



# Toward a Politics of Immediation

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A passage from Moten haunts the writing of these words that seek to push a politics of identity toward a politics of immediation. In a parenthetical aside in a paper on the city and the commune, Moten cautions us as regards the critique of identity politics. Too often, he writes, critiques of identity politics are waged against “non-white, non-straight, non-male identity [...] while courteously leaving politics to its own uncriticized devices” (Moten, 2016, p. 163). Through the figure of immediation, I ask: what happens when we do not insert a mediating gesture at the heart of experience? Is such a move capable of problematizing the figure of identity while still remaining sensitive to the fact for some the loss of a sense of identity may feel like the very same gesture as the colonial act of exclusion from the category of the human? In this double articulation of refusing mediation and introducing a time-form that challenges human-centered, colonial history, can we create an affirmative politics of emergent subjectivity that does not ignore that allegiances are necessary in the face of the systemic violence of oppression? The task, it seems to me, involves recasting allegiance such that it need no longer be subsumed to identity, and, by extension, to the individual. For the individual, that pet-figure of neoliberalism, is nothing more than the other side of the subject, which is the other side of the human. To focus on the individual in an exploration of modes of existence, to make the politics about the individual, is to reinstall a mediation that knows in advance how to recognize the human as orienter of experience. The problem of identity must instead be engaged from the perspective of Wynter’s “descriptive statement” of the human. This category of the human, as Wynter underscores, is concerned to perpetuate a genre of the human (Wynter, 2015, p. 9). What kinds of sociality cut across this genre?

**Keywords:** immediation, more-than human, sociality, Whitehead, time, Souriau, neurodiversity, black life

## OPEN ACCESS

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### Specialty section:

This article was submitted to  
Sociological Theory,  
a section of the journal  
Frontiers in Sociology

**Received:** 07 May 2018

**Accepted:** 10 December 2018

**Published:** 08 January 2019

### Citation:

Manning E (2019) Toward a Politics of  
Immediation. *Front. Sociol.* 3:42.  
doi: 10.3389/fsoc.2018.00042

## THE SUBJECT

It always happens in the middle. *We* always happen in the middle. Not first a thought, then an action, then a result, but a middling, “we” the result of a pull that captures, for an instant, how the thought was already action-like, how the body was always also a world. Not first a body then a world, but a worlding through which bodyings emerge. Not one then the other, but time-topologically, “we” a burst too vertiginous to articulate in the one-word-after-the-other language of “I” Not mediation, not something that comes in between to parse the existing terms, but *immediation*, the witness of time, of body in the making.

For Whitehead, there is never a subject that preexists an occasion of experience. And there is never a time into which we bathe fully-formed. All occasions of experience fashion the quality of subjectivity their uniqueness calls forth. In so doing they co-create the time of the event. A subject is in-time, coming into itself *just this way* in *this* set of conditions only to change again with the force of a different set of conditions. A subject can therefore never be reduced to a single occasion as

though that iteration of experience could map onto every past and future instance of what it might have meant to have come into oneself. Such an account would leave no room for the liveliness of difference in the world.

If this is the case, why is it that we maintain such a strong sense of the subject? How can we speak with such confidence about subject-positions and identity practices? Why do we claim to know “the subject” so clearly?

We know the subject because the subject is given to us again and again as the leading feature of experience. This feature, organized as it is by a commitment to first-person accountability, directs how experience is oriented. The subject, we learn, is the agency behind bodies, the agency that orients experience.

Subjects, however, are only as strong as the mediating positions they reinforce. Working through Whitehead’s account of subjectivity paired with the concept of immediation, the proposition here laid out is that the only subjects are the subjects of events: subjects do not organize experience but are organized by it.

## SIMPLE LOCATION

Whitehead would argue that the persistence of the preexisting subject as identity-position is a fallacy of simple location. Simple location refers to the notion that matter is “self-contained, localized in a region with a passive, static network of spatial relations, entwined in a uniform relational system” (Whitehead, 1938, p. 188). Yet matter, Whitehead underscores,

is fused into its environment. There is no possibility of a detached, self-contained local existence. The environment enters into the nature of each thing. Some elements in the nature of a complete set of agitations may remain stable as those agitations are propelled through a changing environment. But such stability is only the case in a general, average way (Whitehead, 1938, p. 188).

The preexisting subject as agent of experience prolongs the logic Whitehead outlines above, carrying over the self-contained, local existence of matter into its materialization in the body. Like matter, which, in this fallacy of “misplaced concreteness” (Whitehead, 1925) is set up as “a self-contained, static network of social relations,” the preexisting subject meets the world as a distinct, fully-formed other. Any account of simple location misses the push and pull of relation, reducing the complexity of all that co-composes to the set of mediated interactions that make up this one subject-driven identity.

A politics of immediation does not deny that subjects exist and affect how experience comes to be. What it underscores is that these subjects are born of the occasion, affected and affecting within the matrix of its singular conditions of existence. There is no mediation here: the subject cannot be parsed, externalized, abstracted from the occasion. Body-worlds are a constellation. Time here is not a passive surround in which the subject rests. The time of the subject cannot be abstracted from the time of its coming-into-being. In this regard, the subject can only be seen as

fleeting, as an appearance at the cusp that emphasizes a certain quality of experience.

