwork Orange*, the warehouse in *Reservoir Dogs*, and the diner in *Natural Born Killers*: all milieux or settings are exhausted by the impulse for violence that its characters exude.
A Clockwork Orange is a film that explores Alex’s violent impulses. Set in an alternate version of England—a retro-futuristic milieu with influences from the pop art movement—Alex DeLarge narrates his own tale as a gang leader who revels in ‘ultraviolence’ until he is imprisoned for murder. He is released from prison under a new medical program, the Ludovico Treatment, which causes him to feel a nauseating aversion to violence once he is set free in society. The film’s affective violent aesthetic revolves around Alex’s perception of himself as a violent victor in the first third of the film, and the victim of violence until the film’s ambiguous final shot.

The opening shot of the film is an impulse-image where the symptoms of Alex’s violent egocentrism and his misogynist fetishization of women are immediately apparent as he sits in the Korova Milk Bar. Alex addresses the camera directly, gazing at the viewer in close-up. The soundtrack is ominous as the synthesizer emits a sound as pointed as the fake eyelashes framing Alex’s right eye. He remains still, yet his chest heaves slightly. His eyes glimmer menacingly upwards, his head tilts slightly downward, and his lips form an evil smirk. His black bowler hat melds into the black background. The camera begins to dolly away from him as he brings a glass of milk to his mouth. He is dressed in white with a plastic blood-dripped eyeball pinned to the cuff of his white shirt. His ‘droogs,’ Pete (Michael Tarn), Georgie (James Marcus), and Dim (Warren Clarke), are dressed in similar attire. The droogs are still as they pose next to Alex and stare blankly away from the camera.

The camera continues to dolly away from the gang to reveal white decorative writing on the wall above them and contorted naked white female mannequins at their feet as foot rests and coffee tables. The mannequins are symmetrically placed throughout the bar with their backs arched, legs open, breasts, and genitals exposed. Another type of nude white female figure is on its knees on a square pillar. They are symmetrically aligned along the edges of the frame—forming a forced perspective. Patrons populate the bar as they
aimlessly stare ahead. The camera never stops its outward motion and Alex does not disengage his stare. He does, however, begin to narrate halfway through the camera movement. In voice-over, he states that the milk prepares them “for a bit of the old ultra-violence.”

There is no character-motivated emotion in this opening shot. It has all the components of a purely effective impulse-image where the spectator is enthralled by Alex’s maleficent gaze, the eerie music, and the intangible violence of this opening long take. The looming violence is felt in Alex’s imposing presence as well as the disembodied elements of fetishization, such as the overt sexual nature of the mannequins. Alex remains the center of this opening shot while the mannequins are highly sexualized objects that provide nothing more than décor and milk. Alex’s unblinking gaze, coupled with the camera movement, immediately sets up his unflinching impulse for violence that is later actualized in his participation in rape and violence.

In *Reservoir Dogs*, the violence stems from emotion as the gangsters react to the psychopathic violent actions of Mr. Blonde (Michael Madsen) and struggle to figure out who the traitor is in their gang. The majority of the violence in *Reservoir Dogs* remains in the realm of the action-image because of the way in which the gangsters react to one another and the situation they are in. Mr. Blonde’s violence, on the other hand, leaves a distinct impression of cruelty on the spectator.

In the opening sequence of *Reservoir Dogs*, there is a 360 degree pan around a table where the gangsters—Mr. White (Harvey Keitel), Mr. Orange (Tim Roth), Mr. Pink (Steve Buscemi), Mr. Blue (Edward Bunker), Mr. Brown (Quentin Tarantino), Mr. Blonde, Nice Guy Eddie Cabot (Chris Penn) and his father, the boss, Joe Cabot (Lawrence Tierney)—gather in a restaurant sometime before the heist. The panning motion is intercut with impulse-images that introduce the central characters’ violent temperaments. However, I will concentrate on Mr. Blonde’s impression of cruelty since he is the most outrageously violent of all the gangsters.
Mr. Blonde’s violence is inherently impulsive since he leaves an impression of cruelty that the other gangsters do not exude. While the other gangsters are emotional in their convictions, Mr. Blonde leaves an impression of coldness and cruelty, a detachment from others, and a joy in violence. Mr. Blonde’s impulse-image is most apparent when he arrives at the warehouse—the post heist meeting place—where Mr. Pink and Mr. White are already quarreling over who might be the traitor. As the camera dollies away from the men in a standoff, Mr. Blonde is revealed in the sidelines—silently stalking the area, the men, the situation at hand. His back is to the camera. He leans on a metal beam, holding a soda nonchalantly, and wearing black sunglasses. In a close-up that is reminiscent of his initial impulse-image from the restaurant scene, Mr. Blonde exudes a cool façade that masks his immanent violence. He later tortures a cop in the warehouse while singing and dancing to a Stealers Wheel’s song entitled “Stuck in the Middle with You.” Mr. Pink repeatedly asks him what happened after the heist. Mr. Blonde does not answer. With his head tilting down slightly, he merely stares at Mr. Pink and Mr. White over his dark frames. He takes his glasses off, looks down, and says nothing. Mr. Pink continues to address him. Mr. Blonde, in close-up, puts his glasses away and looks up at the men aloofly.

In Mr. Blonde’s opening impulse-image, at the restaurant, he offers to shoot Mr. White because he grabbed Joe Cabot’s address book. Mr. White, characteristically emphasizing remorse, says to Mr. Blonde: “You shoot me in a dream; you had better wake up and apologize.” Mr. White refuses to return the book. Joe tells Mr. Blonde to shoot Mr. White and everyone laughs. In a close-up of Mr. Blonde: he smirks coyly, aims at Mr. White with his index finger, and pulls the trigger with his thumb. He is immediately set up as a trigger-happy gangster. During the warehouse’s impulse-image, Mr. Blonde makes no apologies for his behavior when Mr. White and Mr. Pink accuse him of acting like a psychopath at the heist. They claim that he shot
innocent bystanders when the alarm sounded and the police arrived at the jewelry heist. For the spectator this incident remains unseen. The impulse-image introduces a character’s cruel and evil nature. In this case, I want to draw attention to the fact that the impression of Mr. Blonde’s nonchalant violence correlates with the way the other gangsters describe him as a ‘psychopath’ and deem his actions to be morally wrong within their gangster code.

In *Natural Born Killers*, Mickey and Mallory’s acts of violence are deemed immoral by Wayne Gale (Robert Downey Jr.), a reporter who tracks their crime sprees on his tabloid television show entitled ‘American Maniacs,’ and the prison warden (Tommy Lee Jones) who eventually imprisons them. In support of these judgments, the opening credit sequence reveals the animalistic violence within Mickey and Mallory. In *Deleuze and Horror Film*, Anna Powell offers a schizoanalysis of *Natural Born Killers*. She argues that “viewers are forced to become schizo in watching” the film because “we are assaulted by images and affects without time for our feelings and thoughts to cohere” (52). She also examines Mickey and Mallory in terms of their becoming-animal, their predatory behavior, and the spectator’s affective experience of this becoming-animal through the various animalistic images throughout the film (Powell 52-58).

The opening black-and-white images of a wolf and a snake reflect Mickey and Mallory’s animalistic impulse-images. In the first instance of violence at a diner, a waitress named Mabel (O-Lan Jones) serves Mickey. When he asks her about key-lime pie the image is in color, his back is to the camera, she looks down at the ground and nonchalantly answers, “It’s an acquired taste.” In a black-and-white jump-cut, she smiles at him flirtatiously as she repeats the same line. The use of black-and-white and the distortion in her behavior stems from Mickey’s view of women as his sexual prey. Like Alex’s impulse-image in *A Clockwork Orange*, this impulse is later developed in an action-image rape scene where Mickey exhibits a feline
roaring expression before raping a kidnap victim. Although Mickey’s sexualized fetishization of women is not explicitly revealed until the rape scene, the affect of his violent, sexual impulse is felt in his distorted perception of Mabel’s answer where he views a nonchalant answer as a sexual advance.

While Mickey hunts his prey like a predator, Mallory uses her sexuality to trap her prey. She dances erotically by the green glow of the jukebox as Mickey eats his lime green pie at the counter. She wears a cropped halter bra revealing a scorpion tattoo on her abdomen. Two men walk into the diner and watch her dance off-screen. The sound of a rattle snake accompanies the camera movement and references the opening impulse-image of a snake. There are three successive low-angle shots of Mallory swinging her hips sensually. The zooms, canted angles, and rock music have a music video aesthetic. When the older man sits by Mickey and calls Mallory “pussy,” Mickey sees red. Similar to the previous impulse-image in master-shot, Mickey is shown in close-up slowly sipping his coffee in color. His eyes are intense, staring ahead fiercely; he is annoyed by the man. In a black-and-white close-up of Mickey sipping his coffee slowly, there are quick, aggressive, successive medium-shots inserts of Mickey, now in color, standing, facing the camera covered in blood. When the younger man begins to harass Mallory, she immediately crashes a bottle over his head and laughs hysterically as she continues to punch him. In intermittent cuts from black-and-white to a set splashed with garish colors, exaggerated sounds, fast cuts, and sinuous camera movements, Mickey and Mallory kill everyone in the diner except one man who must live to tell the tale of Mickey and Mallory’s terror.

The cruel effect of the impulse-image is related to the emotional qualification, or the affection-image, of a character’s joy in violence or a victim’s pain in violence. In relating classical cinema’s pairs, emotion/object, impulse/fetish, and affect/face, Deleuze explains that
classical realism is a cinema of behavior where emotion, impulse, and affect are causally linked to a respective object, fetish, and face (*Cinema 1* 159). He gives an example from *On the Waterfront* (Elia Kazan, 1954), in the famous scene on a park swing, when Terry (Marlon Brando) picks up Edie’s (Eva Marie Saint) fallen glove, fiddles with it, and wears it. Deleuze argues that Edie’s ambivalence towards Terry, and his shyness and guilt towards her—due to his implication in her brother’s death—are behavioral impressions: “a genetic or embryonic sign for the action-image, that could be called *Impression* (emotional object) and which already functions as a ‘symbol’ in the sphere of behaviour” (*Cinema 1* 159). In other words, the nervous playfulness that Brando is exhibiting in his gesture is, for Deleuze, a sign of the dramatic tension between Edie and Terry.

Similarly, I have demonstrated that the impulse-image is the sign of a cruel intention or an impression of violence. In *A Clockwork Orange*, *Reservoir Dogs*, and *Natural Born Killers* the characters express their desire to refuse society in their joy in violence. The symptom of cruelty, the power-quality defined by the impulse for violence, is rape and murder in both *A Clockwork Orange* and *Natural Born Killers* and torture in *Reservoir Dogs*. These acts of violence are foreshadowed by the impulse-image’s fetish: the sexualized mannequins in *A Clockwork Orange*, Mr. Blonde’s need for guns and power in *Reservoir Dogs*, and Mickey and Mallory’s animalistic impulse for violent action in *Natural Born Killers*. In each case, the violent character is associated with cruel and evil actions that the impulse-image forebodes through the fetish for violence that is torn from a real milieu or setting.
My main claim is that through characterization, the time-image’s power of the false transforms affection into affect. In other words, the character’s joy in violence ‘I am affected by joy in violence,’ or for example, ‘I am affected by Mr. Blonde’s psychotic violence,’ becomes joy-sadness. The time-image’s power of the false therefore eliminates the difference between good and bad, real and imaginary, subject and object of violence because violence becomes an affect rather than an affection. With the time-image’s shock affect, these “[s]ensory-motor situations [i.e., perception, action, impulse, and affection] have given way to pure optical and sound situations to which characters, who have become seers, cannot or will not react, so great is their need to ‘see’ properly what there is in the situation” (Deleuze, Cinema 2 128). This new image of violence deterritorializes the movement-image’s causal subjectivities, judgmental qualifications of violence that are associated with cruel actions, which are related to the spectator’s impression of the character’s cruelty.

It is important to note that, according to Deleuze, the time-image or crystal-image differs from dreams or mental-images because mental images reflect a character’s psychological state. The time-image, on the other hand, creates a new image that is detached from any consciousness or psychological state (Deleuze, Cinema 2 80). I am therefore arguing that the affect of the time-image creates a new image of violence because violence is no longer attached to the character’s identification with violence or the spectator’s judgment regarding an act of cruelty.

The final time-image in A Clockwork Orange is an ambiguous sequence, which may or may not suggest that Alex has returned to his impulsive violent self. Driven to madness by the effects of the Ludovico Treatment, Alex is hospitalized after an attempted suicide. In hospital, he receives a visit from the very politician who endorsed his treatment. In order
to appease the popular criticism of the government, in the wake of Alex’s suicide attempt, the politician offers him a government job to sway public opinion in its favor. As they seal their deal, the government official brings two large speakers of music—a loud triumphant overture fills the screen space—and a few floral arrangements into Alex’s room. A swarm of paparazzi enters to photograph the event. In Alex’s final affection-shot, he smiles for the cameras and shows a thumbs-up. Suddenly, his smile turns fierce, tight, and his lip begins to quiver slightly. He goes into a daze and rolls his eyes upwards and back. His upward glassy gaze is reminiscent of the film’s opening impulse-image and there is a cut to the final time-image.

This cut has no clear relation to the previous shot. It entails the purely optical and sound situation of the time-image as the triumphant overture continues to fill the screen. The camera remains static in a slow-motion perception long-shot of Alex and a woman in long gloves and black garters. They are naked. She straddles him as they lie on a cloud of white confetti, which melts into the white background. There are two rows of people applauding at their sides: the men are wearing grey suits with top hats, and the women are wearing colorful gowns, hats, and carrying umbrellas. The shot is symmetrical in its composition and forms a forced perspective, which recalls the symmetry and illusion of depth in the film’s opening shot: the impulse-image at the Korova Milk Bar. The classical music comes to a climax and Alex’s voice-over notes slyly, “I was cured alright!”

Although this final time-image recalls an earlier series of dream-images, a succession of violent imagery as Alex pleasures himself to the sound of Beethoven’s “Ninth,”—his violent anthem throughout the film—the film’s final shot is not particularly violent. Its overall affect is joyful. In fact, the woman holds a dominant position and presents a playful smile. The final time-image is quite ambiguous due to its exuberant affect of joy: joy that is not linked to a sensory-motor schema associated with Alex’s joy in violence.
If, as I argue, the film’s movement-image aesthetic expresses Alex’s emotional identification and attachment to violence, then the final time-image is ambiguous in its celebration of Alex’s freedom. In the first third of the film, Alex’s violent intentions are expressed in the recurrence of the initial impulse-image: the cruel joy he finds in violence. He views himself as the star of his own violence and his victims are subjected to his cruel desires. In the next two-thirds of the film, the roles are reversed when the law punishes Alex’s delinquent behavior. After undergoing the Ludovico Treatment, the law’s punishment, Alex then becomes the victim of violence and the subsequent affection-shots underline his victimization and martyrdom.

The film’s final shot suggests two possible conclusions regarding Alex’s attempted suicide: either he could be freed from his emotional identification with violence, or he could be freed from the Ludovico Treatment. In either case, this time-image forms a power of the false because the film’s final shot is not a question of whether Alex is good or evil, the question is: how will he use his free will? The affect of joy in Alex’s final time-image suggests that joy is detached from Alex’s attachment to violence as much as it is detached from the government’s systemic joy or judgment in torturing evil-doers such as Alex Delarge. In sum, the final time-image ‘joy’ has an affect of joy-sadness because it exceeds actualized joy or sadness.

Similar to *A Clockwork Orange*, *Reservoir Dogs*’ central time-image is a sequence that conflates real and imaginary as well as the concept of good and evil. In *Reservoir Dogs*’ time-image, the reality of the situation involves Mr. Orange’s success at convincing the gangsters that he is one of them by telling them a ‘commode story’—the imagined story of a former drug deal—to instill their trust in him as a gang member. As he proceeds to tell the story, Mr. Orange sits in a bar with Mr. White, Joe, and Eddie. The bar’s ambient lighting is blood red. There is a 360 degree panning motion around the table, which recalls the film’s opening restaurant sequence. Mr. Orange appears in
the frame alone. The gangsters are in a three-shot, reverse-shot, responding to his story. The story becomes a time-image that is intercut with Mr. Orange’s actual telling of the story at the bar. The virtual story telling reflects his fear of being found out as the traitor among the gangsters.

In the time-image, there is a 360 degree panning motion around Mr. Orange who stands in a white public washroom among four policemen and a search dog who barks at him. According to the story, Mr. Orange is carrying a bag of marijuana that he is supposed to sell in a train station. As he tells his story, his virtual emotions are described in a way that enforces their actuality: “Panic hits me like a bucket of water. First there’s the shock of it. Bam! Right in the face. And, I’m just standing there drenched in panic. And, all these sheriffs are looking at me. And they know, man. They know. They can smell it.” The panning motion stops. Mr. Orange walks calmly from the urinal to the sink to the hand dryer. A loud vacuum-like sound overwhelms the image—it has an absorbent affect that highlights the time-image’s play between the actual and the virtual—as Mr. Orange dries his hands in a series of close-ups. In another close-up, the camera pans slowly across the faces of the cops who watch Mr. Orange off-screen. In another series of close-ups, Mr. Orange turns his head towards the dryer in slow-motion and dries his hands. In another close-up, the dog barks at him in slow-motion. Mr. Orange turns away from the dog slowly in a medium close-up. The vacuum-like sound stops as Mr. Orange steps away from the dryer and exits the frame in regular motion.

Joe Cabot’s voice overlays the time-image, “You knew how to handle that situation.” Then, in the actuality of the red-lit bar, Joe lights a cigar and exhales smoke in slow-motion. The voice of Mr. Orange’s police chief overlays the screen space: “Tell me about Cabot,” he says.

The point, here, is that the time-image’s aesthetic affect reflects the fallacies of ‘truth’ within the film. In the melding of this actual moment in the bar and the virtual story, Mr. Orange—and the spectator’s experience of
his dual actuality and virtuality—is both good and bad, cop and gangster. In this time-image in *Reservoir Dogs*, like the final time-image in *A Clockwork Orange*, violence is characterized as an affective power rather than a position of truth. Mr. Orange’s virtual fear is actualized throughout *Reservoir Dogs* in his precarious situation among the gangsters. Mr. Orange is at the heart of the film’s interplay between good and bad, actual and virtual, subject and object of violence, impulse and time-image affects since his wounded body bleeds throughout the course of the film while all the other gangsters argue about which one is the traitor.

Deleuze’s notion of the time-image, particularly his discussion of the time-image as a time crystal, refers to the illusion of thought. Contrary to mental-images, such as dreams or recollections which are “actualized or in the course of actualization in consciousness or psychological states” (Deleuze, *Cinema 2* 79). The crystal or time-image “exists outside consciousness, in time, and we should have no more difficulty in admitting the virtual insistence of pure recollections in time than we do for the actual existence of non-perceived objects in space” (Deleuze, *Cinema 2* 80). In other words, the dream or recollection differs from a pure recollection because this pure recollection of the crystal-image has no origin in the self. The affect of the time-image remains selfless, beyond character, to form a characterization of violence.

The importance of *Reservoir Dogs*’ time-image reflects both Mr. Blonde’s and Mr. Orange’s treacherous relation among the gangsters as a joy-sadness. While Mr. Blonde’s impulse is indicative of his joy in violence, and the gangsters’ judgment of him as a cruel psychopath, the time-image creates a coalescence between Mr. Blonde’s cruel or evil nature and Mr. Orange’s good nature. Joy-sadness is felt in the continuous variation of spilt blood, joy in violence and sadness in betrayal, among the gangsters. This characterization of violence therefore revolves around the power of the time-image rather than the power of a character.
Mickey and Mallory’s impulse, affection, and time-images coalesce due to the experimental aesthetic in *Natural Born Killers*, which entails jump-cuts, cartoon-like violence, and a melding of their actual acts of violence and their virtual visions of the pain or joy that is associated with their experiences of violence. The film’s complex layers of actual violence and virtual violence ultimately lends itself to a critique of our televisual culture.

Like *A Clockwork Orange*, the conclusion of *Natural Born Killers* ends on an affect, which is not directly associated with Mickey and Mallory’s experience of joy or sadness regarding their personal experiences with violence. Many of the time-images in *Natural Born Killers* are recollection or dream images that haunt Mickey’s and Mallory’s psyches. For example, in recurrent black-and-white recollection-images, Mickey and Mallory both re-experience the pain of child abuse. Yet, in the final time-image, sadness does not refer to a character; it points to the spectator’s participation in violent imagery as a part of our televisual culture. After Mickey and Mallory shoot Wayne Gale, a sad song fills the screen. There is a close-up on Wayne’s camera lens and a canted long-shot as Mickey and Mallory walk away from Wayne’s limp corpse. In the time-images that follow, there is a cut to a shocked newscaster and subsequent cuts to actual news footage of violent crimes which occurred in America yet gained international media coverage. The succession of images include: the Menendez brothers’ trial, Tonya Harding figure skating, the Waco Texas Massacre, and the O. J. Simpson trial among other less recognizable news stories. The cuts, from one image to the next, are accompanied by the televisual sound, the blankness, or white noise of a changing channel. This suggests that the spectator’s implication in the media’s characterization of violence is part of a larger frame of time-image affects, from the fiction of cinema to the reality of media news stories. The film’s final shots therefore insinuate that the continuous line of variation among affects of joy-sadness,
as they relate to intermedial images of violence, perpetuate a cycle of sadness that is based on the joy in violence (whether it is a joy in the act of violence or a joy in its punishment).

