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The Tendency to Trans-: The Political Aesthetics of the Biogrammatic Zone

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It has been suggested that extending the concept of the diagram into the biogram might be a vector worth pursuing. Formal topologies are not enough. The biogram is a lived topological event. It is onto-topological. It is the event of experience folding back on itself for its own furtherance, its continuing becoming [...] The biogram is experience reaccessing its powers of emergence, for more effect. It is the existential equivalent of lifting oneself up by the bootstraps: ontogenetic and autopoietic. (Massumi, 2002a, 206)

For politics precedes being. Practice does not come after the emplacement of the terms and their relations, but actively participates in the drawing of the lines [...] (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987, 203).

Extending the concept of the *diagram*, as explored by Foucault, Deleuze and Guattari, to its *living* complement – the *biogram* – is worth pursuing. It provides a means of envisioning and revisioning the centralized Fold or ‘zone of subjectification’ drawn by Deleuze in his overview of Foucault’s diagrammatic ontology (Deleuze, 2000). Why might this be of interest in addressing the ethical/political field that situates the technicity of a performative interface? The diagram and its immanent conceptual offspring, the biogram, propose a process through which the unstable forces of a social field affect how art and life are performed and lived. How the power relations between these forces charge and guide the individuating subject amidst the multiple contingencies of acting otherwise. Improvisation, as a technique and aesthetic, presents a means to explore the relations between power, resistance, knowledge and praxis through the dynamic interface of a biogramming

diagram. In this way, the biogram functions as a translocal 'site' for a biopolitics of resistance. But resistance, especially when couched within a diagrammatic pertaining to performance practice, complexifies. It can be construed as a dynamic variable impeding *and* accessing intensities of chaos and control immanent to the social field it inhabits. And, it *re-markably* draws upon that oscillating relation between chaos and control through techniques of performative action.

The focus in this paper will turn towards reinventing the folding *diagrammatic* 'zone of subjectification' proffered by Deleuze through Foucault, as a *biogrammatic* performative interface, a lived transcoding of the unformed, unthought (ontogenesis) and the formalizing (autopoietic) encounter between content and expression. The map that best articulates this diagram runs through and across a process of individuation inspired by Gilbert Simondon,¹ accessed through intuitive, contingent and improvisatory relations between compositional forces. With an augmenting twist, the Fold becomes a phase-shifting differential; resistance² becomes transversal (or translocal) movement capable of intensifying and/or attenuating, the relation of disparate forces. These abstractions will be tunneled to the specificity of LiveArt³ performance practice: 1) through translocal

¹ 'The individual is to be understood as having a relative reality, occupying only a certain phase of the whole being in question - a phase that therefore carries the implication of a preceding preindividual state, and that, even after individuation, does not exist in isolation, since individuation does not exhaust in the single act of its appearance all the potentials embedded in the preindividual state. Individuation, moreover, not only brings the individual to light but also the individual-milieu dyad.' (Gilbert Simondon, 'The Genesis of the Individual' in Jonathon Crary and Sanford Kwinter (eds); M. Cohen and S. Kwinter (trans), *Incorporations*, Zone (New York, 1995) p. 300

² 'Where there is power, there is resistance, and yet, or rather consequently, this resistance is never in a position of exteriority in relation to power.' (Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality: Volume One* (New York, 1978) p. 9

³ 'LiveArt is an umbrella term, a conceptual framework for live arts practice that dynamically slips

(online, digital) performance styles experienced in the vj/dj genre; 2) through the example of the body as a transductive, ontogenetic interface in the style of Michel Waisvisz, a pioneer in electronic instrumentation. But first to begin with an overview of the diagrammatic.

0° Phase: How to diagram a diagram

How does a diagram diagram? Massumi has called this process “the dynamic interrelation of relations” (1992, 16). It’s a definition that can be applied to performance practice and more generally, lived experience. A theoretical bootstrap in architectural discourse during the past decade, the dynamic cartography of the diagram resonates equally well with the variable nuance, the indeterminate affect, of the performative. Indeed, Deleuze has commented in crafting his turn on Foucault’s vision:

This is a different kind of diagram, a different machine, closer to theater than to the factory; it involves a different relation between forces [...] This is because the diagram is highly unstable or fluid, continually churning up matter and functions in a way likely to create change [...] every diagram is intersocial and constantly evolving. (Deleuze, 2000, 34-35)

The constantly churning change, open to intersocial dynamics, aptly describes the compositional forces and phase-shifting differentials modulated by chance, common to all

between the more stratified genres of the performing arts such as dance, theatre, music, and now, games. Its tenet, if one could dare to call it that, is its resistance to representation, to the inscription of meaning, through its embrace of process. Its very liveness and insistence on change and transformation is integral to its practice. The concerns of LiveArt are not about crossing boundaries per se, but favour the dissolution of boundaries into emergent forms.’ (Sher Doruff, *Connected! LiveArt* (Amsterdam, 2005) p. 6

performance practice in varying degrees. Every diagram is interfaced through a subjective zone, drawing off the 'immanent cause' of a turbulent (milieu)⁴ (Ibid, 36). From this perspective, the biogram will be introduced as a way of describing the subjective zone as a performative interface with a dual function: as a conduit for channeling a heightened sensitivity to the relational events produced by intersecting, unformed forces on the out-side of the diagram; and the selection, filtering and formalizing of perceptions to actual occasions (things, artefacts, meanings, gestures) emerging from the content/expression encounter on the in-side.

