Fluids on Pictures on Screens: Pseudonymous Affect on Reddit’s TributeMe

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Abstract
Tributing is the practice of sending a sexually explicit photo adorned in ejaculate to the subject of the photo. It involves an entanglement of screens, online identities, platforms, affect, materiality, and bodily fluids and plays out in a particular way on bulletin board Reddit. This article draws on two week-long archives of the subreddit TributeMe to study the way affective exchanges are intensified by the circulation of digital images. I draw on the way affect pertains to movement to argue that tributes express affect moving in two ways: through the body, with the ejaculation evidencing arousal and standing in for a physical encounter, and through social media platforms, with images being circulated as digital objects. Although the strict verification system involves providing consent for the image to be tributed, people deliberately remain pseudonymous on TributeMe. This is a strategy to compartmentalize their involvement in TributeMe so it does not appear as a publicly accessible digital trace. The pseudonymity of TributeMe allows people to engage in sexualized affective exchanges in public.

Keywords
social media, platforms, pseudonymity, affect, Reddit, tributing, public intimacy

Tributing is the practice of ejaculating on a sexually explicit photo, taking a photo of the printed page or device adorned in ejaculate, and sending it back to the subject of the photo. It involves an entanglement of screens, online identities, platforms, affect, intimacy, materiality, and bodily fluids and plays out in a particular way on bulletin board Reddit. The subreddit TributeMe hails potential participants in a sexually playful fashion:

Girls: Like the idea of seeing yourself coated in cum? Ever wanted to see the seminal satisfaction your pics can bring? Fancy a fantasy facial?

Guys: Want a wank? Why waste it when wenches want to watch?

Try a Tribute!

We’re all about good dirty fun.

It might seem weird at first, but seeing yourself covered in guys’ cum is strangely arousing, curiously satisfying, and surprisingly fun. It’s like having a memory of something you never actually did. Being able to try it and talk about it openly, safely, and in a supportive environment, is pleasantly liberating . . . and somewhat addictive; you can’t understand until you’ve tried it yourself!—anon.

Submitters must have TributeMe flair proving that they are verified before they can request tributes. (TributeMe, 2017)

This article considers TributeMe as a site of affective exchange between participants, facilitated by the pseudonymity of those posting. To pay attention to what people do in relation to social media platforms—Nick Couldry (2012) calls this approach a focus on media practices, and Margaret Wetherell (2012) describes it as studying affective practice—I archived posts and comments from TributeMe, analyzing them in terms of how they communicated affect, and how this affect was intensified by each circulation of the image.

I have written about pseudonymity practices on Reddit GoneWild to argue that pseudonymity allows people to publicly share sexual images of themselves (van der Nagel, 2012)
Affect Theory and Social Media

Affect is a concept that has been deployed in studies of social media when considering how the intensity of emotion is embodied through communication on platforms. It is most often traced back to philosopher Benedict de Spinoza (1883/2000), who discussed the way emotions increase, diminish, aid, or constrain the active power of the body. For Gilles Deleuze (1998), noticing a state of affect is also noticing the passage from one state to another. Psychologist Daniel Stern (2010) suggests that we experience forms of vitality, or affect, as events that have a force within or behind them. He explains that affect isn’t an emotion but how someone has an emotion. Someone can be explosively angry or have their anger surge up or fade away. Affect is how emotion moves someone. Wetherell (2012) argues that a turn to affect in the social sciences led to a focus on embodiment and endeavors to understand how people are moved. Like Couldry (2012), Wetherell emphasizes that studying affective practice, what people do, is a productive way to expand the scope of social investigation by bringing the emotional as it appears in social life back into analysis. Within media theory specifically, Anthony McCosker (2013) argues that a renewed interest in affect involves a sharper focus on bodily matter and forces while also paying attention to sociocultural contexts.

