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(Not) doing it for the Vine: #Boredom Vine videos and the biopolitics of gesture

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This article approaches gesture in relation to the problem of boredom in a postdigital culture. As David M. Berry and Michael Dieter suggest, the term 'postdigital' encompasses 'a wide range of issues attached to the entanglements of media life after the digital', including, crucially, 'a shift from an earlier moment driven by an almost obsessive fascination and enthusiasm with new media to a broader set of affectations that now include unease, fatigue, boredom, and disillusionment'.[1] In what follows, I explore the role of boredom in recent postdigital media ecologies by focusing on a selection of Vine videos that use boredom-related hashtags[2] to classify bodily movements and gestures, and to link them to a particular situation, mood, or state of mind that is thereby framed as involving boredom in some way. Like other digital media formats, Vine videos display a particular obsession with facial expression, and with the 'division of bodily movements, actions, and gestures into discrete parts'.[3] In #boredom Vines, Viners commonly turn their cameras on themselves, attempting to capture what the experience of boredom feels like through gestures and facial expressions, before spreading their videos through the app's social network, ostensibly in an effort to drive boredom away (Figs 1-3). Gesture is thus positioned in these Vines both as a communicative interface that discloses an internal mood or affective state and as a means through which this same affective state might be forestalled or discharged into action. The article situates #boredom Vine videos within the attention economy of postdigital media, which aims to extract profit from even

the most mundane of our daily gestures, including the experience of being bored.
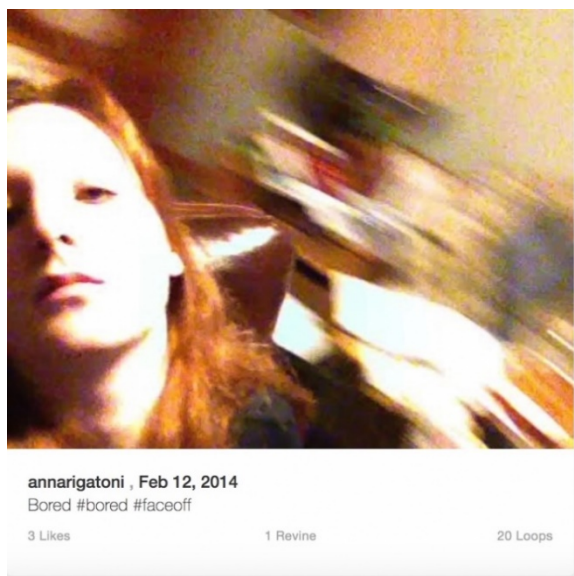

Fig. 1: Video accessed via Vine Archive. Annarigatoni, 'Bored', Vine, 12 February 2014.
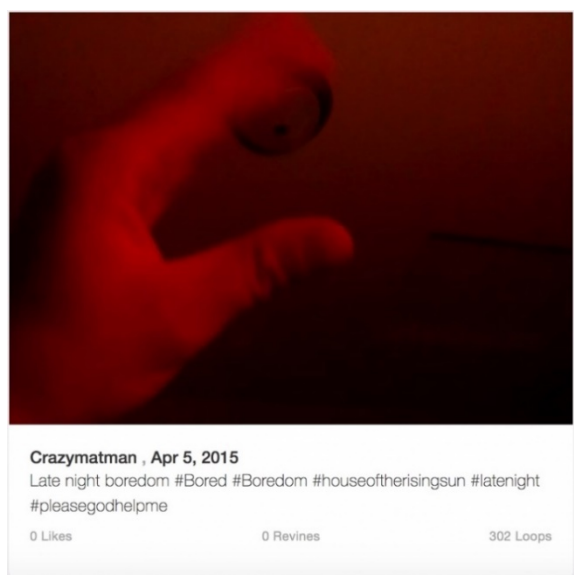

Fig. 2: Video accessed via Vine Archive. Crazymatman, 'Late Night Boredom', Vine, 5 April 2015.

Fig. 3: Video accessed via Vine Archive. Yeovil Dante, 'Boredom Strikes', Vine, 29 October 2014.

In what follows, I explore the often uncomfortable tensions that emerge in #boredom Vine videos between digital network culture's demand for both entertaining content and sufficiently entertained subjects, and the obdurate state of lethargy and stalled agency that these videos sometimes – but do not always – express.