The diagram as abstract machine and its hinge

Diagramma in the original Greek, refers to the wax tablet philosophers once used to compose ideas before committing them to papyrus with a stylus (Knoespel, 2001)⁵. The blackboard and chalk of the mathematician, the notebook of the artist, the sketch of the architect, the inked napkin from the

⁴ 'It is precisely because the immanent cause, in both its matter and its functions, disregards form, that it is realized on the basis of a central differentiation which, on the one hand will form visible matter, and on the other will formalize articulable functions.' (Deleuze, Gilles, 2000,38)

⁵ Kenneth Knoespel notes that *diagramma* in the original Greek does 'not simply mean something that is marked out by lines, a figure, a form or a plan, but also carries a second connotation of marking or crossing out,' suggesting not only ephemerality but also an incompleteness that carries an expectation of potential. 'What is interesting is that the diagram participates in a genealogy of figures that moves from the wax tablet to the computer screen [...] the Greek setting of diagram suggests that any figure that is drawn is accompanied by an expectancy that it will be redrawn [...] Here a diagram may be thought of as a relay. While a diagram may have been used visually to reinforce an idea one moment, the next it may provide a means of seeing something never seen before.' (Kenneth Knoespel, 'Diagrams as Piloting Devices in the Philosophy of Gilles Deleuze', *Deleuze - chantier, Centre de Recherches sur la Litterature et la Cognition*, Presses Universitaires de Vincennes (2001): 147

brainstorm lunch, the vectorial indications of the choreographer - all exhibit diagrammatic tendencies, the matter-movement of the not-yet-formalized. There are coextensive registers of relation present between diagramming as an *abstract machine* (Deleuze&Guattari) and as a formalizing realization of that abstraction - those sketches, drawings and mappings making their way to form, to a more or less concrete assemblage. The movement of thought, sensation and intuition between these registers provokes strategies for thinking processually through the politics of the abstract diagram to the aesthetic politics of *the making of* and the made; the relation of informal to formal. The abstract machine, the informal out-side of the diagrammatic 'makes no distinction between content and expression, as a discursive formation and a non-discursive formation' (Deleuze, 2000, 34). Its virtual, a-significations of unformed matter and unformalized functions are on the move: 'They constitute the dynamic 'matter' of expression. When they settle into *rearticulations*, they become 'substances': formed functional elements of either content [...] or expression...' (Massumi, 2002b, xx). This distinction cannot be stressed enough. For it is in the formalizing, looping movement of rearticulation, the becoming-substance of expressive matter, that the concept of the biogram makes sense as an ethico-aesthetic interface, pulsing within a larger diagrammatic scheme.

So an informal diagram maps the unformed and unstable forces that affect mutations to the conceptual givens of a project's design: all those possibilities that are most likely to actualize in a making process through habit, know-how, style. The diagram as abstract machine maps, in a Spinozan turn: '[...] the relations between forces unique to a particular formation; it is the distribution of the power to affect and the power to be affected [...]' (Deleuze, 2000, 72). The distribution of affective power presents another viable relation to performance practice and political action. In further describing the forces of the abstract machine, Deleuze has commented that relations between these forces tend '*to incite, to provoke, to combine* [...]' (Ibid, 27 emphasis added). 'To cut' and 'to make' could be added to this list. Provocation, from a Foucaultian

perspective, is the power/resistance relation generated from the action of force upon force. It can be intensely performative.

The abstract machine plays out in a theater of power/resistance relations between compositional forces. It is through the interface of the Fold that the diagram continually re-emerges as a new map through its own biagrammatic eventness. It is not yet of content, not yet of substance. It is a process of becoming through shifting and folding. The biogram-as-interface, ontogenetic and autopoietic, draws off the *re-markable*⁶ as it erases and re-marks the drawn; enables praxis of something Massumi has recently called a “thinking-feeling of what happens” (2008). It maps intensities of echo and relay between individual and milieu as it modulates the encounter between content and expression. It affords the concretizing and conservation of its process as it stratifies. The biagrammatic then, *individuates* the specific features of a diagram, its far-from-equilibrium process of perpetually coming into being.

90° Phase : From Fold to Phase-shift

The diagram, through its biagrammatic interface, generates a political aesthetic in which action is felt through the affective modulations and/or tonalities it incites. A doubling occurs in the moving towards realization, the rearticulation, of the becoming-thing/gesture. This doubling divides in a central differentiation, referencing a voluminous vocabulary of the interstitial - fissure, gap, disjunction, in-between, crack, interface, fold, non-place – descriptors of a bifurcating rift between content and expression, necessary for realization. Deleuze sums up the crux of this Foucaultian

⁶ ‘Remarkable’ in this paper has a double reference: 1) to Deleuze’s notion of the ‘remarkable’ prehension that distinguishes itself and is ‘drawn into clarity’ to become a conscious perception (Gilles Deleuze, *The Fold: Leibniz and the Baroque* (London, 2006) pp.104). 2) and to the original meaning of the word ‘diagramma’ which is a marking and a re-marking.

argument:

Things can be realized only through doubling or dissociation, creating divergent forms among which they can be distributed. It is here that we see the great dualities: between different classes, or the governing and the governed, or the public and the private. But more than this, *it is here that the two forms of realization diverge or become differentiated*: a form of expression and a form of content, a discursive and a non-discursive form, the form of the visible and the form of the articulable. It is precisely because the immanent cause, in both its matter and its functions, disregards form, that it is realized on the basis of a central differentiation which, on the one hand will form visible matter, and on the other will formalize articulable functions.' (2000,38)

