INTRODUCTION: Mediating affect

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This Special Issue brings together seven affective mediations on the theme of mediating affect. The articles were presented in an earlier form at the inaugural Affect Theory Conference, held in Millersville (USA) in October 2015. Responding to a Call for Papers, authors were invited to take on the question of 'media' and 'mediation' in the context of the blossoming field of affect studies. Each article in turn tackles a particular trajectory of concern examined as a multiplicity—the philosophy/study of living and feeling, fear and the amplification of affect, trauma and absence, detention and compassion, memorialization and shōjo (少女) (the girl trope in postwar Japanese cinema), whiteness and the good life. The theoretical, disciplinary and cultural lineages are many. Developed together within the context of the project of cultural studies, the resulting Special Issue provides an opportunity to consider more deeply how 'media-world assemblages' (Murphie 2017) give rise to certain political and ethical questions. In this Issue, we encounter six different media-world formations and learn how they shift as they pulsate with affective relations. As well as introducing these relations, this Introduction canvases some of the conceptual work that has gone into 'mediating affect', addressing the context that underpins this bringing together of terms and seeking out ways of provoking further research.

Key words: cultural studies, affect, media, medium, mediation, feeling

'[F]ields of relation agitate to emerge into … collectivities' (Manning in Massumi and Manning 2015, p. 149).

Since we always wrote about what moved us, about what mattered, we always were mediating affect. In our speaking and writing we tried to fathom the quality of experience that was mediated to us. And we joined one another to deepen and widen this enquiry into the mediation of affect as something that cultural studies *does*—a doing that was at once doubled, knowingly and unknowing prohibited and expanded upon by the very concept we had of it. This Introduction hence approaches *mediating affect* as both an *object* of cultural studies enquiry and a necessary *site* of its intervention. For concepts themselves and the cultural studies' theories that curate them 'shimmer' with affective content (Seigworth and

Gregg 2010). We write and think with the field of affective relations carried by the relation between what has been said and what hasn't, maneuvering within the historical present of the study of 'what it feels like to be alive' (Grossberg 2010b, p. 310, discussing Hoggart and Williams). We have written and continue to write in *affective voices* (Gregg 2008) that betray our hope 'against hope'—a structure of feeling that comes from beyond what we do as academics (Grossberg 2010b). We write and think in the belief that 'the world did not have to be this way' (p. 331). We write from an *in-between* that is our own becoming.

The becoming of our work is indebted to the mediation of affect, as the 'space between the virtual and the actual, of becoming actual' (Grossberg 2010a, p. 191). If concepts could not vibrate with intensities, we could not be moved to think: we could not inscribe 'thinking' in thought; we could not learn from the past, or leave behind conditions of possibility. Time would stand still in our writing, which would be inert and lack politics. Cultural studies is a becoming actual of this affective movement *in* and *between* concepts and politics. We mediate the concept and politics of affect in our practices of reading, in our debate and discussion, as well as in our silence and hesitation—in our being stumped as much as in our exhilaration. To start with affective relations is to start in the middle: we are still starting in the middle of the culture industry, of feminist consciousness raising, of the Civil Rights movement and the birth of environmentalism. Cultural studies grapples not only with the philosophy of affect, but with the social movements that have politicized the mediation of affect with their critical and lived concepts of agency and resistance, power and insubordination—concepts that are themselves full of agitation, urgency, bold aspiration, and the social value of our connection to one another (our *belonging*).

This Special Issue began life as a Call for Papers for the inaugural *Affect Theory Conference* held in Millersville (USA) in 2015. Interest in the Conference Stream 'Media |

Mediation | Affect' reflected the incredible diversity of work being undertaken on, in and through media-tion. The Issue has since found *mediating affect* as a transversal object of inquiry situated in the midst of cultural, media and affect studies, but drawing from the study of film, trauma, patriotism/nationalism, colonialism, Indigenous sovereignty, liberalism, subjectivity, and catastrophe. In the spirit of affect studies, the articles that comprise the Issue each participate in the matter of their discussion: affective mediation. Each conveys a different life, a different intensity, a different feeling; each has been written through its own singular course of 'study' (Moten and Harney 2013, cited in Murphie this issue), addressing 'felt questions, lived questions, questions in the midst of change' (Murphie this issue). Each comes with a biographical and a disciplinary bent: we are (the authors) located in the arts, art and design, media and communications, literary and cultural studies. While engaging with the cultural and political debates of our time (including as they are framed by disciplinary and other contexts of power/knowledge) our work aspires to something more-than (and less-than) interdisciplinary communication, precisely because disciplinary knowledge is institutionalized knowledge and as such imposes limits on our description of the 'becoming-environmental of power' (Murphie this issue; also Cefai 2015).