Methodologically, my approach is informed by Giorgio Agamben's understanding of gesture as bound up with wider biopolitical attempts to investigate, systematise, map, and classify the body and also as resisting this process through the potential that he invests in gesture to disclose what he calls a 'sphere of pure means'.[4] In his essay 'Notes on Gesture', Agamben describes a 'generalized catastrophe of the sphere of gestures',[5] which he locates at the end of the nineteenth century, in the wake of the medical and proto-cinematic experiments of Tourette, Muybridge, and others. These experiments attempted to analyse human movement by breaking it down into discrete parts, fixing it into a series of frozen images, thereby estranging the human body from its gestural commons. As Agamben notes, cinema emerges from this same context as a technologico-aesthetic tool, which both documents and attempts to reclaim this crisis of gesture; while cinema can and does contribute to the reification of gesture, it also holds the potential to disclose what Agamben identifies as the essential element of the human gesture: '*the exhibition of a mediality*', that exceeds a logic of means and ends.[6] By exhibiting itself as 'pure mediality',[7] gesture sets itself apart from the sphere of instrumental action and communication, preparing for the 'emergence of

the being-in-a-medium of human beings' and thus, in Agamben's view, opening 'the ethical dimension for them'.[8]

I want to suggest that there is a productive affinity between boredom and Agamben's understanding of gesture as indexing a state of 'ontological suspension'[9] in which 'nothing is being produced or communicated, but rather something is being endured and supported'.[10] Moreover, I want to claim that this state of ontological suspension *can* still be expressed through gesture in short, networked video formats such as Vine, even though this suspended or stalled state is not prioritised – either discursively or technically – by twenty-first century media. In what follows, I develop an understanding of boredom as a temporalised affective and embodied experience of stalled agency that is closely aligned with the notions of suspension, incommunicability, and endurance that inform Agamben's reading of what is disclosed through the sphere of gesture.[11] Commonly thought of as an experience of distended, vacant, or repetitive time, boredom has come to epitomise a pervasive, default state of negativity that digital network culture promises to manage through its supposedly unlimited supply of entertainment on demand. The *OED* defines boredom simply as 'the state of feeling bored', listing a range of synonyms including: lack of enthusiasm, excitement, interest, or concern; apathy, languor, sluggishness, frustration, dissatisfaction; and repetitiveness, flatness, and blandness.[12] In recent psychological research, boredom has been defined as 'the aversive experience of wanting, but being unable, to engage in satisfying activity'.[13] Significantly, this research re-classifies boredom to privilege its relationship with attention rather than existential meaning, which was the basis of measure for previous medico-psychological definitions. In the context of late capitalism, the question of what counts as 'satisfying activity' has been culturally constructed through the category of entertainment, as Julian Jason Haladyn suggests when he writes that boredom can be viewed in this context 'as an assumed response indicative of anyone who is not fully engaged or, more precisely, *entertained* at a given moment or by a given object or event'.[14]

Through their exposure of bodies that are held in the grip of inertia or indecision, caught in a liminal zone between stasis and movement, repetition and change, #boredom Vines highlight boredom as a potential problem for digital network culture's fantasies of 24/7 productivity and unbroken attentive engagement. This direct targeting of the human body's capacities for sustained attention by computational capitalism has been a major preoccupation of recent media theory, featuring as a concern in the work of Franco

'Bifo' Berardi, Jonathan Crary, Mark B. N. Hansen, Jonathan Beller, and many others.[15] In this context, states such as boredom and fatigue – which point to the limits of the human body's capacity for sustained attentiveness and productivity – have been pre-emptively targeted as key sites of biopolitical experimentation and production.[16] This article adds to these ongoing discussions by considering how gesture has been requisitioned in this context as perhaps *the* primary means through which boredom – and the problematic suspension of attentive engagement that it indexes – can be managed and put to work. As I will suggest, in the context of twenty-first century media, gesture has come to accrue specific communicative functions; but perhaps more significant is the way that particular gestures have become engrained as a means of combatting boredom through our engagement with platforms such as Vine. Across many different social media platforms, gesture is often conscripted as a means of unblocking the bored body's stalled agency, and channelling it back into communicative networks, where it can produce value for media corporations.[17] Simply put, habituated or semi-automated gestures that are fostered by participatory networks reclaim the bored body for productivity in the twenty-first century. But, as I will argue, while the bored body is increasingly drawn upon – paradoxically – as a source of productivity, in #boredom Vine videos it still retains the ethico-political potential that Agamben ascribes to gesture and to cinema: to suspend, to oppose the sphere of action and communication, and to resist fixed intention or goals.