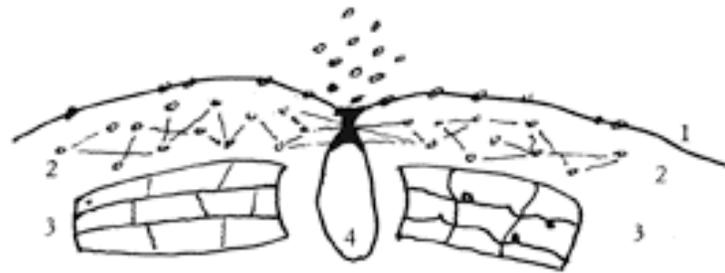
It can be argued that this central differentiation or interface distinguishes between the movements of two diagrammatic registers: outside from inside and the forms of realization. Transductive processes between these registers mark portals of entry through which all points of the diagram are in superposition, in passage as intensities of non-localizable relations from one point to another. The diagram distributes affective intensities within the context it maps.

Deleuze elasticizes Foucault's reach by translating his oeuvre within the folding/unfolding of a knowledge-power-subjectivity continuum, mapping Foucault's relays between the bifurcating polarities of content/expression, visibilities/statements as they differentiate and integrate through the folding 'zone of subjectification'. *The biogramming interface*. The 'event' of rearticulation, of knowledge-capture and distribution, takes place through the perceptual filter of differential relations becoming-actual as a perception or thought. This is a topological dynamic mapped by the diagram, affected through the central differentiation (biogram) 'or the *'non-place'*', as Foucault puts it, where the informal diagram is swallowed up and becomes embodied instead in two different directions that are necessarily divergent and irreducible. The concrete assemblages are therefore opened up by a

crack that determines how the abstract machine performs' (Ibid, 38). It's the process of swallowing up the relational intensities of a milieu and spitting back out certain selected somethings to be swallowed again that's of particular interest to political aesthetics of the performative event.

Foucault imagined a cartographic container of forces, affects, attractions and repulsions that modulate the diagram, excite the disjunction that separates forms of realization. The abstract machine begins to actualize its virtual potential as it distributes its relational dust. Deleuze's somewhat odd *diagramme de Foucault* helps clarify this process.

[insert Figure 1 Landscape]



1. Line of the outside
2. Strategic Zone
3. Strata
4. Fold (zone of subjectification)

Figure 1: Deleuze's *diagramme de Foucault* (2000, 120).

This diagram appears in the last chapter of his book on Foucault. It depicts a kind of homage to the diagrammatic. The line of the Outside, which draws the Fold (1), separates the interplay of forces from the strategies and strata that filter the affects of power relations becoming 'the world of knowledge.' The central Fold of subjectification, the zone of life, of biopolitical potential, is 'hollowed

out' and ignored, according to Deleuze, by the forces of the outside as they are realized in the strata. This fulfills the obligation of the diagram to come to fruition in the archive. The residual dust of the affective relations produced by force upon force distribute to the strata where they differentiate as polar forms of realization. The central fissure attracts the strategic zigzagging of integration and differentiation as content and expression bifurcate to stratified layers. The process of crystallization integrates as it simultaneously differentiates matter and function. Deleuze's zone of the Fold is the 'center of the cyclone', the calm encircled by the maelstrom, where life is lived '*par excellence*' as a 'slow Being' (Ibid, 122-123). This zone, with some modifications, can be construed as a living interface specific to performativity:

The biogram is a perceptual reliving: a folding back of experience on itself [...] A biogram doubles back on itself in such a way as to hold all its potential variations on itself in itself: in its own cumulatively open, self-referential event. (Massumi, 2002a, 194)

That cumulatively open, self-referential (autopoietic) event tends towards the potentially overfull as much as to the calm, blue-sky emptiness of a cyclone's eye portrayed by Deleuze. Tends towards the drawing off of remarkable affective intensities as well as the drawing of relations. Both states, overfull and empty, complement and cancel through rhythmic variations of speed and slowness⁷ in a manner similar to the relation between power and resistance. Push/pull, contract/expand, fill/empty, dive in/hop over, cut/paste. The fissure-as-biogram is a metastable, transductive⁸ conduit, embodied *and* distributed, transforming the re-emergence of lived experience as expressive content. Repeatedly.

⁷ See also Sher Doruff, 'The Translocal Event and the Polyrythmic Diagram' (2006) pp.184-186

⁸ '[...] transduction is characterized by the fact that the result of this process is a concrete network including all the original terms. The resulting system is made up of the concrete, and it comprehends all of the concrete. The transductive order retains all the concrete and is

Drawing O(f) the Zone

The gist of the biogrammatic zone then is that the lived experience of our *perception* of the world is inclusive not only of multi-sensory stimuli but also of linguistic signs and movements of thought:

[...] the biogram is a lived topological event [...] for all perceivers the biogram is the mode of being of the intrasensory hinge dimension. Its strange one-sided topology is the general plane of cross-reference not only for sights, sounds, touches, tastes, smells, and proprioceptions, but also for numbers, letters, words, even units of grammar. On that plane, the learned forms that are usually thought of as restricted to a "higher" cultural plane re-become perceptions. Practice becomes perception. (Massumi, 2002a, 188)

Arguably, Deleuze's diagram (*Figure 1*) falls short of mapping the disjunctive Fold as biogrammatic. Another doubling is needed. One speculative augmentation might look something like this:

[inert Figure 2 Landscape]



Figure 2: *Left:* abstracted from Deleuze's 'diagramme de Foucault.' This is the line of the Outside as Fold. *Right:* To best express the movement of transductive relations of the biogrammatic, the

characterized by the conservation of information, whereas induction requires a loss of information.' Gilbert Simondon, 'The Genesis of the Individual' in Jonathon Crary and Sanford Kwinter (eds); M. Cohen and S. Kwinter (trans), *Incorporations*, Zone (New York, 1995s) p. 315.