In this article, I consider pseudonymous, affective practices that are mediated through screens, devices, and social media platforms. Existing studies of affect on social media have investigated how people use platforms to receive, process, and transmit affect. For Jodi Dean (2015), affect comes from the endless circular movement of commenting, adding notes and links, bringing in new friends and followers, layering and interconnecting myriad communication platforms and devices. Every tweet or comment, every forwarded image or petition, accrues a tiny affective nugget. (p. 90)

On Tumblr, Alexander Cho (2015) argues that communicating through queer porn images that circulate without captions involves relying on the felt register of imagery. On Twitter, Zizi Papacharissi (2014) interprets the platform as one that supports affective processes in political discussions, because affect is an energy that drives networked publics by making people feel connected and close to some, and distanced from others. Cho and Papacharissi are both attuned to how platform affordances allow for affective exchanges, while Nishant Shah (2015) emphasizes that platforms are not invisible intermediaries through which affect travels from person to person but have themselves become sites of desire and recipients of affect. Shah is being provocative about the role that platforms play in affective exchanges, and other theorists have been more critical about the way platforms commodify affect. In their article, “The Like Economy,” Carolin Gerlitz and Anne Helmond (2013) trace social buttons to demonstrate that Facebook’s rhetoric of connectivity emphasizes sociality while turning interactivity and affect into valuable consumer data. Facebook Likes quantify the affect present in expressing an emotion over social media content, enabling a datafied metric of engagement rather than an open-ended box for comments. Platforms and the way they operate through automated algorithms generate what Taina Bucher (2016) calls “ordinary affects”: it can be disconcerting to see people who have died recommended as friends or frustrating to post something that doesn’t garner any Likes.

When I examine tributing, I am not only considering the physical trace of one body on another, in the sense of ejaculate being on a picture of someone’s body, but the way arousal involves movement. Within the context of TributeMe, arousal is not a static state. It involves a cycle of affective media practices, from taking photos to uploading digital images to thanking a person for tributing an image. Before considering the affective exchanges of sexual subreddit TributeMe, I turn to a brief overview of Reddit and how TributeMe operates within the platform.

TributeMe on Reddit

Reddit is a bulletin board that functions as a repository of links, calling itself “the front page of the Internet.” Registered members, or Redditors, submit posts to topic threads called subreddits, and Redditors can give posts one upvote or one downvote, a voting system that ranks content so that the most popular submissions are displayed at the top of each page. Two white, male American college students in their early 20s, Steve Huffman and Alexis Ohanian, created Reddit in 2005,
and their demographic group remains Reddit’s central user base (Duggan & Smith, 2013). A pseudonymous culture thrives on Reddit, fostering an unfiltered culture, according to Adrienne Massanari (2015). This is largely due to the signup process, which only asks for a username and password to post and allows people to browse without logging in at all. Instead of profiles, Redditors have a page that lists their posts in chronological order. Most Redditors use pseudonyms as their usernames, but to compartmentalize their posts, some also use multiple accounts or a temporary “throwaway” account (Leavitt, 2015) when posting. Reddit is governed by its content policy, informal rules of engagement known as Reddiquette, and guidelines for each individual subreddit that include rules about what kinds of content is allowed. The subreddit TributeMe is intended for adult audiences, and as quoted in the introduction of this article, it is a thread that invites women to submit sexually suggestive photographs of themselves in order for those photographs to be masturbated on by men and presented back to the original posters with ejaculate.

Sending photos of ejaculate on sexual images dates back to at least the 1980s, when men would submit Polaroids of their ejaculate on the centerfolds of magazines like Juggs (Shah, 2016). Although tributing has scarcely been studied as a discrete practice among porn or social media scholarship, it is discussed in an interview with sexual anthropologist Sergio Messina. Discussing the amateur, messy, authentic porn genre Realcore, often seen on early bulletin board Usenet, Messina calls tributing especially evocative. He describes it as a game in which the first post is the opening move, alluding to the circulation of affect and images through platforms: “What a digital, complex, multi-stage way to please each other! Real, then virtual, then real again (and sticky), then virtual again, then sticky again . . . .” (Messina in Dery, 2007: 29). In Messina’s experience, tributing is a practice that often involves photos of faces, but I have encountered it as largely pseudonymous. Sharing erotic photographs in public, while being unidentified, was a key part of the thrill and the pleasure for tributers and tributees.

Tributing occurs across multiple platforms, including Twitter and Tumblr with the hashtag #cumtribute, but these are not necessarily consensual. On the subreddit TributeMe, the emphasis is on tributing performed with photos that were specifically created and uploaded for this purpose. TributeMe was founded in 2012, and a female moderator set up the rules for privacy protection and etiquette to avoid the subreddit becoming a place for men to post pictures of their ex-partners, and because she acknowledged that interaction between tributers and tributees is part of what makes tributing enjoyable (BobbyJo_babe in Klee, 2015).

