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Becoming-Dinosaur: Life's Resistance Against Binary Biopower in Steven Spielberg's *Jurassic Park* (1993)

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Abstract

This article discusses how the cinematic classic *Jurassic Park* (1993) is often represented in a negative light in the critical literature that surrounds it. This paper will argue that these paranoid readings are not necessarily productive, and a different, more reparative reading of the film is warranted. Through combining an extensive list of theoretical approaches by many postmodern philosophers such as Deleuze and Guattari, the Dinosaur comes into being as the most important and impactful character of the film. With a focus on the affective and the animal turn, this study is a pointed reparative analysis of how the Dinosaur becomes a force of resistance against multiple facets of binary biopower; ultimately becoming the hero of the entire film.

Keywords: Becoming-animal, Reparative Reading, Affect, Resistance, Biopower

Feminist critics Lucie Arbuthnot and Gail Seneca begin their analysis of *Gentlemen Prefer Blondes* (1953) with a familiar quandary among those who enjoy and study popular media. On the one hand, they argue, popular arts like Hollywood cinema are “clearly a product of the dominant culture.”¹ On the other hand, and despite its oppressive shortcomings, people continue to enjoy them.² As Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick describes in her chapter “Paranoid Reading and Reparative Reading,” in a world rampant with self-evident systemic oppression, “to theorize out of anything *but* a paranoid critical stance has come to seem naïve, pious, or complaisant.”³ By paranoid, she does not mean to diagnose a pathology inherent to a form of critique; instead, she considers paranoid inquiry to be a kind of theoretical stance that makes the search and signaling of the dominant culture’s oppression its primary aim. Sedgwick believes that this has become coextensive with critical inquiry rather than one among several practices.⁴ This alleged coextensiveness between paranoid inquiry and critical analyses of popular culture is evident in several readings of *Jurassic Park*.⁵

Jurassic Park is one of the most iconic, popular, and successful cinematographic works of all time.⁶ However, there is relatively sparse academic literature on *Jurassic Park*, much of which points to several problematic elements in the film. Americanist Paul Lauter makes this Spielbergian work the object of an account that details the evolution of numerous theoretical “shifts” and the new modes of critical interpretations of popular culture these turns have

elicited.⁷ For example, Laura Briggs and Jodi Kelber-Kaye suggest the film is exemplary of how “the opposition to genetic technologies expressed in contemporary popular culture is grounded in a profound anti-feminism.”⁸ Indeed, feminist criticism of the film appears to be a constant feature of the critical literature that surrounds this film. Lauter points to psychoanalytic interpretations of “bad mothers,” such as Lisa Yaszek’s compelling argument that the film’s dinosaurs “indicate a very real anxiety about the ways that advanced technologies threaten normative understandings of sexual identity.”⁹ But even though academic interpretations have found *Jurassic Park* to be the product and bolster of a dominant culture that oppresses and alienates those deemed to be the “other,” its popularity among audiences and critics remains undeterred.¹⁰

What are scholars of popular culture to do in this scenario? Must we continue to engage in what Sedgwick refers to as “paranoid hermeneutics,” that is, the project of detecting, exposing, and denouncing hidden patterns of violence she believes has become “the common currency of cultural and historicist studies”?¹¹ Further, should we discard works that have been found to be in bed with the dominant culture’s systemic oppression? Or is there another way? Arbuthnot and Seneca’s answer is straightforward: “it is insufficient simply to expose and destroy.”¹² Their view is reminiscent of Sedgwick’s call for *reparative readings* that focus their efforts on pleasure and amelioration,¹³ open to experience surprise,¹⁴ and whose impulse is additive and accretive.¹⁵ Thus, my reading of *Jurassic Park* focuses on what is most enjoyable about the film:¹⁶ the Dinosaur.¹⁷ This text will explore the different ways the Dinosaur ‘becomes’ a force of resistance against a dominant culture of binary (animal, economic and gender) politics. Such a reparative reading of *Jurassic Park* offers a refreshing viewpoint of an often-neglected part of the film: the Dinosaur as the hero.

I draw from two unfolding theoretical turns to advance this argument. The first, and perhaps most readily relevant of the two, is the “the animal turn.”¹⁸ Born of the necessity of thinking about the role played by living beings beyond the human in the study of media,¹⁹ this turn to move away from an anthropocentric view of the world has led to the development of (Critical) Human-Animal Studies. Anthrozoologist Margo DeMello defines this as “an interdisciplinary field that explores the spaces that animals occupy in human social and cultural worlds and the interactions humans have with them.”²⁰ Sociologist David Nibert adds that this framework allows for examinations of the “entangled oppressions of humans and other animals” while recognizing the role of capitalism in promoting systemic oppression of all types.²¹ A growing number of scholarly works set on decentering the human from the study of popular media have implemented this framework.²² But as Brett Mills argues in his book *Animals on Television*, the tools employed in these scholarly examinations to explore and make sense of representations “are themselves speciesist” and predicated on the binary distinction between human and animal.²³ Scholars Randy Malamud and Cary Wolfe have voiced similar criticism. The former argues that human representations of animals “are inherently biased and self-

serving,”²⁴ and Wolfe bemoans what he considers to be “humanist approaches to posthumanism” and calls instead for a “reconfiguration of what philosophy is” to respond to the challenge at hand.²⁵