Fold figure could be drawn as a one-sided topology of the möbius strip in a doubling process of looping and folding.

[insert Figure 3 Landscape]

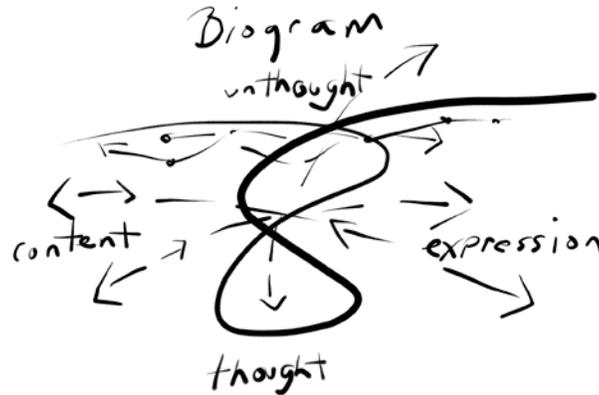


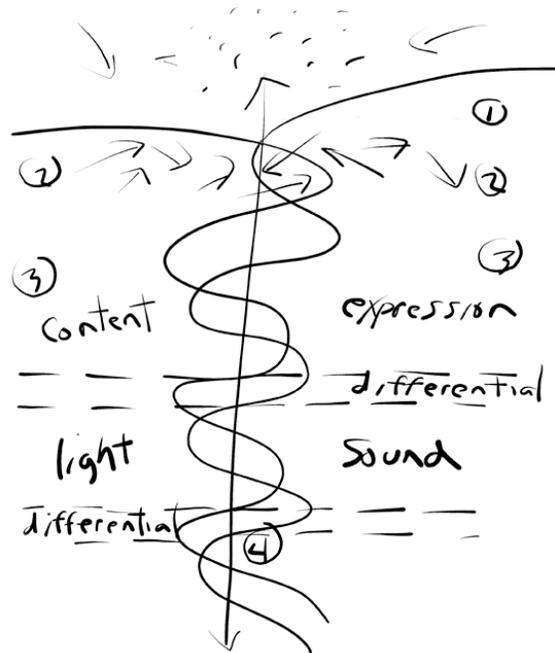
Figure 3: Movement between the polarities of content and expression, thought and the unthought, transduced through the biogrammatic fold.

Yet other speculative visualizations emerge when the push/pull, contract/expand, fold/unfold movements of integration and differentiation play out. These periodicities of intensity resemble wave functions. It's a rhythmic image that superimposes Simondon's concept of individuation as phase-shift over both the folded and folding images of the 'fissure' sketched in *Figure 2*.

The biogrammatic interface sketched in *Figure 4* produces variations in the Zone, focusing on the differential relation critical to the dynamic of the Fold. The contained zone becomes a partial phase of an always-individuating center. It remains open at one end to reduce a hierarchical, top-down perspective of out-side to in-side. It empties in the autonomy of a closed phase (180°), a center of the cyclone eventspace. Coherent and incoherent frequencies and amplitudes fluctuate. Wave species are ambiguous. Technically of course, sound and light waves are different-in-kind, and do not interrelate. Yet the empirical synaesthetic experience of intermodality, of everyday perceptual vision/sound intensities and cancellations of the not uncommon color-to-pitch

conjunctions of synaesthetes, begs a view on light/sound transduction in the biagrammatic zone as metaphysically viable.

[insert Figure 4 Portrait]



1. Line of the out-side
2. Strategic Zone
3. Strata
4. Biogrammatic Zone (ontogenetic, individuating, transductive)

Figure 4: The folding fissure of Deleuze's diagram mutates yet retains its folding properties through a Simondonian inspired individuating phase-shift.

This approach to the performative biogram elicits a drawing off and the drawing of - a *drawing o(f) f the zone*. It approximates the rhythmic expression of integration and differentiation that affect performativity in an art-making context. This sketch retraces the line of the Outside that

separates and enfolds the abstract machine from stratified knowledge in a phase-folding subjectivity expressed as a transductive individuation. The differential relations of the phase-shiftings constitute perceptual passageways.

Phase 180° : Re-markable Resistance

These sketches imagine the activity of the Zone. It's a diagrammatic set-up for approaching the biopolitics of improvisation and resistance. In effect then, the *biogrammatic* is synergetic with what might be called *diagrammatic praxis* and can be considered ontogenetic to performing arts practice as it emphasizes the experience of *practice becoming perception* through differential relations. Artistic production has no monopoly on the creative, but it can and often does tease out the unpredictable through processes of creation pushed to mutational extremes. Francis Bacon's diagram that sweeps the Sahara and the rhinoceros skin across the face of a painting (Deleuze, 2003) is a well-worn, well-theorized example. Brion Gysin, William Burroughs, Robert Smithson, Gertrude Stein, Boccioni, John Cage, Paul Klee, Arakawa and Gins, Marcel Duchamp, Greg Lynn, Guy Debord, The Hub, Lydgia Clark, Stelarc, Michel Waisvisz, Judson Church - represent a fraction of an extensive interdisciplinary list of 20C+ practitioners that come readily to mind; their work in some way amplifies diagrammatic/biogrammatic interfacing. The Situationists (1952-1972), mutating from their Futurist, Surrealist and Dadaist predecessors, were pivotal in introducing a variegated political aesthetic that traversed polemics and play: taking the *détournement* to the streets. Current projects of hacker, FLOSS artists concerned with the ethical distribution of know-how through multiplicities of authorship such as the Bricolabs initiative, the goto10 group, [share], The Eclectic Tech Carnival and Factory School⁹ to name but a few, are worth noting for their bottom-up approach to creative resistance. How might resistance incite and provoke in a biopolitical diagram through a biogrammatic interface?