**Observing Affective Encounters: Methods, Ethics, and Results**

I studied tributing through a case study of the subreddit TributeMe, using a qualitative approach to reveal social norms and assumptions about communication technology (Marwick, 2013). My data collection of the two separate weeks of posts to TributeMe included images, so that I could gain an understanding of how the platform operates. In their book *Visualizing Facebook*, Daniel Miller and Jolyonna Sinanan (2017) claim their main approach to their corpus of images was “simply to stare at thousands of visual postings and try and identify repetition and genres” (p. 5). While my content analysis also involved breaking the posts into categories and counting instances of platform elements associated with the posts, such as tags for different kinds of posters, staring at the postings was how I began my analysis. This qualitative case study involves different kinds of multimedia data: my two week-long observations included platform architecture, subreddit guidelines, pseudonymous usernames, images, image titles, image tags, and comments. When researching online porn, Paasonen (2011) argues that when the visual and textual are meshed, more than one strategy is needed to interpret these hybrid modalities.

I pay particular attention to practices of tributing, following Couldry (2012), who argues that we can understand how media relates to society by focusing on what people do when they are engaging with media. When applied to social media studies, Couldry’s approach is useful because it foregrounds the user and how they interact with, and negotiate, platforms. When his media practice approach is combined with affect theory, it allows me to discuss the way that taking photos, uploading digital objects to platforms, titling images, recording masturbating to climax, and posting links are all ways in which people on TributeMe engage in affective encounters. Accessing these practices involved observing the content on the platform, and in collecting these data, I had to make decisions about the ethics of doing so.

There aren’t any firm rules about whether social media posts are more like published texts or private conversations, but researchers must be aware of the reasonable expectations of people communicating online (Waller et al., 2016). Tim Highfield and Tama Leaver (2015) argue that using social media posts for research may be altering someone’s user experience of privacy, since their posts are being taken out of context. I’ve paraphrased or shortened comments within this article to preserve the commenter’s anonymity, because even if I don’t include the username of the person posting, directly quoting from Reddit can mean the image titles or comments can be entered into a search engine and traced back to the poster. According to Stefanie Duguay (2015), changing minor words within phrases on social media protects personal information, as it limits the searchability of the phrase. Although the people posting in TributeMe do so pseudonymously, I don’t want to compromise their Reddit presence by reappropriating their words.

Another element worth considering in the research process was how to publicly write about a sexual practice, and a specific subreddit, that may have otherwise remained relatively unknown. I discovered TributeMe as an offshoot of...
popular exhibitionist subreddit GoneWild and have seldom found tributing mentioned in news articles, blog posts, or academic work. When tributing is the subject of writing, it is often framed as an atypical, niche sexual practice, presented to an audience to fascinate and titillate: take, for example, the article titled “The amateur-porn hub where men defile their laptops for strangers” by Miles Klee (2015), posted to The Kernel within its “Weirder Web” section. I am aware that writing about tributing in this journal article means exposing the subreddit to a wider audience, but I acknowledge my position in doing so. Radhika Gajjala (2002) emphasizes the importance of researchers being self-reflexive about their subjectivities, which she argues are produced within historical and structural constraints. I have approached this topic of study as a sex-positive, feminist researcher who respects and appreciates TributeMe as a mutually consensual site of affective exchanges. Consent is established through the verification system: on TributeMe, beginning a post means receiving the message:

Privacy and respect are paramount here—we’re all about the willing spilling of the juice on fantasising females, so all female posters must be verified before Tributes can flow. (TributeMe, 2017; emphasis in original)

Verification involves posters submitting a photo of them holding a handwritten card displaying their username, the name of the subreddit, and the date; choosing a verification type; and including the word “verification” in the title of the post. Types of verification include “cum-certified” (non-identifying body photos only), “tattooed target” (photos featuring tattoos or body modifications), “facial fan” (photos revealing anything above the bottom lip), “couple,” or “trans.” This verification system fits within a platform-wide rhetoric of consent while sharing images, as Reddit forbids sexualized images of people taken or posted without their permission. Despite this, other subreddits exist with no verification policy, including NSFW Tributes, CumTributes, CelebrityTributes, and CumOnHer. These subreddits do warn against posting photos of people without their permission but have no formal procedure to ensure the consent of the photo’s subjects.