This article focuses on a specific configuration of boredom and gesture that flourished in the brief period between 2013 when the Vine platform was launched and 2017 when it was archived by parent company Twitter.[18] While social media platforms such as Vine enable users to capture even the most banal and seemingly unremarkable aspects of their daily lives, they do so within the context of an attention economy which assigns value to these human embodied gestures and movements through their processes of naming, classifying, ordering, ranking, and spreading them. This process is explicitly biopolitical, working to distinguish gestures 'at the fleeting limit between the normal and the pathological',[19] sorting gestural expression somewhere along a continuum between the entertaining and the boring, the spreadable and the unspreadable. As Janet Harbord writes, these same techniques of scientific measurement and photographic study that Agamben evokes in his essay on gesture would contribute to the emergence of cinema, which extends this project of diagnosing interiority through the observation of gesture and facial expression: 'The grammar of the cinema in this early

period comes into line with the proliferating range of discourses concerned with reading the traces of the subject on the exterior of the body, traces that reveal the inner workings of the subject in whatever codified form.'[20] Moreover, as Harbord suggests:

> Far from being simply an entertainment complex, cinema is aligned with a properly modern set of practices that, according to Foucault, capture, reproduce and administrate bodies through the inculcation of the care of the self. Under the sign of the biopolitical, the modern subject is produced through a newly dispersed power moving through the populace as techniques of self-management cross-referred to statistically rendered classificatory norms.[21]

As I will suggest in what follows, twenty-first century platforms such as Vine extend cinema's legacy as a means through which to read interior states through bodily gesture and facial expression, producing new classificatory norms through which boredom and entertainment are understood, and subjecting them to self-management.[22] However, while boredom and the gestures that are indexed to it are often subject to a process of classification and reification in Vine videos, they also retain an inherent ambiguity that allows them to resist this process.

The human body's potential to communicate clearly-coded meanings through gesture is central to the appeal of many of the image-based memes and viral videos that circulate across our networked platforms and devices. While bored people do not always make for the most entertaining of subjects, in GIF culture in particular boredom themed animations abound, offering users ways of commenting on situations that are thereby interpreted as boring.

Functioning as what digital curator Jason Eppink calls 'gestures of the Internet',[23] many reaction GIFs similar to these have entered a 'common lexicon'[24] where they are woven into communicative exchanges as readily-identifiable short-hand emotions that draw on gesture as their material support. For example, the bodies in these GIFs are often used in forums or in online exchanges to signal a user's weariness, apathy, or frustration; to condemn a particular topic as not worthy of one's attention; or to urge an interlocutor to move a conversation along. While scholars such as Hampus Hagman and others have argued for the GIF's potential to restore the fullness of the gesture by pulling it from its narrative framework,[25] these examples show that GIF reaction gestures such as these may just as easily settle down into convention and cliché. These GIFs frame boredom's state of suspended animation as an aversive experience, while providing a means of dispelling it

through the networked actions of searching, finding, copying, and posting. When used in this way, the bored body's gestures are conscripted to work not as a force of suspension, but as a productive part of networked media, which speeds communicative activity along.
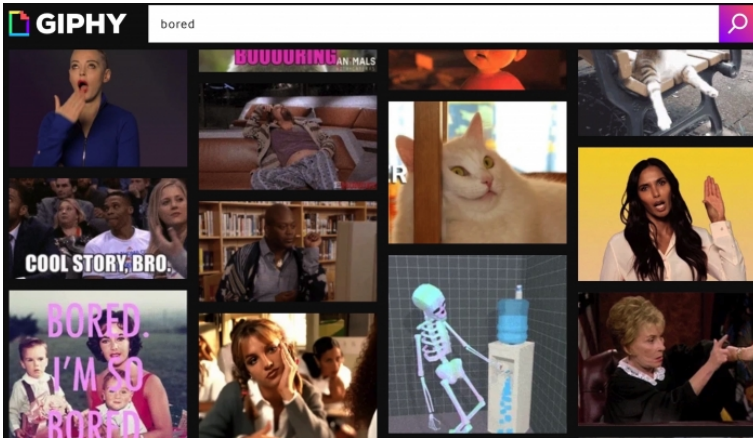

Fig. 4: Frame grab of boredom-themed GIFs returned by searching for the term 'bored' on Giphy.com.