**Conclusion**

By examining New Hollywood’s capacity to reterritorialize classical, representational ideas about violence, I want to draw a distinction between the idea of *what* violence represents (i.e., an idea of evil) and *how* violence functions as a subjectless affective force. In Pisters’ words: “Deleuze argues that with time that puts truth into crisis, cinema has become Nietzschean” (*Matrix* 84). She later explains that when the notion of an absolute truth or morality is replaced with the Deleuzian, Nietzschean, and Spinozan view of affect-as-power, the only thing that remains is the belief in bodies as forces, “forces that express a ‘will to power’” (Pisters, *Matrix* 85). Body, in the Deleuzian sense, is not separated by a Cartesian mind versus body division. It is rather a melding of the mind, body, and soul where the capacity to affect and be affected is a fluid state that is marked by changes in the capacity to act. If one is pained, one has a diminished capacity to act or live; if one is joyful, one has an amplified capacity for action. Morality and ethics are related in that ethics asks how morality functions as a system of power; power that inspires sad passions.

The analysis of my case studies suggests that while a moral position against violence creates an idea of violence, an idea based on cruel actions, there is an ethics of joy-sadness that blurs the moral line between good and evil because joy in violence as well as joy in its judgment perpetuates violence through sad passions. As I explained previously in Chapter 2, with reference to Pisters’ *The Matrix of Visual Culture*, according to a Deleuzian-Spinozan ethics, the desire to destroy that which makes us sad (either the
impulse to refuse society or the desire to judge this impulse) creates a chain of sorrow where violence is consistently born of hate. My case studies demonstrate that while morality (the representation of an idea or judgment of violence) creates a division between good and evil, ethics goes beyond this idea of violence to engage with violence as bad encounters which result in a decreased capacity for action.

The ethical power of the false is two-fold: it entails the power to detach from a humanistic notion of subjectivity and judgment, and it engages with violence as a function of power. The time-image, in each case study, creates an indiscernible affect between impulse-image cruelty and the cycle of sad passions that is perpetuated by violence (evil violence and justified lawful violence). If the shock affect of the time-image and its power of the false renegotiate classical cinema’s representational system, then New Hollywood’s time-image forms a camera-consciousness that places morality in crisis.

Deleuze presents an important caveat regarding the cinema’s capacity to shock thought when he says that: “[e]veryone knows that, if an art necessarily imposed the shock or vibration, the world would have changed long ago, and men would have been thinking for a long time. So this pretension of the cinema, at least among the greatest pioneers, raises a smile today” (Cinema 2 157). Despite Deleuze’s caveat, which humbles both the power of the cinema as well as the power of philosophy, I would argue that the cinema’s capacity to awaken the spectator’s spiritual automaton—his or her capacity for the conscious awareness of thought—is at least somewhat dependent upon our ability as researchers to articulate the importance of affect as a conceptual tool for understanding our relation to cinema and media as a whole.

I have drawn a distinction between the effect of the impulse-image and the shock affect of the time-image’s power of the false. From the pulsating impression of violence that exudes from the character’s impulse-
image to the shock affect of the characterization, spectator and character experience the transition from what Deleuze calls Chronos to Cronos. In the realm of the impulse-image’s Chronos, or chronological time, the impulse-image has a preeminent effect of violence that leads to a narrative of destruction because the impulse-image precedes and presupposes an act of cruelty. Cronos of the crystal or time-image, on the other hand, refers to the characterization’s shock affect “since the past is constituted not after the present that it was but at the same time, time has to split itself in two at each moment as present and past, which differ from each other in nature, or, what amounts to the same thing, it has to split the present in two heterogeneous directions” (Deleuze, *Cinema 2* 81). The Cronos of the crystal or time-image is splintered from the idea of Chronos or chronological time: “[t]ime consists of this split, and it is this, it is time, that we see in the crystal. The crystal-image was not time, but we see time in the crystal. We see in the crystal the perpetual foundation of time, non-chronological time, Cronos not Chronos. This is the powerful, non-organic Life which grips the world” (Deleuze, *Cinema 2* 81). This implies that while the violence of impulse is one of judgment, of good versus evil, the power of the time-image creates an image of violence that grips the world according to the continuous variation of joy-sadness.

Theorizing cinema as an event within Cronos allows the spectator to believe in the world rather than systemically judging the world, especially the world of violence, through moral categories of good versus evil. When Deleuze claims that, “[w]e need an ethic or a faith, which makes fools laugh; it is not a need to believe in something else, but a need to believe in this world, of which fools are a part” (*Cinema 2* 173), he insists on the power of affect as a substitute for a system of judgment. In the realm of an affective approach to cinema, characterization allows the spectator to see situations rather than react or judge them. For Deleuze, “[the crystalline narration] is the Dostoevskian condition as taken up by Kurosawa: in the most pressing
situations, *The Idiot* feels the need to see the terms of a problem which is more profound than the situation, and even more pressing (the same is true for most of Kurosawa’s films)” (*Cinema 2* 128).

Accordingly, viewing ethics as a problem of power, through the inspiration of sad passions, engages with the power of imagery including the representation of an idea of violence because ethics focuses on the idea’s affect. In the context of this chapter, New Hollywood’s camera-consciousness explores the spectator’s absorption into the otherness of a characterization of violence. Rather than viewing violence as an image or representation of cruelty, where cruelty is an implied moral problem, the characterization, or Deleuze’s forger, “now assumes an unlimited figure which permeates the whole film” (*Cinema 2* 132). Beyond the narrative, representational, and moral division between good versus evil, an affect of violence is felt in the joy-sadness that unites both the character’s impulse for violence and the systemic violence that tries to stifle aberrance.

Deleuze’s discussion of the crystal-image, or time-image, is pertinent because it creates a slippage between the spectator, the character, and the image or description (of violence), which is a departure from narrative-based, character-motivated action. According to Deleuze’s modern time-image, the character becomes a forger because classical cinema’s relation between the character and the film world, the spectator and the screen has collapsed to create a becoming-other. In sum, Deleuze’s time-image forger, or what I am calling the characterization of violence, creates a power of the false because the causal relations of action-image cinema no longer delineate a system of reason, justice, and judgment.

The confrontation with the attachment to the pleasures of watching or experiencing visceral violence results in a power of the false: “the power of the false cannot be separated from an irreducible multiplicity. ‘I is another’ [‘*Je est un autre*’] has replaced Ego = Ego” (Deleuze, *Cinema 2* 133). The power of the false therefore questions the creation of subjectivities as a
system of judgment. For Deleuze, and the purposes of my own argument, the importance of affect rests in the spiritual automaton’s capacity to jolt common sense notions of violence that are based on the judgment of good versus evil.

What is at stake if the pleasure of subjectivity, such as the pleasure in judgment, is not questioned by an ethics of spectatorship? According to Deleuze, the death of cinema occurs when “the mass-art, the treatment of the masses, which should not have been separable from an accession of the masses to the status of true subject, has degenerated into state propaganda and manipulation, into a kind of fascism” (Cinema 2 164). In Chapter 1, with reference to Ian Buchanan’s “Five Theses of Actually Existing Schizoanalysis of Cinema,” I explained that the only way to break away from this sensory-motor image of thought—where common sense ideas tend towards the fascism of nationalistic ideology and propaganda—is to engage with affect. Time-image puissance, its power of the false, is both an engagement with affection and affect since the time-image’s power of the false deterritorializes affection from the sensory-motor schema. Deleuze suggests that when classical cinema remained at the level of representation and judgment, “[t]he spiritual automaton became fascist man” (Cinema 2 164) rather than an affective entity.
Chapter 4

The Face of Violence and the Affect as Entity: Masculinity in Crisis

The affection-image is the close-up, and the close-up is the face. . . . Eisenstein suggested that the close-up was not merely one type of image among others, but gave an affective reading of the whole film. This is true of the affection-image: it is both a type of image and a component of all images. (Deleuze, Cinema 187)

Introduction

When Deleuze stresses the ‘pure’ power or quality of affect, what he calls ‘the affect as entity,’ he is drawing a distinction between the power of expression (the ‘expressed’) and its manifestation in a state of things (such as a face) that arrests and qualifies expression. I am using Deleuze’s definition of affect as power [puissance]—the capacity to affect and be affected—to reexamine the concept of white masculine power beyond the representation of phallic power and violence as a force of domination. If, as I have shown in Chapter 1, the discourse on New Hollywood violence has made white masculine power the face or representation of violence—the site where the subjectivity and signification of power and violence meet—then dismantling this hierarchical idea of power requires an engagement with affect. Affect is

35 Deleuze’s notion of the affect as entity, the pure virtual nature of affect that refers only to its own power-quality (its capacity for affect), stems from Peirce’s sign of firstness in Charles Sanders Peirce, On Signs: Writings on Semiotic, ed. James Hoopes (Chapel Hill: U of North Carolina P, 1991); Deleuze also traces the concept of pure affect to Maine de Biran, Mémoire sur la décomposition de la pensée (Paris: PU de France, 1952); Deleuze, Cinema 198.
the capacity [puissance] for power that forms and dismantles the face of violence and its systemic power [pouvoir] relations of domination and resistance.

The problem with the correlation between violence and the representation of masculine power, or lack of power, is that it defines power in terms of an image of masculine dominance without questioning the function of power itself. This correlation between violence and the representation of masculine power forms a binary opposition between power, which is assumed to be masculine, and the lack of power as something ‘other’ and opposed to white masculine power.

In order to redefine violence and power beyond the connotations of the patriarchal symbolic order, this chapter uses the Deleuzian concept of affect to engage with the capacity for violence as a desire for power. Rather than focusing on the performance of the masculine body as an image of strength (or emotional sensitivity as a lack of power), a dichotomy that many studies delineate, I am arguing that there is a distinction to be made between the idea of what power represents (i.e., an image of white masculine power or loss of power) and how power functions in terms of desire.

Why is the close-up an inherently affective shot type? As the epigraph to this chapter suggests, the close-up is fundamentally affective because it encompasses both the ‘expressed’ of a moment and the affect of an entire film. This is because the affect or ‘expressed’ of the affection-image has the power to exceed its qualification in a state of things. In Cinema 1, Deleuze discusses the power of the close-up in terms of the affect as entity: “[i]t is not

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a sensation, a feeling, an idea, but the quality of a possible sensation, feeling or idea” (98). He uses the term power-quality, with reference to the affection-image, as a hyphenated term because power-qualities are singular in their capacity for affect since they are distinct from their manifested state of expression. Deleuze states that, “power-qualities do relate to people and to objects, to the state of things, which are, as it were, their causes. But these [power-qualities] are very special effects: . . . they only refer back to themselves, and constitute the ‘expressed’ of the state of things” (Cinema 1 102). Deleuze explains that the power-qualities of affect “are pure possibilities, pure virtualities, which will be accomplished in particular conditions by the sensation that gives us the knife under the light, or by the action of the knife in our hand” (Cinema 1 106-07). This is an important passage because Deleuze implies that affect forebodes the quality or qualification of an action as much as it arrests the quality of a sensation which has passed. Affect therefore goes beyond representation because its power-quality refers not to its actualization, but only to itself.

In order to grasp the importance of the affect as entity, it is essential to understand its dual capacity for quality and power, which respectively correspond to Deleuze’s two poles of the face: the reflecting face and the intensive face. According to Deleuze, the quality of a reflecting face expresses, arrests, and qualifies an idea, thought, feeling or sensation: “we are before a reflexive or reflecting face as long as the features remain grouped under the domination of a thought which is fixed or terrible, but immutable and without becoming, in a way eternal” (Cinema 1 89-90). The power of an intensive face, however, moves from one quality to the next quality. Deleuze explains that, “we find ourselves before an intensive face each time that the traits break free from the outline, begin to work on their own account, and form an autonomous series which tends toward a limit or crosses a threshold” (Cinema 1 89). He gives the example of an “ascending series of anger, or, as Eisenstein says, ‘the rising line of annoyance’
(Battleship Potemkin [Sergei Eisenstein, 1925])” (Deleuze, Cinema 1 89). He claims that the aim of the intensive series is to create a new quality by moving from one quality to the next: “this serial aspect is best embodied by several simultaneous or successive faces, although a single face can suffice if it puts its different organs or features into series. (Deleuze, Cinema 1 89).

Furthermore, these two modes of affect, quality and power, are respectively associated with Deleuze’s actual or real and his virtual or imaginary:

[First] as they [power-qualities] are actualised in an individuated state of things and in the corresponding real connections (with a particular space-time, hic et nunc, particular characters, particular roles, particular objects) and [second] as they are expressed for themselves, outside spatio-temporal co-ordinates, with their own ideal singularities and their virtual conjunction. (Cinema 1 102)

This definition is important because I will be drawing a distinction between the representation of power [pouvoir]—associated with action-image violence—and the power-quality [puissance] of a possible sensation, feeling or idea of power [pouvoir]. I am not suggesting that representation and affect are dichotomous in nature, yet they entail different forms of power. I am arguing that representation and affect form an interrelated system of power where the quality-power of affect has the capacity to illuminate how representation functions as a system of domination and resistance. It is one thing to assume that masculinity represents an idea of power, yet it is another matter to question how this correlation is formed in the first place.

Within my Deleuzian framework, the affect as entity—its affect on spectatorship—oscillates between the qualification of a state of things and the power to go beyond a state of things, beyond ideas and representation. In fact, Deleuze associates the close-up, face, and affection-image with the two
central characteristics of Bergson’s definition of affect: “a motor tendency on a sensitive nerve. In other words, a series of micro-movements on an immobilised plate of nerve. . . . It is this combination of a reflecting, immobile unity and of intensive expressive movements which constitutes the affect” (Cinema 1 87). This unity of affect—the interrelation between the quality of an immobilized plate and the intensive power of expressive movements—is crucial to the close-up and to Deleuze’s implicit concept of an affective spectatorship. It is the purity of affect that allows the cinema and the spectator to be actively immersed in ever-changing qualified states of subjectivity (perception, action, impulse, affection) and passively absorbed in the realization of a becoming-other—a realization that is a shock to the realm of ideas, thoughts, and representations. The shock to the representational image of rational thought—to the causal relations between affection and perception—illuminates the fact that thoughts do not create consciousness; rather, consciousness is in things. Hence, the spectator is constantly formed through the affects of camera-consciousness rather than the representation of determinate states of subjectivity.

Although Deleuze does not explicitly discuss spectatorship in relation to the affect as entity, the system of desire that encompasses the film experience is mapped out in Deleuze and Guattari’s chapters, “November 28, 1947: How Do You Make Yourself a Body without Organs” and “Year Zero: Faciality,” in A Thousand Plateaus. The concepts of the Body without Organs (BwO) and faciality relate to the affect as entity since all three terms describe the process of desire associated with the capacity for power. I draw on these concepts in order to clarify Deleuze’s implications regarding spectatorship and affect in the Cinema books. In the following section, This is Not Red, I will outline how Deleuze’s concept of the affect as entity ties into notions of desire and spectatorship that are explored in A Thousand Plateaus. The concepts of the affect as entity, the BwO, and faciality delineate two interrelated modes of power: pouvoir and puissance. As I have
discussed in previous chapters, \textit{pouvoir} refers to the representational, actual, social, ideological, and political systemic modes of power—of domination and resistance—while \textit{puissance} refers to the virtual and affective prepersonal modes of power—the capacity to affect and be affected in life. It is the desire for power and the capacity for affect that unite both modes of power, \textit{pouvoir} and \textit{puissance}.

The case studies for this chapter follow from these modes of power. The section that precedes the film analysis, Dismantling the Face of Violence, defines the interrelation between the reflective face of violence—a qualified idea of power [\textit{pouvoir}]—and the intensive series of faces—the capacity [\textit{puissance}] to affect and be affected by the power-qualities that form power relations. The section, The Reflective Face: Action/Reaction to an Idea of Power [\textit{Pouvoir}], examines how the case studies form an idea of power as a force of domination or systemic mode of power that is established in a significant action-image sequence. Here, the close-up expresses the quality of the representation of an action and/or reaction to a situation. The final section, The Intensive Face: The Capacity [\textit{Puissance}] for Love-Hate, focuses on the close-up as an entity that allows for an affective reading of the entire film. Here, the close-up is not qualitatively actualized in an action; it is a virtual affect that expresses the power of the face throughout the film. Here, affect is disembodied from the face—from the character as a state of things—to form a pure affective reading of the case studies as a whole. In order to best exemplify the affect as entity, I will concentrate on the affects, the close-ups, and the faces that establish the power relations of an action-image and relate them to the final moments of the films in question.

I will examine how \textit{A History of Violence}, \textit{Strange Days}, and \textit{Monster} form an idea of power through the representation of violence as a force of domination. Yet, I want to emphasize how the affect of the close-up, its emphasis on emotion and affect, expresses the quality and power of a possible sensation, feeling, or idea of power within the case studies as a
whole. I have chosen *A History of Violence*, *Strange Days*, and *Monster* as my case studies because they are films that complicate the idea of white masculine power through an emotional and affective exploration of violence.

In *A History of Violence*, Tom Stall’s hidden past, as a Philadelphian gangster, unravels when he kills two men who hold up his small town diner. The news coverage about his act of heroism attracts Tom’s former gangster cohorts to his new life. The ensuing physical violence exacerbates the emotional tension in his family and the power relations in his marriage. The idea of white masculine power is complicated in *A History of Violence* due to Tom’s simultaneous role as heroic father and aberrant gangster. The desires that inform violence in this film complicate the position of white masculine power. The quality-powers of love and hate dismantle the subjectivity and significance of the binary idea of white masculine power versus aberrance—because the quality-power of violence allows for an affective reading of the power relations within the Stall family.

In the futuristic film *Strange Days*, Lenny Nero deals the software for an illegal ‘playback’ device. The playback user viscerally experiences an action that has been previously recorded on a disc—for example, a bank robbery. The playback recording is played back on a hard drive, a SQUID receptor, which is plugged into the recorder’s and then the user’s cerebral cortex. The user therefore experiences the recorder’s sensory perception of an event. When Lenny discovers two playback snuff videos—the death of a white prostitute and a black ‘gangsta’ rapper, respectively—he asks his friend Mace (Angela Bassett), a security agent and limousine driver, to help him figure out who is behind the murders.

Mace is a strong black female who embodies the physicality of masculine strength, while Lenny is a sensitive, nostalgic anti-hero who is addicted to revisiting the memories of his past relationship with Faith (Juliette Lewis), an upcoming rock star, via playback. Mace’s imposing physicality is emblematic of her moral strength of character. She frowns
upon Lenny’s implication in drugs, but—as revealed in a flashback to when Lenny was a policeman—she admired his paternal instincts when he cared for her son, Zander (Brandon Hammond). Despite Mace’s strong masculine presence and Lenny’s tendency to avoid responsibility, the emotions that they both experience, in their encounters with the snuff playbacks, redefine power in terms of its capacity for affect rather than as an action/reaction to the idea of white masculine power. The violence of the snuff videos describes an idea of violence that is based on the systemic power relations of misogyny and racially motivated violence. Yet, Lenny and Mace’s capacity for affect—their hatred of discrimination and love for each other—complicates the idea of white masculine power. Violence is no longer attributed to the representation of a role of violence—i.e., Mace’s masculine strength and Lenny’s weakness. Violence becomes a capacity for affect that goes beyond the film’s intricate exploration of race, gender, and power relations.

*Monster* is a dramatization of the true crime experiences of Aileen ‘Lee’ Wuornos (Charlize Theron) as a prostitute and killer, which ultimately led to her conviction and death by capital punishment. After a brutal rape and an unsuccessful attempt at finding legitimate work, Aileen kills her clients and steals from them in order to support her young lover, Selby (Christina Ricci). When Aileen is convicted of her crimes, the FBI convinces Selby to contact Aileen via wiretap so that she confesses to the murders and relieves Selby from being charged as an accessory to murder. Throughout the film, there is a clear dramatization of the physical violence and emotional torment that Aileen endures as a prostitute. Yet, the film’s exploration of Aileen’s strength is emphasized in the close-ups of her face that reveal her pain and resilience. Aileen’s face of violence is created in the action/reaction to the violence she endures as a ‘white trash’ prostitute. At the same time, however, her face of violence is dismantled from Aileen’s aberrant social role since the intensive power of her face becomes a site of
love and hate, hope and violence, which transcends the actuality of her acts of violence and the systemic violence she endures.

I argue that, when violence becomes an affect, New Hollywood’s camera-consciousness places the idea of white masculinity—as a representation of power—in crisis. Deleuze’s concept of the affect as entity emphasizes the power of affect as the elusive ‘something’ that cannot be contained in thought. The affect as entity is beyond thought since thoughts cannot represent or contain the complexity of human experience. It is for this reason that the human face and the affective mechanisms of the cinema are so engaging for Deleuze, and for the purposes of this chapter.