The affective premise of mediation

While affect enjoys growing discursive attention (Seigworth and Gregg 2010), several authors working in the context of media studies claim that *mediation* is undertheorized (Grusin 2015, Guillory 2010, Kember and Zylinska 2012) and have subsequently focused on expanding the possibilities of the term. In his *Cultural Studies in the Future Tense* (2010a), Lawrence Grossberg specifically aligns the theorization of mediation with the cultural studies project of analyzing the complexity of 'affective apparatuses and mediations' (p. 198). By working with an affective concept of mediation, cultural studies has become equipped with

the critical capacity to analyze, comprehend, dance with and disturb 'reality itself' (p. 189).

Rethinking culture in terms of affective mediation is a project shared by other traditions, notably cultural anthropology. Culture, explained Kathleen Stewart (1996), is not 'a "thing" that is not self-identical with itself but given to digression, deflection, displacement, deferral, and difference' (p. 5). The study of culture as emergent, 'in between', is all the more pressing given the refusal to disinherit 'the Euro-modern logic of mediation' (p. 187) in much of what passes for media studies today. This Kantian logic 'reproduces a metaphysical gap in the very heart of epistemology' (p. 186). As feminist philosophers earlier noted (Grosz 1994), representational thinking has meant that in many 'philosophical accounts we cannot experience the world directly or immediately because we cannot know the world without some form of mediation' (Grusin 2015, p. 128). That is, the 'contradiction between the immediate and the mediate that the euro-modern logic of mediation constructs' (Grossberg 2010a, p. 191) challenges us to retheorize media in light of the corporeality of representation.

We encounter the problem of disembodiment/dispassionate investigation/defensive thinking in the use of the term 'media' as a 'stable concept' (Grossberg 2010a, p. 206). The scope for developing an alternative concept of media, 'both as category and object' (Grossberg 2010a, p. 212), must contend with the economic and political conditions of the field. Between 1996-2009, the number of UK universities offering degrees in media studies tripled from 37 to 111 (Higher Education Policy Institute, cited in *The Guardian* 2012). The rapid growth of media studies belongs to a broader shift to the creative and cultural industries (Hesmondhalgh 2012, McRobbie 2016). As a staple of the UK economy, the new cultural industries are intensifying the ties between the field of media, its fee-paying students, and its corporate (industry) and policy (government) interests. These interests, which render the field viable but construct its limits, task us pedagogically—we must find ways of subverting 'the contemporary media-driven cult of the entrepreneur' (Hardt and Negri 2017, p. 142) without

undermining our students. Our pedagogies must address 'the global culture industry' as precisely 'the space of the real' (Lash and Lury 2007, p. 11). This is no easy task given the university's embrace of an entrepreneurial attitude (to research, as much as study). Although the conceptual shortcomings of the term 'media' appear overshadowed by the material and ideological challenges at play in this context, it is precisely these voluminous affective charges that are brought to bear on but productive of media studies that render a more processual notion of media as 'mediation' relevant.

This challenge is being addressed by the multiplicity of ways in which we can think of media as mediating affect. The social value of media is linked to the capacity of specific media as vectors of affect: we can note accounts of media as an affective currency (Gibbs 2002, Kavka 2008), as bodily prosthesis (Kember and Zylinksa 2012), and the folded matter of body and machine (Munster 2006). We therefore need academic scholarship that offers a nuanced account of how specific affective and discursive formations take form via specific media 'practices' (Couldry 2012), while cautioning against the ease by which the term 'media' connotes a set of unifying propositions. We need to think more about how the theorization of mediation entails the repositioning, reimagining and redeploying the media concept. In this regard, John Guillroy (2010) claims that 'changes in the modes of social mediation can be inferred from the operation of technical media and that reflection on this fact has deepened the theory of mediation and of society' (p. 354). Yet we also need to distinguish between the overall utility of the term 'mediation' for talking about 'media' from the assumption that media are the primary objects of mediation. Mediation belongs to 'reality itself' (Grossberg 2010a, p. 189)—not to 'media' or 'culture'. It is from within broader process of mediation or 'trajectories of effectivity (the way reality constructs and expresses itself)' (p. 189), that media are distinguished by their processes of distanciation (Thompson 1995): media are 'not the default substitute for an absent object' but an 'interpolated

distance', 'means and ends in themselves' without originary 'social necessity' (Guillroy 2010, p. 357). As we 'move into relations with media that quite literally move us/the world and with which we can move the world', our theorization of 'all the world as medium' requires a 'more complex but also humble understanding of "our" media and communications' (Murphie *in press*, n.p.).