In the case of Vine videos, this framing of the bored body as the site of potential productivity often works somewhat differently. Unlike GIFs, which are more frequently based on material extracted from previously-existing moving image media, Vines enlist users to create their own content. This conscription of users in the production of content is, of course, a key feature of a range of social media platforms, but has a particular significance in the context of #boredom Vines, as I suggest below. During its four-year lifespan, Vine's app for smartphones allowed users to create six-second looping micro-videos and to upload them to the video-sharing platform, where they could describe them through captions and tag them using hashtags; followers could like or comment on the Vines or re-Vine them. As with other social media networks, the Vine platform therefore works by reducing the fullness of a user's embodied agency into a set of specific gestural possibilities aimed at generating maximum traffic on the site. Vines were also frequently shared across other video-sharing platforms, notably YouTube, where many users created compilations to store their favourite Vines before the site was archived. The most popular Vines went viral and inspired other Viners to reiterate, re-mix, and riff on the original – as, for example, in the _What are Those?_ and _Ryan Gosling Won't Eat His Cereal_ memes that originated as Vine videos.

Vine encouraged a specific relationship to gesture through its in-app editing feature, which recorded video when the user's finger was on the screen, and automatically paused or 'cut' when the finger was lifted.

Perhaps because the app was designed for use on personal mobile devices – permitting videos to be filmed and uploaded with ease – Vine quickly established a close connection to the habitual, the banal, the ordinary, often depicting 'users simply doing things',[26] frequently in domestic settings. Indeed, when I first began researching Vine for this project, I was initially struck by the banality of the content that was posted to the platform in general, and the seeming lack of any distinction between the kind of posts that used boredom tags and those that did not. In other words, Vine seemed to have a special relationship to the boring outside of any separate conceptual category that might name and contain it. If anything, boredom hashtags seemed to be used most often simply to indicate an experience of struggling to name and lend meaning to the content that was being shared – to name and qualify what Elizabeth Goodstein calls an 'experience without qualities'.[27] Read in relation to gesture, what is at stake in many Vines that use boredom hashtags to index this diffuse, amorphous state is potentially, following Agamben, nothing other than the

> communication of a communicability. It has precisely nothing to say because what it shows is the being-in-language of human beings as pure mediality.[28]

Rather than pointing to anything specific *about* boredom, gesture in Vine videos is potentially shaped by the affective pressures that are at stake in the experience of having, precisely, nothing to say – in a context in which we are constantly being encouraged to communicate.

However, there is a complex biopolitical process of inculcation at work here that merits further scrutiny. While Vine displayed a particular affinity for the mundane, its success relied on its ability to elevate even the most unremarkable aspects of human experience into entertaining content that could drive traffic to its website and spread it to others. Nathan Jurgensen notes the paradoxical way that Vine and associated platforms such as Vinepeek were able to transform boring, average, everyday material into a feeling of excitement and anticipation, writing: 'Dog sushi computer baby bowling guy beer concert train cooking kid cat shot-glass sports video game eating fireplace cab-ride thinking about what comes next feels a bit addictive.'[29] This process of affective modulation – whereby the mundane and boring is translated into a feeling of anticipation and entertainment – is central to the biopolitical

management of boredom and attention through twenty-first century networked media. Indeed, although I was initially struck by the diversity of content that #boredom Vines seemed to name, after a while specific patterns began to emerge, many of which foregrounded this process of affective modulation at work on Vine. It quickly became apparent that while there were hundreds of Vines being uploaded with boredom hashtags every month, the most popular were those that re-interpreted banal settings and gestures as either humorous, or surprising, or both. Viners who wanted to capitalise on the visibility that the platform afforded them did so by making sure that the content was engaging, unique, memorable, and above all not dull. They also tended to mimic or riff on previous posts that had gained widespread circulation, sorting content into implicit categories or genres.