⁹<http://bricolabs.net/> ; <http://goto10.org/>; <http://share.dj/share/> ; <http://eclectictechcarnival.org/> ; <http://www.factoryschool.com/>

As intimated, *the diagram tends to trans-*, moving across and through the biogram in a strategic zigzag. In *Figure 1*, for example, Deleuze draws the strategic 'plane' (#2) under the line of Outside that separates the informal from the formal. Emerging and fading in the Outside 'of uncertain doubles and partial deaths' (2000, 120) is a *micropolitics*, the molecular shapings of perceptions, attitudes, representational systems, etc.; transgressive lines of resistance (Foucault), lines of flight (Deleuze), 'desiring-productions' that interface a creative in-between of extreme macropolitical forces such as fascism and capitalism. Micropolitics produces an ethical aesthetic of the affective kind. It resonates with artistic practice in addressing Foucault's insight that '*resistance comes first*' (Ibid, 89). Micropolitics is a multiplicity, disavowing identifiable unities. Within the diagram, micropolitics and microperceptions share resonant functions. The unconscious microperceptions at play in the differential relations of the biogrammatic zone are also imperceptibly affective. Microperceptions come to consciousness through the differential filter as a *macroperception*.¹⁰ Both micropolitics and microperceptions actualize from the immanent cause of the unformed-unthought, from lines of resistance, to perceive, think, act and distribute through a diagrammatic process. Deleuze proposes a scenario for this process and intimates an embedded register of formalizing diagram as a political means:

[...] the collective field of immanence where the assemblages form at a given moment, and where they trace their lines of flight, also has a veritable diagram. We must find then the *complex assemblage* capable of effectuating this diagram, by operating the conjunction of lines or of the points of deterritorialisation. (1997)

Points of deterritorialization are cutting edges, the avant-garde as it were, of the

¹⁰ Gilles Deleuze, *The Fold: Leibnitz and the Baroque* (London, 2006) pp.97-113

distinguishing and convolving of matter and function. As the abstract machine becomes a formal diagram through its conjunctive lines of resistance/flight and cutting edges, it effects a biopolitical aesthetic. The Zone of the diagram can play a role in *operating the conjunction* of lines and points. Interestingly, a tactical social network seems to emerge from the immanent collective field.

Transducing the virtuostic

Transduction is commonly perceived through everyday transformations of one form of energy into another. Microphones, for example, transduce sound waves into electrical impulses that are transduced again from electrical energy to sound waves through speaker cones, even as the hair cells of the ear transduce those sound waves so that the full impact of a politician's posturing can be appreciated. Currency exchange is another transductive activity. Contextually framed within the diagram, transduction exposes the ontogenetic *individuation* of the biogrammatic Zone - a becoming 'out of a domain of unresolved tensions and potentials' (Mackenzie, 2002, 17). Individuations are phase-shifting ontogenetic processes: partial resolutions, metastabilities that Simondon calls *internal resonance* (1995, 305). Individuations support transductive processes even as transductions individuate *and* consolidate.

Performativity, of necessity, resonates with the power relations generated in the milieu of a social field. The micropolitics of biopolitics fosters these relations. Strategically, power may become dominating but as Foucault has it, power is an action on possible actions. Resistance to power as action need not be a negation, a *reaction*, but rather a creative vector, a transforming of a situation through active participation. What Foucault called ethical action is akin to what Francesco Varela has called *ethical know-how*, an immanent expertise whose only requirement is 'full participation in a community' (1992, 24). Though the 'fullness' of participation may be a misleading yardstick, the transductive potential to alter or augment the power relation is of importance. It leads to an aesthetic politics that embraces the *event-value* of art production rather than its surplus or exchange-value (Massumi, 2008, 9), goes for invention 'unsubordinated to external finalities' (Ibid,

10). The performing artist produces actions, the dynamic matter of expression. Which is not say of course that it is work without exchange-value but, unlike an art object, it persists in the affect of its eventness – an artaffect.

Hannah Arendt pointed out the political dimensions of performative virtuosity and the performer-audience relation.¹¹ Paolo Virno distinguishes post-Fordist *virtuostic* activity without-end-product from commodity producing *labour*. He references the performing arts by example: ‘One could say that every political action is virtuostic. Every political action, in fact, shares with virtuosity a sense of contingency, the absence of a ‘finished product,’ the immediate and unavoidable presence of others’ (2007, 53). The immaterial contingencies of LiveArt practice generally take at least two forms: the immediacy of the live(d) experience as relational affect between performer and participating audience and its eventual reproduction (rearticulation) as commodity/archive/thing (recording, documentation, tour, website, blog).