I look at the "affective turn" in search of this reconfiguration of philosophy. Originally derived from Baruch Spinoza's philosophical formulation of *affectus*, I follow Brian Massumi's definition of affect as “the ability to affect and be affected.”²⁶ In his text *The Politics of Affect*, however, Massumi complicates the deceptively simple definition by stipulating that affect requires a reconceptualization that understands it “not as fundamentally individual, but as directly collective.”²⁷ Furthermore, he argues, affect must be understood as “*involving feeling in thinking*,” and vice versa, which makes this theoretical approach particularly receptive to being implemented in a reparative reading.²⁸ Coupled with Claire Colebrook's characterization of the affective turn as the spark of “a revolution in a history of Western thought dominated by Man as the center of knowledge,” the concept becomes relevant to works seeking to destabilize human dominance in a text.²⁹ To better grasp the applicability of affective notions to a film like *Jurassic Park* and how it may offer a novel way of understanding it as a politically-productive text, I turn to Gilles Deleuze's and Felix Guattari's *A Thousand Plateaus*. The work is composed of a collection of free-floating essays on diverse but interrelated subject matters (plateaus). One of these, “Becoming-Intense, Becoming-Animal, Becoming-Imperceptible,” begins with the authors' recollection of the “B” movie *Willard* (1971),³⁰ and their interpretation of the protagonist's journey of “becoming-rat” in the film.³¹

Becoming-animal is a notoriously intricate notion whose unwillingness to be demarcated is in accordance with its conception within the indeterminate philosophy of Deleuze and Guattari. Nevertheless, their utilization of *Willard* as a point of departure for their exploration of the concept at hand, and its relation to their attempt at philosophical reconfiguration, is remarkably useful to my argument. Their choice to use Mann's film for these purposes is already noteworthy as its similarities to Spielberg's in form and content are significant. Both have made American mainstream cinematographic adaptations of relatively obscure novels. More important, however, are the affinities in their content. Both films are, in essence, monster movies in which the creatures that haunt the screen are, in truth, animals. And even though *Willard*'s “monsters” ultimately tear the film's human protagonist to shreds, Deleuze and Guattari consider that “the heroes are rats” in this film. This is key. Their characterization of the proliferation of rats in *Willard* as combative and admirable sets an interpretative precedent that recognizes animals in films as a potential locus of resistance against oppression. Likewise, I argue that in *Jurassic Park*, the Dinosaur is the hero.

My interpretation of the Dinosaur as the hero of this affective-reparative reading of *Jurassic Park* requires a redefinition of what the Dinosaur is and how it functions in the film. According to Deleuze and Guattari, “a becoming-animal always involves a pack” or

multiplicity.³² Malamud interprets this to mean that “becoming-animal is about the whole animal and its life rather than its iconically reductive cultural representation.”³³ Likewise, media scholar Steve Baker sees this proposition as stemming from Deleuze and Guattari’s “suspicion that in handling animal form, artists are merely imitating the animal from a safe distance,” in a way that has little to do with the intensities and potentialities of their lives.³⁴ This theorizing contributes to the constitution of becoming-animal as a formulation capable of envisioning animals as dynamic and fluid entities that eschew human-sanctioned individualist and speciesist boundaries. Furthermore, this approach resonates with Massumi’s stipulation that affectivity is directly collective and pertains to relations.³⁵ Thus, the Dinosaur in *Jurassic Park* shall be understood not as a particular individual or species, at least not exclusively, but as a multiplicity of affects circulating between interrelated nonhuman forms and brought together into communal becoming by an eventuality. As Massumi adds, affects are implicated in an operativity that “pertains more fundamentally to events than to persons.”³⁶ Thus, it is the events that comprise *Jurassic Park*’s narrative that assemble into a becoming-Dinosaur.

Deleuze and Guattari write that “a becoming is always in the middle,”³⁷ and *Jurassic Park*’s becoming-Dinosaur seems to adhere to this prescription. The opening scene takes place at night and in the midst of what appears to be an industrial operation. Dimly lit and cross-cutting shots alternate their focus between images of cargo breaking through a jungle and a crew of technical personnel clad in hard hats and jumpsuits awaiting its delivery. The camera’s focus on the men’s faces denotes their weary watchfulness over the large metallic crate that has just arrived at their facility, a gated installation bulwarked by high-intensity floodlights and armed guards. Once the reinforced container is positioned at the gate, a man outfitted with khaki hunting clothes and a shotgun issues carefully orchestrated instructions in a British colonial accent. In short, the materiality of the mise-en-scène and casting are all connotative of what film scholar Elena del Rio describes as the “technologically mediated forms of killing, surveillance, and security procedures that maintain a state of permanent terror.”³⁸ This inferred terror devolves into horror when the cage’s reinforced bars—designed to contain the creatures inside—are hardly able to conceal their violent attack on their handlers. Thus, *Jurassic Park*’s opening scene establishes, as the audience later learns, that the Dinosaur is already in the process of becoming. Further, it is already a force of resistance.