For example, many #boredom Vine videos feature gags or comedic performances, which may hint at boredom's state of suspension, endurance, or incommunicability, but are expressly intended to move both the user and the viewer past this stasis. The popular *When Happy Cloud Gets Bored*, <u>*Ghetto names*</u>, and <u>*When boredom strikes w/Izzy Dinma*</u> all operate in this way, framing boredom as a pretext for comedic gags or madcap antics aimed at making viewers laugh, and thereby accruing value in the form of loops, likes, and re-Vines. *Ghetto names* – a brief comedic monologue riffing off of the names of household bathroom cleaners – acknowledges this goal of accumulating views through a sub-caption that reads, 'I'm blowing up y'all's feed tonight'. Here the hashtag 'bored' undercuts the blatant attention-seeking that is hinted at in the sub-caption, reinforcing boredom as the great motivator for all manner of comedic, off-beat, or zany performances. *Happy Cloud* highlights this relation between boredom and zaniness by picturing in close-up a man (Daz Black) whose head has been entirely encased in soap suds, save for the eyes and mouth. Holding an electric toothbrush up to the camera, Black says (in a cartoon voice), 'Look what I can do', before simulating some kind of drilling action or electric shock therapy as the toothbrush burrows into his cloud-head (Fig. 5). This zany performance is framed in relation to boredom's powerful sense of suspended agency, which has seemingly driven Black to seek out this new and highly unusual way of passing the time. Many #boredom Vines work in this way, displaying acts that are so irrational or offbeat that they sometimes border on, and seem to validate, sheer stupidity.

Fig. 5: Vine video accessed from YouTube. BestVines, 'When Happy Cloud Gets Bored', YouTube, 25 November 2013.

Fig. 6: Screen grab accessed from Vine. Anonymous User, 'Fun Pain Tazer Boredom', Vine, 13 April 2015.

Many #boredom Vines try to manage boredom through zany performances that aim to shock. For example, *Fun Pain Tazer Boredom* (which has since been taken down by its producer) takes this remit literally, as an unseen camera operator's hand is seen holding a tazer, which he uses on a second man's upper thigh. The about-to-be-tazed man can be heard breathing in a rapid and exaggerated pattern – in through the nose, out through the mouth – as if preparing physically for the ordeal; once tazed, he emits what sounds like a genuine cry of pain before falling backwards into the bathtub, laughing. While this Vine does not make clear how the content relates to boredom *per se*, it can be assumed that boredom is once again identified as motivation for the senseless stunt, which seems to have no goal – except, perhaps, the goal of staving off boredom.[30]

As Sianne Ngai suggests, zany performances such as these navigate tensions that are symptomatic of the '"perform-or-else" ideology of late capitalism, including its increasingly affective, biopolitical ways of meeting the imperative to endlessly increase productivity'.[31] This Vine offers insight into what this imperative to increase productivity might look like in the context of an attention economy, which generates value in part from these sorts of zany, hyper-performative, or reckless stunts. However, as Ngai points out, 'for all its spectacular displays of laborious exertion, the activity of zaniness is more often than not destructive; one might even describe it as the dramatization of an anarchic refusal to be productive'.[32] For Ngai, zany performativity may retain a critical dimension through its hyperbolic displays of pointless or violent action, which clearly exceed any specific intention or goal. Returning to Agamben, perhaps the hyper-performativity of the zany might work to exhibit, or put on display, the pure mediality of human gesture through the sheer excess that it unleashes. But if zany performativity has the potential to unmoor gesture from intention or instrumental reason, I would argue that this is decidedly not the case with the #boredom Vines that we have looked at so far. In zany #boredom Vines, the seeming refusal to be productive that Ngai locates at the heart of the zany aesthetic is channelled back into networked forms of productivity, which not only permit, but even thrive on its excessive, anarchic energies. What is affirmed through the zany in this context is not so much the value of gesture as pure means, but its conscription within a regime that values performativity as an end in itself. So while zany performativity in #boredom Vines may highlight the tensions at stake in a context in which users are conscripted into performing every as-

pect of their ordinary lives as entertaining content for others to view, ultimately their framing within a postdigital attention economy mitigates against a more meaningful critical function. Rather, the openness and ambiguity that Agamben invests in both boredom and gesture are reduced in this context to a set of hashtags and descriptors that are calculated to promote a Viner's profile and accrue loop counts.

Fig. 7: Vine video accessed from YouTube. 9,999,999 Views, 'Bored as Shiiiiii vine', YouTube, 3 December 2017.

Aside from modeling the categories of performativity that are most productive for the management of boredom, #boredom Vine videos also frequently intervene into the temporality of boredom, using the technical affordances of the Vine app to break up and enliven an experience of distended or vacant time. Two extremely popular Vines, *Bored as Shiiiiii* (Fig. 7) and *BoredinClass* foreground the gestural and in-app possibilities for piercing or shaking up boredom's painful state of duration. *BoredinClass* names a highly recognisable situation – with which many young viewers can surely identify – of feeling trapped in a tedious and dreary lesson. While this painful experience of situative boredom is alluded to in the Vine's title, what is noteworthy about the Vine is that the temporality of boredom is never given a chance to unfold. The video begins, rather, with a loud, shrill shriek that pierces the atmosphere, sending reverberations through the room that cause fellow classmates to whip around in alarm. This is followed by a reaction shot of Viner JackSepticEye's face, frozen in a rictus grin. If the 'bored' of the title hints at boredom's sense of intolerable, extended duration, the shriek preempts this unwanted temporality before we even have a chance to experience

it. Similarly, the shriek also models one means by which the painful condition of blocked or suspended agency associated with boredom can be discharged into potent sonic action.