In pursuit of the task of rethinking mediation, Richard Grusin (2015) finds inspiration in William James, who writes: 'the relations that connect experiences must themselves be experienced relations, and any kind of relation experienced must be accounted as "real" as anything else in the system' (1922, p. 42, cited in Grusin). In this account, the empirical begins with *relations* and never 'objects or the real in itself' (Grusin 2015, p. 127). This definition includes the lived abstractions that comprise an assemblage within the empiricism of media. Grusin hence calls for *radical* mediation as a way to start 'in the middle' (Deleuze 1992, Deleuze and Guattari 1987), reformulating James thus: 'the mediations that connect experiences must themselves be experienced mediations, and any kind of mediation experienced must be accounted as immediate as anything else in the system' (p. 127). The sense in which Grusin means 'experience' is crucial here. What it feels like to live in the present is 'a historical articulation … how you can move across those relationships, where you can and cannot invest, where you can stop/rest and where you can move and make new connections, what matters and in what ways' (Grossberg 2010a, p. 313).

If, as Grossberg suggests, we need to distinguish between three dimensions of affect—(1) the ontology of immanence or virtuality, (2) the reality of the actual as affective, and, (3) certain modalities of incorporeal effects (p. 194)—then thinking affect necessitates thinking mediation. Indeed, Grossberg describes *mediation* as 'becoming actual' (p. 191), which theorizes affect as 'the locus of the investment within reality itself' (p. 195). In this schema, dimensions (1) and (2) concern 'the virtual and expressive strata', whereas

dimension (3) 'refers to the multiplicity of regimes, logics, or organizations of intensities or passions (*affectus*) which define the affective tonalities and modalities of existence, behavior, and experience'. That is, the third dimension is a 'second articulation of expression'. These expressive regimes (3) are only effective 'within larger articulations': (3) is effective in 'the discursive formations or apparatuses of the culture' (p. 194). These formations are comprised too of nondiscursive elements. In short, there are 'a multiplicity and variety of affective mediations' (p. 198). Affect is a composite concept, riven, multiple and folded. Thinking affect is already a 'concept-cluster' (Seigworth 2016, p. 873). By this account mediation is not 'a secondary concept or category' (Grusin 2015, p. 130) that functions autonomously in 'the discursive formations or apparatuses of the culture' (Grossberg 2010, p. 198). Expression does not enter the scene *after* the emergence of subjects and objects, 'humans and nonhumans, representation and reality, or culture and nature' (Grusin 2015, p. 130). As Erin Manning puts it: 'The point is not that there is no identity – no human, no animal, no plant – but that the species is not where the process begins or ends' (Massumi with Manning 2015, p. 123). There are, rather, 'dimensions' (Grossberg 2010, p. 194) of affect and affectivity expressed temporally as '*a difference in kind'* (Kember and Zylinska 2012, p. 3).

Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari guide us to the multiplicity of concepts in their *What is Philosophy?* (1987), in which they write: 'In any concept there are usually bits or components that come from other concepts … each concept carries out a new cutting-out, takes on new contours' (p. 18). So while affect is already 'mediating-affect' we can make a cut to accentuate the question of *mediation* and what is at stake in its theorization. We can do this keeping in mind the incorporeality of concepts with us in the everyday: 'the abstract *is* lived experience … you can live nothing but the abstract' (Deleuze 1978, cited in Massumi 2011, p. 43). The abstraction of the past lived in the everyday is a prevalent theme for Jennifer Coates' and Sarah Cefai's contributions to this Special Issue; and for all authors,

immediacy is 'always in relation to the past, but it's a direct, unmediated relation to the past as the past is coming back to life in the singularity of a given situation that hasn't yet fully played itself out' (Massumi, in Massumi with Manning 2015, p. 147). Notwithstanding Massumi's own discrepancies with the term, mediation denotes not the ontological separation of 'present' from 'past', but 'a thinking-feeling in the immediacy of what's coming' (Manning discussing Whitehead, in Massumi and Manning 2015, p. 149). This is what I understand to be 'the space between the virtual and the actual, of becoming actual' (Grossberg 2010, p. 191). That is, mediation is not predicated on a Cartesian split, but 'names the immediacy of middleness in which we are already living and moving' (Grusin 2015, p. 129).