Subsequent scenes offer clues regarding the ontology of the circulating impersonal affects implicated in both the Dinosaur’s process of becoming and the oppressive power against which it resists. First, human characters corporate lawyer Donald Gennaro and miner Juanito Rostagno convene at a Dominican amber mine to discuss the events of the opening sequence. Their dialogue pertains to “a \$20 million lawsuit by the family of that worker” whose life was lost in the incident, ensuing questions of liability raised by insurance underwriters, and anxious investors demanding an on-site inspection. This is telling because as Brian Massumi writes, both “worker and capitalist are *figures of capital*,” rather than its perpetrators.³⁹ Indeed, the lack of

concern expressed for the loss of the worker's life beyond the financial implications of his death resonates with Masumi's argument that "the worker personifies the potential for the capitalist relation to continue to appropriate productive forces."⁴⁰ The dialogue's implication of capitalist interests seeking to mitigate and contain the Dinosaur's process of becoming is emphasized by the locality. Because even though there is no mention of the captive creature involved in the incident in which the worker was lost, this scene plays out against a background of workers endeavoring in the extractive practices by which the Dinosaur has become a commodity.

The process by which the Dinosaur is made the object of capitalist capture in *Jurassic Park* is itself seized in a single close up shot of a mosquito encased in fossilized amber. As Deleuze and Guattari stress, the multiplicity of an animal becoming.⁴¹ They argue for an understanding of these multiplicities as rhizomatic,⁴² referring to their potential to establish horizontal relationships either through symbiosis, like orchids and wasps, and/or through contagions, such as between a virus and a host.⁴³ As is explained through an animated expositional montage in a later scene, it is through one such relation of contagion that the disembodied Dinosaur survives to the present day. A relational rhizome extends from the Dinosaur to the mosquitoes, whose thirst drives them to feast on the former's blood, and then from the mosquitoes to the trees on which they perch, and, in whose sap, they are entrapped and fossilized: "Bingo, Dino-DNA!" The rhizome's extension from the Jurassic to the fossil-thirsty Capitalocene, however, catapults it yet again into another relation; a relation not of contagion, but of capture. For in *Jurassic Park*, extirpation from Juanito's amber mine is but the first of several processes and technologies of extraction, confinement, and control bent on taking the Dinosaur as its object.

The aforementioned animated montage is played out for a team of 'experts' flown to an island, the site of the opening scene's incident, with the intent of convincing them to 'sign off' on the work being done there and placate the investors' anxiety. After detailing the rhizomatic relation through which the fossilized Dinosaur's becoming-mosquito has devolved into an object of desire for capital and its logics of extraction, the montage further elaborates on the operational details. The disembodied Dinosaur, it is explained, has been further subjected to "sophisticated extraction techniques" developed by the multinational biotechnology firm InGen. Once captured, the Dinosaur has been manipulated, replicated, and re-embodied by InGen's scientists through the use of virtual-reality displays, genetic hybridization, and cloning technologies, for the purpose of surplus-value production. John Hammond, the park's CEO, generously describes the site as "an island preserve," but the laboratory, park rangers, and electrified fences more closely resemble a zoo. Malamud characterizes zoos as both sites of captivity⁴⁴ and "a vivid symptom of our anthropocentrically degraded environmental epistemologies."⁴⁵ Similarly, Mills argues that these physical barriers that separate visitors and animals reassert the binary opposition of *wild* animals/*civilized* people, "whereby animals must be imprisoned for the safety of visitors".⁴⁶ Furthermore, he likens the constant "zooveillance" of these captive populations in order to carry

out and legitimize regimes of control to the patriarchal gaze deployed in media to reassert heteronormative dominance.⁴⁷ Indeed, the regime intended to control the Dinosaur in Hammond's park is invested in an anthropocentric and patriarchal understanding of sexuality.

The film follows the experts as they are granted access to the park's genetics lab to seek answers regarding the site's feasibility and contingency measures. In the following scene, the *mise-en-scène* is loaded with mechanisms of surveillance/zooveillance (cameras, sensors, screens) and technical staff. The atmosphere of control and containment is maximized through the sterile immaculacy and computerized mechanization of the lab. It is in this regimented and controlled environment that a Dinosaur 'becomes' in a stroke, or perhaps show, of "perfect timing." In a scene designed to emphasize the newly-regained vitality of these prehistoric beings, a hatching velociraptor breaks through the robotically-monitored eggshell. The eggshell encased an expression of pure, immanent life force, and the velociraptor was in immediate defiance of a paternalistic captor who pathologically insists on being "present for the birth of every little creature on this island." When questioned about how that can be, the full extent of the park's imposition of their power over life is revealed. Dr. Wu, the park's chief geneticist, proudly proclaims: "population control is one of our security precautions. There's no unauthorized breeding in Jurassic Park." Wu explains, that this has been accomplished by ensuring that "all the animals in Jurassic Park are female" through hormonal engineering, even boasts that "it's really not that difficult" since "all vertebrate embryos are inherently female." But as chaotician Ian Malcolm skeptically explains in the film, this form of power over life is not possible.

