

## Critically examine the relations between affective experience, power and space

Experience is emergent, we live ‘affective transitions’, the sensations of events as they come into being. For Massumi, ‘a body is a complex of inbracings playing out complexly and in serial fashion’ (Massumi, 2008, 1). These inbracings hold-together as they fold out recursive-durationality in the loopy present: the ‘instincts, inclinations, teeming feelings and masses of memories, conscious and nonconscious, with all manner of shadings in between’ (Massumi, 2008, 2). Affective experience emerges as the *constitution of a becoming*, a crowding-in to new constellation, pure inbracelation. Crowding in: because always becoming more-than, openly inducting and attuning to certain regions of tendency, futurity and potential.

For Massumi, the affective experience of the body is therefore always-already political, politicized, politicizing. An affective politics or power is inductive, constitutive; an ‘art of emitting interruptive signs, triggering the cues and microperceptions that attune bodies while activating their capacities differentially’ (Massumi, 2008, 4). Power in this sense crowds-in, cuts and *informs* the complex of inbracings as they play out complexly and in serial fashion. By such (trans)logic, power formations of late capitalist modernity modulate, entrain and interfere with a body’s capacity to affect and be affected. This modulation might be conceptualized as emergent normative variation with(in) the virtual pools of relational potential from which the affective event is drawn. Affect in this light is not a passively endured state of bodies but a ‘glischroid matter’ (Deleuze, 1988, 56), a transitive, transversal, transductive potentiality. A strange horizon. To be modulated.

Thinking spaces of affective experience and power, this essay critically examines the relations between the becoming body’s ‘everyday infinities of virtual potentials and *the real operations of power*’ (Bertelsen and Murphie, 2011; their italics). If bodies are open complexes of inbracings, then I explore experience and the production of subjectivity as a commotion and co-motion with(in) the modulatory apparatuses and power formations of State, proto-State and State-like constellations in contemporary capitalism. Fundamentally, the lines of this essay gather around Deleuze’s notion of an emergent ‘control society’. As Grove (2014) writes, in contrast to the ‘disciplinary society that operate[d] on the capacities and desires of individual bodies, a control society attempts to harness the transmission of affect through techniques that crowd-in, interfere and alter how bodies can relate to one another in an emergent milieu (Grove, 2014, 12).

For Massumi, ‘control’ is therefore ‘modulation made a power factor (its flow factor). Control is the powering up or powering away of potential. The ultimate capture, not of the elements of expression, not even of expression but of the movement of the event itself’ (Massumi, 2009, 16). This transition from discipline to control is as equally then named a transition from governmentality to environmentality. ‘Capture of the movement of the event itself’ works through the ‘regulation of effects’ rather than of causes, power is experienced as an ebb and flow of potentialization and containment (powering up or powering away). In the chaotic and hypercomplex situations and sinews that refrain capitalism’s flow and variation, environmentality emerges as operationally ‘open to unknowns’, to what Bertelsen and

Murphie (2011, 3) term the 'affective carriage of future potential. Environmentality as such simultaneously follows that which it regulates as it produces the regularities of the milieu, 'sniffing out and running after feral belongings it must attempt to recoup, re-channel and remodulate: the 'nonlinear, transversal phenomena' captured and positively re-potentialized before they amplify the stirrings to actual crisis proportions' (Massumi, 2009, 10).

Thinking spaces of affective experience and power, this essay composes around a series of tendential headings, markers, propulsions in an emergent ontology and vocabulary of affective experience. I explore the amorphous structuring of control and environmentality as a 'proliferatingly kinetic' performance of *preemption*, *semiosis*, and the modulative mobilization of the '*affective fact*' (Massumi, 2009) and '*somatic marker*' (Connolly, 2002). In this light, I tend toward exemplifying the transivity of State, proto-State and State-like constellations to 'capture the movement of the event itself' through the US government's semiotic production and modulation of a national 'threat-environment' and a paranoid structure of feeling post-9/11. In Schwartz's words, this structure of feeling 'took on an ambient thickness' after the event and gave the 'preemptive power mechanisms dedicated to its modulation an advantage over other regimes of power and sensation (sovereign, disciplinary).

Modulation made a power factor, in preemptive environmentality Massumi writes, 'fact grows conditionally in the affective soil of an indeterminately present futurity'. I explore this through the pre-emptive politics of Bush prior (or was it after?) to the Iraq war (O'Tuathail, 2003; Masco, 2009; Massumi, 2009, Anderson, 2010; Goodman, 2010, Schwartz, 2011). There is a danger here however of stilling affective experience in a scalar, normative and ontological static: of framing affective experience as something simply *between* individual and government, as always negative, erosive (Berlant, 2011; Illouz, 2013) and as a linear, isotropic transferal and absorption from powerful to *powerless* bodies, or constellations of bodies. To frame the relations between affective experience, power and space in this reductionistic manner however would be to ignore the transivity of affect, the manyness of its forms.