Mediating affect is also understood here as a cultural studies concept—a concept-cluster that describes, specifically, what cultural studies does. While all forms of knowledge mediate affect, cultural studies is expressly interested in mediating affect. Moreover, the historical and theoretical investments that characterize the field affectively mediate its accounts of affective mediation. This might sound a bizarre tautology but it is an immensely productive one. Cultural studies mediates the pressures of its external environments—including those aforementioned economic and social pressures that the university mediates. Cultural studies transduces these pressures in the production its own pressurized milieu. To recapitulate, I make two final points. Firstly, the study of how expressions give affect form is vital to any account of what is happening in the world, as we can see in articulations of 'the body politic' (Protevi 2009), 'home' (Manning 2003), 'intimacy' (Berlant 2008), 'feeling' and 'emotion' (Campbell 1997, Woodward 2009). Media are 'modalities of incorporeal effects' that act as 'regimes, logics, or organizations of intensities or passions (*affectus*) which define the affective tonalities and modalities of existence, behavior, and experience' (Grossberg 2010a, p. 194) only because 'the ontology of immanence or virtuality' and 'the

reality of the actual as affective' (nondiscursive elements) are not subsumed. This is 'affect precisely as mediation' (p. 197). Secondly, it is in mediating affect that cultural studies offers a platform for fellow travelers. As I understand, the field itself is a pastiche of historical and new materialist, feminist, queer, race, postcolonial, Indigenous and decolonial thinking in part because the cultural studies concept-cluster of mediating affect magnetizes critical feelings. Each of these respective epistemologies cultivates the expression of those feelings that are critical to surviving the way life is now, as well as exacting judgement on the very sources of such affection (*affectio*) within structures of power.

Media, states and audiences

I first came about the analytical use of the term 'mediation' while teaching media and communications. I recall this use here with the intention of eschewing the unhelpful disciplinary division between 'media and communication studies' and 'the cultural disciplines' (Guillory 2010, p. 354). Several scholars in media and communications have undertaken the study of mediation as part of a concern with social and historical change, media ethics, and what 'media' do (Chouliaraki and Orgad 2011, Couldry 2008, Livingstone 2009, Silverstone 2007). According to Nick Couldry (2008), this work is distinguished from that concerned with 'mediatization,' which purports to describe how 'many cultural and social processes are now constrained to take on a form suitable for media representation' (p. 376). Mediation, on the other hand, holds out the possibility of differentiating patterns across the 'huge complexity of inputs (what are media?) and outputs (what difference do media make, socially, culturally?)' (p. 379). The study of mediation here is one of the key ways in which the study of media contributes to social theory. More specifically, the question of how media configure the 'phenomenology of distance' (Dayan 2007, p. 113) stems from an ethical concern with the political conditions that give rise to 'distant suffering' (Chouliaraki 2006, p.

1). In media contexts, distanciation is intimately bound with asymmetry: asymmetries of power, feeling (especially, suffering-compassion) and access to representation (also see Boltanski 1999). In *Media and Morality: On the rise of the Mediapolis* (2007), Roger Silverstone consolidates an understanding of mediation as fundamentally a question of ethics. The self-referentiality of the Western-facing media reflexively shapes 'our' sense of self through the representation of *distant* others in the non-Western world. It must be said that Silverstone makes this argument with little reference to postcolonial theory in much the same way that dominant frameworks for thinking about globalization and cosmopolitanism reiterate the originary premise of 'the West'. Nevertheless, this understanding of how media are positioned within the reproduction of asymmetrical global power by virtue of their capacity to provide a 'space of appearance … where the world appears' (p. 27) is an important provocation. It is in this space of appearance that we enter into relations with others: mediated appearance 'constitutes our worldliness, our capacity to be in the world' (p. 26). This capacity is understood as the effect of our capacity to represent.

We can consider too the development of a theory of mediation in allied accounts. Benedict Anderson (1983) for example, assigned the emergence of the modern nation to 'the spread of particular vernaculars' (p. 40) by 'print-as-commodity' (p.37). And any account of globalized modernity worth its salt must account for mediation in *some way*. For instance, Arjun Appaduri's *Modernity at large: cultural dimensions of globalization* (1996), describes media as a building block of '*imagined worlds*' (p. 33). This account notes how the 'image-centred, narrative-based accounts of reality' (p. 35), that Appaduri terms 'mediascapes', are mobilized by the state with the effect of creating a 'disjuncture' (p. 39) between state and nation. The notion of disjuncture resonates in the contributions to this Special Issue that examine the breaks, cuts, and gaps within media-assemblages.