Brad Evans argues that when power takes life to be its object "resistance to power already puts itself on the side of life and turns life against power."⁴⁸ As has been shown, *Jurassic Park* depicts a regime of captivity and zooveillance that takes life as the object of its gaze, eliciting the Dinosaur's physical resistance as evidenced in the opening scene. I argue that this is a regime of biopower, as it is exemplary of "numerous and diverse techniques for achieving the subjugations of bodies and the control of populations."⁴⁹ In the film, this is accomplished through Wu's genetic techniques of embryonic manipulation and sexual discipline and with the intention of safeguarding the welfare of the park's human visitors. The biopower implemented by the park in their attempt to maintain an exclusively female population, however, is predicated on absolute and determinist sex/gender binary, an "anthropocentric cultural norm."⁵⁰ Indeed, Lori Gruen and Kari Weil note that there is a conceptual link between the "logics of domination" that operates to reinforce heteronormativity and the logic that supports the oppression of nonhuman animals.⁵¹ As Deleuze asserts, however, "when power becomes bio-power, resistance becomes the power of life, a vital power that cannot be confined within species, environment or the paths of a particular diagram."⁵² In *Jurassic Park*, the Dinosaur—in Deleuze's words—refuses to comply with anthropocentric sexual diagrams, and becomes a force of resistance against the park's binary biopower.

The organizational rigidity of the park's biopolitical system is emblematic of Deleuze and Guattari's discussion of the continual work of organizational powers "to plug the *lines of flight*" and reconstitute its subject.⁵³ In the context of becoming-animal, Malamud interprets lines of flight as transgressions beyond boundaries that embody a process of life and serve to "highlight the animals' mobility and agency. They are paths of escape from captivity and inertia."⁵⁴ In *Jurassic Park*, two lines of flight converge and allow the Dinosaur to escape biopolitical oppression. First, a disgruntled employee sabotages the park's automated electrical grid to stake his capitalist claim on the Dinosaur via embryonic abduction in an act of industrial espionage while the experts and Hammond's grandchildren tour the island. An ensuing scene in which the tyrannosaurus breaks free from its physical barriers is thrilling and thorough in its visualization of this becoming-Dinosaur's line of flight. I argue that even though this escape deterritorializes the park, the potential for reterritorialization remains, as the system of domination—though temporarily hacked—is simply awaiting its reinstatement. In Hammond's words, "this is just a delay." However, a secondary line of flight is encountered by paleontologist Alan Grant, one of the regretful invited experts, while he and Hammond's grandchildren stumble upon a clutch of cracked eggshells in the wilderness on their trek back to the visitor's center following the tyrannosaurus attack. Immediately recognizing that "the dinosaurs are breeding," Grant proceeds to explain to the children: "On the tour, the film said they used frog DNA to fill in the gene sequence gaps. They mutated the dinosaur genetic code and blended it with that of frogs. Now, some West African frogs have been known to change sex from male to female in a single-sex environment."

I began this article by briefly referencing how other critical analyses of this film have interpreted the park's biopolitical regime of population control, the Dinosaur's rebellious reproductivity, and their relation to the film's perceived themes. Lauter suggests that psychoanalytic frameworks find the Dinosaur to be "terrible mothers" whose unwillingness to subject to normative familial relations is the primary cause of horror in *Jurassic Park*. Briggs and Kaye read them as metaphorical "Third World females" whose insistence on reproduction threatens the existence of the film's white children.⁵⁵ Lastly, Yaszek considers that by allowing the Dinosaurs to "become temporarily 'male' for the purposes of procreation," the film becomes indicative of a "very real (if displaced) anxiety about the ways that advanced technologies threaten normative understandings of sexual identity."⁵⁶ These are all viable readings of the film. Yet, they all confirm Sedgwick's stipulation regarding the prominence of paranoid stances in scholarly analyses of texts and their deployed rhetoric continues to rely upon the same binary logic used to uphold anthropocentric and heteronormative dominance. In other words, their paranoid interpretation of the Dinosaurs and their sexuality remains both binary and normative. And as Deleuze and Guattari write, it is "as deplorable to miniaturize, internalize the binary machine as it is to exacerbate it: it does not extricate us from it."⁵⁷ Let us thus move away from

normative heterosexism and anthropocentrism and turn our focus toward the Dinosaurian line of flight and imagine other ways in which it may be interpreted.