As Massumi writes, affect and therefore power is a dimension of every event - positive and negative - cutting transversally across dimensions of space and time, past and future. The living room is therefore as much an event-space as the 'warzone', the governmental office, the school, the shop, the street, in which the ebb and flow of potentialization-and-containment is refrained into machinic, capitalist choreographies (McCormack, 2013). For one, Massumi drawing on the (postmodern, Don-Delillo-esque) home as a 'a node in a circulatory network of many dimensions [...] awash in transivity' suggests that power is experienced not as a singular, punctual logic but as a 'technologized field of immanence', as a network that distributes (and effectively connects) transcendences' (Massumi, 2009, 22). What all this enunciates and moves toward as such is the *proliferatingly kinetic* trans-logic of capitalism. Bush's neoconservative power in this sense is not so much a stand-out formation as a formation-among-formations (albeit perhaps a higher-order one), a machine-among-machines, a creation-modality in a systematicity of endlessly fractalizing power-potential, sensuously mediating and modulating affective experience.

I use 'mediating' purposefully here. If, as Massumi suggests, power is the 'ultimate capture of the movement of the event itself' then an affective politics, and the 'network that distributes transcendences' ("environmentality-encompassing") interloops with the emergence (in the late 20th Century) of new modes of telecommunication and media commercially (Thrift, 2006 ; Shaviro, 2010) and governmentally (Adey, 2008; Grove, 2014) experimented with to generate multiple regimes of sensation: paranoiac, yes but also enchanting, hopeful (Anderson, 2010; Bennett, 2001), a kinaesthetic structure of feeling. Thus, while this essay primarily draws a focus to the US-government-media-war-machine assemblage, there are many more such examples of affective experience and the real operations of power that fold out complexly and in serial mediation and modulation to refine it.

For instance, Thrift writes of how mechanisms of fascination and 'technologies of public intimacy' machine in a 'calculative prostheses' the neuro-aesthetic toward a more forceful functionality. In this sense, the proto-state and state-like firms and corporations of everyday capitalism and experience are involved in the generation of regimes of sensation becoming thresholds to the consumeristic real. Thrift explores how the lines between production, distribution and consumption are becoming habitually blurred. For Shaviro (2010), Clough (2011) and Munster (2006) then, new media, in its increasingly commercial and experimental (post-cinematic) realization moves toward the disruptions and reconfigurations of bodily capacities and functions that might be made possible and made economically valuable by digital technologies (Munster, 2006: 19).

Adey (2009; 2011) for one explores the value of digital technologies in the airport-border complex, observing how technologies and techniques of surveillance now 'capture the movement of the event itself' : the microscopic particles and traces, physiological indicators and micro-expressive gesticulations of moving bodies individualised and animalized into an axial dimensionality of interior and exterior surfaces, pasts and futures, prereflective and unconscious bodily capacities. These capacities of bodies to affect and be affected then are simultaneously examined and worked upon in a strange paradoxical feedback of behavioural profiling that activates the future at every turn. Massumi explores how this paradoxical feedback emerges through a modulatory environmentality - an analogic affective amplification-regime - wherein 'certain tendencial headings, perceptions and cognitions are backgrounded, peripheralized or blended-out by the synesthetic economy of movement-across that is regulated by the [airport's] architectural regime' (Massumi, 2002, 204)

To return to experience as an affective transition within multiple regimes of sensation then, affective experience is always a 'bifurcation of divergent series', an inbracing of elisions of different possible worlds. Capitalism in this light is the bifurcator of the bifurcation, the capillary network of the capillary, the circulator of the circulation, the motor of transivity in the constitution of becoming. For Lazzarato, capitalism modulates affective experience through a dual *subjection* and *machinic enslavement* of the body. The affective (inbracing) body as such is always bifurcated, split between an individualized subjectivity and a series of machinic proto-subjectivities playing out complexly and in serial fashion. The former, Lazzarato writes, 'allows capitalism to establish molar hierarchies', a first hierarchy (economic)

between man and nature, man and woman and so on. Machinic enslavement then ‘formats the basic functioning of perceptive, sensory, affective, cognitive and linguistic behaviour’ (Lazzaratto, 2006, 17).

Rather than a pure logic of disciplining subjects (a disciplinary society), modulation by *subjection and machinic enslavement* (the control society) emerges trans-logically, transitively, opening and bifurcating an ‘opportunity for producing something other than paranoid, productivist, consumerist individualism’ (Lazzaratto, 2006, 12). Massumi terms this the ‘machinic subjection of freedom’ (Massumi, 2009, 8).