To study how TributeMe functions and how it is growing and changing, I conducted two rounds of data collection, archiving each post from 8 to 15 March 2017, then 8 to 15 June 2017. During the data collection periods, I logged on to TributeMe each day and recorded each post’s date, number of upvotes, image, image title, username, verification level, and the comments, including any links to photos or videos of the post being tributed. I took screenshots and copied and pasted text, images, and links into a document, a manual method which required a close engagement with the site.

It seemed I arrived in TributeMe at a moment of growth. There were plenty of verification posts, indicating new members, and the number of subscribers grew from 47,234 at the beginning of the first data collection period to 52,553 subscribers by the end of the second week, an increase of 5,319 subscribers over 3 months. On TributeMe, people often post multiple times a week. In March, there were 63 posts from 36 different posters. The June collection featured slightly fewer posts from more posters: 57 posts came from 41 different posters. As people join the subreddit, their first post must verify them before they are allowed to post images to be tributed. This verification process doesn’t seek to undermine their pseudonymity; rather, it links the bodies in the images with consent from the person posting them. Rather than seeing fewer verification posts as time went on, indicating new people stayed on, the kinds of posts were similar for both weeks. In March, there were 13 verification posts; 34 tributed; and 16 tagged “Tribute me!” By June, there were 10 verification posts; 35 tributed, and 12 tagged “Tribute me!”

In addition to this, I noticed there were only six usernames common to both data collection weeks, meaning that TributeMe has a high turnover of posters: people move through the verification process, post a few photos to be tributed, and then stop posting.

I was especially interested in the pseudonymity practices of TributeMe and how pseudonymity facilitates public affect and intimacy. Faces are extremely rare, but do still occur, on TributeMe. Of the verification levels, the most common (with 38 posts in March and 35 in June) was “cum-certified.” Five posts in March and six in June were tagged “tattoo target,” and there were three posts for each month tagged “facial fan.” In addition to leaving faces out of images, people also play with identity clues in their usernames. Rather than simply building a username from their first and last name, Redditors on TributeMe were much more likely to include elements that alluded to their bodies: hair and skin colors, body shapes, and body parts featured in usernames with words like “curvy,” “hot,” “ginger,” “booty,” “pink,” and “boobs.” Some usernames revealed a relationship status, including the terms “wife,” “gf” [girlfriend], or “husband.” Others seemed to be usernames of accounts specifically created to post within TributeMe, referencing “tributes,” “cum,” or including the word “throwaway” within the username to indicate the account is temporary.

**Selfies, Sexting, Porn: Framing Tributing**

TributeMe exists, not definitively within scholarship around selfies, sexting, or pornography but at the productive tension between all three. As a subreddit for self-portrait photographs, TributeMe can be understood within recent scholarship on selfies, which are intimate portraits taken by the subject of the photograph in an act of self-representation. The meaning of a selfie is highly contextual (Lasén, 2015), and within the context of TributeMe, women pose provocatively, urging men to ejaculate on their photo. As Theresa
Senft and Nancy Baym (2015) put it, the selfie signifies human agency, but it is distributed through an assemblage of nonhuman agents. The selfie is a mirror, camera, and stage all at once, argues Katie Warfield (2015), as she alludes to the way selfies may begin as private reflections, but become caught in mediated, networked publics as they circulate through platforms. This enmeshing of the intimate and private with the networked and public is intensified when selfies are sexy, when their vulnerability threatens to become overexposed.

According to Amparo Lasén (2015), publicly displaying intimate images modifies the articulation between privacy and intimacy. The selfies posted to TributeMe may be accessible to anyone who comes across the subreddit, as Reddit posts are available to view even to people without accounts on the platform, but they are not public in the sense that they would be appropriate to share with family, friends, or coworkers. Posting selfies on TributeMe, therefore, becomes a risk. In this case, the danger is being judged or alienated by people outside TributeMe. As I have discussed, pseudonymity is a way to mitigate these risks. As will be discussed later in this article, while tributing is a mutually consensual, pleasurable activity within TributeMe, some outside the subreddit find it disgusting.