Deleuze and Guattari argue that sexuality “is badly explained by the binary organization of the sexes, and just as badly by a bisexual organization within each sex.”⁵⁸ Instead, they argue for an understanding of sexuality as “the production of a thousand sexes, which are so many uncontrollable becomings.”⁵⁹ Feminist scholar Myra Hird seemingly agrees. Hird has written extensively about the numerous ways in which sex diversity found in nonhuman beings challenges the prevalent notion of sexuality as composed of two distinct, opposite, and complementary morphs. In her monograph *Sex, Gender, and Science*, Hird argues that although biologists are routinely called upon to reify the sexual dichotomy—as Grant certainly does in *Jurassic Park*—these assumptions are not backed by evidence derived from studies of nonhuman sex.⁶⁰ Through descriptive examples of what she provocatively calls “intersex, transsex, and transvestism among nonhuman living organisms,” she demonstrates how sexuality is far more diverse than what anthropocentric notions typically allow.⁶¹ Taking this into account, the view that the Dinosaur’s ability to breed reinforces anthropocentric prescriptions of normative sexuality falls short. Rather, it is a line of flight through which it overcomes a material realization of what Colebrook deems the “affectless, lifeless, disembodied Cartesian prison” that is the gender binary;⁶² and expression of the many ways in which nonhuman species have increasingly led human culture to realize that “there are not really ‘two sexes’ at all.”⁶³ Further, it is a trans-gression against a regime of biopower that seeks to limit and dictate the Dinosaur’s life capacities based on speciesist and heterosexist assumptions of normativity, and it is demonstrative of affective notions of life’s power for political resistance.

The link drawn between nonhuman sexuality and the deterritorialization of rigid molar powers in Deleuze and Guattari’s reading of *Willard* is telling.⁶⁴ They consider sexuality’s unpredictable and uncontrollable diversity of conjugated becomings to constitute “an entire war machine.”⁶⁵ Literary scholar Ella Briens theorizes these machines as mechanisms that address differential interactions and thus labor to undermine (binary) oppositions such as human/animal, natural/unnatural, and male/female.⁶⁶ Similarly, Evans understands affective war machines as aphoristic becomings, imperceptible to conventional political registers, that only appear in the form of an antagonism directed against all forms of capture and overcoding once appropriation has occurred.⁶⁷ Thus, the Dinosaurs’ fluid (trans)sexual becoming can be read as a war machine that is only *perceived* as antagonistic by the anthropocentric and heterosexist forces that seek to capture and appropriate them. As Brad Evans explains, “since life resistance combats the forms of confinement and technical strategies so essential to forms of species manipulation, it equally refuses to accept the dangerously unfulfilled categorization which power necessarily imposes in order to control and transform existence.”⁶⁸ By refusing to adhere to what biopower dictates and breaking through its physical and categorical boundaries, the Dinosaur in *Jurassic Park* becomes demonstrative of how “the life which exceeds expectations becomes a life of resistance.”⁶⁹

Unlike the industrial sabotage mentioned above, this line of flight-by-transsexuality subsequently becomes the basis for a deterritorialization that resists biopower's attempts to regain control over the park.

Deleuze and Guattari assert that organizational forces are “always trying to plug the lines of flight” by stopping or interrupting movements of deterritorialization, weighing them down and ultimately reterritorying them.⁷⁰ These tendencies toward reterritorialization manifest themselves in *Jurassic Park* through human attempts to reassert their biopower regime over the island. In yet another scene of expositional dialogue, the film reveals the existence of “the lysine contingency,” a faulty enzyme inserted into the Dinosaurs' genome that renders them lysine-deficient and, unless they are supplied, causes them to slip into a coma and die. This emergency protocol is reminiscent of Evans's reconceptualization of bare life, who argues that in a biopolitical sense, bare life begins with the promotion of others, in this case, the humans.⁷¹ The clutch of eggs in the wild, however, suggests that this attempt at reterritorialization through biopolitical elimination has already been forestalled by the Dinosaurs' transsexual becoming.⁷² Indeed, the notion that the Dinosaur pack is proliferating is accentuated in the scene following the discussion of the lysine contingency. The tyrannosaurus preying on the gallimimus flock recalls Deleuze and Guattari's proclamation that only “liberated elements can enter into the new relations from which the becoming-animal, and the circulation of affects within the mechanic assemblage, will result.”⁷³ Their predator-prey relation is both a refusal of the physical boundaries erected for the pretext of protection and a visualization of the movement, engagement, and ecosystemic interactivity that Malamud considers distinctive of becoming-animal.⁷⁴

Further attempts to plug the Dinosaur's lines of flight and reterritorialize biopolitical dominance over the park are similarly resisted and prevented as the proliferation of the liberated Dinosaur unfolds. Offscreen, a velociraptor pack dispatches Ray Arnold, the park's systems engineer, when he ventures to the maintenance shed to reboot the sabotaged operating system. The raptors then outsmart and take out game warden Robert Muldoon when he goes after them to provide enough cover for paleobotanist Dr. Ellie Sattler,⁷⁵ another expert recruited by Hammond, as she similarly attempts to reach the shed and reboot the system. And even though she ultimately accomplishes her goal, Sattler's efforts prove largely futile as the velociraptor pack forces her to retreat to the visitor's center. Indeed, this pack spends much of the remainder of the film consistently exceeding expectations and challenging, as Malamud writes, “the conventional segregation between human and animal sentience.”⁷⁶ But despite cornering the human survivors, the velociraptors' final blow is abruptly halted by the tyrannosaurus, ensuing in one of the most visually stunning and iconic battles in the history of popular cinema. Though spectacular, this Tyrannosaurus-ex-Machina is symptomatic of the kind of escapist, family-oriented cinema characteristic of Spielberg. This appears to undermine any possible readings of *Jurassic Park* as engaged with notions of political resistance.