The genealogy of *mediating affect* in media studies is of course not confined to those accounts that specifically name mediation as their object of study. In any case, such accounts are heavily invested in a particular configuration of spectatorship, signification and modernity, from psychoanalytically derived theories of spectatorship to functionalist 'uses and gratifications' models of audience behavior. Silverstone (1994) again offers an interesting point of reference in his reading of Winnicott to interpret television as a primal scene of becoming-other. According to Winnicott, the ability to distinguish between 'the worlds of subjective and objective reality' (Silverstone 1994, p. 9) originates in the separation and connection between the self and (m)other but is later transposed to other 'objects'. The reality of the subject itself partakes in the distinction between subjective and objective reality, originating in 'the emergence of a space—a potential space (perhaps more accurately a space for potential) in which the work of separation … can take place' (p. 9). As we grow older the transitional object 'loses meaning' (Winnicott 1971, cited in Silverstone) but we still surround ourselves with '*transitional phenomena'* that are 'a defence against anxiety' (p. 4). This posits media as scenes of defensive relations that express transitional affects: 'our media, television perhaps preeminently, occupy the potential space released by blankets, teddy bears and breasts' (p. 13).

Lisa Blackman and Valarie Walkerdine (2001) also critique the 'autonomous self' (p. 4), particularly as this theory of the self results from the way psychology and 'the media work together to provide a way of understanding what is normal behaviour' (p. 4). Their analysis of the late 19th century concept of 'the crowd' and its ongoing ramifications illustrates the bias towards 'upper- and middle-class white men' (p. 32) expressed by this concept: 'the masses together in a crowd were too suggestible to outside influences, too easily swayed and led' (p. 31). These accounts of 'the idea that the media has an effect' (Blackman and Walkerdine 2001, p. 15) mediates the potential of affect through the examination of media

concepts that express social characteristics. In the psychologizing discourse propagated by British news and broadcast media, otherness is a truth-effect promoted by 'an understanding of subjectivity through concepts of self-regulation and autonomy' (p. 179). The influence of this theory of the subject continues to extend beyond explicit reference to the psy disciplines and is found in a wide range of media contexts. Think, for example, of the assumed activities that characterize the 'active' audience (p. 181) and the subsequent reduction of audience 'activity/passivity' to 'processes of signification' (Carpentier 2011, p. 519).

Back in 1991, Ien Ang offered a powerful critique of the audience's colonization by an 'institutional point of view' (p. 2). The 'institutional reproduction' (p. 14) of film and television, notes Ang, relies upon the cultural concept of the 'audience'. Concepts of the audience are invested by both industry and government interests, articulated in the growing privatization and regulation of culture. Certain versions of the audience concept block alternative understandings—specifically, in Ang's account, those permeating the inconvenience and messiness of the everyday. Ang's observation is a political one, given the way in which such a term has marginalized those empirical and affective elements that challenge the myth of media as a center of power, or what Couldry (2015) has called 'the myth of the mediated centre' (p. 642).

While Ang's critique still has much resonance with the activities of media and communications regulatory and marketing organizations, the implications of the reification of the 'audience' are far more difficult to track in today's polymorphous media environments (see for example Nielson's (2017) bricolage of data analytics). For one thing, streaming services and their digital archives have introduced a new economic model into film and television (referred to as 'the long tail') that continues to buttress the significance of the niche audience whose more nuanced tastes are precisely associated with cultural difference. Moreover, the very disciplinary investment in 'the everyday' that Ang and others called for

might now be associated with top-down pressures, easily serving as a shorthand for 'the empirical' deemed essential to research with rankable 'impact' value (i.e. through mechanisms such as the UK's Research Excellence Framework). As Sarah Kember and Joanna Zylinska (2012) note, most UK research in media and communications tacitly and defensively depends upon a 'positivist and humanist' (p. 2) epistemology. The naïve empiricism that is championed by 'isolated, protected and simultaneously obscured' terms, such as 'the social' (p. 2-3), cannot be separated from the powerful interests that the field mediates.

To read and write about mediating affect is to take on positivist epistemologies and to search out the rejoinders between media, communication and cultural studies. All too easily, we forget that 'we would have no emotions if we *were* subjects' (Terada 2001, p. 4). Our conceptions of audiences, nation-states and belonging too often seek traction in 'old reliable' categorizations of experience. But we know in practice that belonging skids off our presuppositions, often despite our intentions. For subjectivities emerge only through fields of attachment whose alignments between immanent ontologies, affective realities and incorporeal effects are tenuous at best, however penetrating, and however convincing their promise.