This discourse of risk is common to writing on sexting, the practice of exchanging sexy selfies through digital devices and platforms. Although TributeMe hosts one-to-many image sharing, the emphasis on reciprocity could situate it within sexting literature. Although much popular discourse on sexting frames it as something young women in particular should abstain from to avoid becoming victims of sexual humiliation, researchers like Kath Albury (2017) and Amy Adele Hasinoff (2013, 2015) argue that “sex education” should challenge gendered assumptions by reframing young women as active content creators engaging in a digitally mediated sexual practice and instead punishing those who redistribute sexts as violators of privacy and trust. Along with being understood as selfies and sexts, the images that circulate within TributeMe are also a kind of amateur, user-generated porn: those posting are not paid to do so, but they do produce sexualized, erotic photos and videos intended to sexually arouse their viewer. Reddit’s (2018) rule that prohibits “the dissemination of images or video depicting any person in a state of nudity or engaged in any act of sexual conduct apparently created or posted without their permission” (n.p.) calls this “involuntary pornography,” and journalist Gaby Dunn (2013) refers to those posting on related subreddit GoneWild as “amateur porn stars.”

Paasonen (2011) points out that “amateur” has been co-opted as an aesthetic that represents rawness and intimacy through drawing on the social and material textures of everyday life to invoke a sense of authentic desire and pleasure. This authenticity is depicted within images on TributeMe that routinely feature bedrooms, bathrooms, and domestic furnishings like curtains, cushions, towels, and bedspreads. Such everyday textures, along with the ability to communicate directly with the subject of the image, contribute to the affective practice of tributing: the layering of images and fluid, and the personal exchanges within a public platform. According to Paasonen, the carnal resonance of porn is the way it moves people in embodied ways. Porn “involves the viewers’ ability to recognize and somehow sense the intensities, rhythms and motions depicted in porn in their own bodies” (Paasonen, 2014, p. 138). In the case of TributeMe, the images compel their audience to capture and share an emission of semen as evidence of the way they have been moved. This affective practice can be framed within different, but overlapping, areas of scholarship: it can also be framed as a desirable practice by those who engage in it, and a disgusting one by those who consider it a niche fetish they would not themselves participate in.

**Desire and Disgust**

For Sara Ahmed (2014), desire and disgust are contradictory impulses, desire pulling us toward objects, disgust pulling us away. This “pulling” is an intensification of movement that is embodied through facial expressions, nausea, and recoiling: “to be disgusted is after all to be affected by what one has rejected” (Ahmed, 2014, p. 86). Considering perspectives on tributing from those who find it disgusting, and contrasting them with those who find it desirable, allows me to make a case for why people remain pseudonymous while they offer or tribute photos: they feel able to take part in an affective, intimate practice in public.

While the comments within TributeMe are overwhelmingly positive, one unsolicited offer of tributing was reposted to a cringe subreddit, which drew the following comments (following Duguay 2015, minor words paraphrased to avoid searchability):

- how the fuck would any guy think any girl would ever want a “tribute”?

- Eww. That’s something I wish I didn’t know. Again, Eww.

- Who would want that?? Ever????

- I mean . . . I guess he asked first. I’m super grossed out right now but it’s better than just getting a video. shudder

- What the fuck

- Love how guys think jacking off on a stranger’s photo is some wonderful flattering gift. Ugh.

- So that’s . . . um . . . disturbing . . .

- Creep posts like this don’t usually bother me too much, but this one made me quite nauseous for some reason.
These comments express shock and disgust: some over the man’s inappropriate sexual offer on a non-sexual subreddit, but most over the act of tributing itself. This disgust is despite the description of CringePics (2017) as “the place for images depicting an awkward or embarrassing social interaction” (n.p.). For McCosker (2013), obscenity is the sensation of discomfort felt when in proximity to bodies displaying either sexual pleasure or physical pain. These commenters are expressing their disgust and discomfort at obscenity through phrases that describe embodied responses: exclaiming “eww,” using multiple question marks “?????” to demonstrate incredulity, describing a movement by italicizing the word “shudder,” and claiming their body felt “nauseous.” In this way, even the broader audience of Reddit, who do not enjoy tributes, have a visceral, embodied response to them.

On TributeMe, women initiate the encounters by posting pictures of themselves, and men respond to their demands for a specific kind of sexual attention. The pseudonymity of Reddit, along with the capacity to produce and distribute images for the specific purpose of them being tributed, is an important element in this practice of affective exchanges.