I return to Sedgwick to overcome this apparent impasse. Sedgwick affirms that interpretative and epistemological practices beyond paranoia do not, in themselves, entail a denial of the reality or gravity of enmity or oppression.⁷⁷ Lauter builds a strong case to support his diagnosis of films like *Jurassic Park* as works that serve the primary cultural purpose of “making visible contradictions within commodity capitalism, and then emotionally grounding them in a microcosm of spectacle and pleasure.”⁷⁸ This suggests that the visually impressive conclusion to *Jurassic Park*’s cinematic narrative is part of popular culture’s imperative to perpetuate the consumption of its productions and the cultural notions of normativity, dominance and oppression that it promotes. Lauter does not address how other works of art differ in this regard. Brian Massumi hypothesizes that “every move made anywhere, from the farthest corner of the earth to the most intimate depths of the soul, is susceptible to capitalist capture,” meaning that there is no position to critique it from outside, presumably, even in works of art.⁷⁹ Instead, Massumi argues, constructive critiques must come from within the collective field. Accordingly, this reading of the film has focused on the Dinosaur, as an agential animal and, most importantly, as a multiplicity of affective relations pertaining to the events of the film, in an attempt to add and accrete to that which is enjoyable in this text and what has been overlooked in prior interpretations. I posit that by bringing the focus back onto the Dinosaur and its affective relations, *Jurassic Park*’s final scene and its position in the film can be understood away from capitalist specularization. For this, I resort to the anomalous.

Deleuze and Guattari claim that every animal has its anomalous. Likening this concept to *Moby Dick*’s whale and *Willard*’s Ben the rat, they consider the anomalous to be an exceptional individual with whom “an alliance must be made in order to become-animal,” and that sometimes appears as “the higher Power of the band.”⁸⁰ It is noteworthy, then, that the human experts fail to fully denounce the island’s biopolitical regime until the tyrannosaurus—an exceptional individual within the park’s Dinosaur multiplicity who has been at both the border and forefront of its lines of flight—demonstrates the Power of the band against its kin. This chain of events recalls Deleuze and Guattari’s elaboration on affect’s disposition:

... it is the effectuation of a power of the pack that throws the self into upheaval and makes it reel. Who has not known the violence of these animal sequences, which uproot one from humanity, if only for an instant, making one scrape at one's bread like a rodent or giving one the yellow eyes of a feline? A fearsome involution calling us toward unheard-of becomings.⁸¹

Their words suggest a tendency or an invitation to attune and allow the self to be affected by the animal’s vitality, its capacities of resistance, and the accomplishments of these powers. In this view, the tyrannosaurus’s obliteration of the velociraptors is the very becoming-Dinosaur of this heterogeneous pack, much in the same way an orchid and a wasp are a becoming-pollination, or a cheetah and a gazelle form a becoming-fast. Further, it is a reflection, or contagion, of the mechanism Deleuze and Guattari consider is “the only way Nature operates – against itself.”⁸²

The affective power of the altercation reaches Grant and the other experts when the tyrannosaurus becomes the allied anomalous, the terrifying member of the Dinosaur pack who turns against her brethren simultaneously allowing the survivors to escape and obliterates any remaining semblance of anthropogenic control. Uprooted from their humanity and its tendency towards biopower, the experts and the audience become-Dinosaur, recognizing the Dinosaur's unwillingness to be contained and agreeing "not to endorse the park." The final shot then returns to the anomalous—the tyrannosaurus—its roar the triumphant culmination of its line of flight.

It is through the powerful realization of the Dinosaurs' line of flight that *Jurassic Park* redeems itself as a work of popular cinema. Certainly, this reading of the film resonates with Colebrook's assertion that life without a centered dominant consciousness is sufficient and becomes distorted with the addition of binary logics that distinguish between separated and separating intellects.⁸³ But it can be most productively understood as a depiction of an irreversible deterritorialization that overthrows a binary biopolitical regime that sought to dominate and take life as its subject. The Dinosaurs' fluid trans-sexuality and trans-gression of speciesist boundaries embody what Malamud considers animals' ability to locate paths to escape the captivity of inertia and along which we "must learn to see animals and to follow them."⁸⁴ Certainly, Lauter would see it otherwise. Anticipating interpretations that focus on *Jurassic Park*'s prescription that "life finds a way," he finds them to be loaded with "a primitive hopefulness" that passes for progressive politics while refusing to do the work.⁸⁵ But what is this work? What can a cinematic body accomplish, politically speaking? It is as Sedgwick states, that the work is done from within in the many ways selves and communities succeed in extracting sustenance from the objects of a culture "whose avowed desire has often been not to sustain them."⁸⁶ Perhaps cases like Dr. Victoria Arbour's,⁸⁷ who cites *Jurassic Park* as inspiration for becoming a paleontologist, are a testament to the affective relations that films like Spielberg's can draw out. Unheard-of becomings can shatter binary biopolitical boundaries like those that once made paleontology a western, anglophone, and exclusively-male field.⁸⁸ It is time to pay closer attention to the becoming-animal, in popular culture and beyond, and look for how it may have led Others to pursue new lines of flight, that is, how its affects may have and do lead to hitherto imperceptible political becomings. It is time to see the reality of the becoming-animal: "that it is affect in itself."⁸⁹

Notes

¹ Lucie Arbutnot and Gail Seneca "Pre-Text and Text in *Gentlemen Prefer Blondes*," in *Issues in Feminist Film Criticism*, ed. Patricia Erens (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1990), 112.