## THE SUPERJECT

For Whitehead, an occasion coming into itself is always marked by a certain quality of form-taking. He calls this subjective form. Subjective forms are not subjects in the strong sense. They are the subjects *of the event*: they are the way the event gathers its complexity into itself. Whitehead writes: “An actual entity is at once the subject experiencing and the superject of its experiences” (Whitehead, 1978, p. 29). If the subject is the subjective form of the occasion coming into itself *just this way*, the superject is what crystallizes its quality of becoming as the event perishes. The superject is the crest of the wave in William James’s

“we live, as it were, upon the front edge of an advancing wave-crest, and our sense of a determinate direction in falling forward is all we cover of the future of our path. It is as if a differential quotient should be conscious and treat itself as an adequate substitute for a traced-out curve. Our experience, *inter alia*, is of variations of rate and of direction, and lives in these transitions more than in the journey’s end” (James, 1911, pp. 116–117).

The subject and the superject are always interwoven.

It is subjectsuperject, and neither half of this description can for a moment be lost sight of. The term “subject” will be mostly employed when the actual entity is considered in respect to its own real internal constitution. But “subject” is always to be construed as an abbreviation of “subjectsuperject” (Whitehead, 1978, p. 29).

This interweaving of experience, where experience carries both the quality of the occasion coming into itself *and* its crystallization, is made possible by event-time<sup>1</sup>, time folding into the event as it comes to expression.

In process philosophy, an occasion of experience is fully and absolutely what it is when it comes into its superject. But the superject as the living form-force of an actual occasion is short-lived—it must perish to give way to other experiences. This means that subjects are also short-lived. What persists is the quality-of-form of the superject, the force-of-form it leaves as trace in the world. In Whitehead’s vocabulary, the superject, or the subject of experience, persists, once it has perished, only as a datum for experience to come. It is not the superject as already-formed that continues into experience but its angling-into-expression that makes ingress into occasions to come. Whitehead names this mode of the perished superject “objective immortality” to highlight the way nothing is ever completely lost. Everything that comes to expression makes a difference, but there is no continuity of becoming, there is no uninterrupted flow. Instead, there is the becoming of continuity, cuts in process affected by the objective immortality of occasions bringing the force of their form into the

<sup>1</sup>For an account of event-time, see “Propositions for the Verge,” in *Always More Than One: Individuation’s Dance* (Manning, 2013).

welter of new occasions forming. It is the cut, the change, the schizz that creates the complexity of process.

What Whitehead's account of process underscores is that *any* process involves the cut of difference. The conditions of experience will always have changed, just as *this* cresting wave will always be different from the last. "The ancient doctrine that 'no one crosses the same river twice' is extended. No thinker thinks twice; and, to put the matter more generally, no subject experiences twice. This is what Locke ought to have meant by his doctrine of time as a 'perpetual perishing.' (Whitehead, 1978, p. 29) What has agency, or, preferably, *agencement*<sup>2</sup>, is the process itself, the process in its schizzing, not the figure of a pre-existing subject. Every occasion, every event is an *agencement*, a singular reorienting of the conditions of experience. Through its perishing, what the occasion leaves behind is not a fully-formed subject that will enter unchanged into the next occasion, but the *agencement* of its having come into existence just this way. It is the *agencement*, the conditioning of experience in its singularity now moving into new occasions, that moves the world.

## TIME MIDDLING

Time is never linear in Whitehead's account. Experience is topological, bending with the force of pastnesses future-presenting. Time is topological, a fold rather than a line. Mediation presupposes the time of the line. Organizing experience from the perspective of its unwavering extremities, mediation relies on opposable presuppositions. The subject is essential here—mediation's work is to enter into a naturalized social relation that consists of preexisting subjects and objects. With power structures firmly in place, mediation enters into the equation not to recast experience but to extract further structures. This restructuring may, and indeed often will, also have an effect on the terms at hand, shifting the stakes of their relation. This may even cause a certain redistribution of power. But it will not fundamentally alter the conditions of experience.

Recasting experience is the work immediation does. It does so not in opposition to mediation. Immediation's logic has no relationship to mediation. Whereas, mediation by its very nature requires time to be a container into which experience plays out, immediation makes apparent that relations are emergent. Experience is not an external quantity to be analyzed. Experience grows from the middle. It is from this middling that immediation does its work, recognizing that everything has effects: each occasion of experience leaves traces that affect how experience comes into itself in a time always folding.

## NON-SENSUOUS PERCEPTION

William James is suspicious of any account of time that would claim to know the now of experience. As in Whitehead, time for James is the time of the event, a time too complex to parse in the

past-present-future account of metric time we are accustomed to. He writes:

Let any one try, I will not say to arrest, but to notice or attend to, the *present* moment of time. One of the most baffling experiences occurs. Where is it, this present? It has melted in our grasp, fled ere we could touch it, gone in the instant of becoming (James, 1890, p. 608).

The present, James says, is specious: the now of experience is already part of the past, altered, if only minimally, in the now that is cresting. "In short, the practically cognized present is no knife-edge, but a saddle-back, with a certain breadth of its own on which we sit perched, and from which we look in two directions into time" (James, 1890, p. 609).

Like James' specious present, the not-hereness of the present felt in its passing, Whitehead's account of time aims to foreground how the future bends into the present even as the past colors it. Time is past-contouring in its future-presenting. Experience knows not time itself (the present) but the burst of its presenting in a time as yet to be invented.