Bored as Shiiiiii works in a similar fashion, but begins with the Viner Daneisia Powell in a classic boredom pose. The mise-en-scene of the bedroom, the positioning of Powell's body laying supine on a bed, and her blank or unimpressed facial expression all convey an atmosphere of domestic boredom that is easily recognisable and relatable. This condition of boredom is framed as so easily legible, in fact, that this shot only lasts for one second before cutting at minute two to reveal a head and shoulders shot of Powell, now standing upright, performing a dance to Jay-Z's 'Big Pimpin'', her lips pressed forward in a comedic pout. This transition, combined with the rhythm of the music and Powell's slightly jerky movements, cut into the distended, dead time of boredom, enlivening the mood into one of playfulness. This video has enjoyed an extremely long afterlife on Instagram and YouTube since its original posting on Vine in 2014. Judging by the user comments on YouTube, the popularity of this video seems to have something to do with the powerful and effective way that it stages its transition from bored stasis to playful excitement. Many of the user comments re-contextualise what happens at second two in light of their own experience, for example: '0:02 when they cancel school for a week',[33] or 'When your crush finally texted you back'.[34] What the video offers viewers, then, is a means of shaping the temporality of their experience into what Anna Munster calls a feeling of being '"in-the-now" of the everyday'.[35] Here, the vacant or diffuse temporality of boredom is re-structured as an affective event, with a clear before and after punctuated by the cut. As Munster suggests, while this shaping of experience through short viral videos entails a 'contouring of this moment's duration as presentness', it does not offer 'duration full of presence', but rather 'a shaping of the temporariness ... of the everyday'.[36] Following Munster, what this Vine offers is a means of structuring temporality such that boredom becomes an event with a clear end in sight, rather than something to be 'endured and supported', as Agamben would have it.[37]

While boredom might present a potential problem for network culture's demand for attentive engagement and entertaining content, here that problem is being worked through gestural efforts of users to translate boredom's lethargy or apathy into recognised networked forms of agency. As such, gesture in these Vines participates in the ongoing biopolitical production of boredom as a site at which subjects might be re-invested back into networked

circuits of value. The platform's motto, 'Do it for the Vine', exemplifies this logic whereby users are conscripted into the ongoing production of their own mundane lives as potential entertainment for others. But what happens in Vine videos that *refuse* the affective modulation and temporal re-structuring outlined above? What about the #boredom videos that decline or simply ignore the platform's invitation to 'Do it for the Vine', focusing instead on the embodied phenomenon of boredom in the time of its duration? While #boredom Vines that aim to disperse or dispel boredom abound, there are also a number of examples that avoid the strategies outlined above, drawing on the technical affordances of the Vine platform in order to reveal something of the state of suspension and endurance that is at stake in both boredom and gesture. These Vines also take a range of different forms. Many focus on gestural movements that are repeated through the Vine's auto-looping function: foreheads are repeatedly bashed against desks, walls, or pillows; groaning bodies fall onto beds and endlessly bounce back up again. (Fig. 8); hand gestures such as snapping, clapping, or puppetry animate the dead time that permeates boredom, but without quite translating it into an event (Fig. 2; Fig. 9). Others picture faces or mouths in close-up, which often emit inarticulate noises instead of words; there is a lot of sighing, yawning, and rhythmic clicking, inhaling, and chomping of teeth (Fig. 3).
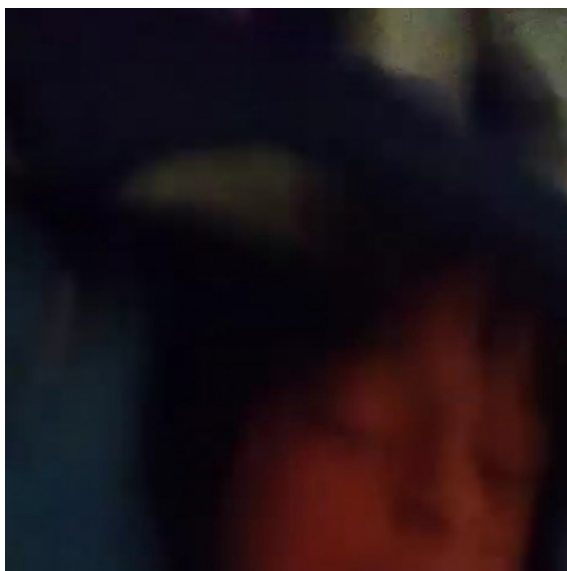

Fig. 8: Frame grab from Vine video. Tristan Herrera, '#bored', Vine, 22 June 2015.