What is at stake in the bigger picture, in the diagram of a virtuostic, biogrammatic politics, is ambiguous. Just as there is matter in expression and expression in matter, there is event-value in an exchange-value paradigm, which in fact bolsters the force of its power relations. Just-in-time capitalism feeds on event potential. It grows and flourishes on the mass production of affective intensities. Reciprocally, there are degrees of exchange-value in eventness. To establish a proposition for discussion on the relation between current LiveArt practice and its cultural milieu, one might first ask: How is a social field distinguished from a social network, particularly of the Web

¹¹ The performing arts [...] have indeed a strong affinity with politics. Performing artists-dancers, play-actors, musicians, and the like — need an audience to show their virtuosity, just as acting men need the presence of others before whom they can appear; both need a publicly organized space for their ‘work,’ and both depend upon others for the performance itself’ (Hannah Arendt, *Between Past and Future*, Penguin Classics (London, 1993), p. 154

2.0 variety?

Phase 270° : The Tendency to Trans-

Tendency is a performed self-referencing to other states, past and potential. As such, it is a way in which an event in some sense, not necessarily consciously – in fact most often and in large part nonconsciously -- feels itself, catches itself in the relational act. And in some sense, not yet separable from this feeling, nonsensuously thinks itself, in that very same act. (Massumi, 2008)

Certain synergies between LiveArt practice, micropolitics and the biogram begin to topologically shapeshift. In this expressive movement, improvisation emerges as a creative relation of resistance and power between compositional forces; becomes a technique of aesthetic politicking. Improvisational practice has virtuostic tendencies. It champions the indeterminate; indulges the chaotic in its compositional ordering. In improvisational practice, like a diagrammatic gesture, content and expression are indistinguishable, on the move. 'No matter how formulated or codified a diagrammatic continuum may appear, it can be written over, marking a moment of change' (Knoespel, 2001, 160). This re-markable movement, when applied to a diagram of online, performative interchange, can be thought of as *translocal* lines and points. In the event of the LiveArt translocal jam, the operational conjunction of their passing through, of their cutting-edge deterritorialization doubles the non-place, through the network and the 'skin' (line of the Outside).

Translocal Jamming

Collaborative performance making¹² of the cross-media synthesis variety in the unruly, unstable, experimental 90's-early 00's,¹³ challenged thresholds of co-creation techniques. In its translocal

¹² Collaborative, distributed performances in which media data was synchronously co-processed, co-authored refers to: KeyWorx events from 2000-2004 (see <http://sprsearch.waag.org>; also Doruff,

variant (performance venues at a distance linked by Internet technologies) it was all event-value. Technical failure was a prominent feature. Plug and play connectability was a distant concept. DIY hacking at relatively low-levels of code was common and just-in-time. Surplus-value tendencies bubbled up in the realm of IPR for entrepreneurial software applications but most practitioners couldn't yet envision a need or desire to commodify a performance product, so suffused with chance, instability and the experimental was the activity. It affected a pioneering spirit in its most generous phase. For those interested in online, bottom-up, collaboration through real-time performance tactics with audience present in multiple locations, these were heady times. Success was measured on a purely subjective basis. Often, technical distractions overshadowed expressive content. But there were moments. Events of felt intensities traversing a social field qua network through the *drawing o(f)f* of performer/artist/audience spatio-temporal synchronicities. Spatially - events of widely distributed translocal affect in which the non-place of the network met the non-place of the performative 'zone' in an enveloping of suspended situatedness. Temporally – events of felt continuity, of durational rhythms, the absence of metric time. Enabling beta-technologies of that era provoked a fervor for participatory events through which the unpredictable, unstable technicity between content and expression could be experienced and co-operated.

The relations between forces construed in Foucault's diagram impacts the co-extensive powerplay of action on possible actions between artists and machines. These relations are an important, *remarkable* aspect of the experience of translocal jamming. The negotiations of control of

'The Translocal Event and the Polyrhythmic Diagram'), early Res Rocket music events, Hot Wired *Live Art* events <http://www.bek.no/hotwired/info.html>, decentred | distributed, the many distributed sound concerts using Max/Msp. pure data, nato, SuperCollider applications.

¹³ This is an artificial bracketing of a time period for coherence sake. There are examples of telematic performance with varieties of technologies that naturally pre-date the 90's and are also vibrant contemporary experiments.

emerging content and expression in real time co-operative performance events at a distance are dependent on the transduction of affective intensities to action. For if the diagram situates a multiplicity of relations between forces, then it's the compositional forces themselves that transform, re-diagram in the oscillating encounter between chaos and order. In performance, the composition appears and perishes, an affect of diagrammatic transformation. The ephemeral event that emerges and dissipates in the modulating biogrammatic interface is renewed in the forces that it redraws. This is an asignifying process; a force of becoming, a tendency of becoming-other. It emerges from the biogram and distributes.

The Form of Experience

Massumi establishes his arguments for the biogram in his essay 'Strange Horizon' (2002a, pp. 177-207) in which he posits that the biogram is the *form experience takes* - "the "being" of the excess of effect over any determinate spatial configuration" (186). An amalgam of perception and memory, repetitively repotentializing experience, the biogram registers the topological shapeshift of continuous change. He uses several vectors to flesh out the biogram, among them synaesthesia¹⁴ which is relevant to digijams and digital signal processing in general.