Mediating affect: the Special Issue

This partial reflection reminds us to attend to the role of *all* media and communications' concepts as mediators of affect, for even in its epistemological disavowal affect remains relevant. To recap, I have suggested that the discussion of spaces of appearance, mediascapes and their disjunctures, psychic attachments, the privileging of the autonomous self and signification, and the vulnerability of the field's theoretical terms to institutionalization, each contribute to the constitution of media and communications as a

field of study that is concerned with *mediating affect*. My reflection is intended to help situate the articles that follow, precisely to draw attention to some of the major theoretical frames of reference and intentions that have been upended—in affect studies and elsewhere—but also to avow those lineages that provide ongoing terms of reference. Without wishing any injustice on the part of the contributors, I hope to offer a brief illustration of how their work deepens these lineages as well as transcends them.

Andrew Murphie's 'On Being Affected: Feeling in the Folding of Multiple Catastrophes', is an opening of, and an insistence on, the world of media and communications. The question of 'how possible it is for a life of ongoing feeling to hold, given the world's current becomings?' immediately figures communication and media beyond the dominant terms of any discipline. For Murphie is concerned here with 'our habits of affecting and being affected' as they are linked to 'the world as feeling in process and data as potential for feeling within the ongoing process of the world' (discussing Whitehead, p. xx). Climate change, social change and a 'third media revolution' (p. xx) are put forward as examples of shifting 'media/world collision thresholds' (p. xx). Murphie walks us through some of the major factors that have created 'a massive and pervasive proliferation of data, and thus of potentials for feeling' (p. xx). This 'catastrophic multiplicity' (p. xx) obliges us 'to imagine much about feeling and living differently' (p. xx).

'Radical Absence: Encountering Traumatic Affect in Digitally Mediated Disappearance' works through three case studies of what Michael Richardson calls 'radical absence': 'video circulates of the beheading of a kidnapped journalist; an airplane vanishes into the sky; friends learn someone has died when Facebook 'memorializes' their page' (p. xx). These case studies are examples of absence that is 'strangely present' within the everyday. It is the 'entangling affectivity of contemporary media' (p. xx) that provide the conditions of possibility for this new 'encounter with mediation [that] might itself be

traumatic or traumatically affective' (p. xx). Videos can exercise an 'affective force' (p. xx) even in their absence: the more we enquire into the whereabouts of that missing object, 'the more its absence could be felt intensely' (p. xx). We are compelled to react to the affective connections that social media keeps 'alive' (p. xx).

Questions of absence and presence are prevalent in all of our accounts. Steen Christiansen's 'Action Movies' Affects: Mediating Potency and Fear' details the affective structure of the action movie genre, which Christiansen convincingly argues is the primary structure of the blockbuster movie. These movies produce 'rhythms, forces, and intensities' (p. xx) that articulate the underlying spatiality of Anglo-American cultural dominance in the War on Terror. That is, action movies and their ilk 'prime us through a nexus of networked affects of contemporary warfare' (p. xx). Christiansen takes up the *Transformers* franchise as an example of the privileging of 'sheer bodily impact' (p. xx) and 'pure sensory overload' (p. xx) over visual narrative, and the use of 'ultra-low sonic frequencies' (p. xx) to create 'palpable sensations such as heart palpitations, sweaty palms and a diffuse, queasy feeling' (p. xx). This 'machinic sensorium', that 'no longer separates cinematic expression from human perception' (p. xx), can be understood to constitute a new type of mediated appearance that is particular to the affective and discursive formation of terror. Christiansen makes the disturbing claim that: 'while drones currently work overseas to target morale, action movies work on the home front to produce not only an openness to shock-and-awe strategies but also engender a mode of sensation that also functions as action' (p. xx). Modes of sensation come to constitute new ways of being in relation to others.