**This is Not Red: The Affect as Entity, BwO, Faciality**

The importance of the affect as entity revolves around the expressive affect of cinema, its capacity to dismantle the face of violence—site of significance and subjectification of power—by illuminating the quality or power of violence. Deleuze claims that:

> The affect is the entity, that is Power or Quality. It is something expressed: the affect does not exist independently of something which expresses it, although it is completely distinct from it. What expresses it is a face, or a facial equivalent (a facified object) or, as we will see later, even a proposition. (*Cinema 1* 97)

When Deleuze examines the affect of a proposition, he states that affect is “a ‘red’, as present in the proposition ‘this is not red’ as in ‘this is red’. If you like, it [the affect of red] is an immediate and instantaneous consciousness, such as is implied by every real consciousness which is itself never immediate nor instantaneous” (*Cinema 1* 98). His distinction between real
consciousness and instantaneous consciousness relates to the distinction between the power of representation and the power of affect. The instantaneous consciousness of ‘red,’ of the quality and affect of red, cannot be entirely contained in the real, representation, thought, or proposition ‘this is not red.’ The affect of a representation is much more complex and elusive than the representation. Similarly, I will demonstrate that the quality and power of violence, the affect of an image or representation of power, is implied throughout the use of the close-up as an affective entity. I am therefore drawing a distinction between the affection-image’s relation to action, which represents an idea of power, and the affects of love-hate that reveal the capacity for power—i.e., an increased or decreased capacity for action.

In his chapters on the affect as entity, Deleuze is constantly marking this distinction between actualized affect—as it is expressed in the action/reaction to an action-image duel for example—and the virtual affect of the close-up that goes beyond the spatio-temporal coordinates of a character, role, or place. It is important to note that Deleuze’s chapters on the affect as entity, “The Affection-Image Face and Close-up” and “The Affection-Image, Qualities, Powers, Any-Space-Whatervers” in Cinema 1, describe the power of the close-up or face and the power of the film setting or milieu, respectively. While this chapter engages with the affect of the face, the next chapter will examine the affect of the milieu or setting. Deleuze clearly distinguishes between the reflective quality and intensive power of the face, the affect, and the close-up with this distinct list of characteristics:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reflective quality</th>
<th>Intensive power</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sensible nerve</td>
<td>Motor tendency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Immobile receptive plate</td>
<td>Micro-movement of expression</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
This list is important because it delineates the two poles of affect that tie into the affection-image’s relation to the action-image situation \([pouvoir]\) and the affect as entity’s capacity \([puissance]\) for affect.

Similar to the previous chapter’s distinction between the idea of morality and an affective ethics of joy-sadness, this chapter distinguishes between the idea of masculine power, actualized in action-image power relations, and the close-up’s capacity to go beyond actualized affect. When affect is neither actualized in the judgment of evil, nor actualized in the emotional actions/reactions to violence, the affect as entity has the capacity to illuminate how power functions as a capacity for affect. At stake, in the distinction between actual power \([pouvoir]\) and the capacity \([puissance]\) for power, is the affect of power: the system of desire that makes power function.

How does desire function? Deleuze and Guattari pose a similar question in their chapter entitled “How Do You Make Yourself a Body without Organs?” in \(A Thousand Plateaus\). According to Deleuze and Guattari, the BwO is the desire, affect, and power that organizes and disorganizes the strata or semiotic systems that unite the organism, its significance, and subjectification \((Thousand\ 167)\). The organism in question here is the face of violence: the face of power and loss of power. As I
explained in Chapter 1, it is clear in the literature on New Hollywood violence that the representation of power is associated with the socio-cultural performance of white masculinity. From Freudian and Lacanian psychoanalytic film theory’s connotations of phallic power, to feminist film theory’s investigation into female abjection, and postmodern film theory’s emphasis on the loss of class consciousness, there is a clear dichotomy between the representation of white masculine power and its otherness. Using Deleuze and Guattari’s concepts of the BwO and faciality, as well as Deleuze’s affect as entity in *Cinema 1*, I want to dismantle the concept of white masculine power from its dichotomous position in order to view power as a desire that moves between two poles: representational thoughts and ideas of power [*pouvoir*] and the affective capacity [*puissance*] for power. If the organism, the face and representation of white masculine power, is actualized within sociological, ideological, and political systems of domination and resistance, then affect—the affect as entity—has the capacity to bypass binary and systemic notions of power. Affect cannot be contained in these dominant modes of thinking since it **is not red.**

According to Deleuze and Guattari’s *A Thousand Plateaus*, Freudian and Lacanian psychoanalysis remain stuck in a hermeneutic semiotic system where desire is associated with phallic power and the anxiety associated with its castration. They argue that “[t]he error of psychoanalysis [is] to understand BwO phenomena as regressions, projections, phantasies, in terms of an *image* of the body” (Deleuze and Guattari, *Thousand* 165). The problem that Deleuze and Guattari find with psychoanalysis is that it only grasps one aspect of the BwO, i.e., desire as lack of power, because it understands the formation of the subject in terms of the unconscious image of castration. In Chapter 2, I found a similar problem with Freudian and Lacanian theories of spectatorship since the spectator’s subjectivity is formed according to an unconscious fear related to the image of castration and the socio-cultural desire for power which follows from this fear.
Deleuze and Guattari’s concept of the BwO is significant because it is an attempt to understand how and why humanity thinks of itself as an individuated, centered subject. Like psychoanalysis, it acknowledges the formation of the individuated subject and its ties to ideological, social, and political systems of power [pouvoir] as one aspect of the BwO. At the same time, however, the BwO explains how such systems of dominance [pouvoir] function. Ultimately, the concept of the BwO is the process of desire that forms and dismantles the organization of the organism and its strata—its semiotic system of signification and subjectivity. By forming a BwO, Deleuze and Guattari disorganize—or what they call deterritorialize—the organization of the organism that they associate with “the system of the judgment of God” (Thousand 158-59). For Deleuze and Guattari, the organism has been historically organized around the significance of the human subject whose subjectivity is tied to a metaphysics of transcendence where God represents an idea or representation of phallic masculinity.

In their chapter on faciality, a concept analogous to the BwO, Deleuze and Guattari historically trace psychoanalysis’ limited image of power to the face of Christ or “the White Man himself” (Thousand 176). At first glance, the concept of white masculine power, associated with an unconscious image of castration, seems like an ideological problem. However, in “November 28, 1947: How Do You Make Yourself a Body without Organs?” and “Year Zero: Faciality” in A Thousand Plateaus, Deleuze and Guattari claim that the issue is material in nature. In both chapters, they explain the problem of the OwB [Organs without the Body] (Deleuze and Guattari Thousand 164). According to Deleuze and Guattari, the organs without the body and psychoanalysis’ fragmentation of the body—through the unconscious image of castration—are associated with the Western world’s facialization of Christ as an idea of white masculine power (i.e., the power of the Father and the Son) (Thousand 176-77). Therefore, the problem of the OwB is tied to the
organization of power and desire throughout “physical, biological, psychic, social, or cosmic” phenomena (*Thousand* 165).

Furthermore, Deleuze and Guattari argue: “Jesus Christ superstar: he invented the facialization of the entire body and spread it everywhere (the Passion of Joan of Arc, in close-up)” (*Thousand* 176). They conclude that the face or facialization therefore creates a binarization of ideas: 1) the abstract machine of faciality composed of a black hole [subjectification]/white wall [significance] system, and 2) a binary ‘yes-no’ relation to faciality (Deleuze and Guattari, *Thousand* 176-77). In order to fit into this abstract machine, Deleuze and Guattari argue that ‘others,’ such as women and races “must be Christianized” (*Thousand* 178). The aim of the concept of the BwO, as well as faciality, is to map out desires throughout the strata of signification and subjectivity to then dismantle these systems of power [*pouvoir*] and therefore reveal the underlying capacity [*puissance*] for affect that forms the desires that organize systemic power.

In *Cinema 1*, Deleuze uses the concept of the affect as entity to similarly dismantle the significance of the close-up and the face. Like Deleuze and Guattari’s chapters on the BwO and faciality, Deleuze criticizes psychoanalytic and linguistic frameworks of spectatorship for understanding the close-up as a partial object:

Psychoanalysis and linguistics both get something out of this view, the one because it believes that it has discovered in it a structure of the unconscious (castration) in the image, the other that it has discovered in it a constitutive procedure of language (synecdoche, *pars pro toto*). When critics accept the idea of the partial object, they see in the close-up the mark of fragmentation or cut, some saying that it has to be reconciled with the continuity of the film, others that it shows, on the contrary, an essential filmic discontinuity. But, in fact, the close-up,
the close-up of the face, has nothing to do with a partial object (except in one case that we will see later).\(^37\) (*Cinema 1* 95)

As opposed to psychoanalysis and Saussurean linguistics, Deleuze emphasizes that the close-up abstracts affect from the sensory-motor schema of perception, action, impulse, and affection. As a result, the affection-image close-up is expressive in its relation between affection and perception:

As Balázs has already accurately demonstrated, the close-up does *not* tear away its object from a set of which it would form a part, of which it would be a part, but on the contrary, *it abstracts it from all spatio-temporal co-ordinates*, that is to say it raises it to the state of Entity. The close-up is not an enlargement and, if it implies a change of dimension, this is an absolute change: a mutation of movement which ceases to be translation in order to become expression.

(Deleuze, *Cinema 1* 95-96)

The importance of Deleuze’s concept of the affect as entity, as well as the analogous concepts of the BwO and faciality, is that they are systems of abstraction. For Deleuze, the cinema is a mechanism of abstraction that works with the spectator’s desires.

Dismantling the face of violence, experiencing the affect as entity, creating a BwO, and the process of facialization are all mechanisms of desire that form and dislocate significance and subjectification. The close-up cannot tear away its object from the representational system of shots, the face cannot be torn from the process of facialization, and the body cannot be separated from the function of its organs. Dismantling the face and creating a BwO is to become aware of the processes of desire that form and abstract

\(^{37}\) The exception referred to here is the case of the impulse-image, see Deleuze, *Cinema 1* 128.
the organization of significance and subjectification. As Deleuze and Guattari explain:

If the face is a politics, dismantling the face is also a politics involving real becomings, an entire becoming-clandestine. Dismantling the face is the same as breaking through the wall of the signifier and getting out of the black hole of subjectivity. Find your black holes and white walls, know them, know your faces; it is the only way you will be able to dismantle them and draw your lines of flight. (*Thousand 188*)

It is my understanding that creating a ‘line of flight’ involves drawing a map of desire to be aware of the way desires connect to form systems of power.

**Dismantling the Face of Violence: Reflective Face and Intensive Face**

According to the previous section’s argument about the process of facialization, the intersection of significiation and subjectivity, this section will define the face of violence in terms of a reflective face that qualifies an idea of violence. At the same time, however, a dismantling of this face of violence involves an engagement with the intensive face: the capacity for affect as the desires, the spectrum of emotions (love-hate), which form power relations.

Deleuze defines actualized affect within a state of things:

A state of things includes a determinate space-time, spatio-temporal co-ordinates, objects and people, real connections between all these givens. In a state of things which actualises them the quality becomes the ‘quale’ of an object, power becomes action or passion, affect becomes sensation, sentiment, emotion or even impulse [*pulsion*] in a
person, the face becomes the character or mask of the person (it is only from this point of view that there can be mendacious expressions). But now we are no longer in the domain of the affection-image [close-up], we have entered the domain of the action-image. (Cinema 1 97)

The implication here is that once an affect is actualized in an action, sensation, emotion, or impulse it is a qualified state of subjectivity. In my understanding, a face may be mendacious or falsifying because—as I explained in the introduction to this chapter—the reflective face’s “features remain grouped under the domination of a thought” (Deleuze, Cinema 1 89). Thoughts may be falsifying because the affective spectator may find a disparity between the reflective quality of a face during one moment in a film and the intensive power as it develops throughout the film as a whole. In fact, Deleuze claims that the question “what are you thinking about?” refers to the reflective face, while “what do you sense or feel?” may be addressed to an intensive face (Cinema 1 88).

Nevertheless, Deleuze suggests that these questions, which distinguish reflective and intensive faces, are arbitrary since it is the capacity for affect that unites qualities and powers. He explains that:

the reflecting face is not content to think about something. Just as the intensive face expresses a pure Power – that is to say, is defined by a series which carries us from one quality to another – the reflexive face expresses a pure Quality, that is to say a ‘something’ common to several objects of different kinds. (Cinema 1 90)

He describes the passivity of the reflecting face in terms of fixation:
Sometimes the face thinks about something, is fixed onto an object, and this is the sense of admiration or astonishment that the English word *wonder* has preserved. In so far as it thinks about something, the face has value above all through its surrounding outline, its reflecting unity which raises all the parts to itself. (Deleuze, *Cinema 1* 88)

It is my understanding that the ‘reflecting unity’ of the reflective face as well as the ‘reflected unity’ of the intensive face is the sum of affects—qualities and powers—throughout the film.

For example, Deleuze describes the affect of the color white that is actualized in the reflective faces of the films of D. W. Griffith:

The reflecting faces of young women in Griffith can express white, but it is also the white of a snowflake caught on an eye-lash, the spiritual white of an internal innocence, the dissolved white of a moral degradation, the hostile and searing white of the iceberg where the heroine will wander (*Orphans of the Storm* [D. W. Griffith, 1921]).

(*Cinema 1* 90)

With this example, Deleuze’s main point is that the reflective face or mental reflection “is cinematographically accompanied by a more radical reflection expressing a pure quality, which is common to several different things (the object which carries it, the body which submits to it, the idea which represents it, the face which has this idea. . .)” (*Cinema 1* 90). Here, Deleuze highlights the relation between the representation of a mental reflection—the thoughts and wonder that it expresses—and the affect that the face may have as a ‘quality’ attributed to the spectator’s capacity or ‘power’ to be affected throughout the film.

What I am calling the face of violence refers to Deleuze’s reflecting face: a face that reflects an idea of power within a character, face, role, and
situations. While Deleuze finds the epitome of the reflecting face in the work of Griffith and the intensive face in the films of Eisenstein, he suggests that the use of either face is merely a tendency or preference (*Cinema 1* 91). Furthermore, he only briefly extends his discussion of the face and its affect to American cinema—he specifically refers to “the New York school”—when he states that John Cassavetes’ films are “dominated by the face and the close-up (*Shadows [1959], Faces [1968]*)” (Deleuze, *Cinema 1* 121). It is not my intention to classify my case studies as either reflective or intensive in their use of the close-up. The aim here is to distinguish and relate New Hollywood’s idea of violence—described within an action-image sequence as a moment of domination or power—and the emotional affect of violence throughout the case studies.

I have selected action-image sequences that best exemplify the central character’s idea, experience, and expression of power. I am using the term power here to designate a moment of domination that expresses an idea of power [*pouvoir*]. I do not mean to suggest that the central character is necessarily dominant in all the following examples. I am stressing the idea of either power or powerlessness that is expressed in the character’s face.

**The Reflective Face: Action/Reaction to an Idea of Power [*Pouvoir*]**

The aim of this section is to define the idea of white masculine power in terms of its relation to affect that is qualified in a state of things (i.e., power actualized in the action/reaction to action-image violence). Here, the reflective face relates to a state of things that describes an idea of violence and power. Although I am focusing on the affect of violence as it is qualified in an emotion, sentiment or action, it is important to remember that what Deleuze calls the ‘pure’ quality or power of affect—the affect as entity—transcends actualization. Actualized, qualified affect relates to the
representation of an idea, but it cannot be reduced to the idea because affect is essentially ‘pure’ and virtual in nature. The arguments that I make about the reflective face are therefore related to my later arguments about the power of an intensive series of faces and their affects.

I have chosen to examine the idea of white masculine power as it is represented in moments of violence, yet this is not always the case. In *American Psycho*, for example, the business card scene is a good example of Patrick Bateman’s (Christian Bale) reflecting face, the expression of an anxious feeling, which does not directly entail violence. From the slow-motion close-up of Paul Allen’s (Jared Leto) off-white business card to the close-up of Patrick’s reflective reaction, Patrick expresses anxiety related to the domination of his thoughts of inadequacy as he holds and analyzes Paul’s card. In this close-up of Patrick’s face, it is covered in the glossiness of a breaking cold sweat, his facial muscles are tense, his gaze is hardened and glassy as he fixates on Paul’s card. When he notices a watermark on Paul’s card, his hand trembles, he drops the card, and makes a fist. His clenched fist and tense face embody his imminent violence. Here, Patrick’s reflective face is dominated by thoughts of envy as he looks nauseated by the perfection of Paul Allen’s watermarked card that exhibits the perfect shade of white.

This particular close-up recalls an establishing shot of Patrick in the opening moments of the film, and it foreshadows the film’s final shot. The commonality among these shots is the glossy reflection on Patrick’s face in close-up. In the establishing shot, Patrick applies and removes a transparent face mask. In voice-over, he states, “there is an idea of a Patrick Bateman, some kind of abstraction, but there is no real me only an entity.” In the final shot, a dolly shot, an extreme close-up towards Patrick’s cold glassy gaze. His glossy face and glassy gaze is intensive because it reflects the cumulative quality-powers of Patrick’s social status and his disdain for it: the white of his business card, of his apartment, of his social power are ideas
of white masculine power that results in his real and imagined aggression throughout the course of the film. The three glossy close-ups form an intensive series, which are not sequentially or causally related to the film’s action-image violence, yet these shots establish an idea of Patrick’s coldness and cruelty, his anxiety and insecurity, his cumulative affect of violence based on an idea of white masculine power.

An idea of power is a representation, associated with a point of view, a subjective state, and a point of dominance. A point of power or dominance meets its match in the position of powerlessness. Yet, the affect of power is what unites and conflates both positions. A film’s image, idea, or representation of power is not the same as its affect: they are related yet distinct. Deleuze paraphrases Eisenstein’s *Film Form*, when he discusses the problem with the representational aspect of the reflecting face: “[Eisenstein] says that Griffith’s close-up is merely subjective, that is to say it is concerned with the spectator’s conditions of vision, that it remains separated, and only has an associative or anticipatory role” (*Cinema 1 91*). This is an important point since it associates the idea of power to its anticipatory role regarding action-image violence or a duel—e.g., the duel of business cards in *American Psycho*. Here, the affect of the face is actualized in the emotions that anticipate or react to action. Nonetheless, the affect as entity has the capacity to break from the subjective conditions of thought or representation because it is a confrontation with the essence of power.

A scene that best typifies Tom’s representation of male power, in *A History of Violence*, is when he protects his family from Ed Fogarty (Ed Harris) and his henchmen. During the shootout on the Stall’s lawn, Tom visibly transforms into Joey—his former gangster identity—when he emerges from his home with a shotgun. As I explained in the previous chapter, this close-up on Tom’s face is an impulse-image: an animalistic impression of his cruel capacity for violence. In subsequent close-ups, Tom’s face reflects a cold, calculating anger. The gangsters, who have kidnapped
Tom and Edie’s (Maria Bello) teenage son Jack (Ashton Holmes), order Tom to drop his shotgun, get into the car, and return to Philadelphia. When he drops his gun and walks towards the gangsters, his movements are somewhat robotic and immersed in the thought of violence. In the next close-up, he tells Jack to go inside with an equally cold and distant voice. As Jack walks past Tom, he stares at him as though he does not recognize his father. Tom’s face remains stern with a confidence in his ability to kill the men that threaten his family. The qualified affect of power, on Tom’s face, is one of pride and protection.

Furthermore, Tom’s representation of power—his face of violence, strength, and masculinity—turns into an evaluation of his son’s capacity for violence. After Tom kills Fogarty’s men, Fogarty shoots Tom in the shoulder. Jack immediately shoots Fogarty with the household firearm. Jack’s jaw drops as Fogarty takes the hit. Tom is splattered with blood. He rolls away from the falling corpse, finds a nearby handgun, and points it instinctively at his son Jack. He then walks up to Jack robotically and stares at him with the fierce look of a veteran soldier sizing up a rookie. The idea of masculine power and violence, in this scene, is embodied in Tom’s cold, hard, facial expressions as much as it is developed in his actions and his evaluation of Jack. Some might argue that isolating Tom’s moments of power, through his facial and bodily expressions, creates a Kuleshov effect. Yet, my point is that while the quality of Tom’s violence—both its paternal quality and its aberrance—is determined in an action-image, the power of Tom’s impulse for violence has complex emotional implications throughout the film. The quality of Tom’s violence is contingent upon various moments of power and loss of power throughout the film.

As opposed to Tom’s image of power in A History of Violence, Lenny’s face of violence, in Strange Days, is a face of powerlessness when he is subjected to the playback images of the rape and murder of his friend Iris (Brigitte Bako). In this scene, the murderer—who is later revealed to be
Lenny’s friend and former police colleague Max (Tom Sizemore)—is in a position of power, which is represented by his first person point of view, his perception of the murder, captured through a SQUID receptor. Lenny’s powerlessness is affectively shown in his close-ups and his bodily reactions to the action-image snuff. There are a few Deleuzian analyses of *Strange Days*, especially pertaining to the complex spectatorial relations of this rape scene, yet they do not focus on the affect of Lenny’s face throughout this scene. Lenny’s reflective face is important because it reflects two qualities, relating to an idea of violence, Max’s sadism and Iris’ suffering. Therefore, Max’s position of power, the first person point of view, simultaneously becomes an affect of empathy.