Clear markers of voluntary participation and sexual desire are present in the image titles on TributeMe. I won’t quote exact image titles to preserve the pseudonymity of the people posting, but the most common genre of image title was an appeal directly to a potential masturbator for them to ejaculate on the linked photo. Sometimes a directive was given, imploring a tributer to ejaculate on someone’s “ass,” “tits,” “holes,” or “pussy” (in the language of the image titles). A desire for a large quantity of ejaculate was expressed with phrases like “frost my tits,” “I want to be covered,” “shower me,” or “give me a load.” Importantly, the image titles were written as though speaking directly to a lover, without any reference to the mediation processes involved in uploading a digital image to a specific section of a platform. People were deliberately ignoring the screens that separated them, instead emphasizing the embodied aspects of tributing. Even though tributees would never actually feel the ejaculate on their body, image titles like “I want to feel your cum dripping down my thighs,” “I promise to keep it on my tits all day,” “I want my tits sticky,” and “give me a hot/warm/yummy load” (titles paraphrased) paid attention to how the ejaculate would feel. Affect is inherently within the material body, Anna Gibbs (2002) argues, amplified and modulated by mediated faces, voices, sounds, and images. Tiziana Terranova (2004) also foregrounds the materiality of affect when she writes:

In the missing half-second between the moment when the skin reacts to the image and the moment when the brain registers the stimulus, all kinds of crossing of wires take place. The whole body is filled by the vibrations produced by the impact of images on sensory organs, including eyes, ears and skin. What we actually come to perceive consciously is only a fraction of what has touched us. (pp. 151–152)

The images circulating around TributeMe, from the original photo as a post on the subreddit, to the downloaded, ejaculated on photo, to the re-uploaded photo in a comment become imbued with affect as the participants draw upon the available platform affordances to speak to each other as though they were in each other’s physical presence.

Within comments on the images, the most common genre is praise: affective expressions like “mmmm,” “I’d love to . . . [fuck you, come on you, other expression of a sexual encounter in person],” or adjectives for the body of the poster like “amazing,” “awesome,” “hot,” “exquisite,” “beautiful,” “fantastic,” “impressive.” Don Slater (2002) wrote about the exchange of sexually explicit material, or sexpics, on chatroom Internet Relay Chat (IRC), arguing that people went to great lengths to make things material to establish a social order within the chatroom. Mechanisms of making things “more thing-like” (p. 229) included moving off IRC to other communication mediums like email or phone calls, creating extensive categories of sexual imagery, and people claiming that the photos exchanged were of themselves. Many of these mechanisms of materiality can also be seen within TributeMe, such as the emoticons and emojis used in image titles and comments.

Emojis have been popular on Reddit since mid-2015, which may be attributable to the uptake of mobile Reddit apps allowing for the insertion of emojis into text posts and comments. They are another way to reinscribe a human touch into platforms that abstract a person through text and mostly faceless images. Within my data collection, I recorded smiley faces :) as a general marker of positivity, along with emoticons and emojis that signaled flirtations or sexual comments, like winking faces ;), kissing faces :, tongues poking out :P, hearts <3, drooling face emoji 😋, kiss mark emoji 😘, droplets or the splashing sweat symbol 💦, and the peach emoji 🍑. These pictograms are important ways of representing affect, as well as the body: emoticons punctuate conversation with an action, sitting alongside detailed, graphic language as a way of mediating presence (Argyle & Shields, 1996). Emojis create new avenues for digital feeling, underscoring tone, introducing humor, and bringing color and personality into networked text (Stark & Crawford, 2015). Emojis are a standardized set of graphics with varying sociocultural conventions of use: as Highfield and Leaver (2016) argue, emojis aren’t treated as straight visual representations but have their own connotations. In my observations of TributeMe, the droplets that Emojipedia calls “splashing sweat” 💦 were often used to represent ejaculate, and the peach emoji 🍑 was included in a comment about attractive buttocks. In this way, emoticons and emojis add affective texture to the networked practice of tributing.