For Rebecca Adelman, a range of artistic artifacts constitute media forms 'through which detainees *seem* to appear' (p. xx). 'Fictive Intimacies of Detention: Affect, Imagination, and Anger in Art from Guantánamo Bay' links the public interest in artistic objects produced by detainees to people's desire 'for intimate knowledge about the detainees'

(p. xx). Examining the affective relationships between presence and absence that are transacted by these particular objects, In these transactions, the affective and emotional expression of *anger* cannot appear—except as 'activist anger *on behalf* of the detainees' (p. xx). Adelman demonstrates how this asymmetrical expression of anger is linked to the depoliticization of detainee subjectivity. Adelman's thoughtful engagement with *Poems from Guantánamo: The Detainees Speak* (Falkoff 2007), Mohamedou Ould Slahi's (2015) *Guantánamo Diary*, and examples of visual art, each raise a set of ethical questions about what has appeared in that artistic space—one that remains, ultimately, distant from its viewer/reader. These artefacts are produced within a broader media environment of hypervisibility—characterized for example by 'the continual troping of the orange-suited detainee' (p. xx)—that must be challenged for the way in which it renders *invisible* the experience of those it purports to represent. It is as a result of this context of affective distanciation that art objects become testimony to the 'disconnection from the outside world [that] is intrinsic to the form of indefinite detention practiced at Guantánamo' (p. xx).

It was the enforced (top-down) absence of images depicting postwar suffering in Japanese film that created the conditions of possibility for the emergence of *shōjo* (少女). The girl trope enabled the celebration and memorialization of Japanese adult male soldier characters. *Shōjo* is at once an abstraction—'an abstract representative of the suffering of all the Japanese people after 1945'—and a concrete comfort to viewers. Jennifer Coates writes that the 'repetitive structures in film not only reflect the repetitive patterns experienced by the trauma sufferer but also posit the film text as an imaginative space within which some organizational meaning can be made of the trauma of defeat and occupation' (p. xx). While hiding the painful suffering in the aftermath of being exposed to nuclear radiation, 'the repetitive *shōjo* motif opened up a space for emotional testimony against nuclear war' (p. xx). 'Mediating Memory: *Shōjo* and War Memory in Classical Narrative Japanese Cinema'

examines 'the emotions generated and repeated by the circulation of the *shōjo* image throughout postwar Japanese cinema, and questions the impact of the affective atmospheres these repetitions create on the popular memorialization of war' (p. xx). In this context, *shōjo* mediates suffering. Affectively *shōjo* 'may address and even reconcile difficult emotions related to Japan's recent war' (p. xx). The 'discourse analysis of the print media of the era' enables us to think more about how film mediates the experience of the audience, and how this experience in particular echoes within the recent *Ring* film series. Both the Japanese originals and the Hollywood remakes offer a further historical layer of affective mediation that Coates introduces to her analysis. Coates tracks how these films express the changing conditions of representation, but also how affective circuits replay through the expressive capacities of the *shōjo* and Sadako figurations.

My own contribution, 'Mediating Affect in John Pilger's *Utopia*: 'The Good Life' as a Structure of Whiteness', focuses more on the historical absence that is perpetuated by the affective structure of whiteness in Australia. As a documentary film focusing on 'black and white Australia', *Utopia* provides an opportunity to think more about the discursive and affective formation of whiteness. I claim that the good life is an optimistic form of attachment to the white nation and that whiteness is rendered present in the everyday by affective attachments. The film *Utopia* critiques 'the media' as a space of appearance in which Indigenous concerns perpetually disappear. The film itself enacts the affective mediation of an Australian chronotope, but one that seeks to make present that which is usually absent from the televisual frame. The relation between presence and absence is expressed too in the very definition of whiteness as an invisible measure of who holds possession. In this sense, the affective structure of whiteness rests on the present absence of whiteness.

Bringing media back to mediation: war stories

Each of these articles is working at the conjuncture of particular theoretical concerns. And each encounters their object of study through their broader consideration of how that object might constitute the expression of a particular affective formation. In the spirit offered to us by Gregory Seigworth (2017), 'Mediating Affect' too seeks to 'champion work that resists:

- the critical ossification of affect inquiry into rigid theoretical postures,
- reified citational genealogies, and
- overarching disciplinary orthodoxies' (n.p.)

Moreover, bringing media 'back to the question of mediation itself' (Grossberg 2010a, p. 221) entails working beyond the limits of orthodox vocabulary. Importantly, this means resisting 'the logic of negativity' that prohibits thinking 'to escape from or define solutions to the binary organizations of asymmetrical power' (p. 202). In this context, bashing dominant notions of mediation for their 'Euro-modernity' would simply put us on the wrong track—with this distraction we would never be able to arrive at the mediated affects, their political and ethical ramifications, we outline here. To conclude, I offer one illustration of how the return of media to mediation creates an opening for the analysis of mediated affect to emerge.