Fig. 9: Frame grab from Vine video. Briana Cordon, '#weird and #bored', Vine, 18 June 2013.

Fig. 10: Frame grab from Vine video. Anonymous User, 'on the floor—Boredom kills', Vine, 9 July 2015.

A smaller number of Vines feature completely still or quasi-still bodies, slumped back or supine, suspended ambiguously between stasis and movement – a state that is extended potentially indefinitely through the Vine platform's auto-loop function. While these Vines do potentially frame boredom as a negative experience that is being worked through the gestural possibilities provided by the Vine app, they admit to a greater degree the state of suspension that Agamben attributes to gesture. While the human bodies in these Vines are bound up within a biopolitical drive to classify, name, and fix the meanings of gestures, many of the gestures that we see in these Vine videos retain a degree of opacity that resists their reduction to instrumental ends. Here, hard-to-decipher bodily gestures and inarticulate vocal expressions convey a sense of boredom at a state of incipience, before it has been mapped, disclosed, understood, before its sense of obstructed agency has been dispelled and re-invested back into networks. Although the hashtags and descriptors used do help to classify what we are seeing, these Vines amplify the ambiguities of both boredom and gesture, featuring subjects whose gestures remain suspended and uncertain, before boredom is codified or translated into an event, and before it is dislodged from the body. These examples interest me because in them the gesturing body is not quite legible, and as a result, it is not as *functional* in the sense of displaying its power to spread through, and hence produce profit for, networked platforms. Indeed, it is important to note that another feature of these particular Vines, in contrast to the earlier Vines discussed in this article, is their modest or extremely small loop counts (many have been looped less than 25 times). These Vines are *not* the Vines that spread across different platforms; many of them have been taken down and so cannot be accessed at all through a traditional web search. I would suggest that this unspreadability has to do with the way that these Vines resist the late-capitalist injunction to translate gestures into entertainment for others. Instead, they put boredom's state of suspension on display, drawing on the gestural potential that Agamben invests in gesture to show the body as supporting and enduring something, rather than on its ability to 'Do it for the Vine'.

By exposing embodied and temporal experiences of not-quite-doing-it-for-the-Vine, these videos thereby open up the potential that Agamben invests in gesture to reveal the 'endurance and the exhibition of the media character of corporal movements'.[38] Similarly, in their inarticulateness, they foreground the dimension of incommunicability that Agamben ascribes to gesture when he suggests that 'the gesture is always a gesture of not being able

to figure something out in language; it is always a *gag* in the proper meaning of the term'.[39] What these videos highlight through both boredom and gesture is the potential for resistance that both yield within the spheres of communication and action. These videos do not unquestionably take the alleviation of boredom or the entertainment of others to be an end goal, but foreground their own mediality and the process of making a means visible as such: here I am, simply bored. In this way, these Vines make trouble for the affective promise that boredom can be dissolved by twenty-first century media technologies, or that we might be endlessly entertained by the boredom of others. This has implications, in turn, for the kinds of hopes that we invest in media platforms, and the sorts of ethical relations that we might hope to forge through them.

While gesture in the Vine videos analysed in this article clearly solicits some kind of attention, recognition, or relation, the terms of what is being expressed, and what kind of relation might thus ensue, remains uncertain. This sense of suspension or uncertainty that is manifested in the recalcitrant energies of boredom is, as I have suggested in this article, a potential resource for Agamben's gestural politics, which would recognise boredom not as a problem for individual subjects to manage, but as storing energies that might refuse inscription within a neoliberal logic of means and ends, to disclose a commons founded on the human gesture as pure mediality. While boredom is not a default form of resistance in a postdigital culture, it retains a degree of ambivalence because through its gestures the question of means and ends is delayed, suspended, or short-circuited. This article has attempted to theorise relations between boredom and the gestural as they were mediated through the Vine platform during the brief period when it flourished. But although it may have established a particular relationship to the everyday – and perhaps even the boring – Vine is certainly not the only platform through which users attempt to express, modulate, and manage boredom. Further research is needed to assess how other networked platforms – from Snapchat to TikTok – frame the work of boredom and gesture in a postdigital media ecology.