Non-sensuous perception is the term Whitehead gives to the act of past-contouring that enables a certain persistence of experience. Every occasion of experience, Whitehead proposes, pushes forth a certain quality of its continuance even as it perishes. The question is how that continuity moves into and affects the present-passing. This quality is carried more than sensed through sense perception. Typically, the movement from past to present would be accounted for with sense perception. For Whitehead this continuity must not be reduced to sense perception as this would imply a cognition of time-passing, a mediation of the present into the past by the figure of the present. It would make the folds of time themselves conscious. Non-sensuous perception is a way to speak of direct experience, of the way experience itself cuffs the folds. This occurs in the experience itself, *immediating*.

Non-sensuous perception relies on an account of what he calls the "immediate past." The immediate past is "that portion of our past lying between a tenth of a second and a half a second ago. It is gone, and yet it is here. It is our indubitable self, the foundation of our present existence (Whitehead, 1967, p. 181). Non-sensuous perception is what moves pastness into presentness, making possible an intercession in experience of the time of the other. It is a time of the other in the sense that it carries germs of experience activated in ecologies other than the one now growing into formation. This ingression of otherness into experience brings with it qualities and tonalities and expressions of the past, doing so in relation to the futurity already affecting the experience in-forming, thereby modifying the welling occasion in both directions at once. Time bends in the event, and from this bending come subjectivities in the making.

It is important not to confuse these subjectivities in the making with what Whitehead calls "the self-identity of the occasion" (Whitehead, 1967, p. 181). The self-identity of the occasion is not identity abstracted from the event, it is the in-itselfness of the occasion at hand, the singular way it has come to be. The subjective form of an occasion comes into itself *out*

<sup>2</sup>For a more detailed exploration of the concept of *agencement* as an alternative for agency, see the introduction of *The Minor Gesture* (Manning, 2016).

of this self-identity. This coming out of itself produces not an identity but a tending, a tendency. It is this tendency Whitehead call the subjective form. When the tendency crystallizes into the superject, it will have taken on a consistency. But it will never be known exactly that way again. For when the occasion perishes, the subject perishes with it, leaving behind not a subject but a potential consistency, an *agencement* for occasions to come. This potential for ingression moving across occasions forming is the otherness referred to above—"The present moment is constituted by the influx of the other into that self-identity which is the continued life of the immediate past within the immediacy of the present" (Whitehead, 1967, p. 181). Past and future co-compose, the first active as a field of potential affectations for the future-presenting, the second the measure of how the allure of difference actualized. "Self-formation," writes Whitehead, "passes into its activity of *other-formation*" (Whitehead, 1967, p. 193).

Becoming-subject is therefore always becoming-other. Of course there are gradations. The question is to what degree an occasion of experience is oriented toward the more-than of its actualization. Appetite for difference increases the potential of that difference to make a difference. Appetite in the act itself, or what Whitehead calls the occasion's self-enjoyment, is the manner in which the occasion carries a certain curiosity for what exceeds the actual. Never simply located, appetite is the mode that activates other-formation, the force of attraction that orients the occasion to its more-than.

## MORE-THAN HUMAN

The pre-constituted subject is inevitably connected to the human which, like the subject, tends to be mobilized as a categorical given. To cement its givenness, the human is defined according to its difference from other categories such as the animal or the plant or the mineral. This givenness is not neutral. The implicit hierarchy is clear: the human stands above, not in an ecological co-relation to other forms of life.

Sylvia Wynter dates the category of the human as we now conceive of it to 1492. This is the date of what she calls "the bifurcation of history" (Wynter, 2015, p. 16). In this period of early colonization, the human is constructed as an epistemological category that serves to "[reify] bourgeois tenets" (Wynter, 2015, p. 17). Any notion of hybridity is excluded. "The larger issue is [...] the incorporation of all forms of human being into a single, homogenized descriptive statement that is based on the West's liberal, monohumanist man" (Wynter, 2015, p. 23).

As Wynter argues, this bifurcation of history facilitated the exclusion of black life from the human's "descriptive statement." Black life becomes the cipher for a life that troubles all categories, that unmoors existence by deviating from the order that seeks to sequester it, a mode of existence that create life-environments too illegible to count, to be counted, too cumbersome, too excessive, too unwieldy to make it into the colonial ontology.

The category of the human is more fragile that it would like to appear. In fact, it is so uncertain of the place it occupies that it requires continuous policing: the human, and humanism more generally, is terrified by the prospect that faced with the plethora of modes of practicing, of becoming-praxis, as Wynter articulates it, other modes of existence might be cast forth that trouble its

position of centrality. To keep its central position as maker and taker of the world, vigilance must be practiced. And so juridical, historical, political systems are created and sustained to hold the category in place and keep what threatens it at bay. As Denise Ferreira da Silva writes: "Wynter's critical move is to conceive of the classical order, and the rational grids (measurement and taxonomy) organizing it, as a transmutation (juridical-economic -> symbolic) of colonial power" (Ferreira da Silva, 2015, p. 96). Complex systems of subjugation must be set in place to uphold the category of the human (as so white as to be without race, as so colonial as to be without claim), and with them come practices of mediation, practices that stage repetitive choreographies of oppression in the name of territory and identity, of imperialism and global capitalism. These practices of mediation, always set up with the terms already in place, the mediators themselves the very description of neurotypicality (white in the security of their unspoken claims, white in the confidence of their apparent neutrality, white in the belief that theirs is the image of the world worth living) preclude an exclusion of all that doesn't fit neatly in the normative account of existence as we know it. They also, critically, include the framing of what counts as knowledge, as value. This is what we tend to forget in the context of mediation: that it has also given us the very category of knowledge itself. For what is framed as knowledge is mediated, always, by the neurotypical.