In this scene, Lenny is in the back of Mace’s limousine watching a playback disc that was left for him in a club. A masked perpetrator (Max) breaks into Iris’ hotel room, chases her across the room, attacks her with a stun gun, and drags her to the bathroom where she is handcuffed to a towel rack. Iris begs him to let her go. Lenny’s body language parallels Iris’ face and body. His shoulders are tense as he shakes his head and mutters, “Oh my, oh no.” Iris screams when she is jolted again with the stun gun. Lenny gasps and Mace calls his name. Lenny opens his eyes wide with panic and urgently tells Mace to go to the Sunset Regent Hotel. Iris is blindfolded and a SQUID receptor is placed on her head. Lenny, concerned and confused, says: “He’s jacking her into his own outlet… She’s seeing what he’s seeing… She’s seeing herself.”

The spectator’s affective experience of the violent rape scene in *Strange Days* builds on the reflective quality of the violence, specifically Lenny’s disgust with the act of rape, in a complex melding of affects. The dominant action-images of rape and murder are intercut with close-ups of Lenny’s appalled reactions to his viewing experience. With a razor blade,

Max cuts through Iris’ white t-shirt exposing her breasts. She whimpers and grits her teeth. Lenny makes a similar facial expression. Max then cuts off Iris’ underwear and unties his belt. Lenny whimpers in close-up. There is a close-up of Iris’ pain stricken face as she is raped. Lenny winces in close-up. Max chokes her; Lenny opens his eyes aghast while Iris is strangled and raped. Lenny gasps for air as his body language mimics her movements. He grunts angrily, disgusted, as Iris’ body falls limp. Lenny holds the sides of his head and says, “oh my God, oh my God.” Max removes the SQUID gear from Iris’ head, opens her eyes, and approaches her left eye so that the reflection of his masked face appears in her dark dilated iris.

This sequence is quite complex in its use of the face since the final shot of Max expresses his physical and spectatorial power over Iris and Lenny. The power that he has over Lenny, in affecting him with images of rape and murder, is evident in Lenny’s facial responses throughout the scene. Although Lenny’s eyes are closed—he must shut his eyes to experience playback—his face clearly reflects the pain that Iris experiences as well as his contempt for the perpetration of snuff. When Deleuze describes the reflecting face and its sense of admiration, he notes that the connotations of the term admiration are not necessarily positive: “[i]t will be recalled, for example, how Descartes considers contempt to be a special case of ‘admiration’” (qtd. in Cinema 1 89; Descartes 52). The admiration that Max clearly has for himself when he shows his masked face to Lenny is a point of power emphasized by Lenny’s pain and Iris’ victimization.

In Monster, like Strange Days, Aileen’s reflective face is one of powerlessness due to her involvement in prostitution. Her face of violence reflects her desire to refuse social law, the law of white masculine power, that has marked, judged, and violated her due to her aberrant social position. Aileen’s face of violence is best exemplified in a scene, almost entirely composed of close-ups, where Aileen is pulled over by a police officer. Here, the quality of her face of violence reflects her victimization and
contempt for the violence she has endured at the hands of middle class white men.

The policeman represents white male power through his intimidation and exertion of power to get sexual favors from her. She sits in the back of the police car wondering what she did wrong. The officer pulls over into a vacant garage and asks, “Don’t you remember me?” Aileen shakes her head nervously, “No.” He continues, “I busted you about eight months ago for tricking up on 95.” Aileen sighs, looks down, and closes her eyes. He says, “I went real easy on you, too. Seems to me that you might owe me one.”

Aileen expresses her face of violence—her deep inverted smile, jaw in the air, eyes wide open—and she says: “You almost broke my fuck’n jaw.” She drops her head down and lowers her gaze as soon as the cop says, “Please. Did you do time?” Aileen opens the door. He says, “Climb over,” implying that Aileen is just ‘a whore’ as he had addressed her earlier in the scene. The degradation of making her climb over the seat is visible on Aileen’s face. She moves begrudgingly as her gaze refuses to meet his. Aileen’s refusal to look at him is significant because it is a gesture that exhibits her shame and his power over her. Aileen’s face of violence is complicated because it has a dual quality: the hate associated with the refusal to be dominated by white masculine power and, at the same time, the pain associated with her victimization.

Aileen’s face of violence figures throughout the film. In the film’s final moments, her face of violence is aggressive. Held back by shackles and a prison guard, she thrusts her body towards the judge and jury as her contorted jaw, face, and bulging eyes condemn them for sending a violated woman to death row. Ultimately, her face of violence is a refusal to acknowledge white male power in much the same way society refuses to acknowledge her.

Throughout this analysis of the reflective face, I have shown that the reflecting face of violence expresses not only the emotional action/reaction
to power, but the embodiment of a social role. In *A History of Violence*, while Tom’s violence stems from his aberrant past, it plays a part in his paternal role to protect his family. In *Strange Days*, Lenny’s role and representation as a weak male ultimately places him in Iris’ position of victimization since his face expresses the torture of the rape he viscerally experiences via playback. Aileen of *Monster* also expresses a victimized face of violence that reflects her social position as a ‘white trash’ prostitute. In the following section I will demonstrate how Deleuze’s concept of the affect as entity creates a distinction between affect qualified in a face—its relation to an idea of violence that is related to social power relations—and affect as an intensive series of power-qualities that allows for an affective reading of the film.

**The Intensive Face: The Capacity [*Puissance*] for Love-Hate**

The affect as entity is a power, a capacity to affect and be affected in life. It is the movement from the role or representation of the face of violence—embodied in the quality of a reflecting face—to the power of an intensive face. The characteristics of an intensive face revolve around the capacity or power to move from one quality to another:

- Motor tendency
- Micro-movement of expression
- Characteristics of faceicity
- Intensive series
- Desire
- (love-hate)
- Power
Expression of a power which passes from one quality to another. (Deleuze, *Cinema I* 90-91)

Qualities and powers are bound to the capacity for affect since the quality of a reflective face arrests affect in the abstraction of a thought, representation, role or idea while the capacity for an intensive series (of affect or affects) breaks away from an individual, qualified subject position.

The importance of the affect as entity, which is akin to the power of the intensive face, rests in the capacity to move from a personal, embodied, qualified, individuated state of things to a collective state of things and vice versa. It is this capacity for affect that unites both the individuated and collective state of things rather than creating an opposition between these subject positions. Deleuze calls this prepersonal or virtual (non-actualized) state the ‘Dividual’:

Eisenstein’s innovation was not to have invented the intensive face, nor even to have constituted the intensive series with several faces, several close-ups; it was to have produced compact and continuous intensive series, which go beyond all binary structures and exceed the duality of the collective and the individual. Rather, they attain a new reality which could be called Dividual, directly uniting an immense collective reflection with the particular emotions of each individual; in short expressing the unity of power and quality. (*Cinema I* 92)

If the particular emotions of each character—that I analyzed in the previous section—reflects an individuated state of power or lack of power, then circumventing any binary structure of power requires an investigation into this so-called ‘Dividual’ or disembodied capacity or power of affect.

I am using the term disembodied to emphasize the fact that the capacity for affect is not individuated in a state of things, a subjective state.
Disembodied affect, the affect as entity, refers to the capacity for affect itself. The very desire for affect—as a capacity [puissance] power—unites the affect of the face throughout the film. This disembodied union of affects is possible because affect is the singular constant that allows the face to move between the two poles of affect, quality and power. In Deleuze’s words:

Peirce does not conceal the fact that firstness [the affect as entity] is difficult to define, because it is felt, rather than conceived: it concerns what is new in experience, what is fresh, fleeting and nevertheless eternal. . . . Firstness is thus the category of the Possible: it gives a proper consistency to the possible, it expresses the possible without actualising it, whilst making it a complete mode. 39 (Cinema 1 98)

It is my understanding that the affect as entity is a complete mode of expression due to its direct relation to firstness or to sense experience. Yet, the articulation of sense experience is only an abstraction of the entirety of sense experiences. Since the capacity of affect is singular in its ability to unite, conflate, and efface subject and object positions, I am maintaining the fact that camera-consciousness is an affect of estrangement from the concept or idea of white masculine power. As a result, power is not simply a subject position of dominance or submission; it is a capacity to be affected by the desire for power. While the power of domination [pouvoir] qualifies experience in subjective thoughts of admiration or contempt, power as puissance is a capacity for love or hate that unites a tendency for either admiration or contempt.

In Deleuze’s film analyses, he views the affect as entity—its expression of a dividual state—in terms of the face’s loss of individuation.

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39 Deleuze refers to C. S. Peirce’s On Signs, he uses Peirce’s categorization of images to formulate his own definition of the affection-image (Peirce’s firstness) and action-image (Peirce’s secondness); see Deleuze, Cinema 1 98-106.
For example, Deleuze cites Jean Epstein when he explains that the close-up abstracts expression from all spatio-temporal coordinates: “this face of a fleeing coward, as soon as we see it in close-up, we see cowardice in person, the ‘feeling-thing’ the entity” (qtd. in *Cinema 1* 96; Epstein 146-47). Furthermore, Deleuze finds the epitome of the affect as entity in the work of Ingmar Bergman because “Bergman is undoubtedly the director who has been most insistent on the fundamental link which unites the cinema, the face and the close-up” (*Cinema 1* 99). Bergman is important, for Deleuze, since his use of the close-up dismantles the individual and communicative roles of the face:

> Ordinarily, three roles of the face are recognisable: it is individuating (it distinguishes or characterises each person); it is socialising (it manifests a social role); it is relational or communicating (it ensures not only communication between two people, but also, in a single person, the internal agreement between his character and his role). Now the face, which effectively presents these aspects in the cinema as elsewhere, loses all three in the case of [the] close-up.
> *Cinema 1* 99

In the following analysis, I will examine how the affect as entity dismantles the character’s face of violence. Here, power is not associated with an individual role of violence, power is the capacity for affect (love-hate) associated with violence in the case studies as a whole. The spectrum of emotions, which stem from love and hate, inform violent power relations because they delineate the capacity for affect that has the power to go from one quality of violence to the next one.

In *A History of Violence*’s final scene, both Tom and Edie’s faces express the capacity for love and hate: an intensive culmination of their power relations throughout the film. Edie, her son Jack, and daughter Sarah
(Heidi Hayes) glance at each other awkwardly when Tom enters the house—he is returning from Philadelphia where he has killed his brother and the gangsters who threatened his family. Tom walks towards the kitchen and Edie does not meet his gaze. Tom’s head bows down as he walks into the kitchen. Edie hangs her head down and clasps her hands together. Sarah looks up at her father and smiles, but drops the smile once she looks at those around her. Jack awkwardly darts his eyes to the left, in his father’s direction, without looking at him. Sarah sets a place for Tom. Tom’s head hangs low as he lightly clenches his jaw. Sarah smiles at him. Tom slowly pulls up a chair. Jack looks at his mother, she has not moved, and places the meatloaf near Tom. Tom sheepishly looks down. Edie looks up at him with deep frowning eyebrows, an angry gaze, and tears in her eyes. Tom looks up at Edie very slowly with teary eyes. She looks at him with great pain and sorrow projected into her angry gaze. Tears stream down her face. Tom’s eyes well up with tears as he searches for forgiveness, for love, for the way things were before his family discovered his history of violence.

The poignancy of the film’s final shots, the silence between Tom and Edie, carries the intensive weight of the film’s affect. It is difficult to know whether or not the Stall family will recover from the violence they have witnessed in Tom and in themselves. The idea of Tom’s masculine power, his role as a father, his need to protect his family is overshadowed by the sorrow he has caused them. The passing series of expressions on the Stall’s faces expresses the power of Tom’s betrayal and its rising cumulative affect from scene to scene up until Edie’s palpable hatred. The film moves the spectator from early moments of love, between Tom and Edie, to this final moment of pain. This final moment is not simply a qualified feeling of contempt, which conceals the underlying pain of Tom’s betrayal, but an impossible desire for the way things were before violence entered their lives. The impossibility of this desire is felt in the affective tension between their faces, between each scene, since the violence in Tom—his nature as Joey the
violent gangster—is visible beneath the surface throughout many scenes in the film.

In *Strange Days*, the use of close-up is as complex as the film’s spectatorial implications since many close-ups are part of the film’s actual time-space coordinates and dismantled from such coordinates with the virtual affect of the playback machines. It is my understanding that the affect of the violence that Lenny and Mace both experience via playback is virtual because both scenes underscore their mutual capacity for affect that ultimately leads to a rising bond of love between them.

When Lenny asks Mace to view the playback disc, which Iris had left for him, she refuses to implicate herself in this illegal activity. Lenny convinces her to see the images for herself. Through playback, she viscerally experiences the killing of ‘gangsta’ rapper Jeriko by two police officers. Follow this playback, there is an exchange of close-ups between Lenny and Mace. It could be argued that this is a simple shot reverse shot montage. Yet, the affect of these close-ups is important since it exposes not only Mace’s vulnerability but both Mace and Lenny’s capacity for affect. When she removes the SQUID receptor, her face shakes in a quasi catatonic state: it is not only Mace’s face but an intensive face. It creates a melding of actual violence and virtual violence since Mace’s pain recalls Lenny and Iris’ close-ups during the previous snuff sequence. Furthermore, Mace’s disbelief and terror foreshadows a later moment when she is beaten by the L. A. P. D.—a scene that is reminiscent of the Rodney King beating, which sparked the L. A. race riots. Lenny remains calm and composed. It is his most assured moment, his most confident face, in the film. He grabs the side of Mace’s face and explains to her that she had to see it. He loads a handgun, shakes Mace out of her stupor, and they leave to seek more information about the snuff videos. This scene is important because of way in which Lenny holds her face. It marks a closeness between Lenny and Mace that is later realized in the film’s final shots when Lenny kisses her during a
crowded New Year’s Eve celebration. This final note of celebration, love, and hope triumphs over the underlying racial tensions in the film and its references to actual racial violence in L. A.

The kiss is Lenny’s most real romantic moment, one that is not lost in playback memories, where he looks at Mace as if he is seeing her for the first time. The love that Mace has for Lenny is evident from the beginning of the narrative, yet the gaze that they share in this moment—another shot reverse shot close-up of Lenny holding Mace—is a shared affect of love much like the shared affect of pain that they experienced when they faced violence.

Aileen’s intensive face in Monster has a tragic affect from the first close-ups of Aileen to the film’s closing shots. Like all tragic tales, the affect of tragedy lies in its opposition to hope. Yet, the affect of the opening and closing shots of the film blend hope and tragedy in a way that liberates Aileen from her face of violence. Her dismantled face is hopeful and tragic because it expresses a relational power, a culmination of her pain, sadness, and resilience as an overall capacity for affect. The film’s opening shot is a cropped extreme close-up of a young Aileen’s (Cree Ivey) playful, bright smiling eyes. In voice-over, Aileen describes all the hopes and dreams she had of being “beautiful and rich—like the women on TV.” This opening image of hope appears in a small frame—a tiny window of hope—with a large black border around her image of innocence. In the film’s final moments, however, Aileen’s acceptance of her death row sentence is framed in whiteness and again layered with her words of hope in voice-over. Prison guards escort her along a white hallway. In voice-over, she enumerates many hopeful clichés and ends with: “Where there’s life, there’s hope.” There is a distinct pause in the voice-over. The following close-up is introduced in silence: Aileen looks back at the camera, the spectator, in a direct address. In the next shot, she turns her back to the camera, and she says in voice-over: “They gotta tell you something.” The camera remains static as she is
escorted out of the hallway and disappears into the overexposure of white light. These close-ups are confronting because there is both a looking towards the spectator with her face of violence—her sad frown with a hardened stubborn gaze—and a turning away from the spectator. This confrontation with Aileen’s face of violence, as well as her defiant turning away from the spectator, dissolves her face of violence and makes it a shared, intensive face that has affectively engaged spectatorship from the film’s opening moments.

The affect of a reflective face—dominated by a thought, idea or image of white masculine power—and its intensive series of affects are two modes of power that allow character and spectator to be united in their estrangement from the self by the mechanisms of camera-consciousness. Deleuze, who is constantly distinguishing and relating these two modes of power, explains the link between the external surface of representation—the reflecting face—and the internal capacity for affect: “[a]ll these aspects are linked. Firstly, turning away [détournement] is not the opposite of, ‘turning towards’ [se tourner]. Both are inseparable; the one would be rather the motor movement of desire, and the other the reflecting movement of admiration” (Cinema 1 104). I am stressing the fact that the cinema’s power of affect results in a loss of the self or the ego since the pure possibility of affect refers only to itself rather than the state of the self. I have shown that a momentary, qualified state of power—arrested in a face of violence—becomes a faceless power, a capacity for affect. The capacity for affect is faceless because it is a love or hate that drives all desires. Dismantling the face of violence, throughout the case studies for this chapter, has meant an engagement with the affect of power—a spectrum between love and hate—rather than a position of domination.
Conclusion

A dismantling of the face of violence—the concept of white masculine power—is an engagement with New Hollywood’s capacity to affect the spectator beyond the representation of violence, morality, masculinity, and the spectacle of action-image violence. Affective power circumvents representation, yet it does not mean foregoing it altogether; it is an engagement with the how of representation—the impact not only of ideas, concepts, and images of violence but the emotions and affects that shape these preconceptions. The term preconception is used here not literally—before the concept—but to underscore the formation of the concept, of representations, thoughts and ideas of violence.

In order to understand the formation of the idea of white masculine power, I have examined the face of violence—its reflection of the quality of an idea of white masculine power—and its dismantling through the affect as entity. The aim has been to understand how the concept of white masculine power expresses an idea about power and violence that is based on a social role: Tom as a protective father and aberrant gangster; Lenny as a weak drug dealer and Mace as a strong security agent; and Aileen as a deviant prostitute. In order to dismantle these ideas of violence that create binary oppositions between masculinity and femininity, law and aberrance, I have emphasized the capacity for (love-hate) that unites these binary oppositions. Here, power becomes the ‘expressed’ of violence: the desires, of love and hate, which drive violence.

In Cinema 2, Deleuze explains that we have sensory-motor schemata for turning towards something when it is beautiful or engaging and turning away from something when it is horrifying. Yet he stresses that when this sensory-motor action/reaction breaks, in the face of cinema’s power of abstraction, we are left with ‘the thing in itself,’ its affect (Deleuze, Cinema 2 20), an affect of violence. The power of a face in close-up therefore
dissociates violence from action by confronting changing qualities of violence from one face or close-up to the next.

I have not meant to imply that a dismantling of the face ever entirely breaks free from the system of significance and subjectivity that forms the face. We have a capacity for affect that moves with and breaks away from systems of signification: we are essentially subjectless bodies that are physically, mentally, and spiritually susceptible to significance and subjectification.

The central implication of my analysis is that desire is dangerous since it is clear that the capacity for affect, the essence of desire, is what forms and dismantles signification. In other words, the powers of the face must always be kept in check. The danger of forming a BwO, like the danger of dismantling the face and close-up, is that of falling into an extreme state of signification.

A brief summary of Deleuze and Guattari’s chapter on the BwO is useful here since it delves into the dangers of desire. In A Thousand Plateaus, Deleuze and Guattari use the masochist’s body as an example, a type of BwO, which has the attribute of pain. It is not defined by pain, guilt, and lack in the way that psychoanalysis views masochism. For Deleuze and Guattari, the masochist body—like all BwOs—is a process of desire where joy is the desire to form a BwO in the first place. Here, the term joy is used in its Spinozan sense: a desire to live and act rather than a positive emotional value. It is for this reason that they claim: “all BwO’s pay homage to Spinoza. The BwO is the field of immanence of desire, the plane of consistency specific to desire (with desire defined as a process of production without reference to any exterior agency, whether it be a lack that hollows it out or a pleasure that fills it)” (Deleuze and Guattari, Thousand 154). The danger of theorizing desires, as theorizing affect, is getting lost in the power of affects and desires rather than remaining aware of the plane of
consistency—the distinction and interrelation between systems of power. Deleuze and Guattari explain that

the material problem confronting schizoanalysis is knowing whether we have it within our means to make the selection, to distinguish the BwO from its doubles: empty vitreous bodies, cancerous bodies, totalitarian and fascist. The test of desire: not denouncing false desires, but distinguishing within desire between that which pertains to stratic proliferation, or else too-violent destratification, and that which pertains to the construction of a plane of consistency (keep an eye out for all that is fascist, even inside us, and also for the suicidal and the demented). (Thousand 165)

The common argument correlating Deleuze and Guattari’s chapters on the BwO and faciality, and Deleuze’s concept of the affect as entity in the Cinema books, is that the desire expressed in the BwO and the face is the degree zero, the matrix, or the intersection where significance and subjectivity meet.