The authors were not asked to thematize war, and there was no mention of war in the Call for Papers—not even the mentioning of drone warfare. It is striking then that all these articles in some way address the context of war: we each address war formations as current context and/or formative legacy. And while 'war' might be less present in Murphie's article, except as a compounding element, his imperative study of catastrophe might also be amenable to the thinking-feeling of war contexts: in catastrophic multiplicity 'the danger [is that] … every kind of defence finds renewed strength at exactly the wrong moment, in a kind of catastrophic multiplicity of reactionary feeling' (p. xx). We might, frighteningly, think too about the implications of all mediated communication for war. Our wars are becoming less human and more media-ted (Baudrillard 1991; Christiansen this issue). It is no coincidence

that the task of thinking through affective mediation takes us to war stories. Our media machine *pre-mediates* the future and the logic of premediation perpetually gears us towards pre-emptive war (Grusin 2010). More than 'a specific military doctrine', 'pre-emption is an *operative logic of power* defining a political epoch in as infinitely space-filling and insidiously infiltrating a way as the logic of "deterrence" defined the Cold War era' (Massumi 2015, p. 5). Massumi goes on:

> By an "operative" logic I mean one that combines an *ontology* with an *epistemology* in such a way as to trace itself out as a self-propelling *tendency* that is not in the sway of any particular existing formation but sweeps across them all and where possible sweeps them up in its own dynamic.

During the Second World War, Nazi soldiers were systematically given Pervitin (methamphetamine) to ward off exhaustion and increase aggression (Drugs in Warfare 2016).[1] In more than one episode of Charlie Brooker's *Black Mirror* (2011–) this biochemical imaginary is augmented by a technological one to create a nightmarish cyborgian scenario. Reflected back to us through the dark lens of the show, this is the very scenario we are increasingly living. In the episode 'Men Against Fire' (2016), we enter a world in which soldiers' sensory perceptions are bio-technologically engineered to just one or two degrees beyond the everyday distortions to which we are accustomed: soldiers fight an enemy of sub-human 'roaches',[2] unaware that they are in fact violently slaying innocent humans. In the soldiers' perception (in)human presence is entirely mediated. As the episode progresses, the audience discovers (somewhat predictably, given our present) that 'roaches' are in fact people just like the soldiers—just like us.

Myriad films and television series offer further examples of present affective contortions. *Homeland*'s (2007–) 'The Drone Queen' (2014) focuses on the protagonist's lack of feeling when, as a CIA officer, she 'mistakenly' bombs a wedding, killing 40

civilians. Bringing the war "home" to the viewer, the episode '13 hours in Islamabad' (2014) is set in a US Embassy (in Islamabad). The episode climaxes in a hostage situation, as the Ambassador exclaims to the head of the CIA: "He's gonna cut her head off for Christ's sake". To this the head of the CIA responds: "It's a *war*, Andrew"—as if, until this point, he had not realized. Throughout its six seasons, *Homeland*'s most troubling scenes are those which use an 'affective timbre' (Christiansen this issue, p. xx) to locate America in war—the first three seasons alone focus on the conversion of an American to 'jihadi terrorism'. How many other times have we seen politicians sitting in 'situation rooms', drone operators ahead of screens (*House of Cards, The Good Wife*)? The head of the CIA replies to the Ambassador: "Well, I can't just stand here and *watch*" (my emphasis). These reflections point to mediating affect as a history of war. The popularity of film, television and streaming-vision's 'parallel present' locates pre-emption in the 'experienced mediations' (Grusin 2015, p. 127) that connect experiences: the parallel present highlights 'the space between the virtual and the actual' and invites us into 'the trajectory of effectivity or becoming' (Grossberg 2010a, p. 191). The parallel present is pre-emptive, compensating 'for the absence of an actual cause by producing a present effect in its place … it converts a future, *virtual cause* directly into a taking-actual-effect in the present. It does this affectively' (Massumi 2015, p. 15). Like war stories, the articles in this Special Issue on Mediating Affect provoke us to look forward, to futures swallowed up by the pre-emptive present, as much back, to an abstract past lived in the present.

Acknowledgements

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[1] The program interviews Norman Ohler, the author of *Blitzed* (2016) and Lukasz Kamienski, author of *Shooting Up* (2016).

[2] Just a year prior, the UK media-public went into a furor over Katie Hopkins' article 'Rescue boats? I'd use gunships to stop migrants'. Published in *The Sun*, Hopkins wrote: 'These migrants are like cockroaches. They might look a bit 'Bob Geldof's Ethiopia circa 1984', but they are built to survive a nuclear bomb.'