² Ibid.

³ Eve Sedgwick, "Paranoid Reading and Reparative Reading, or, You're so Paranoid, You Probably Think This Essay is About You," in *Touching Feeling*, (Durham: Duke University Press, 2002), 125.

⁴ *Ibid*, 126.

⁵ *Jurassic Park*, directed by Steven Spielberg (Universal City, CA: Universal Pictures, 1993), Amazon Prime.

⁶ "Jurassic Park Critics Consensus: 91%," *Rotten Tomatoes*, Oct. 8, 2020,

https://www.rottentomatoes.com/m/jurassic_park; "AFI's 100 YEARS...100 THRILLS: The 100 Most Thrilling American Films," *American Film Institute*, June 12, 2001, <https://www.afi.com/afis-100-years-100-thrills/>; "Top 100 Films of All-Time," *Film Site*, Oct. 1, 2020, <https://www.filmsite.org/boxoffice3.html>.

⁷ Paul Lauter, *From Walden Pond to Jurassic Park* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2001).

⁸ Laura Briggs and Jodi I. Kelber-Kaye, "There is No Unauthorized Breeding in Jurassic Park: Gender and the Uses of Genetics," *NWSA Journal* 12, no. 3, (Fall 2000): 92.

⁹ Lisa Yaszek, "Of Fossils and Androids: (Re)Producing Sexual identity in 'Jurassic Park' and 'Blade Runner'," *The Journal of the Midwest Modern Language Association* 30, no. 1/2, (Spring 1997): 54.

¹⁰ It should be noted that while the film has been largely panned as anti-feminist in academic literature, feminist scholars have offered more positive critics in other media. Most notoriously, Dr. Hannah McGregor makes an argument similar to that made in this paper in *Secret Feminist Agenda*, "Jurassic Park!," Season 3, Episode 1 (October 5, 2018), <https://secretfeministagenda.com/2018/10/05/episode-3-1-jurassic-park/>.

¹¹ Sedgwick, "Paranoid Reading," 143.

¹² Arbuthnot and Seneca, "Pre-Text," 123.

¹³ Sedgwick, "Paranoid Reading," 144.

¹⁴ *Ibid*, 145.

¹⁵ *Ibid*, 149.

¹⁶ Though they largely ignore their relations in the film, both Yaszek and Lauter consider that the dinosaur is what is memorable and enjoyable about *Jurassic Park*.

¹⁷ This text will use the capitalized word "Dinosaur" when making general references to the 'pack' of dinosaurs present in the film and not as a reference to specific/ individual dinosaurs. When referring to specific dinosaurs the uncapitalized word "dinosaur" will be used.

¹⁸ For a brief explanation see, Harriet Ritvo, "On the Animal Turn," *Daedalus* 136 (2007): 118–22.

¹⁹ Brett Mills, *Animals on Television: The Cultural Making of the Non-Human* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017), 11.

²⁰ Margo DeMello, *Animals and Society: An Introduction to Human-Animal Studies* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2012), 4.

²¹ David Nibert, "Foreword," in *Defining Critical Animal Studies: An Intersectional Justice Approach for Liberation*, eds. Anthony J. Nocella II, John Sorenson, Kim Socha and Atsuko Matsuoka (New York: Peter Lang, 2014), xi.

²² See for examples: Tim Gadd, "Human-Animal Affiliation in Modern Popular Film," in *Figuring Animals: Essays on Animal Images in Art, Literature, Philosophy, and Popular Culture*, eds. M. Pollock and C. Rainwater (London: Palgrave MacMillan, 2005), 247–60; Henrik Brumm, "Biomusic and Popular Culture: The Use of Animal Sounds in the Music of the Beatles," *Journal of Popular Music Studies* 24, no. 1 (2012): 25–38; and, Claire Molloy, "Animals, Avatars and the Gendering of Nature," in *Cinema Beyond the Human*, eds. Anat Pick and Guinevere Narraway (New York: Berghahn Books, 2013), 177–93.

²³ Mills, *Animals and Society*, 65.

²⁴ Randy Malamud, *An Introduction to Animals and Visual Culture* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), 6.

²⁵ Cary Wolfe, "Flesh and Finitude: Thinking Animals in (Post)Humanist Philosophy," *SubStance* 37, no. 3 (2008): 8.

²⁶ Brian Massumi, *Politics of Affect* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2015), ix.

²⁷ *Ibid*, 91.

²⁸ *Ibid*. Emphasis in original.

²⁹ Claire Colebrook, *Deleuze and the Meaning of Life* (London: Bloomsbury Press, 2010), 30.

³⁰ *Willard*, directed by Daniel Mann (Los Angeles, CA: Rysher Entertainment, 1971).