The formation of presubjective forces, the capacity to affect and be affected in life, is based on two poles of quality-power—the desires that are qualified according to variations of love-hate. While the quality of a reflecting face is actualized as a quality within a state of things, the intensive face has the virtual power to abstract emotion from a state of things, a face or facial equivalent, and relate this quality to other moments in a film or films. For example, the impulse for violence that is visible on Alex’s face in A Clockwork Orange—his head tilted downward, his menacing upward gaze combined with a frown and a slight smirk—and its qualification of his insanity is paralleled on Jack’s face in The Shining and Pyle’s (Vincent D’Onofrio) face in Full Metal Jacket (Stanley Kubrick, 1987). Deleuze uses the term ‘pure’ power or quality to emphasize the virtual capacity of the
affect as entity due to its power of abstraction. Virtual means that pure affect cannot be contained in an actual thought, role, idea, representation, or character. Pure virtual affect moves from moment to moment because it is the capacity to be affected from one quality to the next quality.

In terms of cinema and spectatorship, the close-up is the point where the spectator may be confronted with the face of desire, the desire for violence and its affects, and the cinema’s capacity for affects that blur the lines between quality and power, significance and subjectification, screen and spectator. These lines are blurred precisely because the affect as entity, its power-quality, is developed according to the variations of love-hate. In defining both the admiration of the reflecting face and the desire of an intensive series of movements, Deleuze emphasizes their interrelatedness:

what Descartes and Le Brun call admiration, which marks a minimum of movement for a maximum of unity, reflecting and reflected on the face; and what is called desire, inseparable from the little solicitations or impulsions which make up an intensive series expressed by the face. It matters little that some consider admiration to be the origin of passions precisely because it is the degree zero of movement, whilst others put desire first, or restlessness, because immobility itself presupposes the reciprocal neutralisation of the corresponding micro-movements. Rather than an exclusive origin, it is a matter of two poles, sometimes one prevailing over the other and appearing almost pure, sometimes the two being mixed in one direction or the other. (Cinema 1 88)

Throughout the case studies, the close-up exposes what Deleuze refers to as “a ‘system of emotions’ . . . capable of inducing non-human affects” (Cinema 1 110). It matters little that Tom and Edie of A History of Violence, Lenny and Mace of Strange Days, and Aileen in Monster fight against an
image and idea of white male power, what matters is how they are affected by this fight. The affect of white male power is not the representation of an idea of power. The quality-power of this idea of violence is the lost innocence of a marital bond, the loving unity between a black woman and white man, and the liberation from an ego marked by the systemic violence of being ‘white trash.’
Chapter 5

The Violent Spectacle is Beautiful: The Real in Crisis

“The cinema does not just present images, it surrounds them with a world” (Deleuze, Cinema 2 68).

A purely optical and sound situation does not extend into action, any more than it is induced by an action. It makes us grasp, it is supposed to make us grasp, something intolerable and unbearable. Not a brutality as nervous aggression, an exaggerated violence that can always be extracted from the sensory-motor relations in the action-image. Nor is it a matter of scenes of terror, although there are sometimes corpses and blood. It is a matter of something too powerful, or too unjust, but sometimes also too beautiful, and which henceforth outstrips our sensory-motor capacities. (Deleuze, Cinema 2 18)

“The intolerable is no longer a serious injustice, but the permanent state of a daily banality” (Deleuze, Cinema 2 170).

Introduction

The aim of this chapter is to view spectacles of violence as a series of spiritual states rather than causal, determinate narrative actions. The term spiritual here is important because Deleuze references Kantian beauty in his discussion of the time-image’s spiritual automaton (i.e., a confrontation with the unthinkable or that which cannot be thought). In Brian Massumi’s
anthology, *A Shock to Thought: Expression after Deleuze and Guattari*, Steven Shaviro and Melissa McMahon both present interrelated essays on Deleuze and Kantian beauty.\(^4\) They claim that Kant’s notion of the beautiful solves Benjamin’s problem regarding the loss of aura since the beautiful engages with the aesthetic event on its own terms rather than assuming an integral relation between art, culture, morality, and the individual. McMahon defines Kantian beauty as “a discourse on individuality: an imperative that resonates from a contingent singularity (by contrast, the sublime still operates with a – doomed – imperative to reproduce the Whole)” (5). She argues that the condition for the aesthetic experience of Kantian beauty is a ‘disinterestedness’ in the object’s moral or utilitarian use-value (McMahon 5-6). Furthermore, she references Deleuze’s concept of cruelty in *Difference and Repetition* when she argues that Deleuze’s spiritual automaton dramatizes Kantian beauty in the *Cinema* books (McMahon 4-6).

Although McMahon suggests that Deleuze’s spiritual automaton may be equated with Kantian beauty, Deleuze’s arguments in “Thought and Cinema” in *Cinema 2* clearly delineate two main phases of the spiritual automaton that are implicitly and respectively associated with Kant’s sublime and the beautiful. The first phase of the spiritual automaton describes the totalized relation between thought and cinema in regard to the sublime (Eisensteinian) dialectic of Deleuze’s movement-image (*Cinema 2* 156-64). With the second phase of the spiritual automaton, however, Deleuze implicitly references Kantian beauty through Artaud’s concept of cruelty (*Cinema 2* 156-88). Deleuze invokes Artaud’s notion of cruelty to describe the time-image’s break from classical movement cinema’s image of rational thought. This break, the crisis of the action-image and the introduction of the time-image, is a confrontation with the unthinkable or thought’s incapacity.

to represent the whole—i.e., the relation between thought and ‘unthought’ (Deleuze, *Cinema 2* 164-88).

In “Thought and Cinema,” Deleuze explains that Eisenstein creates a dialectical epistemological relation between thought and cinema. Here, montage creates a shock in which reality or social consciousness is revealed through the figurative forces that reproduce the whole, i.e., the integrity between the individual (quality) and collective (power) consciousness, which Deleuze calls the Dividual (*Cinema 1* 92). According to Deleuze, however, “it is the totality of cinema-thought relations that Artaud overturns: on the one hand there is no longer a whole thinkable through montage, on the other hand there is no longer an internal monologue utterable through image” (*Cinema 2* 167). The aim of this contradistinction is to argue that while Eisenstein’s sublime dialectic seeks to form “the set of harmonics acting on the cortex which give rise to thought, the cinematographic I THINK: the whole as subject” (Deleuze, *Cinema 2* 158), Artaud’s concept of cruelty is a confrontation with the impossibility of thinking the unthought or the unconscious (Deleuze, *Cinema 2* 167). The importance of Artaud’s concept of cruelty, for the *Cinema* books and this chapter, relates to Deleuze’s time-image as a break from classical realism and its image of rational thought.

Taking inspiration from Shaviro’s question, “[h]ow can Kant’s antinomy be used to help define a postmodern or Deleuzian notion of Beauty?” (“Beauty” 16), this chapter examines the correlation between Deleuze’s time-image and Kantian beauty as it is explored in terms of Artaud’s concept of cruelty. Deleuze illustrates the time-image’s confrontation with cruelty, the exploration of ‘psychic’ or spiritual states, through his concepts of the any-space-whatever of color cinema and the pure optical and sound situations.

The following section, The Crisis of the Action-Image: From the Sublime to the Beautiful, will establish Deleuze’s discussion of Eisenstein’s sublime dialectic in order to correlate Artaudian cruelty with the time-
image’s any-space-whatever of color cinema and its pure optical and sound situations. I will explain the relation between Eisenstein’s dialectical automaton, or his dialectical relation between thought and cinema, and Deleuze’s classical movement-image (perception, action, and affection images). This is an important point in order to establish the transition from a sublime dialectic, as it relates to classical realism, to the time-image’s affinity with Kantian beauty.

In the section entitled Any-Space-Whatevers: From the Sublime’s Black, White, and Grey Spaces to Beauty and Color, I explain the transition from the any-space-whatever of the sublime to the beautiful. In the movement-image, Deleuze describes Eisenstein’s sublime dialectic in terms of the black, white, and grey any-space-whatevers of Expressionism and lyrical abstraction (Cinema 1 102-22). Deleuze associates these black, white and grey any-space-whatevers with a metaphysics of transcendence, its system of judgment, which is based on a hierarchical view of humanity whose transgressions are punished or redeemed by God.41 In the time-image, however, he examines how modern cinema’s any-space-whatever of color broke away from classical narrative relations—beyond determinate actions and milieux—and allowed the time-image’s pure optical and sound situations to proliferate (Deleuze, Cinema 1 118-22). As a result, Deleuze theorizes the cinema’s new image of belief in time-image cinema. According to Deleuze’s time-image, the crisis of the action-image breaks the link between man and the world, or the character and the film world, and this broken link “must become an object of belief” (Cinema 2 172). In time-image cinema, belief

is no longer addressed to a different or transformed world. Man is in the world as if in a pure optical and sound situation. The reaction of

41 In abstract lyricism, Deleuze associates the character’s struggle with good and evil with the extreme moralism of Jansenism and the Reformation. He examines this extreme moralism in the cinema of Dreyer and Bresson as well as the philosophies of Pascal, Kierkegaard, and Sartre; see Deleuze, Cinema 1 116.
which man has been dispossessed can be replaced only by belief. Only belief in the world can reconnect man to what he sees and hears. The cinema must film, not the world, but belief in this world, our only link. (Deleuze, *Cinema 2* 172)

Deleuze’s time-image expresses this change in belief through its pure optical and sound situations that are emblematic of Artaud’s concept of cruelty as the “powerlessness to believe in life” or a discovery of “the identity of thought and life” (*Cinema 2* 170).

The section entitled Beauty: Any-Space-Whatever of Color focuses on color as an affect of violence. Here, color expresses a power-quality or an affect of preeminent action. The any-space-whatever is defined as:

a space of virtual conjunction, grasped as pure locus of the possible. What in fact manifests the instability, the heterogeneity, the absence of link of such a space, is a richness in potentials or singularities which are, as it were, prior conditions of all actualisation, all determination. This is why, when we define the action-image by quality or power actualised in a determined space (state of things), it is not sufficient to oppose it to an affection-image which relates qualities and powers to the preactual state that they assume on a face. (Deleuze, *Cinema 1* 109-10)

The preactualization of affection and the actualization of determinate action are related through the capacity for affect. The affect of an any-space-whatever, like that of the face and close-up, is “extracted from a given state of things” that will be actualized in a determinate action (Deleuze, *Cinema 1* 111). In this realm of the preactual, Deleuze maintains that “there are two signs of the affection-image, or two figures of firstness: on the one hand the power-quality expressed by a face or an equivalent; but on the other hand
the power-quality presented in any-space-whatever [espace quelconque]” (Cinema 1 110).  

In accordance with the previous chapter’s exploration of Deleuze’s affection-image, this chapter argues that American Psycho, Fight Club, and The Matrix exemplify New Hollywood’s exploration of Godard’s ‘it’s not blood, it’s red’ through their aesthetic questioning of action-image representation. Deleuze uses the term ‘power-quality’ as one hyphenated term: “Godard’s formula, ‘it’s not blood, it’s red’ is the formula of colourism” because it is “the affect itself” as “the power which seizes all that happens within its range, or the quality common to completely different objects” (Cinema 1 118). The power-quality therefore relates to the capacity of absorption into affective states which exceed determinate actions and change according to the film’s manipulation of time-space relations.

The case studies have been chosen because they resonate with Deleuze’s discussion of the literal absorption of the character into an any-space-whatever of color. In his explication of the any-space-whatever of color cinema, Deleuze explains that Vincente Minnelli’s films illustrate the absorbent affect of color. He states that Minnelli’s colorful dreams and/or nightmares create an “obsessive theme of characters literally absorbed by their own dream” (Deleuze, Cinema 1 118). In the section on Beauty: Pure Optical and Sound Situations, I examine the pure optical and sound situations in American Psycho, Fight Club, and The Matrix. The time-image’s pure optical and sound situations are important because they delineate an affective and aesthetic definition of violence where affect is disembodied from action, character, and narrative. New Hollywood inherited this new affect from modern cinema’s time-image where

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42 Deleuze’s notion of the any-space-whatever [espace quelconque] is a term borrowed from Pascal Augé, yet there is no reference to Augé’s original work in the Cinema books; see Deleuze, Cinema 1 109-10.
[s]ome characters, caught in certain pure optical and sound situations, find themselves condemned to wander about or go off on a trip. These are pure seers, who no longer exist except in the interval of movement, and do not even have the consolation of the sublime, which would connect them to matter or would gain control of the spirit for them. They are rather given over to something intolerable which is simply their everydayness itself. (Deleuze, *Cinema 2* 41)

In all three case studies, the departure from the action-image—a sensory-motor representation of violence in the character’s action/reaction to a determinate situation—manifests itself in an affective spectacle of violence.

*American Psycho* lulls the spectator into Patrick Bateman’s superficial reality: a version of New York, circa 1987, at the height of Wall Street wealth, white privilege, and materialism. As the film explores Patrick’s ego, various levels of anxiety and aggression surface through his cool façade. At the end of the narrative, it is revealed that the film’s extreme violence is all in Patrick’s mind. Yet, the affect of his anxiety—which is felt throughout the film’s exploration of color and his pure optical and sound situations—skews action-image realism and creates a dream-like affect.

*Fight Club* entails a similar reversal in the narrative where the Narrator’s experience of violence is also revealed to exist in his mind, as the creation of a violent alter ego. In *Fight Club*, the Narrator leaves the comforts of white, upper middle class materialism to live with eccentric drifter Tyler Durden. Durden and the Narrator live on the fringes of society and explore their masculine aggression by forming underground extreme-fighting clubs for men. These clubs soon form an anti-capitalist terrorist group called Project Mayhem. As the violence of Project Mayhem spins out of control, the Narrator and spectator alike are confronted with the fact that Tyler is the Narrator. Thereafter, all the determinate situations of violence
essentially become spectacles of the Narrator’s splintered psyche that has formed and dismantled a concept of masculine power.

*The Matrix* differs somewhat from *American Psycho* and *Fight Club* because it is a classical narrative of heroism. Neo (Keanu Reeves)—a computer programmer—is chosen by an underground army, led by Morpheus (Laurence Fishburne), to save humanity from its slavery to machines. Despite this classical narrative structure, *The Matrix* entails two intertwined spectacles of violence. On the one hand, Neo is introduced to the reality of human enslavement which looks like any bustling city, yet this modern city life, ‘the matrix,’ is merely programmed into humans by the machines. On the other hand, the actual reality beneath this matrix is a desolate futuristic vision of earth overrun by machines. In this machine world, humans are pod-like slaves—batteries for machines—who are plugged into the matrix. Morpheus and his crew—Neo, Trinity (Carrie-Anne Moss), and Cypher (Joe Pantoliano) among others—navigate this desolate machine world in an attempt to free humanity from the oppression of the machines. The violence in *The Matrix*, which mainly takes place in the unreal programmed city world, defines violence beyond determinate action and consciously explores violence as a an indeterminate cinematic (or, more specifically, digital) spectacle.

These case studies question the spectator’s relation to character and narrative by affectively complicating the representation of action. New Hollywood’s stylistic exploration of violent spaces as well as the montage’s manipulation of time implies that the concept of cinematic violence goes beyond the representation of determinate actions, characters, and settings to include the ‘unthought’ of violence. The ‘unthought’ of violence, that I explore in this chapter, is the affect of violence as a spectacle of color, and as a pure optical and sound situation of violence rather than a determinate action.
In order to highlight Deleuze’s implicit use of Kantian beauty in the *Cinema* books, I will explain how his crisis of the action-image describes a change in spectatorship from a sublime conception of classical cinema to a notion of modern cinema that is akin to Kantian beauty. This section will briefly outline Deleuze’s use of the sublime in order to explore how the any-space-whatever of color and the pure optical and sound situations of the time-image relate to Kant’s beautiful in the following sections.

Deleuze defines the sublime as follows: “[t]he cinematographic image must have a shock effect on thought, and force thought to think itself as much as thinking the whole” (*Cinema* 2 158). This cause and effect relation is essential to the sublime since the shock in the dialectic between the image and the creation of a concept exposes the faculty of rational thought. Deleuze explains that “[t]he whole is produced by the parts but also the opposite: there is a dialectical circle or spiral, ‘monism’ ( . . . ). The whole as dynamic effect is also the presupposition of its cause, the spiral” (*Cinema* 2 158-59). The sublime therefore creates a metaphorical harmonics between images that represent the whole: the relation between thought and the unthought, consciousness and the unconscious.

Deleuze argues that the cinema’s shock to thought “gives rise to a spiritual automaton in us, which reacts in turn on movement” (*Cinema* 2 156). For Deleuze, the spiritual automaton breaks away from classical philosophy and its assertion that thought stems from a “logical or abstract possibility of formally deducing thoughts from each other” (*Cinema* 2 156). Instead Deleuze, in accordance with Martin Heidegger’s *What is Called Thinking?*, claims that thought is not predicated on the logical possibility of thought (Deleuze, *Cinema* 2 156; Heidegger 3). When Deleuze states, “with the movement-image, you can’t escape the shock which arouses the thinker
in you” (*Cinema 2* 156), he is implying that it is the power or capacity for affect that overwhelms thought processes.

Deleuze finds this notion of a spiritual automaton in the film theories of Elie Faure and Jean Epstein (*Cinema 2* 308). Both Faure and Epstein discuss a correlation between the cinematographic material automatism of the image and an affective subjectivity that goes beyond ‘the real’ or beyond our intellectual automatism (Epstein 63; Faure 56). The affect of the sublime surpasses the ‘real’ determinate spaces of the image, yet it remains tied to the representation of the whole because it represents the relation between perception, action, and affection. This relation creates the narrative dramatization of “action-thought and indicates the relation between man and the world, between man and nature” (Deleuze, *Cinema 2* 161), and between character and spectator. The affect of the beautiful also goes beyond the ‘real’ determinate spaces of the film world, yet the beautiful is a confrontation with thought’s inability to represent the whole due to the crisis of the action-image. Whereas the spiritual automaton of the sublime is “defined by the logical possibility of a thought” (Deleuze, *Cinema 2* 166), the spiritual automaton of the beautiful is confronted with the inability to think the unthought.

In the first phase of the spiritual automaton, Deleuze explores the sublime’s shock to thought in terms of the dialectical relation between thought and cinema. Deleuze offers three main examples of the sublime: Kant’s mathematical sublime in the work of Gance; Kant’s dynamic sublime in the Expressionist cinema of Murnau; and Eisenstein’s dialectical sublime.43 Although Deleuze’s examples of the sublime point to Gance, Murnau, and Eisenstein, he also claims that the sublime’s spiritual

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43 In his chapter on “Thought and Cinema” Deleuze summarizes classical cinema’s spiritual automaton—specifically its use of the sublime—see Deleuze, *Cinema 2* 157-164. For more on his analysis of Eisenstein’s dialectical sublime see Deleuze, *Cinema 1* 32-40, 178-84; regarding the mathematical sublime and Gance see Deleuze, *Cinema 1* 40-55; on the dynamic sublime and Murnau see Deleuze, *Cinema 1* 53-55, 111-12.
automaton or its dialectical automaton is applicable to classical cinema as a whole (*Cinema* 2 157).

With his analysis of a sublime conception of classical cinema, Deleuze uses Eisenstein’s dialectic to describe the classical integral relation between man and the world, the character in the film world, the spectator and the moving image, art and society. He calls this an ‘affective fusion’ (Deleuze, *Cinema* 2 160), or a metaphorical harmonics of thought and cinema. He gives examples of affective fusion with reference to Eisenstein’s two types of affective composition. Firstly, in extrinsic affective composition, “two images [have] the same harmonics (for example, a sad nature for a sad hero)” (Deleuze, *Cinema* 2 161). Secondly, in intrinsic affective composition, “a single image captures the harmonics of a different image which is not shown (for example, adultery as ‘crime’, the lovers having the gestures of a murder victim and a mad assassin)” (Deleuze, *Cinema* 2 161). Deleuze explains that in both types of affective composition there is a fusion between the author, the film, and the spectator because the composition of images implies the character’s experience as well as the author’s and spectator’s judgment of the character (*Cinema* 2 161). According to Deleuze, this is what Eisenstein called “‘the new sphere of film rhetoric, the possibility of bearing an abstract social judgment’” (*Cinema* 2 161). He describes this dialectic as:

The complete circuit thus includes the sensory shock which raises us from the images to conscious thought, then the thinking in figures which takes us back to the images and gives us an affective shock again. Making the two coexist, joining the highest degree of consciousness to the deepest level of the unconscious: this is the dialectical automaton. The whole is constantly open (the spiral), but so that it can internalize the sequence of images, as well as becoming externalized in this sequence. The whole forms a knowledge, in the
Hegelian fashion, which brings together the image and the concept as two movements each of which goes towards the other. (Cinema 2 161)

This Hegelian dialectic is evident when Deleuze summarizes three aspects of the sublime: “the relationship with a whole which can only be thought in a higher awareness [the organic], the relationship with a thought which can only be shaped in the subconscious unfolding of images [the pathetic], the sensory-motor relationship between world and man, nature and thought [the dramatic]” (Cinema 2 163). The organic is the movement from image to thought or from the percept to the concept of the image. From image to thought, Deleuze explains that the shot or the movement-image, like a thought, is a cell “multiple and divisible in accordance with the objects between which it is established” (Cinema 2 157). The pathetic, which enters into a dialectical relation with the organic, refers to the reverse relation from the thought to the image or from the concept to the percept. The dialectical relation between the organic and the pathetic implies a movement from the concept of the image to its affect because the whole—the relation between thoughts and images—forms the concept. Deleuze claims that “[i]f Eisenstein is a dialectician, it is because he conceives of the violence of the shock [the affect] in the form of opposition and the thought of the whole in the form of opposition overcome, or of the transformation of opposites: ‘From the shock of two factors a concept is born’” (qtd. in Cinema 2 158). With his concept of the movement-image, Deleuze explores this shock to thought according to the relation between affection and perception—i.e., the causal relations between perception, action, and affection images that lead to a new perception.