Theorizing affective experience is therefore steeped in normative complexity. We live affective transitions (plural), experience can never be stopped, stepped outside of, it complexly and serially unfolds as sensations of events come into being. Massumi continues from Lazzaratto then when he suggests that security, preemption, the neoconservative power formation of the US government is a ‘positive thinking machine’ of which ‘we are its embodied thoughts’. The machine, he writes,

‘effectively produces its own facts of affective passage by the way in which its beginningless and endless series of partial subjects and partial objects caught up [enslaved] in the self-effective of the event dynamically interpret its signs’ [...] The actual experiential contents of our lives are its pragmatic speculations [...] Security is the new political me. The process becomes us’ (Massumi, 2009).

A machinic subjection. Power then is the ultimate capture and release, potentialization-and-containment, not of individual bodies or ‘the elements of expression, not even of expression but of the (machinic) movement of the event itself’ (Massumi, 2009, 18).

For Connolly (2002), this machinic movement and subjection is tied up with the modulation and mediation of somatic markers. A somatic marker, he writes, is a ‘culturally mobilized, corporeal disposition through which affect-imbued, preliminary orientations to perceptions and judgement scale down the material factored into cost-benefit analyses, principled judgements and reflective experiments’ (Connolly, 2002, 9). The somatic marker is therefore ‘not wholly cultural nor biophysical but the mixing of the latter into the former’, an intersubjective, proto-subjective structure of affect and memory. For Massumi, in the aftermath of the event of 9/11 somatic markers interlooped with affective facts<sup>1</sup>, to legitimate governmental action and the Iraqi war machine, through a ‘semiotics of indexicality, in operative coupling with an ontology of virtuality.’ This ontology of virtuality then emerges as the modulatory power formation of *preemption*.

Preemption, Massumi writes, is ‘when the futurity of unspecified threat is affectively held in the present in a perpetual state of potential emergence(y) so that a movement of actualization may be triggered that is not only self-propelling but also effectively, indefinitely, ontologically productive, because it works from a virtual cause whose potential no single

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<sup>1</sup> The mechanism of an affective fact is simple: Threat triggers fear. The fear is of disruption. The fear is a disruption.

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actualization exhausts.’ Lightning-like, the ‘judge of the decision’s value are its consequences’ (Massumi, 2009, 16). If somatic markers then coattail to the body’s mnemonic (past-oriented) proto-subjectivity then the affective fact is the performative extension, the preemptive in-folding of these markers into futurity. To understand this perpetual state of potential emergence(y) and its power, its affective hold, Ó Tuathail explores the temporal contours of the 9/11 event-space and its transitive, trans-situational distribution into broader event-spaces, beamed as it was across television screens nationally and globally.

The liveness of live footage as such blurred over the following months of 2001 and onwards; in the loops and loops of visual footage, eyewitness accounts, the ‘Falling Man’ and spectacles of catastrophe and loss held in lively affective priming across screens, newspapers, articles, movies, documentaries, theatrical plays, songs, music, faces, bodies. The power of control, Massumi adds, is predicated on the ultimate capture of the movement of the event itself, on ‘decoding (the rendering immanent of signs as vectors of indeterminate potential) and deterritorialization (the drawing off of the event - 9/11 - from its general-particular spaces of expression).’ Control then is ‘decoding and deterritorialization, *delivered* (ready for catalysis, into a potentialization-and-containment in a new space - the living room, the school, the body - ready for recoding/recodification and re-territorialization)<sup>2</sup>.

For Masco, this preemptive control, environmentality emerges as the informal production of regularities in a paranoiac structure of feeling, the ‘regulation of effects rather than causes’ through a semiosis of ‘sign-induced becoming’ that itself hold a broader genealogical heritage. During the Cold War Masco (2009) observes, signs of nuclear ruins were ‘affectively held in a perpetual state of potential emergence(e)y’ as a strange form of nation building, a machinic subjection of anxiety, resilience and hyper-alertness to the tiny and apocalyptic things populating the everyday. Beyond the US-government-media-9/11-Cold War war-machine-assemblage then, Grove (2014) notes the relations between affective experience, power and space folding from a remedial disaster management project in Jamaica. Transitivity, the power formations modulate affect by an eerily similar (trans)logic, machining what Grove terms a ‘resilience machine’, a certain structure of feeling, a region of tendency, futurity and potential held in a state of hyper-tensile and perpetual emergence(y) between environmental bodies.