Cross-modal referencing of perception leans towards the hypothesis that all experience is synaesthetically modulated. Visual-proprioceptive cross-referencing, for example, both stabilizes and dislodges a sense of *place*. A translocal sense of place emerges from the condition of non-place. The transformations of cross media synthesis, the experience of congruent sensory modalities has specific characteristics in networked interplay. The performing takes place in the kinesthetic space between the eye, computer screen and controllers though this screen-based user

¹⁴ For a more in-depth analysis see the dissertation: Doruff, 'The Translocal Event and the Polyrythmic Diagram', pp.191-196

scenario is increasingly less true as of this writing. The experience then (circa 1997-2005) of exoreferential or extra-personal space was secondary to tunneling through the screen.

During the *Interfacing/Radiotopia/KeyWorx*¹⁵ performance at DEAF03, performer pairs in Rotterdam and New York experienced their co-operative vj'ing in liminal, translocal space:¹⁶ the non-place of the diagrammatic. Their attention was focused on dynamic multi-sensory transformations occurring within a synaesthetic dimension in the kinesthetic armreach of a laptop screen and controller-tools. The milieu of the performance space at V_2 was alive with the imperceptible and the mediated. Audience members contributed to the expression of content, sending text messages that triggered image results from the Google search engine; at that time, a novel real-time effect. The performer's conscious perceptions of the emerging and perishing synaesthetic forms during that four-hour performance were 'event-dimensions combining senses, tenses, and dimensions on a single surface' (Massumi, 2002a, 186-187). The so-called higher cultural forms (language) feed experience loops as sensation ultimately eliciting a grand loop in which experience is its own perception. '*Practice becomes perception*' (Ibid). It is made palpable through co-created improvisatory composition.

Ontogenetic microperceptions percolate in the differentials of the biogram (Figure 4). 'Differential relations always select minute perceptions that play a role in each case, and bring to light or clarify the conscious perception that comes forth' (Deleuze, 2006, 102). The biogrammatic zone becomes a rhythmic interval, oscillating between overfull and empty; inclusive of affective modalities, of creative filtering (integration and differentiation) and a permeable 'being there' of the skin's surface. If improvisational composition resonates sensation from the intensity of the creative

¹⁵ See artist Michelle Teran's site for excellent documentation of her participation in the project.

<http://www.ubermatic.org/interfacing/>

¹⁶ <http://framework.v2.nl/archive/archive/node/event/default.xslt/domain-deaf03/nodenr-148172>

See also Doruff, 'The Translocal Event and the Polyhythmic Diagram', pp. 107-139

event – an event potential not limited to online performance practice but certainly amplified in it – then we have a means of describing intensive resonance in the body through the network.

The Diagram of Gamespace

But what of that nagging question concerning the relation between a social field and an online, social network?

Web 2.0 developments have changed the processes of dynamic, collective interfacing. There have been gains and losses. Technological advances have brought a plug-and-play stability to the meet and greet, data sharing encounter that have not necessarily enhanced the integration/differentiation transduction between content and expression. In other words, the (inter)action on most contemporary social networking sites cannot be described as biagrammatic. The Web 2.0 paradigm however, is a diagram par excellence - one Deleuze would have been quick to cite as an exemplary model of a 'society of control' (1992) in which change is continuous, borders are permeable, realities contiguous and power affective. For Deleuze, the institutional enclosures of the discipline society Foucault analysed '[...] are molds, distinct castings, but controls are a modulation, like a self-deforming cast that will continuously change from one moment to the other, or like a sieve whose mesh will transmute from point to point' (Ibid, p. 4). The paradox of the diagrammatic is clear. Which is to say that both synchronous and asynchronous play in the social networking context afforded by the corporately owned and regulated usual suspects (MySpace, Facebook, YouTube, Second Life, etc.) comes with additional, imperceptible layers of modulatory control that shifts the power relation between chaos and order in a translocal encounter from event-value to exchange-value. Affective exchange-value between participating clients is dynamically scaled to monetary exchange-value digits. Even when the monetary exchange-value is '0' or close to it (piracy sites, free downloads, Creative Commons, etc.), the activity in a Web 2.0 paradigm plays out in an exchange-value spectrum that was marginal in the short-lived period of unstable, experimental event-value performativity. The diagram of the social field pertinent to online performance practice

has, true to its immanent nature, re-diagramed - to a pervasive *gamespace*.¹⁷ This has consequences as the forces of play, virtuosity and labour become increasingly indiscernible, losing the intensity of their relation. As the market value of affective modulations rises, the ontology of the creative event shifts; relations pass through every password. The subjective folding-phase-shift conspires in its own bi-lateral becoming. Lazzarato sums up the top down tendency towards a biopolitics of the individual life well:

Cultural, social, educative policies define the “wide and moving” framework within which choosing individuals evolve. And choices, decisions, conducts and behaviours are events and series of events that must be precisely regulated by the dispositifs of security. There is a shift from the analysis of structure to the analysis of the individual, from the analysis of economic processes to an analysis of subjectivity, its choices and the conditions of production of its life. (2006)

The diagram as a theoretical political aesthetic oscillates between the liberating and the frightening. It's all about the interface. To round up and synopsise the divergent tangents presented here, it seems appropriate to conclude with the ‘choices and the conditions of production’ of a life lived intensely in the Zone.