Deleuze explains that the very system of the sublime—the dialectic between the organic and the pathetic—is based on the drama of action: the

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44 Deleuze refers the reader to the chapters “The Filmic Fourth Dimension,” “Methods of Montage” and “Film Form: New Problems” in Sergei Eisenstein’s Film Form.
identity of both the concept that is in the image as well as the identity of image in the concept (Cinema 2 161). It does not matter which is first, montage or movement-image, because they are bound to the formation of the concept. In fact, Deleuze claims that this ‘which is first’ dilemma cannot be determined (Cinema 2 158). The importance is the formation of the concept which, according to Deleuze’s summary of a sublime dialectic, is based on the drama of action-thought: “action-thought indicates the relation between man and the world, between man and nature, the sensory-motor unity, but by raising it to a supreme power (‘monism’)” (Cinema 2 161). Within this unity, between the organic and the pathetic, Deleuze argues that “action-thought simultaneously posits the unity of nature and man, of the individual and the mass: cinema as art of the masses” (Cinema 2 162). In other words, there is no individuality, only collective individuation. According to Deleuze’s classical sensory-motor schema (i.e., perception, action, and affection), the classical affection-image or close-up unites action and perception thereby subsuming the individuality of a face or expression into the experience of its affect. Ultimately, Eisenstein’s sublime dialectic, which Deleuze extends to classical cinema as a whole, posits a shock to the image, to thought, through the affect of montage. Yet this very shock subsumes the individual into the masses as it subsumes the shot into a metaphorical association of images.

Deleuze states that Eisenstein, in Film Form, criticized American cinema—specifically D. W. Griffith’s work—for failing to provide a dialectic where the organic and the pathetic form a shock that ultimately creates a metaphor by making the character a figure for the social mass (Cinema 1 91; Cinema 2 162-63). However, Deleuze argues that American cinema entails its own manifestation of the three aspects of the sublime through its emphasis on the action-image:
The action-image could go from the situation to the action, or conversely, from the action to the situation; it was inseparable from acts of comprehension through which the hero evaluated what was given in the problem or situation, or from acts of inference by which he guessed what was not given ( . . . ). And these acts of thought in the image extended in a double direction, relation of the images with a thought whole and with figures of thought.45 (Cinema 2 163)

Deleuze refers to the cinema of Hitchcock as “the very culmination of the movement-image . . . because it goes beyond the action-image towards the ‘mental relations’ which frame it and constitute its linkage, but at the same time returns to the image in accordance with ‘natural relations’ which make up a framework” (Cinema 2 163). The framework of ‘natural relations’ that Deleuze refers to here is the affect of suspense that Hitchcock forms in his work (Cinema 2 164). His point is that, in the sublime conception of classical cinema, both the affect of ‘shock’ in Eisenstein’s dialectic and the affect of ‘suspense’ in Hitchcock’s cinema create a unity between cinema and thought, image and narrative, character and spectator.

However, with the crisis of the action-image and the beginning of post-war modern cinema, Deleuze claims that this unity is broken. Deleuze’s second phase of the spiritual automaton is equated with Artaud’s concept of cruelty: the shocking realization that the brain and the cinema do not constitute the whole—the relation between thought and unthought—the brain and cinema occupy the gap or the unthinkable (Cinema 2 166-67).46

45 Deleuze’s discussion of the relation between thought and cinema in classical American cinema is similar to his discussion of the sublime dialectics in Gance, Murnau, and Eisenstein because the organic spiral-like relation moves from the situation to the action to a new situation (SAS). The reverse logic of relations in American classical cinema moves from the action to the situation to another action (ASA). For more on the SAS, see Deleuze, Cinema 1 141-59. For more on the ASA, see Deleuze, Cinema 1 160-77.
46 Deleuze uses Artaud’s concept of cruelty with reference to Antonin Artaud, Oeuvres complètes, Tome III (Paris: Gallimard, 1933) 22, 76 and Maurice Blanchot, “Artaud,” Le livre à venir (Paris:
The concept of cruelty, implicitly tied to Kantian beauty, which Deleuze advances here is the fact that modern cinema’s spiritual automaton can no longer correlate thought with the indirect representation of time as it did in the movement-image. Instead, with the time-image, time is no longer subordinate to movement or thought: the time-image is the confrontation with the fact that the whole cannot be thought. This implies a confrontation with the problem of thought (i.e., with the problem of the rational, individual subject or the ego). When Deleuze opposes Eisenstein’s and Artaud’s respective views on cinema’s shock to thought, he claims that the spiritual automaton or mental automation of the time-image is neither “defined by the logical possibility of a thought” nor is it “the physical power of a thought that would be placed in a circuit with the automatic image” (Cinema 2 166). In time-image cinema, “[t]he spiritual automaton has become the Mummy, this dismantled, paralysed, petrified, frozen instance which testifies to ‘the impossibility of thinking that is thought’” (Deleuze, Cinema 2 166). In the following sections on the any-space-whatever of color and the pure optical and sound situations of the time-image, I will demonstrate how this new spiritual automaton implies a change in spectatorship from the sublime to the beautiful.

Any-Space-Whatevers: From the Sublime’s Black, White, and Grey Spaces to Beauty and Color

In “The Affection-Image Qualities, Powers, Any-Space-Whatevers,” in Cinema 1, Deleuze claims that it is a change in the any-space-whatever that marks the transition from the movement-image to the time-image. Like the two phases of the spiritual automaton—from a sublime conception of classical cinema to a time-image that resonates with Kantian beauty—

Deleuze offers two definitions of the any-space-whatever. The first definition of the any-space-whatever entails a determinate association between the character, the film space, and the ensuing moral narrative action. Deleuze explores the sublime dialectic of classical cinema’s any-space-whatevers in terms of the shadows of Expressionism and the white light of lyrical abstraction. Yet, the second definition of the any-space-whatever marks a break between the character, the film space, and the narrative action that results in a blurring of the boundaries between the character and the film space, the spectator and the character. For Deleuze, this new any-space-whatever is created through the absorbent affect of color: an absorption of character, spectator, and situations (Cinema 1 118-19).

In regard to classical cinema, the any-space-whatever “is not an abstract universal, in all times, in all places. It is a perfectly singular space, which has merely lost its homogeneity, that is, the principle of its metric relations or the connection of its own parts, so that the linkages can be made in an infinite number of ways” (Deleuze, Cinema 1 109). Deleuze’s examples of the any-space-whatevers of classical cinema include the dark shadows of Expressionist cinema and the white light of lyrical abstraction. A brief summary of the any-space-whatevers of Expressionism and lyrical abstraction is necessary in order to explicate the transition towards the any-space-whatever of modern color cinema.

Deleuze’s emphasis on the shadows of Expressionism and the white light of lyrical abstraction revolves around the character’s struggle with sacrifice. With Expressionism, Deleuze explains that the character struggles with darkness or evil, which is ultimately sacrificed to reveal the spiritual light or white God-like aspect of humanity that goes beyond our individual state of being (Cinema 1 53-54, 111-12). In lyrical abstraction, Deleuze enumerates five characters: the white men of God or duty; the creatures of evil; grey men of uncertainty or doubt; the character of authentic or conscious choice; and finally the beast or the ass (Cinema 1 112-17). With
these five characters, Deleuze demonstrates that lyrical abstraction presents a
spiritual alternative to the black, white, and grey, which results in the
realization that humanity has the consciousness of choice between these
modes of being. In sum, the any-space-whatevers of Expressionism and
lyrical abstraction can go beyond the determination of action (or sacrifice).
Yet, the character’s choice or determination remains subsumed in an
alternation of the metaphorical meaning of good, evil, and uncertainty since
human transcendence is redeemed by God. It is for this reason that the any-
space-whatevers of classicism parallel a sublime conception of cinema where
“[s]pace is no longer determined, it has become the any-space-whatever
which is identical to the power of the spirit, to the perpetually renewed
spiritual decision: it is this decision which constitutes the affect, or the ‘auto-
affection’, and which takes upon itself the linking of parts” (Deleuze,
Cinema 1 117).

With the any-space-whatever of modern color cinema, however, this
definition is altered:

It [the any-space-whatever] is no longer, as before, a space which is
defined by parts whose linking up and orientation are not determined
in advance, and can be done in an infinite number of ways. It is now
an amorphous set which has eliminated that which happened and
acted in it. It is an extinction or disappearing, but one which is not
opposed to the genetic element. (Deleuze, Cinema 1 120)

According to Deleuze, the any-space-whatever is the genetic element of the
affection-image (Cinema 1 110). In his movement-image avatars of
perception, action, and affection, “each image not only has the unity of an
element which may be juxtaposed to others, but the genetic unity of a ‘cell’
[or thought], which may be divided into others” (Deleuze, Cinema 1 34). As
a result, the black, white, and grey any-space-whatevers of the sublime are
not opposed to the empty absorbent affect of the any-space-whatever of modern color cinema. Deleuze explains that

the two aspects are complementary, and reciprocally presuppose each other: the amorphous set in fact is a collection of locations or positions which coexist independently of the temporal order which moves from one part to the other, independently of the connections and orientations which the vanished characters and situations gave them. There are therefore two states of the any-space-whatever, or two kinds of ‘qualisigns’, qualisigns of deconnection and of emptiness. *(Cinema I* 120)

The implication is that within the spiritual automaton of classicism or the sublime, the shot (the movement-image) that Deleuze equates with thought remains in a dialectical relation—in the cycle of perception, action, affection, perception—with the character’s actions.

The underlying assumption here is that the affect of the sublime remains in relation with the whole—in a relation between thought and unthought that represents a metaphysics of transcendence. The affect of the beautiful, on the other hand, is not tied to this causal logic. As the above quote suggests, the any-space-whatever of modern cinema involves a disappearing, an extinction, an emptiness, and therefore a disinterestedness in the cause and effect relations of classical cinema—i.e., the sublime dialectic at work in Expressionism and lyrical abstraction, and in the sensory-motor schemas of situation-action-situation or action-situation-action in American cinema. It is for this reason that Deleuze claims that the crisis of the action-image, the crisis of the sensory-motor schema—the causal relation between thought and cinema—leads to a subsequent change in the status of the whole.
How does the any-space-whatever of modern cinema, the any-space-whatever of color, reflect this change in the whole? How does this imply a change in spectatorship with regard to New Hollywood violence? Deleuze’s discussion of the any-space-whatever of color is brief. His examples refer to Minnelli and Antonioni. As previously mentioned, Deleuze examines the character’s absorption into the colorful dreams or nightmares of Minnelli’s musicals (Cinema 1 118-19; Cinema 2 63). He also states that Antonioni’s cold color pallet and the empty sparse shots in L’Avventura (Michelangelo Antonioni, 1961) create a void that results in the effacement of characters (Deleuze, Cinema 1 119). Nevertheless, Deleuze returns to his main analogy about the affect as entity—a point that I emphasized in the previous chapter—when he claims that: “[t]here is a symbolism of colours, but it does not consist in a correspondence between a colour and an affect (green and hope . . .). Colour is on the contrary the affect itself, that is, the virtual conjunction of all the objects which it picks up” (Cinema 1 118). This virtual conjunction is essential to Deleuze’s conception of the imaginary and its capacity to form new perceptions and new realities thereby conflating the real and the imaginary. The word conjunction is important because it emphasizes Deleuze’s assertion that within modern cinema “the whole is the outside” (Cinema 2 179). He claims that “the whole undergoes a mutation, because it has ceased to be the One-Being, in order to become the constitutive ‘and’ of things, the constitutive between-two of images” (Deleuze, Cinema 2 180). With modern cinema, Deleuze claims that classical realism’s illusory image of rational thought, the sensory-motor schema, is broken. This implies a subjectless state: an interval between action and reaction as opposed to a causal action/reaction. With the crisis of the action-image, the unity between thought and cinema is confronted with its impossibility: the impossible unity between thought and the unthought. Deleuze argues that this realization is a confrontation with the fact that cinema “affects the visible with a fundamental disturbance, and the world
with a suspension, which contradicts all natural perception” (Cinema 2 201). Ultimately, Deleuze’s description of this change in the status of the whole, this departure from the idea of rational thought, resonates with his Bergsonian position that “[t]hings are luminous by themselves without anything illuminating them: all consciousness is something, it is indistinguishable from the thing, that is from the image of light” (Cinema 1 60-61).

With Deleuze’s mention of Godard’s statement ‘it’s not blood, it’s red,’ the problem is neither the meaning of red, nor the meaning of blood. The problem is the association, the sensory-motor link, between blood and red. Deleuze claims that the realization must be that “blood has ceased to be a harmonic of red, and that this red is the unique tone of blood” (Cinema 2 182-83). Similarly, in order to engage with the beauty of New Hollywood’s spectacles of violence, it is important to grasp the spectacle at its formation. Following Deleuze’s framework for cinema, I ask: what are the affective tonalities of violence in American Psycho, Fight Club, and The Matrix? How is the violent spectacle rendered beautiful, disinterested, empty of its referents?

**Beauty: Any-Space-Whatever of Color**

In American Psycho, the spectator is absorbed into Patrick Bateman’s any-space-whatevers of violence, which seem to represent his inner states—his monstrosity, his coldness, his anger or passion—but his various any-space-whatevers express an empty affect of violence. This affect of emptiness is felt in the shared experience of his world through a camera-consciousness that breaks the façade of control, surface materiality, and privilege in Patrick’s vision of himself. At the end of the previous chapter, I associated Patrick’s blank stare—in the final shot of American Psycho—with the
predominant white spaces of his New York apartment. Yet this tonality of ‘white’ and the emptiness of Patrick Bateman in *American Psycho* is a blank canvas on which his violence is drawn and effaced. For example, the opening credit sequence begins with a blank white screen where what initially looks like drops of blood is revealed to be raspberry *coulis* in a subsequent shot. Here Godard’s ‘it’s not blood, it’s red’ becomes ‘it’s not blood, it’s raspberry sauce.’ This ‘red is raspberry sauce’ foreshadows the absurd affect of violence that is explored in Patrick’s pure optical and sound situations. As Deleuze explains in his chapter on “Thought and Cinema,” the time-image’s break from the sensory-motor schema creates a confrontation with “the unthinkable in thought” that becomes apparent “by virtue of the absurd” (*Cinema 2* 169-70). When ‘red’ goes beyond the representation of action-image violence, it has the capacity to shock the sensory-motor link between action/reaction and violence. Violence therefore becomes an affect of absurdity where “[t]he spiritual automaton is in the psychic situation of the seer, who sees better and further than he can react, that is, think” (Deleuze, *Cinema 2* 170).

Red, green, and blue are the predominant colors in the film. Like the absurd affect of ‘it’s not blood, it’s raspberry sauce,’ Patrick’s initial association with these colors is broken. For example, at the end of the opening credit sequence, Patrick is in a green-lit bar. He is angry at the barmaid who refuses to take his coupon. In medium close-up, Patrick smiles and yells, “You’re a fucking ugly bitch!” The light on his face highlights his double-personality—his smile and his anger. The left side of his face is flesh tone, while the right side of his face absorbs the garish neon green color of the ambient lighting. A similar shot appears in the following sequence, when he introduces himself in the voice-over. A couple of slow dolly shots

47 It is this notion of absurdity—Deleuze’s references to Artaud’s cruelty or the incapacity of thought—that Patricia Pisters examines in regard to the affect of laughter and violence in *Pulp Fiction*; see Pisters, *Matrix* 77-105.

48 This bright neon green is similar to the any-space-whatevers that foreshadow the violence in *Natural Born Killers*. 
reveal the white décor of his apartment. The shiny wooden floorboards are anchored with black furniture and the white walls are peppered with black artwork. Patrick enters the bathroom and stares at his reflection in a Les Misérables poster that hangs above the toilet. The camera zooms in on the close-up of his reflection in the poster. Again, the right side of his face reflects the blue in the poster. In the following shot, Patrick explains that he takes care of himself by wearing an iced blue facemask to reduce any swelling around his eyes. In the bar and in his bathroom, there is a literal association between the narrative and the color on his face. The green that he absorbs is reflective of his monstrosity when discussing money, and the reflection of the color blue on his face is soon associated with ice.

These any-space-whatevers affectively explore the monstrosity and cold detachment that one might normally associate with a ‘psycho.’ As opposed to the animalistic impulse-images that I discussed in Chapter 3, there is no logic of degradation—a destructive impulse for violence—in the any-space-whatever of violence. The any-space-whatever, like the affect as entity in the close-up, presents an ideal affect. In other words, the idea of what a ‘psycho’ or a serial killer represents becomes blurred not only in the narrative but in its affect. On one level, the representation of Patrick’s violence reflects the definition of a serial killer when he kills a black homeless man and a prostitute since these victims are in a lower socio-economic class. However, the affect of his violence remains in the realm of ‘it’s not blood: it’s green, it’s blue, it’s red.’ For example, when Patrick kills his colleague, Paul Allen—a man of equal socio-economic stature who is almost indistinguishable from Patrick—Allen’s blood sprays onto half of Patrick’s face. Like the previous absorbent affects of the colors green and

49 Deleuze distinguishes the “‘degenerate’ affect” in the naturalism of the impulse-image and the idealism of affect in the any-space-whatever, see Deleuze, Cinema 1 123.
50 Deleuze clearly makes a distinction between the idealism of the affection-image (Any-Space-Whatevers/Affects), the naturalism of the impulse-image (Originary World/Elementary Impulses), and the realism of the action-image (Determined Milieux/Modes of Behaviour), yet these distinctions do not exclude one another since they reflect stylistic tendencies; see Deleuze, Cinema 1 123, 134.
blue, red is an affect of violence that exceeds representation. In fact, during this act of violence, the camera focuses on Patrick’s face—his passion during the act of violence and his calmness thereafter. As Patrick’s violence consumes him throughout the film, his violence becomes meaningless, yet its affect is captivating. The colorful any-space-whatevers in *American Psycho* break Patrick’s identification with violence, and the spectator’s expectations of what psychotic violence represents.

In a series of sequences that parallels the opening credit sequence—‘it’s not blood, it’s raspberry sauce’—Patrick’s identification with violence and the spectator’s idea of him as a psychopath become somewhat comical. At the end of the film’s most spectacular exploration of an aesthetic of horror film violence—where Patrick throws a chainsaw down a stairwell to kill a prostitute—there is a cut from the image of the dead prostitute to a drawing of this image. In the drawing, the prostitute and the chainsaw are sketched in blue as Patrick colors in the red blood beneath her. The camera then pans left to a dessert served on a blue dish: a chocolate cake with white chocolate shavings, a dollop of whipped cream, three raspberries, and a topping of fresh mint leaves. The colors blue, red, and green form a perfect decadent dessert, which is reminiscent of the opening title sequence’s ‘it’s not red, it’s raspberry sauce.’ This ‘it’s not red, it’s raspberry sauce’ and the ‘it’s not blood, it’s red’ of Patrick’s drawing both foreshadow the following sequence’s pure optical and sound situation of violence, which will be discussed in the following section. For the moment, I want to emphasize that the colors green, blue, and red that figure on Patrick’s face in the first third of *American Psycho* become a pure optical and sound situation of violence when he participates in an irrational sequence of violence—i.e. the ‘feed me a stray cat’ sequence.

Like *American Psycho*, the any-space-whatevers of violence in *Fight Club* and *The Matrix* also entail their own affective versions of ‘it’s not blood, it’s red.’ Both films share a grim color scheme, an overall sickly
green tone that washes over many spaces and characters’ faces. The drab khaki green overtone in *Fight Club* creates blood that is so dark it looks like tar. It is not the reddish orange hue of blood that flows from Mr. Orange’s gunshot wounds in *Reservoir Dogs*.\(^{51}\) Yet, similar to the fact that the orange-red blood of *Reservoir Dogs* forebodes Mr. Orange’s betrayal—and the ensuing violent bloodbath among the film’s gangsters—the affect of *Fight Club*’s “it’s not blood, it’s tar” absorbs the dark ambience that surrounds the Narrator’s world.

In fact, the black tar-like blood foreshadows the terrorism of the fight club since it takes the film’s literal fear of castration—the Narrator’s fear of Marla (Helena Bonham Carter)—to an affective level. For example, at the first fight club meeting, the first man who is smothered in blood rises up from the ground to reveal his blood-soaked beard. This is the same tar-like blood that spills from the Narrator’s desire to ‘be a man’ that fuels his engagement in acts of violence throughout the course of the film. The blackish blood is an any-space-whatever that envelops the Narrator’s dark world—his insomnia, the references to death and disease in his support groups, Marla and Tyler/the Narrator’s smoking habits, his dual personality, and the terrorism of Project Mayhem.