**Pseudonymous Affect on TributeMe**

We can see through the pseudonymity of most people posting to TributeMe that they are actively intervening in their own network of digital traces. For Tyler Reigeluth (2014), producing traces is an inevitable part of digital communication. He
argues that someone’s online identity is made up of the sum of the digital traces they leave behind. Digital traces on social media can consist of records about demographics that platforms collect and sell to advertisers, or what Brady Robards calls the disclosures people make on platforms like Facebook, such as uploading photos, writing status updates, commenting on posts made by others, sharing news items, and entering biographical details. According to Robards (2014), “these digital traces of life are archived by default, persisting indefinitely as etches in Facebook’s servers around the world” (n.p.), and gaining curatorial control over this process is an effort. One way of controlling the digital traces that people leave behind as they move through platforms is by remaining pseudonymous: someone who enters a full first and last name into a search engine will not be presented with that person’s Reddit username. Posting under a pseudonym or a temporary account, only uploading photos that don’t include the posters’ face, and using image sharing programs that strip metadata from digital objects are all strategies to disrupt digital traces. Posting pseudonymously means that, in most cases, the image is only available to people within the specific context of TributeMe, leaving the posters free to publicly share intimate images and desires. I consider the images of ejaculate on images of posing women to be imbued with affect and the way it moves people: tributing is a way of being moved through sexual arousal. These posts render sexual desire physical through the act of masturbating and ejaculating onto a device, then translating that action into a digital object by recording it and posting it on TributeMe. Creating and communicating intimacy through affective exchanges can be seen within the image titles, comments, and emoji on TributeMe.

On TributeMe, people communicate sexual desire and pleasure in a way that aims to provoke physical arousal. They draw on the communicative features of the platform to title their images, comment on them, and embed emojis that represent a diverse range of body languages and embodied responses. And they do so mostly pseudonymously, exercising control over their digital traces. As Ben Light (2014) puts it, people on social media can claim agency over their own identities by deliberately disconnecting from some parts of the online experience. In the case of TributeMe, someone disconnecting from their other identity facets and digital traces through pseudonymity allows them to connect to tributing as a form of sexual expression and enjoyment. Participating in TributeMe means inviting a particular kind of digital trace: people posting their photographs want to be connected to an audience who will appreciate their photos through marking them in a physical way and making their affective response available as a digital object through the platform.

**Conclusion**

Tributing involves the movement of affect in a physical sense, with arousal moving through the body to the point of ejaculation. For Paasonen, male orgasm is at the center of contemporary porn images. Women are seen begging male partners to ejaculate on them, essentially behaving as a mirror of male desire. Male ejaculation on a partner’s body is a convention known as the money shot, or cum shot, a key example of what she describes as the “frenzy of the visible” (Paasonen, 2011, p. 77), visibly verifying and documenting sexual climax. Movement is also generated through the circulation of affective images through networked spaces. For a tribute to occur, a photo must be taken, uploaded to an online repository like Eroshare, linked to TributeMe, printed or displayed on a device, ejaculated upon, and then a photo of the photo is taken, uploaded, and linked as a comment on the original post.

This analysis of tributing allows us to understand more about the role of movement in studies of affect on social media. According to Kuntsman (2012), platforms are never still: sharing, virality, posting, and commenting are all examples of circulation that “call our attention to the work of emotions as they move,” (p. 7; emphasis in original). Ahmed (2014) argues that media texts can name or perform emotions, and if we consider social media posts to be texts, we can understand how they “move, stick, and slide” (p. 13), circulating and generating affect. Taking these two ideas together, that social media texts are never still, and that they generate affect as they circulate, I build on this work about social media affect by arguing that movement is essential to the affective practice of tributing. An image on a social media platform may arouse its viewer, but tributing involves layering digital objects, physical ejaculate, social media platforms, and media devices, drawing on the interaction possible within digitally networked platforms to intensify intimacy and affect with each layer.

By considering how affect operates on TributeMe through two week-long studies of the subreddit, I have identified a range of strategies used to tribute people in an intimate, affective, embodied, mostly pseudonymous manner. These include posting the photographs and tributes themselves; using descriptive language, emoticons, and emoji in usernames, image titles, and comments; and deliberately leaving out personal information and faces from the photos. Although some people on TributeMe do reveal their face or tattoos, playfully pushing the boundaries of their pseudonymity, their participation in tributing is not likely to be returned when their name is entered into a search engine. Pseudonymity on TributeMe means people can enjoy tributing on a public subreddit while compartmentalizing their involvement so it doesn’t appear as a publicly accessible digital trace. There is intimacy in sharing a niche sexual practice, especially one that is considered unusual or even disgusting outside of the TributeMe subreddit. The pseudonymity of TributeMe allows people to engage in sexualized affective exchanges in public.

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