We could stop here and fight. The problem is we'd be fighting against the mediation, mediating the mediation. We'd be restaging the very same conditions that created the problem in the first place. "To study 'Man' or 'Humanity' is [...] to study a narrativization that has been produced with the very instruments (or categories) that we study *with*" (Mignolo, 2015, p. 107).

A politics of immediation invites us to begin elsewhere. It invites us to begin not with the terms intact but in the middling where things are still forming and categories are not-yet. Cutting into the middle, moved by the force of the future in the past-presenting, immediation seeks not structure but composition. This involves improvisation. There is no knowing quite how the conditions of experience will be altered by the event of time's middling.

This is not to discount the extraordinary suffering that comes of being excluded from the category of the human, nor to underplay the horror of slavery then and now, nor to excuse the exclusion perpetrated in the too often unspoken name of neurotypicality, nor to ignore the continuing violence upheld by that very category. It is to take seriously that we must come to knowledge differently, beyond the strictures of colonialism, beyond the "instruments (or categories) that we study *with*." In this we would accompany Wynter, who, in Mignolo's words, "seeks to undo the systems through which knowledge and knowing are constituted" (Wynter, 2015, p. 106).

## DECOLONIZATION

If we follow Wynter in her assertion that colonization creates an exclusive figure of the human, bringing the concept of the human into a lasting relationship not only with colonialism but with

capital and its matrix of power<sup>3</sup>, we might see the act of turning against the figure of the human as a decolonial gesture. This is the direction Nandita Sharma takes in her piece “Strategic Anti-Essentialism: Decolonizing Decolonization,” where she argues that the act of decolonization has to be careful not to take up the very instruments of power/knowledge mobilized by the oppressor. The turn away from the category of the human would by necessity also have to be a turning away from the conditions of identity imposed by the very colonial regime that gave the human its boundedness in the first place, she suggests (Sharma, 2015, pp. 166–169). The decolonial gesture would have to be immediating, not mediating.

When Leanne Simpson writes of decolonization in the context of the First Nations in Canada, she underscores the importance of forms of knowing to the project of decolonization. She writes:

“if we do not create a generation of people attached to the land and committed to living out our culturally inherent ways of coming to know, we risk losing what it means to be Nishnaabeg within our own thought systems (Alfred, 1999, 2005). We simply cannot bring about the resurgence of our nations if we have no one that can think within the emergent networks of Nishnaabeg intelligence. We cannot bring about the kind of radical transformation we seek if we are solely reliant upon state sanctioned and state run education systems. We cannot carry out the kind of decolonization our ancestors set in motion if we don’t create a generation of land based, community based intellectuals and cultural producers who are accountable to our nations and whose life work is concerned with the regeneration of these systems, rather than meeting the overwhelming needs of the western academic industrial complex or attempting to “Indigenize the academy” by bringing Indigenous Knowledges into the academy on the terms of the academy itself. Our ancestors’ primary concern in “educating” our young people was to nurture a new generation of Elders—of land based intellectuals, philosophers, theorists, medicine people, and historians who embodied Nishnaabeg intelligence in whatever time they were living in because they had lived their lives through Nishnaabeg intelligence (Simpson, 2014, p. 13)<sup>4</sup>.

As Simpson makes clear, decolonization cannot do its work from within the confines of colonial modes of power/knowledge. It must move beyond existing epistemologies and in so doing, also move beyond those very categories that uphold the human as defined and upheld by colonization, foremost amongst them, the categories of identity and the nation-state as defined by the treaty

of Westphalia. This is thorny work, given the impulse to take back what has been stolen. And so we must listen to how indigenous scholars themselves work through the issue of land-rights, always aware that there are ways of encountering land that exceed and complicate the territorial imperatives of the nation-state. Land must be reclaimed in order to practice and, where necessary, to reactivate, with the land, modes of living that have been violently usurped by the settler-colonial mode of transforming land into the territory of the state. We must reinvent, led by those who are active in the practice of decolonization, how else to encounter land as a lively aspect of more-than human modes of becoming. It is from this perspective that Sharma writes of the importance of resisting imagining “the space of colonization as finite” (Sharma, 2015, p. 174). As Sharma argues, we must look at “the broader field of power that processes of colonialism opened up” (Sharma, 2015, p. 176). Building future modes of knowing that are rich with traces of the past while active with new imaginings is at the heart of the “decolonial scientia” Magnolo reads as the continuation of Wynter’s decolonial project. What would knowledge look like were it not framed by the mediating power of the legacy of colonial practices in the afterlife of slavery? (Hartman, 1997).