Flashes of blue-white, which figure throughout the film, dispel the Narrator’s darkness. They first appear in the glow of the opening titles. In this computer generated title sequence, the camera tracks through the Narrator’s murky green brain matter as the titles emit bright blue flashes of color. This same blue surrounds the Narrator’s icy cave during his guided meditation and a bright blue flash explodes from the final gunfire when the Narrator puts a gun to his head and eradicates Tyler. Similar to the white canvas in *American Psycho*, where violence is drawn and effaced, the Narrator’s violence is narrated and erased in his own head.

\(^{51}\) Paul Gormley claims that the self-consciousness of the blood in *Reservoir Dogs* has the absorbent affect of Deleuze’s ‘colour-image,’ see Gormley, “Trashing” 159 and Deleuze, *Cinema 1 118.*
In *The Matrix*, the unique tone of blood is a bright red that distinguishes itself from the film’s greyish green overtones. Throughout the film, red has an affect of seduction and fear. When Morpheus gives Neo a red pill, he is literally absorbed into a mirror of reality: the slave-like reality of humanity. In this scene, the red pill entails Neo’s affect of seduction since he is curious about ‘the real world.’ Yet, as a glossy metallic mirror literally sucks him into ‘the real world,’ his fear is equally palpable.

As Neo learns about the matrix, the programmed world that looks like any city, Morpheus creates many any-space-whatevers (computer programmed realities) to test Neo’s ability to surpass the laws of physics within the matrix. For example, in one exercise, Neo must jump from the roof of a skyscraper. When Neo jumps, he is absorbed into an elasticized version of concrete. When Neo is awoken in the real world, aboard Morpheus’ ship, there is a close-up on some blood that Neo wipes from his mouth. Morpheus explains: “Your mind makes it real.” In the following exercise, Morpheus walks him through the any-space-whatever of a city. This programmed cityscape begins with a red stoplight—a stoplight that foreshadows the dangers of seduction. The city features a busy street filled with bustling workers in their black and white work suits. As Morpheus describes the matrix, Neo is distracted by a beautiful blonde woman in a red dress. Morpheus asks him to look at her again. When Neo turns around, the woman is now a replica of Agent Smith (Hugo Weaving)—one of the agents or administrators meant to protect the machine world from freed humans like Morpheus, Neo, and Trinity.

Similarly, the seductive affect of the color red also foreshadows Cypher’s betrayal. The members of Morpheus’ crew are all clad in grey, except for Cypher who is the only crew member in a red shirt. Soon after the ‘woman in the red dress’ sequence, the camera focuses on a bloody red steak accompanied by a glass of red wine. Agent Smith says, “Do we have a deal?” as the camera tilts up to reveal Cypher who describes the bliss of
enjoying the programmed sensory-motor stimulus of ‘steak’ within the matrix.

If, in *The Matrix*, red has the affect of seduction it is because the simulacra or the matrix is seductive when compared to the greyish green reality of freedom. Ultimately, Neo takes the spectator on a journey between the grim reality of freedom—the knowledge that the simulacra masks human slavery—and the seductive spectacles of violence in the matrix. In the film, ‘it’s not blood, it’s red’ becomes ‘there is no red’ because the matrix is not real. At the same time, however, Neo is a character who is as blank as the matrix itself since the film’s camera-consciousness evokes the affects that qualify Neo’s journey: his uncertainty, in the grey color scheme that surrounds him; his fear, in the blood that he sees; and his confidence, in the bright orange glow that he emits in the final battle against Agent Smith. Of all the case studies, *The Matrix* is closest to Godard’s ‘it’s not blood, it’s red,’ since the film’s any-space-whatevers construct and efface affects of violence and take the spectator into a world that plays with violent aesthetics.

I have focused on the any-space-whatevers of violence—specifically the affect of ‘it’s not blood, it’s red’—in *American Psycho, Fight Club*, and *The Matrix*. As Deleuze claims, the aim is not to look for a symbolism of color but to understand the unique affect of color in cinema (*Cinema 1* 118). The importance of color, Deleuze’s ‘colour-image’ (*Cinema 1* 118), is its capacity for affect. I am exploring this notion of affect-as-color in terms of violent affect, such as, a feeling of anxiety or exhilaration. Returning to Deleuze’s definition of the any-space-whatever of color, he claims that “it is now an amorphous set which has eliminated that which happened and acted in it. It is an extinction or disappearing, but one which is not opposed to the genetic element [in a sublime concept of the any-space-whatever]” (*Cinema 1* 120). Deleuze does not oppose the any-space-whatevers of the sublime and the beautiful because
we can only say that the one is ‘before’ and the other ‘after’. The any-space-whatever retains one and the same nature: it no longer has coordinates, it is a pure potential, it shows only pure Powers and Qualities, independently of the states of things or milieux which actualize them (have actualised them or will actualize them, or neither the one nor the other – it hardly matters). (Cinema 1 120)

Still, the distinction between the any-space-whatevers of the sublime and those of color is that the ‘before’ actualization of the sublime tends towards metaphor, whereas the ‘after’—the extinction or disappearing—of color creates unlinked tones or an unlinked image. In all three case studies, it is clear that each film creates a different tonality of ‘it’s not blood, it’s red.’ In American Psycho, the tone moves between the horrific and the absurd. In Fight Club, the dark blood qualifies the violence that stems from the dark crevasses of the Narrator’s mind. In The Matrix, aesthetic absorption into a bleak world is interspersed with splashes of red: seduction, blood, violence, and fear that are not real. In all three films, the camera-consciousness builds an idea of violence and erases it to form various affects of violence.

**Beauty: Pure Optical and Sound Situations**

In this section, I will demonstrate that the pure optical and sound situations in American Psycho, Fight Club, and The Matrix create a confrontation and conflation with the real of violence. In the Cinema books, Deleuze associates classical narrative realism with the sensory-motor link between thought and cinema where cinematic affect is actualized in determined milieux and behaviors. Here, time is subordinate to the movement of the narrative

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52 The ‘unlinked’ image is a term borrowed from Artaud, see Deleuze, Cinema 2 182-83.
between perception, action, and affection. For Deleuze and Bergson, the association between thought and cinema is the essence of cliché or “a sensory-motor image of the thing”:

As Bergson says, we do not perceive the thing or the image in its entirety, we always perceive less of it, we perceive only what we are interested in perceiving, or rather what it is in our interest to perceive, by virtue of our economic interests, ideological beliefs and psychological demands. We therefore normally perceive only clichés. (Cinema 2 20)

In time-image cinema, with the crisis of the action-image and the break in the cliché’s sensory-motor schema, Deleuze claims that the pure optical and sound situation brings out the image’s affect, without metaphor, because the image “no longer has to be ‘justified’, for better or for worse . . .” (Cinema 2 20). As I explained in the previous sections, this sensory-motor schema may be shocked or jolted either through classical cinema’s dialectical sublime, or through modern cinema’s Kantian beauty. Deleuze maintains that although a sublime dialectic shocks the sensory-motor schema, the sublime’s affective metaphors merely make thoughts or ideologies visible. With modern cinema’s pure optical and sound situations, however, Deleuze claims that affect remains ‘pure’ and breaks free of judgments, subjectivities, and thoughts.

If, as I have argued, the clichés of action-image violence correlate the representation of action-image realism with ideas of morality, masculine power, and reality, then the affect of the time-image renders such representations powerless—or, unable to be contained in a rational image of thought—because affect is not formed in thought. Affect is formed outside thought. This is the point of correlation between what McMahon describes as

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53 I am referring to the movement-image, specifically Deleuze’s action-image in Cinema 1 141-77.
the conditions of experiencing Kantian beauty, a disinterestedness in the object’s utilitarian value (5-6), and Deleuze’s discussion of Artaudian cruelty. Both describe “the formula of the unendurable” that Deleuze describes as “a new relation between thought and seeing, or between thought and the light source, which constantly sets the thought outside itself, outside knowledge, outside action” (*Cinema 2* 176). The pure optical and sound situations of *American Psycho*, *Fight Club*, and *The Matrix* therefore confront the idea of action-image violence by breaking away from the cliché of classical realism through pure optical and sound situations.

This engagement with cinematic affect, the pure affect of time or of the time-image, is analogous to the experience of Kantian beauty or Artaudian cruelty because they engage with the incommensurability between thought and the unthought. Deleuze defines the pure optical and sound situation, or the opsign and sonsign, as an “image which breaks the sensory-motor links, overwhelms relations and no longer lets itself be expressed in terms of movement, but opens directly on to time” (*Cinema 1* 218). New Hollywood violence, like its precursor in modern cinema, goes beyond narrative realism to include the experience of affect in time. In time-image cinema:

Subjectivity is never ours, it is time, that is, the soul or the spirit, the virtual. The actual is always objective, but the virtual is subjective: it was initially the affect, that which we experience in time; then the time itself, pure virtuality which divides itself in two as affector and affected, ‘the affection of the self by self’ as definition of time. (Deleuze, *Cinema 2* 82-83)

In Chapter 2, I argued that the concept of an affective spectator may be derived from Deleuze’s rejection of a humanistic notion of subjectivity. Deleuze’s notion of affect—as a prepersonal capacity to affect and be
affected—conflates the subjective (virtual) and objective (actual) since Deleuzian-Spinozan bodies, “‘mental’ or ideal bodies” (Massumi, “Notes on the Translation” xvi), are splintered in time: in a past that is preserved and a present that passes. Deleuze explains Bergson’s theses on time where “the past coexists with the present that it has been; the past is preserved in itself, as past in general (non-chronological); at each moment time splits itself into present and past, present that passes and past which is preserved” (Cinema 2 82). He argues that the fact that “we are in time” is a fundamental paradox because, although it might seem as though time is subjective, “we move, live and change” in time (Deleuze, Cinema 2 82). Hence Deleuze’s assertion, regarding the Bergsonian position, that: “the only subjectivity is time, non-chronological time grasped in its foundation, and it is we who are internal to time, not the other way around” (Cinema 2 82).

Since Deleuze’s time-image is a complex concept, I am focusing on his arguments regarding the pure optical and sound situations of modern cinema because these situations describe Kant’s ‘the beautiful,’ and more specifically, Deleuze’s use of Artaud’s notion of cruelty. In “Crystals of Time,” Deleuze states that “[i]n Bergsonian terms, the real object is reflected in a mirror-image as in the virtual object which, from its side and simultaneously, envelops or reflects the real: there is ‘coalescence’ between the two” (Cinema 2 68). When Deleuze associates the pure optical and sound situations with the time-image’s crystalline description—as opposed to classicism’s organic description—he emphasizes the sensory-motor break and the immersion of character and spectator into the crystal of time: the conflation of the actual (real, representational) with the virtual (affect of time in its pure state). He goes on to explain that within the classical sensory-motor schema, “perception and recollection, the real and the imaginary, the physical and the mental, or rather their images, continually [follow] each other, running behind each other and referring back to each other around a

54 For more on the melding of the actual and the virtual, see Deleuze, “The Crystals of Time” Cinema 2 68-97.
point of indiscernibility” (Deleuze, *Cinema 2* 69). In the crystalline narration of modern cinema, however, the pure optical and sounds situation is not only cut off from its actualization in actions and milieux, the pure optical and sound situation is ‘pure’ in that “the actual optical image crystallizes with its own virtual image” (Deleuze, *Cinema 2* 69). In other words, the conflation and coalescence between the actual and the virtual is based on what Deleuze calls the ‘seed’ of the crystallization between actual and virtual. As a result, there is no individual subjectivity. The time-image’s power of the false effaces the illusory idea of subject and object difference, which therefore results in affects in time.55

In his chapter on “Thought and Cinema,” Deleuze correlates Jean-Louis Schefer’s concept of the ordinary man in cinema, from his book *L’homme ordinaire du cinéma*, with Artaud’s concept of cruelty. In summarizing Schefer’s arguments, Deleuze alludes to pure optical and sound situations:

He [Schefer] says that the cinematographic image, as soon as it takes on its aberration of movement, carries out a suspension of the world or affects the visible with a disturbance, which, far from making thought visible, as Eisenstein wanted, are on the contrary directed to what does not let itself be thought, and equally to what does not let itself be seen in vision. This is perhaps not ‘crime’, as be believes, but simply the power of the false. (*Cinema 2* 168)

Deleuze then claims that:

If Artaud is a forerunner, from a specifically cinematographic perspective, it is because he points to ‘real psychic situations between which trapped thought looks for a subtle way out’, purely visual

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55 This affective ‘shock to thought’ of Kant’s sublime and Artaud’s cruelty is synonymous with Deleuze’s power of the false that I discussed in Chapter 3.
situations whose drama would flow from a knock made for the eyes, drawn out, if we may put it this way, in the very substance of the gaze. (qtd. in Cinema 2 169; Artaud 22, 76)

The pure optical and sound situation’s power of the false is its capacity to take both the character and the spectator beyond the sensory-motor schema, and to open the image up to that which lies outside sensory-motor perceptions.

In Deleuze’s “Crystals of Time,” it is clear that the conflation between real and spectacle is created through the dramatization of the real or the banal. The pure optical and sound situations are byproducts of the crystal-image or the time-image’s crystalline description:

The crystal-image, or crystalline description, has two definite sides which are not to be confused. For the confusion of the real and the imaginary is a simple error of fact, and does not affect their discernibility: the confusion is produced solely ‘in someone’s head’. But indiscernibility constitutes an objective illusion; it does not suppress the distinction between the two sides, but makes it unattributable, each side taking the other’s role in a relation which we must describe as reciprocal presupposition, or reversibility.
(Deleuze, Cinema 2 69)

It is evident here that the power of the false is the capacity to step out of one’s subjective illusion of time: an illusion that Deleuze associates with classical realism’s action-image cinema or the sensory-motor schema. There is also the illusion of the virtual where a recollection-image or flashback is not what Bergson calls a ‘pure recollection’ because a flashback is actualized as a psychological state of (time) within a character (Deleuze, Cinema 2 79). With pure recollection, Deleuze argues that the crystal or time-image allows
the spectator to see time in a pure state. In fact, he maintains that modern cinema exhibits Artaudian cruelty through the dramatization of the real:

In short, it is the whole of the real, life in its entirety, which has become spectacle, in accordance with the demands of a pure optical and sound perception. The scene, then, is not restricted to providing a sequence but becomes the cinematographic unity which replaces the shot or itself constitutes a sequence shot. It is a properly cinematographic theatricality, the ‘excess of theatricality’ that Bazin spoke of, and that only cinema can give to theatre. (Deleuze, *Cinema 2* 84)

Deleuze’s reference to Bazin in “Crystals of Time” leads him to investigate the importance of depth of field, especially with regard to the cinema of Orson Welles. However, the use of depth is not the essence of the conflation between the real and the spectacle. It is the conflation of real and spectacle that crystallizes time in its pure state. For example, Deleuze states that:

In a famous sequence in *Citizen Kane* [Orson Welles, 1941], the little glass ball breaks apart when it falls from the hands of the dying man, but the snow that it contained seems to come towards us in gusts to impregnate the environment [*milieux*] that we will discover. We do not know in advance if the virtual seed (‘Rosebud’) will be actualized, because we do not know in advance if the actual environment enjoys the corresponding virtuality. (*Cinema 2* 74)

The term impregnate is significant here because it implies a future moment that has not yet been actualized. It is my understanding that the snow in this opening moment of *Citizen Kane* is an any-space-whatever that links this moment to the innocence of Kane’s (Orson Welles) childhood when young
Kane is revealed—in the depth of the background in a later shot in the film—playing in the snow with his sled. It is also my sense that the pure optical and sound situation of the opening scene crystallizes Kane’s life and death since his life’s accomplishments are shown in flashback. There is no meaning in the final revelation that ‘Rosebud’ is a sled. There is only the crystallized affect of the actual and virtual: the images of Kane’s life and his desire for accomplishment that immerses both character and spectator.

My interest in the crystal-image is the spectator’s immersion into a characterization where “the character is no more than one virtuality among others” (Deleuze, Cinema 2 70). In his lectures, Deleuze explains that although Travis Bickle (Robert De Niro) of Taxi Driver is in a sensory-motor situation in relation to the streets in which he navigates the taxi, he claims that Bickle is in a pure optical and sound situation in relation to what happens in the streets around him. For Deleuze, the pure optical and sound situation encompasses the intolerable things that he witnesses—for example, a homeless child sifting through a garbage can—because it stirs the soul. He explains that the pure optical and sound situation cuts the relation between perception and action. The implication here is that the perception becomes an affect. As a result, Deleuze argues that we, the spectator, find ourselves in Bickle’s delirium:

The pure optical [and sound] situation where the perception-action [or perception-movement] link seems cut off, interrupted, allows for the birth of a delirium, a racist delirium, a delirium so pervasive in the brain of a taxi driver—that we cannot understand independently of this delirium—that pure optical and sound situations form concretions of fantasy, delirium, and dreams.56

The point is that in a pure optical and sound situation the perception of reality becomes an affect and this crystallization forms a conflation between the real (perception of the actual) and the spectacle. The delirium is pure affect. Furthermore, in the Cinema books, Deleuze explains how actual and virtual violence coalesce in Taxi Driver:

In Scorsese’s Taxi Driver, the driver wavers between killing himself and committing a political murder and, replacing these projects by the final slaughter, is astonished by it himself, as if the carrying out concerned him no more than did the preceding whims. The actuality of the action-image, the virtuality of the affection-image can interchange, all the more easily for having fallen into the same indifference. (Cinema 1 207)

Like the any-space-whatever of snow in Citizen Kane, the streets of Bickle’s New York in Taxi Driver crystallize the disdain that flows through Bickle, up until the final massacre.

Similarly, in American Psycho, Fight Club, and The Matrix, the characters find themselves sauntering in a violent world: an absurd world where ‘it’s not blood, it’s red’ becomes the affective tone of violence that bleeds into their pure optical and sound situations. In American Psycho, the ‘feed me a stray cat’ sequence is a pure optical and sound situation where Patrick’s violence forms a cliché of the action-image. The actions within this sequence are in large part sensory-motor. Patrick goes to an ATM to take out money. He sees and picks up a stray cat from the ground, and the ATM displays the phrase: ‘Feed me a stray cat.’ He attempts to shove the cat into the card slot, an old woman stops him, and he shoots her. Sirens sound as a police car appears in the background. Patrick runs aimlessly around the corner and touches many cars to sound their alarms and distract the police.
The police corner him and ask him to drop his weapon. Patrick kills the policemen and shoots at their cars until they explode in slow-motion. Patrick looks up at the flames and at his gun in disbelief. On a killing spree, he continues to run through a few buildings. He ends up hiding from a police helicopter in an office building where he calls his lawyer and confesses to all his murders.

This scene is a pure optical and sound situation because the frantic soundtrack exhibit Patrick’s anxiety, and the green color of the street lights equally express the monstrosity that is visible on his face in the bar scene. The opening bar scene is a window into Patrick’s violence. After he calls the barmaid a ‘bitch,’ he is framed in the reflection of the bar mirror and states: “I want to stab you to death and play around with your blood.” The unactualized violence in this initial moment is actualized in the delirium of the ‘feed me a stray cat’ sequence along with many of the other actualizations of violence in the film. At the same time, however, these actual moments of violence are effaced when Patrick’s secretary reveals many drawings of his violent fantasies. At the end of the film, it does not matter that the violence was not actualized in American Psycho—like it does not matter that ‘Rosebud’ is a sled in Citizen Kane. What is important is the spectacle of Patrick’s anxiety. This anxiety is visible on the many close-ups of his tortured face: either following the revelation of a perfect business card, or in the meaningless confession of his violent desires following the ‘feed me a stray cat’ sequence.

Deleuze claims that “[t]he crystal is expression. Expression moves from the mirror to the seed” (Cinema 2 74). In the violence of American Psycho, like the violence of Fight Club, there is a conflation between what the spectator experiences as actual representations of violence and the spectacle of absurd moments of violence. In both films, ‘actual’ moments of violence express the seed or the crystallization between the actual and the virtual: the so-called act of violence and the expression it carries throughout
the film. In *Fight Club*, it is not enough to say that the Narrator literally fights with himself throughout the film. Before the Narrator and spectator realize that the Narrator is Tyler, there is a pure optical and sound situation that seems actual, yet it has many virtual connotations that transform its actuality. When the Narrator beats himself up in front of his boss in order to gain a severance package, the action—the beating up of himself—is in essence a sensory-motor reaction to his own punches.

At another level, however, the pure optical and sound situation creates a seed that crystallizes this moment with all the other instances of violence in the film. Mid-punch, the action is frozen. During the freeze-frame, the Narrator says, “for some reason, I thought of my first fight with Tyler.” This is not only the revelation of a clue that the Narrator is Tyler, it is also about his desire to stand up to authority and ‘to be a man.’ The soundtrack in this scene—besides the palpable punctuations of violence—has the same circadian rhythms that are obvious in the fight scene when Tyler first punches the Narrator.