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Notes

[1]   Berry & Dieter 2015, p. 5.

[2]   Specific hashtags consulted on the Vine platform for this article include: #bored, #boredom, #boredomstikes, #boredomkills, and #boredaf. For an initial discussion of 'digital boredom' and the use of hashtags on social media, see Hand 2017.

[3]   Maeder & Wentz 2014, p. 143.

[4]   Agamben 2000, p. 57.

[5]   Ibid., p. 50.

[6]   Ibid., p. 58.

[7]   Ibid.

[8]   Ibid., p. 57.

[9]   Levitt 2008, p. 203.

[10] Ibid., p. 56.

[11] Although Agamben does not pursue this affinity between gesture and boredom directly, his essay on 'Profound Boredom' in *The Open: Man and Animal* elaborates boredom's condition of 'being-held-in-suspense' in terms that are strongly compatible with his understanding of gesture as 'the proper sphere of that which is human'. Agamben 2000, p. 56. As he notes, 'profound boredom' discloses the human in its openness, its 'pure potentiality', which is a 'suspension and withholding of all concrete and specific possibilities'. Agamben 2004, p. 67.

[12] *Oxford English Dictionary,* 2019.

[13] Eastwood et al. 2012, p. 482.

[14] Haladyn 2015, n.p.

[15] See, for example, Berardi 2015; Crary 2013; Hansen 2015; Beller 2018.

[16] See Crary 2013; Gardiner 2014; Gorfinkel 2017; Kendall 2017.

[17] It is important to note that while the profit model of corporate social media relies on the surveillance and monetising of attention (see Fuchs 2014, pp. 114-117), Vine is an interesting case study in this context because it failed to monetise attention quickly enough to remain commercially viable, and hence parent company Twitter decided to shut down the platform in 2017. However, while Vine may not have profited directly from its users' content, it is clear that the 'entertain or else' mentality that helps to produce value for corporate social media bled into many of the Vines created by Viners, who would share them across platforms, where the content *was* monetised. On the wider issue of boredom and social media's creation of value through affect, see Paasonen 2018.

[18] While the particular configuration of boredom and gesture that we find in Vine videos is specific to the twenty-first century postdigital attention economy, it emerges from a much longer historical process of observing, classifying, and disciplining both. In a longer version of this research I explore the historical parallels between the 'generalized catastrophe of the sphere of gestures' evoked by Agamben, and the widespread 'epidemic' of boredom that emerged during roughly the same period of history. Agamben 2000, p. 50.

[19] Väliaho 2014, p. 103.

[20] Harbord 2016, p. 77.

[21] Ibid., p. 72.

[22] This formal process of reading emotion from facial expression and bodily gesture has extended into multiple applications in the twenty-first century. One example is in affective computing, where facial recognition software is being developed in order to detect incipient boredom, amongst other emotions. This technologically-enabled effort to 'read' boredom through facial expression and gesture is being tested and marketed for use across a range of educational and commercial settings, with the aim of rescuing flagging attention spans from the 'danger' that boredom represents in these contexts (Schwartz 2019). In this regard, the production of classificatory norms through facial and bodily cues that we see on social media platforms such as Vine participates in a wider cultural logic of the postdigital, which increasingly focuses on detecting, classifying, and then modulating human emotions.

[23] Eppink in Maughan 2016.

[24] Eppink 2014.

[25] See Hagman 2012; Fetviet 2018; Cuppen 2017; Maeder & Wentz 2014; Poulaki 2015.

[26] Treske 2015, p. 97.

[27] Goodstein 2005.

[28] Agamben 2000, p. 58.

[29] Jurgenson, 2013.

[30] This Vine also unwittingly re-enacts a well-known 2014 psychological experiment that found that people would 'rather be electrically shocked than left alone with their thoughts', effectively choosing pain over boredom. Whitehead 2014.

[31] Ngai 2012, p. 12.

[32] Ibid.

[33] Lovable Hearts Here 2018.

[34] Blackfox 2018, p. 147.

[35] Munster 2013, p. 103.

[36] Ibid.

[37] Agamben 2000, p. 56.

[38] Ibid., p. 57.

[39] Ibid., p. 58.