## MODES OF EXISTENCE

Etienne Souriau’s work on modes of existence explores the ways in which constellations of tendencies coagulate to become modes of existence that alter the conditions of the world as we know it. In his recent book on Souriau, *The Merest Existences (Les existences moindres)*<sup>5</sup>, David Lapoujade explores Souriau’s modes of existence to better understand the place of those qualities of experience which are often cast aside and overlooked, those very qualities that infrathin immediation is most engaged with. These merest of existences as Lapoujade defines are intensifications of experience that alter the quality of what comes to be. They are potentialities, tonalities, tendencies. On the continuum of force-form that makes up modes of existence, they are on the side of force, not form. And yet, as Lapoujade argues through a close reading of Souriau’s work, these merest of existences make all the difference.

Modes of existences could be conceived as styles. A mode of existence “is a manner of making a being exist on a given plane” (Lapoujade, 2017, p. 14). A mode is a gesture, a way of orienting toward. “Each existence consists of a gesture that it instaurates,” instauration understood as the act, immanent to the event, of bringing a mode into existence (Lapoujade, 2017, p. 14). The plane of existence is replete with such gestures that qualify existence, that give it its style in the event-time of its activation. These gestures are not those of a preconstituted subject, “they are immanent to existence itself” (Lapoujade, 2017, p. 14). A gesture, a style, makes a subject, not the other way around.

The gestures of existence, the modes, do not necessarily reveal themselves as such. “The majority of these modes remain at the level of sketches or drafts; they are not capable of differentiating themselves from the indistinct base into which they reimmerse themselves” (Lapoujade, 2017, p. 16).

<sup>5</sup>All translations are my own.

<sup>3</sup>Mignolo writes: “the economy is only one component: domination precedes accumulation, and domination needs a cultural model or a colonial matrix that legitimizes and naturalizes exploitation,” where “the mode of production is a subset of the mode of domination [and] the mode of domination has been set, transformed and maintained in the colonial matrix,” (Mignolo, 2015, p. 115).

<sup>4</sup>Simpson continues, in a footnote: “While Indigenous scholars, students and leaders have made substantial inroads in some disciplines of the academy in terms of curriculum and programing, we have been much less successful in gaining the academy’s recognition of Indigenous Knowledge systems and intelligence on their own merits, and far less successful in dismantling systems of domination and oppression, dispossession and erasure advanced by the academy. While there are sites of decolonization within academic institutions, they still remain a colonizing force upholding the values of heteropatriarchy, settler colonialism and capitalism” (Simpson, 2014, p. 13).

The question is whether that which does not take form, does not take effect as such, can nonetheless make a difference? Do these sketches and drafts affect experience? Does the force of form alter the quality of that which eventually comes to be known as such? This is a key question for a politics of immediation.

Mediation, as suggested above, relies on preexisting categories which it then mediates. A reorganization of experience can occur through mediation, but it will always, by definition, have kept the terms of the exchange intact. This procedure relies on the primacy of the already-constituted, it relies on a kind of knowing that presumes that what makes the difference has already come to form and can be known as such. Immediation functions radically differently: it makes no a priori assumptions about what can make a difference, nor does it map a space of interaction that moves between two existing limit-points, setting itself as the arbiter of that exchange. Immediation middles, which is to say that it crafts middlings from which it tends to experience still in germ. Immediation is the how of the germinating through which force and form co-compose. Under these conditions, everything makes a difference, even those gestures which sketch only the merest of influence.

## THE WITNESS AND THE ADVOCATE

Souriau has two conceptual persona—the witness and the advocate<sup>6</sup>. These conceptual persona are the motivators of his system: they are what move the modes into intensification. The witness and the advocate could be seen as the barometers of the process of moving toward the actualization of a mode of existence. As Lapoujade underscores, these are not existing subjects that stand outside the event (Lapoujade, 2017, pp. 19–20). They are the motor that creates the conditions for the mode of existence to take form.

The witness carries the gesture of the act of seeing [*faire-voir*]. The advocate, always in relation to the witness, moves the seeing into full-fledged appearance. The advocate embodies the gesture of advocacy for existences in germ, as fledglingly perceived by the witness, bringing them onto the plane of experience. For Souriau, the artist is perhaps the best figure of the advocate—artists “bring new entities into existence, produce new realities” (Lapoujade, 2017, p. 20).

But we might ask: what are the conventions of the witness’s act of seeing and the advocate’s actualization of that seeing? What remains unseen in the act of witnessing, even when witnessing is immanent to the event? Can the advocate escape the category of judgement that is carried by its double-meaning in the French as advocate and lawyer? Is the making-perceptible of experience by the witness-advocate not a mediation of experience? Must all coming-into-itself of modes of existence pass through such conceptual figures? What of the force of artfulness itself, that force that alters the conditions of existence without passing through mediators?

## THE WILL TO ART

Lapoujade describes the merest existences as “the cloud of virtualities [*la nuée des virtuels*]” that populates experience (Lapoujade, 2017, p. 31). The cloud of virtualities accompanies all comings-to-be but is never known as such. Its power is precisely that it remains unachieved (Lapoujade, 2017, p. 32). Modes of existence are rendered more complex through the ingression of what remains unachieved. “[The cloud of virtualities] awaits the art that can make them exist more and otherwise. Its art is to generate or to demand art; their own gesture is to create other gestures” (Lapoujade, 2017, p. 32).