The seed of violence in *Fight Club* is about the Narrator’s desire to find himself. He finds this passion in violence. However, his violence includes his anxiety and fear of intimacy, of Marla. In fact, many of the fight scenes have an affect of intimacy or a tactile action-image affect—of contact and blood—that is not there in the computer generated images of the sex scene with Marla. The sex scene—where it seems as though the Narrator is dreaming about Tyler having sex with Marla—has a dream-like affect. The various cuts to images of Marla’s naked body rhythmically blur with the overlapping sounds of her moans. Although the Narrator’s self-beatings have a real action-image affect, a sensory-motor situation of action, the rhythmic tones that overlay this action—like the rhythmic fantasy that qualifies the power of Marla’s body—creates pure optical and sound situations that affectively blur real and fantasy. Ultimately, the Narrator’s disease, his ‘it’s
not blood, it’s tar,’ is the incessant fear of himself (his inner Tyler) as well as his fear of intimacy.

In *The Matrix*, the beauty of violence or the crystallization of actual violence and virtual violence is found in many pure optical and sound situations throughout the film’s manipulation of what is real and what is spectacle. At one level, the film is an action-narrative where Neo must save humanity from the machine world. At another more affective level, Neo and the spectator find themselves in pure optical and sound situations of violence. When Neo is first immersed into the real world, he and the spectator are in a pure optical and sound situation. In a scene reminiscent of the cracked snow globe in *Citizen Kane*, Neo looks at his splintered self in a cracked mirror. Morpheus’ team prepares him for a journey into the real world by extracting him from the fake reality of the matrix. After taking a red pill, Neo sits nervously in a chair and notices the cracks in the mirror next to him. Suddenly, the cracks amalgamate and the image of Neo in the mirror is no longer splintered. He then approaches the mirror and touches it in close-up. The mirror liquefies, ripples, and sticks to Neo’s fingers. Morpheus likens the matrix to a dream as their reflections ripple in the mirror-image. The mirror crawls up Neo’s arm and engulfs him. In the pure optical and sound situation that follows, Neo is swallowed into the mirror. The sound-image of Neo screaming turns into a modem dial-tone. The digital camera movement that accompanies this sound entails a falling motion as the liquefied mirror glides down Neo’s throat in a mixing of mucous membrane and moving mirrors. This pure optical and sound situation immerses the spectator into the affect of *The Matrix* on a journey where ‘there is no blood.’ The mirror, ‘the matrix,’ becomes a character in *The Matrix* where the camera-consciousness takes the spectator on a journey where the action-image is often sped up and slowed down.

Like the snow that seems to flow towards us in *Citizen Kane*, the liquefied mirror—that we seemingly fall into in *The Matrix*—impregnates
the image and creates a crystal-image: a virtual seed of ‘the matrix.’ The green matrices that fall along the computer screens and the film screen throughout the film blend the actual and virtual to create pure optical and sound situations. The falling codes and the environment’s emphasis on shiny mirror-like surfaces—from patent leather to the wet shine of rain drops—all point to the final fight scene’s affect of ‘there is no blood.’ The beauty of the spectacles of violence in The Matrix have the affect of exhilaration that goes with the film’s inconsequential video-game like violence where bullets fall like rain drops. At the end of the film, when Neo is revived by a kiss from Trinity, he is literally able to stop bullets mid-flight and make them fall to the ground. The narrative realism and its affective spectacle transform the action-image into a pure optical and sound situation where the perception of violence becomes virtual and affective. The film environment and its violence actualizes a virtual violence, a violence that is not real but aesthetic.

The central implication of my analysis of the pure optical and sound situations in these case studies is that the definition of what violence is, of what it represents, goes beyond the act of violence or the movement of action. As Deleuze states in his introduction to Cinema 2, it is not enough to say that the pure optical and sound situation simply disturbs the action-thought through the use of either fixed shots or montage cuts; the pure optical and sound situation has three important attributes. Firstly, “movement is the perspective of time” (Deleuze, Cinema 2 22). In other words, the camera navigates the film world in a way that takes subjectivity away from the character, away from the sensory-motor action, to open the image beyond its narrative moment. Secondly, I have used the term ‘foreshadow’ in this analysis in order to highlight how the pure optical and sound situation is at once within the actuality of the narrative while it also forebodes a virtual moment. Deleuze claims that:
the eye takes up a clairvoyant function, the sound as well as visual elements of the image enter into internal relations which means that the whole image has to be ‘read’, no less than seen, readable as well as visible. For the eye of the seer as the soothsayer, it is the ‘literalness’ of the perceptible world which constitutes it like a book. (Cinema 2 22)

Thirdly, Deleuze states that the pure optical and sound situation creates a tactile image because it opens the image outside itself to create “a camera-consciousness which would no longer be defined by the movements it is able to follow or make, but by the mental connections it is able to enter into” (Cinema 2 23). From the any-space-whatevers of color—the affects of ‘it’s not blood, it’s red’—to the pure optical and sound situations of violence in American Psycho, Fight Club, and The Matrix, I have demonstrated the conflation of ‘real’ action-image violence with its virtual force of affect. As a result, it is evident that spectacles of excess go beyond narrative meaning in their affect on the senses. An affective engagement with cinema has the capacity to exceed the film text. In a Deleuzian framework, the aesthetic of the beautiful has the capacity to outstrip our sensory-motor perceptions to create an engagement with the power of affect that is both real and imaginary.

Conclusion

Throughout this chapter, and throughout this thesis as a whole, my analysis has focused on the films in order to engage with the affect of screen violence. I have used Deleuze’s concept of affect from the Cinema books in order to bring out his implicit notion of an affective spectator. However, I have not meant to suggest that this affective spectator is an ideal spectator.
New Hollywood’s affective spectator is at once absorbed into classical cinema’s ideological norms of realism, and immersed into time-image spectacles of affect. Deleuze’s implicit use of Kantian beauty—through his discussion of Artaud’s cruelty—is a confrontation with the cinema’s departure from action-image realism and its implied rational image of thought. Consequently, Deleuze’s time-image emphasizes the indiscernibility between real and spectacle. This point is crucial to his ontology of transcendental empiricism because, in a Deleuzian framework, the capacity to provoke thought and to shock common knowledge stems from affect which lies outside the idea of rational thought.

The concept of the beautiful is an engagement with the aesthetic event. As Melissa McMahon argues in “Machinic Repetition in the Age of Art”:

> The complicity of a mechanistic paradigm and the concept of creation is expressed well by Deleuze in his *Cinema* books, and in a way that aligns itself with the dynamic of Kant’s beauty. Deleuze, following Bergson, traces the genesis of modernity to the analysis of movement into equidistant points. This flattening of movement means that a moving body can be intercepted at ‘any-moment-whatever’ in order to yield information, as opposed to the ancient synthesis of movement into privileged moments (Origin, Telos, Apex, etc.).

In the transition from a sublime conception of classical cinema to a modern concept of the beautiful, I have shown that the shift from classical cinema’s any-space-whatevers—black, white, and grey—to modern cinema’s any-space-whatever of color cinema implies a change in spectatorship and a focus on pure optical and sound situations. With modern cinema’s time-image, Deleuze claims that modern cinema’s break from a synthesis of movement—from perception, action, impulse, affection—that forces the

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57 McMahon refers the reader to Deleuze, *Cinema 1* 3-8. Deleuze also relates Bergson’s three theses on movement to Kant on pages 82-83 of *Cinema 2.*
spectator to confront the aberration of movement in the gap between thoughts: the unthought.

Furthermore, McMahon states that:

The beautiful obliges us to think (its singularity poses a problem), without there being any concept for thought to settle on. . . . The event of the beautiful marks a beginning rather than an end-point, without the pretention of being an Origin, as it happens just any time. The principle of the ‘any-moment-whatever’ enfolds both an indifference and an obligation to differentiate, an impersonality and total individuality. (7)

It is evident in the Cinema books that Deleuze investigates the singularity of affect—the capacity to affect and be affected by the cinema—as a means of illuminating the problem of rational thought. At the same time, he examines how modern cinema’s experimentations with montage transformed movement and created new experiences, new implications of being in the world that involved a becoming or a transformation toward affective (virtual) subjectivities. In Cinema 2: The Time-Image, when Deleuze emphasizes Bergson’s interstice—the irrational cut or the ‘in between’ of images—he claims that “[t]he problem of the relation between images is no longer of knowing if it works or it does not work [si ça va ou si ça va pas], according to the requirements of the harmonics or of the resolved tunings, but of knowing How it’s going [Comment ça va]” (Cinema 2 183). Asking how New Hollywood’s aesthetic of violence affects the spectator is therefore a means of asking how its camera-consciousness disrupts an idea of what violence represents through an aesthetic and technological exploration of the new. A new aesthetic concept of violence is therefore created in this coalescence between the known and the unknown.
Deleuze attributes the absorbent affect of modern cinema’s any-space-whatever of color and the time-image’s pure optical and sound situations to the crisis of the action-image and the innovation of modern, New Wave cinemas. He gives many examples of the ways in which Italian neo-realism, the French New Wave, New German cinema, and what he calls ‘The New York school’ broke away from classical cinema (Deleuze, *Cinema 1* 121). In his first example of the any-space-whatever, Deleuze cites Béla Balázs’ discussion about the rain in the films of Jorge Iven. Balázs claims that this cinematic rain creates “visual impressions [that] are not unified by spatial or temporal representations” (qtd. in Deleuze, *Cinema 1* 110). For Deleuze, this any-space-whatever is “rain as affect, and nothing is more opposed to an abstract general idea, although it is not actualised in an individual state of things” (*Cinema 1*, 110-111). It is clear that the affective experience of rain, in its cinematic materiality, becomes a concrete ‘feeling’ of rain. Similarly, ‘it’s not blood, it’s red’ in *American Psycho*, *Fight Club*, and *The Matrix* does not present violence in its realistic state but presents it as a singular state of affect.

Deleuze indirectly defines the loss of the real, the loss of the sensory-motor schema in terms of modern cinema’s ability to create a spectacle of the real through the use of pure optical and sound situations. When I use the term loss, I do not mean to suggest that the sensory-motor schema does not exist in New Hollywood cinema. On the contrary, I want to emphasize how the breakdown of the action-image—the crisis of classical schemas of action-thought—results in a blurring of classical action-image realism and spectacle of modern time-image cinema. The implication here is that New

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59 Deleuze claims that, for example, Jean-Luc Godard’s *Les carabiniers* (1963) presents categories of war and its feelings. He also claims that an any-space-whatever of color, such as ‘it’s not blood, it’s red,’ equally creates categories or reflective genres, see Deleuze, *Cinema 2* 182-87.
Hollywood cinema is neither classical, nor modern: it negotiates the action-image’s idea or representation of power through time-image affect.

The affect of the beautiful relies on a disinterest in classical cinema’s real conditions of vision, yet the real remains a frame of reference for the time-image’s aberration of movement. In essence, Deleuze’s engagement with the time-image is an exploration of modern cinema’s stylistic innovations that transformed the classical realist style of filmmaking. With modern cinema, and by extension New Hollywood or what Deleuze calls ‘the post-new wave’ (Cinema 2 195), Deleuze claims that there is the potential for the production of ‘new’ concepts (Cinema 2 180).

Based on my case studies, I have argued that the films’ any-space-whatevers, as well as the pure optical and sound situations, renegotiate action-image realism. The implication of the time-image’s beauty, as it is explored through Artaud’s concept of cruelty, is the loss of a representational idea of violence and its metaphorical meaning. With the loss of this sensory-motor schema, of narrative causal action, Deleuze’s argues that the time-image unveils “the real object-subject of cinema” that is the confrontation with “‘the inpower [impouvoir] of thought’” (Cinema 2 168). The result, according to Deleuze’s explication of Artaud’s cruelty, is a cinema of pure optical and sound situations where “believing is no longer believing in another world, or in a transformed world. It is only, it is simply believing in the body. It is giving discourse to the body, and, for this purpose, reaching the body before discourses, before words, before things are named” (Cinema 2 174-75). My film analysis has suggested that this ‘before’ of discourse is an engagement with the formation of the violent film spectacle. I have only tangentially discussed how New Hollywood cinema’s pure optical and sound situations are, in large part, created through the use of new digital technologies since it is beyond the scope of this chapter to discuss these innovations.
My emphasis on New Hollywood’s any-space-whatever of color and its pure optical and sound situations suggest that screen violence is more than its representations and more than its affects when violence becomes a melding of actualities and virtual affects. New Hollywood’s spectacles of violence are associated with the loss of a historical referent. When the idea of a historical referent is rendered meaningless, then an engagement with cinematic affect gives us “reasons to believe in this world” (Deleuze, Cinema 2 172). Ultimately, Deleuze’s time-image is an engagement with an image of thought that breaks the hierarchical relations between the mind and the body. This belief, belief before discourses, allows cinema studies to open the image beyond the representation of violence.
Conclusion

“The price to be paid, in cinema as elsewhere, was always a confrontation with madness” (Deleuze, *Cinema 2* 201).

**Final Thoughts on Deleuze, Affect, and New Hollywood Violence**

This thesis began with the desire to rethink film violence, yet it ends with the realization that it is more important to ‘un-think’ violence. A Deleuzian inspired framework for affect is essentially an engagement with the unthinkable or the affect behind and beyond thought. I hope to have provided a constructive and rigorous engagement with Deleuzian affect and New Hollywood violence: one that ‘un-thinks’ violence as it has been explored thus far.

In Chapter 1, I suggested that the study of New Hollywood violence is important precisely because of its capacity for affect. Many critics dismiss Hollywood cinema merely as a part of popular culture. One of Jameson’s central claims about postmodern culture is that image culture cannot be political because it is imbricaded with the cultural logic of late capitalism or the utopia of consumer capitalism. At stake, for Jameson, is the reality of class consciousness and the underlying exploitative nature of late capitalism. The purpose of this thesis has been to rescue New Hollywood from this dismissal of ‘meaning’ and its so-called loss of affect. I have therefore created a counterpoint between narrative representational meaning and the production of aesthetic affect. However, does my affective framework imply that New Hollywood violence has the capacity to be political?

The short answer to this question is yes, yet a more pensive answer would need to address the interplay between the deterritorialization of affect,
by the time-image, and its reterritorialization by Hollywood cinema. Before discussing the deterritorializing affect of the time-image, which I explore in Chapters 3 and 5, I want to address the deterritorialization of the affection-image, face, and close-up that concerns Chapter 4.

First and foremost, Deleuze claims that “[i]f it is true that the cinematic image is always deterritorialised, there is therefore a very special deterritorialisation which is specific to the affection-image” (Cinema 1 96). He explains that, for Eisenstein, the close-up is deterritorialised from its spatio-temporal coordinates (of a place, moment or thing) when it captures what Eisenstein calls the ‘pathetic’ and what Deleuze emphasizes as “the ecstasy or the affect” as entity (Cinema 1 96). As I explained in Chapter 5, Deleuze’s view of classical cinema follows Eisenstein’s dialectical relation between cinema and thought where the organic (intelligence and thought) enters into a dialectical relation with the pathetic (emotional intelligence) to create the dramatic or the sensory-motor relation between the character and the film world, the spectator and the screen (Cinema 2 159). For Deleuze and Eisenstein, the close-up expresses the affect as entity when it goes beyond qualifying a state of things to expressing the power that passes from one quality to another. As previously mentioned, Deleuze calls this an ‘affective fusion’ (Cinema 2 160) where “the shock wave or the nervous vibration” creates “the cinematographic I THINK” when “we can no longer say ‘I see, I hear’, but I FEEL” (Cinema 2 158). Here, Deleuze implies that an engagement with affect is essentially sensorial in nature.60

I am not suggesting that Deleuze is a dialectician, which is one of Žižek’s main claims in Organs without Bodies. What Deleuze’s arguments suggest, and what my own arguments suggest as well, is that the close-up’s emotional affect is reterritorialized into a dialectic of the sublime. He claims

that “in the sublime there is a sensory-motor unity of nature and man, which means that nature must be named the non-indifferent” (Cinema 2 162).

What does this mean for my case studies? In line with Deleuze’s arguments, it means that the cinema’s representation of violence tends towards metaphor when the face or close-up “brings the unconscious mechanism of thought to consciousness” (Cinema 2 160-61). In Chapter 3, I showed that a representational idea of violence associates violence with naturalistic, animalistic depictions of evil, as in the impulse-image. In Chapter 4, I examined the idea of violence as an image of white masculine power and its aberrance by focusing on: Tom’s double persona as a protective father figure and an aberrant gangster in A History of Violence; Lenny and Mace’s struggle against corrupt police officials in Strange Days; and Aileen’s otherness and her reaction to systemic violence in Monster. In Chapter 5, I focused on the way in which the affect of color and the time-image’s pure optical and sound situations create psychic states of violence, rather than an idea of bloodletting or an empty spectacle. The point is that there is a distinction to be made between an idea of violence and its power. As Deleuze claims, the affection-image may always be deterritorialized from a state of things. Yet, as my arguments suggest, affection is equally reterritorialized into this state of things since an idea of violence and its capacity for affect are two sides of the same coin. The ‘expressed’ in a face or close-up is reterritorialized into action-image cinema because it delineates a social role or the departure from social roles, such as the desire to refuse society that is explored in Pisters’ “Cinema’s Politics of Violence” in The Matrix of Visual Culture.

However, it is not my intention to create a binary opposition between morality and ethics, masculine power and otherness, the sublime and the beautiful. The distinction to be drawn between the reterritorialization of the affection-image and its deterritorialization—expressed in the desire to refuse society—is that the emotion of the affection-image remains in the realm of
the socially constructed, organic relation between the character and the film world, the spectator and the socio-cultural, while the time-image has the capacity to break free of the ego or the individuated.

The capacity for affect grasps the power of affect before discourses, before moral duty, before patriarchal notions of masculine power, and before sublime conceptions of transcendence. The ethics of the characterization of violence is about the desire to refuse society as a matter of joy or sadness. Joy and sadness are the events that shape action-image violence. The ‘expressed’ of affect in close-up examines the drives of love or hate that contextualize action-image violence without actualizing it. For example, when Deleuze examines *The Passion of Joan of Arc* (Carl Theodor Dreyer, 1927), he states:

> Active causes are determined in the state of things: but the event itself, the affective, the effect, goes beyond its own causes, and only refers to other effects, whilst the causes for their part fall aside. It is the anger of the bishop and the martyrdom of Joan; but, all that will be preserved from the roles and situations will be what is needed for the affect to be extracted and to carry out its conjunctions – this ‘power’ of anger or of ruse, this ‘quality’ of victim or of martyrdom. (*Cinema 1* 106)

The impulse-image in Chapter 3, the affection-image in Chapter 4, and the sublime in Chapter 5 describe an idea of violence as judgment, as evil. However, with the time-image—the characterization in Chapter 3 and the beautiful in Chapter 5—affect breaks out of the circuit of perception, affection, impulse, and affection. As Deleuze stresses throughout the *Cinema* books, “the erasure of the unity of man and the world . . . leaves us with only a belief in this world” (*Cinema 2* 188).

In Chapter 2, I claimed that the concept of an affective spectatorship allows for an engagement with the intermediality among images of violence.
I have only tangentially referenced the intermedial affect of images when I discussed the final shots of newsworthy violence in *Natural Born Killers* and the references to actual acts of racially motivated violence in *Strange Days*. A further exploration of Deleuzian affect, spectatorship, and intermediality could help illuminate the beliefs that spur ideas of violence. The aim here would be to understand how an image of violence has a representational affect that resides in discourse and a time-image affect that understands the power of the image beyond discourses. Although it is not a Deleuzian study, Tanya Horeck’s “From Documentary to Drama: Capturing Aileen Wuornos” examines how the tie-ins between Nick Broomfield’s documentaries, *Aileen: Life and Death of a Serial Killer* and *Aileen: The Selling of a Serial Killer*, and *Monster* asks spectators to evaluate the Aileen Wuornos story as documentary and drama at once. Horeck emphasizes the demonization of Wuornos in the documentaries and the humanization of Wuornos in *Monster*. Horeck’s study is important because of its examination of the discourse on Wuornos. In my examination of *Monster*, I have illuminated how the humanization of Wuornos is based on the use of the affection-image, which focuses on her marginalization in society and emphasizes her pain. My emphasis on pain and sadness, love and hate, and beauty is meant to underscore our imbrication in violence on and off screen, real and imaginary.

Returning to my earlier question, does my affective framework imply that New Hollywood violence has the capacity to be political? New Hollywood cinema is political because it has the capacity to question older forms of judgment and morality through affect. This does not mean that New Hollywood cinema always rises to this occasion, yet I have demonstrated that my case studies complicate our understanding of what violence represents by illuminating how it functions. If researchers continue to find ways to engage with the inner workings of images, and better still their intermedial affect, then violence will increasingly be viewed in terms of the desires that form judgments. The epigraph for this conclusion suggests that
the cinema’s confrontation with thought, its consciousness of thought is a confrontation with madness. Unthinking violence is essentially a confrontation with the madness of thought.


Monaco, James. *American Film Now: The People, the Power, the Money, the Movies*. New York: Plume, 1979.


Filmography


*Citizen Kane*. Dir. Orson Welles. RKO, 1941.


The Sun Also Rises. Dir. Henry King. Fox, 1957.