³¹ Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, trans. Brian Massumi (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987), 233.

³² *Ibid*, 239.

³³ Malamund, *Animals*, 46.

- ³⁴ Steve Baker, *The Postmodern Animal* (London: Reaktion, 2000), 139.
- ³⁵ Massumi, *Politics*, 91.
- ³⁶ Ibid.
- ³⁷ Deleuze and Guattari, *Thousand Plateaus*, 293.
- ³⁸ Elena Del Rio, "Bare Life," in *The Grace of Destruction: A Vital Ethology of Extreme Cinemas* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2017), 78.
- ³⁹ Massumi, *Politics*, 89. Emphasis in original.
- ⁴⁰ Ibid.
- ⁴¹ Deleuze and Guattari, *Thousand Plateaus*, 242.
- ⁴² Ibid, 8.
- ⁴³ Ibid, 10–11.
- ⁴⁴ Malamund, *Animals*, 116.
- ⁴⁵ Ibid, 53.
- ⁴⁶ Mills, *Animals on Television*, 119.
- ⁴⁷ Ibid, 121.
- ⁴⁸ Brad Evans, "Life Resistance: Towards a Different Concept of the Political," *Deleuze Studies* 4, (2010): 146.
- ⁴⁹ Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality Vol. I* (Vintage Press, Reissue ed. Apr. 1990), originally published in 1976, 140.
- ⁵⁰ Mills, *Animals on Television*, 46.
- ⁵¹ Lori Gruen and Kari Weil, "Animals Others - Editors' Introduction," in *Hypatia* 27, no. 3 (2012): 479.
- ⁵² Gilles Deleuze, *Foucault*, trans. S. Hand, (London: Continuum Press, 1999), 77.
- ⁵³ Deleuze and Guattari, *Thousand Plateaus*, 270. My emphasis.
- ⁵⁴ Malamund, *Animals*, 46.
- ⁵⁵ Lauter, *Walden Pond*, 92.
- ⁵⁶ Yaszek, "Of Fossils," 54.
- ⁵⁷ Deleuze and Guattari, *Thousand Plateaus*, 276.
- ⁵⁸ Ibid, 278.
- ⁵⁹ Ibid, 279.
- ⁶⁰ Myra J. Hird, *Sex, Gender, and Science* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), 99.
- ⁶¹ Ibid, 99-117.
- ⁶² Claire Colebrook, *Death of the PostHuman: Essays on Extinction, Vol. I* (Open Humanities Press, 2014), 214.
- ⁶³ Hird, *Sex, Gender, and Science*, 99.
- ⁶⁴ Deleuze and Guattari, *Thousand Plateaus*, 233.
- ⁶⁵ Ibid, 278
- ⁶⁶ Ella Brians, "The 'Virtual' Body and the Strange Persistence of the Flesh: Deleuze, Cyberspace and the Posthuman," in *Deleuze and the Body*, ed. Laura Guillaume (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2011), 134.
- ⁶⁷ Evans, "Life Resistance," 152.
- ⁶⁸ Ibid, 146.
- ⁶⁹ Ibid.
- ⁷⁰ Deleuze and Guattari, *Thousand Plateaus*, 270.
- ⁷¹ Evans, "Life Resistance," 154.
- ⁷² The sequels do indeed establish that the Dinosaurs overcome their lysine deficiency through their becoming into ecosystemic relations.
- ⁷³ Deleuze and Guattari, *Thousand Plateaus*, 260.
- ⁷⁴ Malamund, *Animals*, 58.
- ⁷⁵ It is noteworthy that no scholarly analyses of the film have dealt significantly with Ellie Sattler as a character. It seems to me that, from a feminist perspective, she embodies many of the qualities often said to go lacking in popular culture representations of females in action films, science fiction, and popular culture as a whole.
- ⁷⁶ Malamund, *Animals*, 36.
- ⁷⁷ Sedgwick, "Paranoid Reading," 127.
- ⁷⁸ Lauter, *Walden Pond*, 113.
- ⁷⁹ Brian Massumi, *Parables of the Virtual* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2002), 110.
- ⁸⁰ Deleuze and Guattari, *Thousand Plateaus*, 243.
- ⁸¹ Ibid, 240.

⁸² Ibid, 242.

⁸³ Colebrook, *Deleuze*, 31.

⁸⁴ Malamund, *Animals*, 46.

⁸⁵ Lauter, *Walden Pond*, 106.

⁸⁶ Sedgwick, "Paranoid Reading," 151.

⁸⁷ "Curator of Paleontology: Dr. Victoria Arbour." *Royal British Columbia Museum Learning Portal*, Oct. 8, 2020, <https://learning.royalbcmuseum.bc.ca/author/victoriaarbour/>.

⁸⁸ Andrew Anthony, "Paleontologist Steve Brusatte: we owe *Jurassic Park* a debt of gratitude," *The Guardian*, May 13, 2018, <https://www.theguardian.com/science/2018/may/13/steve-brusatte-palaeontologist-debt-gratitude-jurassic-park>.

⁸⁹ Deleuze and Guattari, *Thousand Plateaus*, 259.