When Souriau speaks of art here he is moving beyond the human figure of the artist toward what I have elsewhere called artfulness—the aesthetic yield of experience in the making<sup>7</sup>. This *faire-oeuvre*, the working of the work, is not about a finished object prepared by a preexisting subject. It is about the *way*, about the *how* of coming to experience differently. Art does this best when it takes the shape of a problem that does not yet carry its solution; when it composes transversally with differentials of existence. These are the conditions wherein a “desire for creation” is introduced, “a will to art in the world” [*une volonté d’art dans le monde*] (Lapoujade, 2017, p. 32).

Minor gestures populate this *will to art*, the will to art a kind of Nietzschean will to power that yields aesthetically. Activating a Guattarian ethico-aesthetic paradigm, the will to art sees the aesthetic yield as the creative force of the in-act that does not discount what remains cloudy. The merest of existences are valued here. “All existence becomes entitled to be unachieved,” writes Lapoujade, following Souriau (Lapoujade, 2017, p. 33). All existence “can modify itself, transform itself, intensify its reality, move from one mode to another, conjugate them” (Lapoujade, 2017, p. 33).

Virtualities are transmodal: they move across planes of existence. In their movement, they “dictate, accept or negate nothing; rather they form a nebula where every decision becomes a question of presentiment, of divination or intuition” (Lapoujade, 2017, p. 34).

If virtualities bring the force of the problem to the art of life-living, minor gestures are the propulsion that play out the problem virtualities bring to existence. Minor gestures, as I have defined them elsewhere, are the force of deviation that activate variation in experience. Not propelled by an existing subject—not ours to make—minor gestures attune experience to what is variable within it, orienting it to its artfulness. In this regard, minor gestures are very much attuned to the merest of existences and to the incipient mode’s virtual operations.

Minor gestures are the transversal operations that intensify experience, activating the surplus, the more-than, through which experience touches its aesthetic yield. With the motor of the minor gesture and its capacity to tune the occasion, it seems to me that the conceptual personae of the witness and advocate are no longer necessary. Personifications of experience, even when immanent to the event, risk returning us to the human as central

<sup>6</sup>Souriau uses “avocat” in French, which also translates as lawyer.

<sup>7</sup>For a more complete account of artfulness, see the chapter entitled “The Art of Time” in *The Minor Gesture* (Manning, 2016).

category. In the process of the rock's perception of experience, in its prehension of time (as Whitehead loves to say), why bring in a witness and an advocate? Why not work from within rockness itself, from within the force of immanent variation at the heart of a singular mode of existence? Why not ask directly how minor gestures alter the conditions of rockness? Why not consider the artful quality of this becoming from the perspective of its own process, exploring the will to art on its immediating terms?

This is not to say that all conceptual personae are mediators. It is to undercore that mediation is a strong tendency in political, cultural and philosophical accounts of experience. All efforts to curb the neutralizing of experience are required in challenging the centrality of the colonial, neurotypical human as purveyor of sense. In the case of the witness and the advocate, it is not their status as conceptual personae that concerns me, but the existing presupposition they carry as regards the organization of experience. For it is difficult to conceive of the witness and the advocate beyond the figure of the intermediary, that figure too often white, too often colonial, that makes sense of how experience is valued.

An approach that begins with the problem, that takes seriously Bergson's call that we not seek problems that already have solutions (false problems)<sup>8</sup> but work instead from the field of experience's most knotted sites to discover not the answer but the conditions of existence of that very knottedness, requires modes of engagement that resist mediation at all costs. With the allure of mediation as strong as it remains, why take the risk of re-mediating the occasion through figures that would risk imposing value-systems on the burgeoning event? Why risk making all existence an existence mediated by the all-knowing human, even in the form of conceptual personae? Instead of taking the juridical model of the advocate into the realm of the artful, why not take artfulness into politics, making decolonization and the more-than-human the sites of aesthetic yield?

## INSTAURATION

Staying close to Souriau's work while moving away from the figures of the witness and the advocate in favor of the minor gesture, the question remains: how does the transduction happen? What motivates the shift from an incipency to a mode of existence? What makes existences take shape? If the human is not where activity begins and ends, if there is no subject orienting experience from the outset, what makes the difference such that difference is felt?

Instauration is the concept Souriau gives to the shift that activates the dephasing through which a mode of existence comes into being. As the crest of James's wave, instauration

is the subtraction from the welter of experience: instauration marks the act of culling from the wealth of the gesture only this detail, this singular set of relations, bringing it to the fore. This gathering into itself has effects. What has come to be by subtracting from the welter of potential now orients the mode of existence it has come to embody. This, in turn, affects the coming into itself, through non-sensuous perception, of what will follow. Tendencies affirm similar tendencies, habits are formed and soon we have an object, an instituted way, a being in the world.

But instauration does not happen once and for all, and it is this that keeps what actualizes through subtraction from becoming a fixed representation of itself. Instauration is an iterative process, as topological as time itself. "Instauration is not to found. To found imposes a preexisting Form or dictates its conditions a priori" (Lapoujade, 2017, p. 70). Instauration is immanent to what it brings into existence. "Instauration is upheld only by its own gesture, nothing preexists it" (Lapoujade, 2017, p. 71). To bring into existence, to "make" exist, is the work of instauration, but this is not existence generalized. Instauration is an intensifier: it moves germs of process into existence *in a certain way*, "each time (re)invented" (Lapoujade, 2017, p. 71). Instauration is the *art* of bringing into existence.