Grove writes, ‘effectively, we were attempting to fold memories of life-altering events that destroyed crops, ruined homes, or even killed neighbors into everyday socioecological relations’, to activate and potentialize the environment with future threat: ‘the hillside as a potential landslide, the riverbank as something washable away in a flood.’ In a sense then, the power formation that Grove explores is the ‘future birth of the affective fact’ (Massumi, 2009) in a different, by all means transmissive, event-space. Grove examines how through scenarios, vulnerability mapping, simulations, education and training, a series of participatory programs attempted to ‘engineer affective relations such as sustenance by encouraging people to work out arrangements with local shopkeepers that would allow them to get food and water

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<sup>2</sup> Incidentally, this is power of information, coin, currency, the economy. The neoliberal economy, Massumi writes, predicated as it is on a constitutive openness to the accident, has the same tendential complexity and self-organizing drive of a neoconservative government. It similarly achieves lift-off from the territories that condition, without containing, its emergent axiomatic order, it is a master at finding ways of using counter-tendencies as a launching pad for its own process

on credit until government relief arrives [or to] engineer mobility and circulation by identifying people with chainsaws and encouraging them to volunteer to help clear roads blocked by felled trees' (Grove, 2014, 12). By Massumi and Lazzaratto's logic, the programs emerge as a 'beginningless and endless series of partial subjects and partial objects machined into a positive thinking machine of resilience.

This mode of environmentality-as-power resonates with Guattari's observations of the kitchen space at La Borde, the psychiatric institution he worked at in the 1950s. Though several decades apart, Bertelsen and Murphie (2011) might suggest that both inform by the same psychoanalytical and psychological discourses popularized and instrumentalised after WWI. Guattari as such, writes of the kitchen as a territory 'combining highly heterogenous social, subjective and functional dimensions. This Territory can close in on itself, become the site of stereotyped attitudes and behaviour, where everyone mechanically carries out their little refrain. But it can also come to life, trigger an existential agglomeration, a drive machine - and not simply of an oral kind, which will have an influence on the people who participate in its activities or just passing through. The kitchen then becomes a little opera scene: in it people talk, dance and play with all kinds of instruments, with water and fire, dough and dustbins, relations of prestige and submission (Guattari, 1988

Guattari in this sense returns us full circle to the normative and bifurcating complexity of affective experience. That there is machinic enslavement as much as machinic enchantment, infolds into the dimension of every event. For Bennett (2001), this enchantment combines two distinct sensations or moments: on one hand, 'a pleasurable feeling of being charmed [by an] as yet unprocessed experience', on the other, 'a more *unheimlich* feeling of being torn out of one's default sensory-psychic-intellectual disposition'. Bennett in a sense discloses the bifurcated other of Massumi's world, disclosing a world of things and formations with lively properties and capacities. Her movement-toward is affirmational, sensitive toward the possibility of affective experience, creativity, relation in a positively dissensual world.

As Massumi writes, an affective politics is resolutely dissensual 'in the sense that it holds contrasting alternatives together without immediately demanding that one alternative eventuates and the others evaporate. An affective politics and power as such 'makes thought-felt different capacities for existence, different life potentials, different forms of life, without immediately imposing a choice between them.' In this sense, Bennett is a realist tending toward the affective fact that the body is as much a proliferatingly kinetic transcendence in a network of transcendences as the government or military; the body not as a passive or endured state but a becoming complex of inbracings playing out complexly (i.e unpredictably) and in serial fashion.' We might say, the body emerges as a state-like formation but never as a state.

This essay critically examines the relations between affective experience, power and space. As Massumi writes, an affective politics or power is inductive, constitutive of our affective experience: an 'art of emitting interruptive signs, triggering the cues and microperceptions that attune bodies while activating their capacities differentially' (Massumi, 2008, 4). Power in this sense crowds-in, cuts and *informs* the complex of inbracings as they play out complexly and in

serial fashion. By such translogic, I have examined how contemporary power formations modulate, entrain and interfere with a body's capacity to affect and be affected through a proliferatingly kinetic assemblage of *preemption*, *semiosis*, *environmentality* and the '*future birth of the affective fact*'. 'Control' in this light is 'modulation made a power factor (its flow factor). Control is the powering up or powering away of potential. The ultimate capture, not of the elements of expression, not even of expression but of the movement of the event itself.'

There is therein a certain rhythmicity, a temporal pulse to power; power Massumi writes, follows its own rhythm, forming its own preferential relays. An on-all-the-time ubiquity of its potential deliveries to territorial systems gives it such plasticity that its drive lacks, overall, an ascribable organizational form of its own.' The formation, we might argue, deforms, transitively in a network of transcendences: power as diffuse, capillaric (Foucault, 1984), following feral belongings in the 'regulation of effects rather than causes'. Thinking spaces of affective experience and power, I have explored power as a process of sensuously machining and modulating affective subjectivities and proto-subjectivities. Affect in this light is not a passively endured state of bodies but a 'glischroid matter' (Deleuze, 1988, 56), a transitive, transversal, transductive potentiality. A strange horizon. To be modulated.

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