Phase 360° : The Remarkable Transducer

Michel Waiswiz (1949-2008) was a virtuoso of the biogrammatic zone. He lived as a transducer. The thick callouses on the *tops* of his hands, facing the out-side, were indicative his relationship with his art and his audience. He played hard, crafting an improvisatory technique that convolved polarities. Analog/digital, outside/inside, content/expression – all swallowed up and indiscernible in

¹⁷ McKenzie Wark, *GAM3R 7H30RY*, Future of the Book, (published online: 2006)
<http://www.futureofthebook.org/gamertheory/>

the *event* of his performing. His body, like few other performers, transduced the immediacy of thought and sensation, transduced the infinite resolution of everything analog to its digital capture and expression. A möbius loop, a living wire, a thinking circuit. His fingers and hands were conductive, his skin 'a patchable cable, potentiometer and condensator' (Waisvisz, 2004). Permeable, immediate, sensitive.

The CrackleBox,¹⁸ a 70's invention, is a simple circuit board with a quirky oscillator, sensitized to the interaction of skin conductance. As a concept and an instrument, it was seminal to his long-term investment with his second pair of Hands. Through the intense physicality of his 'tunneled awareness,' from tiny, deliberate finger triggers to expansive arm/shoulder gestures, he modulated the continuous stream of his immediate experience with the transformative potential of the sound sample. His practice was diagrammatic from every perspective.

When Waisvisz performed solo, the play of forces swirling about the room in a continuum of affecting and being affected, doubled and re-doubled through his living circuit. Arms outstretched in a bifurcating figure, Waisvisz was master of the dynamic between chaos and control. The relational *art affect* was palpable. The differential relations that filter percolating microperceptions becoming empowered perception were uncannily transparent in his performing. In duet with acoustic and electronic musicians, he charged the relation between the players as it emerged and re-emerged while maintaining the acute integrity of the originating sounds. Delicate, bombastic, nuanced, intricate, high decibel 'composing of the Now'¹⁹ (Waisvisz, 2003).

Ambient qualities produced by the audience were essential to his technique just as the social field is the immanent cause to the becoming of forms of realization, of content and expression, matter and function. Waisvisz drew the content of his expression from a vast database

¹⁸ <http://www.crackle.org/CrackleBox.htm>

¹⁹ <http://www.crackle.org/composingthenow.htm>

of soundings processed through software and wetware and the milieu that surrounded him. This quiet, intense drawing off, filtered through the whole of his body, registered in his gaze. Through his eyes - fixed, closed and openly laughing - the intensity, the potential of affect could be felt as it coursed through his body from fingertip to fingertip. He was resistor, capacitor, transistor, potentiometer, transducing outside and inside, content and expression. The outstretch of his arms, the porous membrane of his skin, the intermediary callous, the touch of fingertips on the small keypads, were of the biogrammatic, poetically, ardently, tangibly.

[insert Figure 5 landscape]

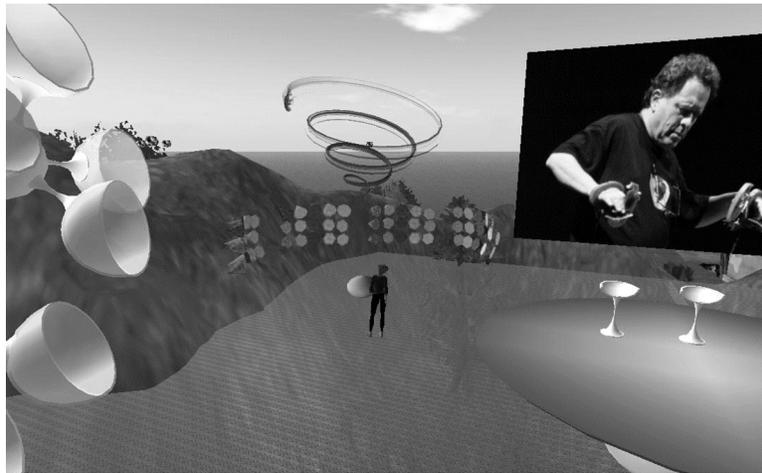


Figure 5: Waisvisz tribute in Second Life at the Odyssey site. His patafone instrument is pictured in the background²⁰.

Waisvisz played the indeterminate as it moved through the zone that is no place and everywhere; having no fixed identity, rather a shifting becoming. He folded and unfolded an ethical know-how in the event of improvisatory music-making. The politics of his insistent, rebellious art-making was an emergent, ephemeral aesthetic that evaded the archival. So strong was it. His was virtuosity without-end-product, without need of finality, culminating in multiplicities of tangential processes that will continue to mutate, provoke and thrive.

²⁰ <http://slurl.com/secondlife/Provincetown%20Seashore/234/171/22/>

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List of Figures and Captions:

Figure 1: Deleuze's *diagramme de Foucault* (2000, 120)

Permission forthcoming from University of Minnesota Press

Doruff.Figure1.tif

Figure 2: *Left:* abstracted from Deleuze's *diagramme de Foucault*. This is the line of the Outside as Fold. *Right:* To best express the movement of transductive relations of the biogrammatic, the Fold figure could be drawn as a one-sided topology of the möbius strip in a doubling process of looping and folding.

Illustration by author

Doruff.Figure2.tif

Figure 3: Movement between the polarities of content and expression, thought and the unthought, transduced through the biogrammatic fold.

Illustration by author

Doruff.Figure3.tif

Figure 4: The folding fissure of Deleuze's diagram mutates yet retains its folding properties through a Simondonian inspired individuating phase-shift.

Illustration by author

Doruff.Figure4.tif

Figure 5: Waiswiz tribute in Second Life at the Odyssey site. His patafone instrument is pictured in the background.²¹

Snapshot from Second Life by author

Doruff.Figure5.tif

²¹ <http://slurl.com/secondlife/Provincetown%20Seashore/234/171/22/>