Instead of situating the advocate as instauration's "spokesperson [*porte-parole*], or, better, their existence-carryer [*porte-existence*]," a politics of immediation suggests that is the minor gesture itself that does the carrying (Lapoujade, 2017, p. 72). Where an advocate mediates, a minor gesture immediates. The force of this immediation is felt in the minor gesture's own textured collaboration with the event's coming into being. Recalling that the minor gesture is never outside the event, is never activated by a subject external to experience in the making, it makes sense, it seems to me, to consider the work of instauration as that quality of intervention that happens through the bringing-into-variation of the minor gesture. For in its operations, the minor gesture does what instauration outlines: it pulls the event into an intensification that makes palpable the indeterminacy that fuels it, keeping the problem of the event alive. "The force of a problem is not its internal tension," writes Lapoujade, "it is the uncertainty that it introduces in the (re)distribution of reality" (Lapoujade, 2017, p. 59). The minor gesture activates the uncertainty that is the movement of thought coursing through the occasion, tuning it to a future-pastness that alters the quality of the mode through which it will come to expression. It affects the mode-as-gesture, making-felt its potential for variability. Modes of existence are fundamentally altered by the as-yet-unthought and it is this force of form that minor gestures make resonant.

This is not to say that all of this occurs harmoniously. Minor gestures are no more harmonious or good than are any other gestures or modes of existence. How they come to be depends on the problems they take up. The intensification of experience is not necessarily positive. It is vital not to invest immediation with morality. How things come to be is always determined by the conditions that opened the way for their singular mode

<sup>8</sup>Following Henri Bergson, Deleuze writes: "False problems are of two sorts, 'nonexistent problems,' defined as problems whose very terms contain a confusion of the 'more' and the 'less'; and 'badly stated' questions, so defined because their terms represent badly analyzed composites" (Deleuze, 1991, p. 17). False problems, like the questions the undercommons does not ask, bring us up against "an illusion that carries us along, or in which we are immersed, inseparable from our condition" (Deleuze, 1991, p. 20). I discuss false problems in detail in "Carrying the Feeling," *The Minor Gesture* (Durham: Manning, 2016).

of existence. This is why there can be no general politics of the minor, and certainly no general politics of immediation. The aesthetic yield always depends on a *way*, and it is the way that must be studied each time. This is the ethics of this approach.

## HAECCEITIES

A politics of immediation makes a case for an attunement to the most minute of variations. Our more-than humanness is rife with such variations, most of which we regularly ignore in favor of the consolidation of experience from which we say “I.” And sometimes that is the only way: consolidation does remain necessary in a world that tends to decry complexity and variation.

But the variation is there, and this variation, in all its nebulosity, far exceeds anything we might call the human as carrier of hierarchies of existence. We were always more-than human. The human as category was never really capable of describing us, of including us; it was there as descriptive statement to tell us what we aren’t. For, those who fit neatly within its bounds have never needed to be included—they already speak from its center. And yet, these orators of human-centredness, these humanists for whom the world is a site to be governed, these neurotypicals who already know what it means to know, they are more-than human too. There is no human. Only, as Wynter might say, descriptive statements that keep epistemologies of segregation, violence and exclusion alive.

In the work of attuning to the more-than that composes us, and the more-than that eludes us, the most difficult concept remains that of relation itself. How to speak of what animates our coming into being but is not us? How to write from the middling of experience in a way that situates us as participants, not leaders of the action? How to not give in and create witnesses and advocates that mediate experience, introducing external measures of value into experience? How to speak of that which absolutely isn’t us but nonetheless affects the “we” we are becoming? How to write of modes of existence that are so other that they don’t even register? Or if they register, do so such that they leave us searching for ways to account for their radical difference without reclaiming them as our own?

A politics of immediation begins here, in the not-knowing. For in the middling there is never a knowing-in-advance. What there are haecceities, qualities that are yet to come into full presence but nonetheless already make the merest of differences. These haecceities of existence carry with them a thisness, an orienting, but no form as such. They are the atmosphere that permeates the associated milieu of existence informing. They are the stuff of relation. They are the relational tenor of incipencies that may never come to form but will nonetheless always have been felt if not by us, then by the world.

Atmosphere is a relationscape that escapes any kind of mediation. It may include us but it also always exceeds us, its feltness a contributory factor in experience that moves through us without ever being only about us. Always more-than what

actualises, atmosphere is carried by that which comes into being but is not limited to being. It affects and is affected, qualifying experience. It has no form, only force. And yet all taking-forms are affected by it. As pure relation it never operates alone. Atmosphere could perhaps be said to be that which conditions all that is relational, that which moves through all which comes into contact.

Brian Massumi connects atmosphere to affective tonality, suggesting that affective tonality is “the leading edge of experience<sup>9</sup>.” Atmosphere, he writes, is the background of that leading edge, a “diffuse vitality affect.” Every instauration brings with it an atmosphere. This atmosphere is the tone, the color of that intensification.

A politics of immediation requires an attunement to these haecceities that condition experience without foregrounding themselves as events in their own right. How to attune to the force of a collectivity, to the quality of a “mutual envelopment<sup>10</sup>,” that is atmosphere? How to speak of the condition of the felt-differential that is atmosphere? How to encounter its nebulosity without attempting to make it our own, to make it some-thing? How to compose with the how of coming-to-act in a way that allows for modes of becoming that exceed the form of being, encouraging an artfulness that is sensitive to the aesthetic yield of the event?

This requires new gestures, new postures, new in the sense of emergent to the event, activated from the event’s middling. And it requires new modes of narration, new modes of writing. Following Saidiya Hartman, we must learn to “write history differently,” challenging the mediating models that are used to mobilize and strengthen existing forms of valuation that tend to privilege those modes already in existence, modes too often seeped in the epistemologies of colonialism and the identity-practices colonialism breeds, including all of the ways academia values the stance of objectivity and distance, always in the name of the unnamed whiteness that lurks at its core. This is not an easy task, especially when dealing with the unspeakable violences of colonialism and the racism it breeds.

Speaking of her book *Lose Your Mother*, Hartman asks: “How does one write about history that is the encounter with nothing, or write about a past that has been obliterated so that even traces aren’t left?” (Hartman, 2008, p. 4). Her uneasy answer is to fashion modes of encounter, through writing, that restage the conditions of experience from the perspective of a future-presenting. Instead of working from an academic distance only with the archives of colonialism, Hartman chooses to write history into existence. Moving away from the work of academic critique, she opts for a poetics toward “a revolutionary imagination that wants to discover, institute, initiate a new way of telling” (Hartman, 2008, p. 6). Instead of being the mediator of the narrative of history, she writes from the fabulating middle, discovering a voice that is both hers and not hers in the writing.

In an interview with Hartman, Patricia Saunders describes Hartman’s prose in *Lose Your Mother* this way: “There is a very personal aspect of the book [...] but it is a personal that isn’t

<sup>9</sup>Talk, IKKM Weimar May 4 2017.

<sup>10</sup>Brian Massumi, talk, IKKM May 4 2017.

simply about you—it is also the formation of an intellectual, the formation of a radical politics,” and here Hartman intervenes, “the formation of a diasporic subject” (Hartman, 2008, p. 11). This act of immediation, the writing from within the narrative to allow a bodying to unfold is a radical act. This is what Souriau is gesturing toward when he says that it is art that is most capable of creating new gestures, and with those gestures, new modes of existence.

This work of crafting new modes of existence will never be possible if we situate ourselves in the position of the critic, observing the world from the sidelines, as Hartman also underscores (Hartman, 2008, p. 7). Only immanent critique can do the work of immediation—critique that moves from the force of the in-act to discover not only what the conditions of a singular mode of existence are, but what its merest existences reveal. Critique that stands in as judge and mediator of experience will only ever leave things firmly in place.

Immediation is a practice. It is an act, a verb. Relational to the core, it reminds us that time is never a point and that experience can never be reduced to that which is culled from the welter. Experience is atmosphere coupled with the cut of subtraction, the crest and the wave. Here, where “we look into two directions into time,” it is the more-than that defines us (James, 1890, p. 609). A politics of immediation proposes this schizz of experience in-forming as the site of existence’s potential.

## REPRISE: BEYOND IDENTITY

A passage from Fred Moten has haunted the writing of these words. In a parenthetical aside in a paper on the city and the commune, Moten cautions us as regards the critique of identity politics<sup>11</sup>. Too often, he writes, critiques of identity politics are waged against “non-white, non-straight, non-male identity [...] while courteously leaving politics to its own uncriticized devices” (Moten, 2016, p. 163). How to raise the problem of identity-positions in a way that doesn’t perform this kind of gesture? How to problematize identity while remaining sensitive to the fact for some the loss of a sense of identity may feel like the very same gesture as the colonial act of exclusion from the category of the human? How not to engage in re-disenfranchising those very bodies that have historically been denied subjectivity? How to

<sup>11</sup>The full passage reads: “To speak of the thing that is before the city—as the previousness of a rigorously imagined contemporary projection of an insistent, departive turning over of soil and blood and language—is to engage in something that wants to be called sentimentalism while asking you to remember that sentimentalism is the aesthetics (which is interanimate with the extra-political sociality) of the unfinished project of abolition and reconstruction that is our most enduring legacy of successful, however attenuated, struggle; and that sentimentalism is too often and too easily dismissed by students and devotees of power, especially in its connection to what they dismiss as identity politics (where such dismissals are always hyper-critical of (non-male, non-straight, non-white) identity while courteously leaving politics to its own uncriticized devices. To be interested in the rematerialization of wealth as something outstripping, even as it is constitutive, of limited bourgeois-imperialist forms and modes is to think such re-materialization as an anticolonial complaint for the anarchic, uncommon) permeation borne by what would have been outside, where we work and work out the poetics of our beautifully ugly feelings, as Thelonious Monk + Sianne Ngai might say. To be interested in this subtensive irruption is to be concerned with what a genuine anti-colonialism might be... (163–164).

create an affirmative politics of emergent subjectivity that does not ignore that alliances are crucial in the face of the systemic violence of oppression?

The task, it seems to me, involves recasting alliance such that it need no longer be subsumed to identity, and, by extension, to the bounded individual. For the bounded individual, that pet-figure of neoliberalism, is nothing more than the other side of the subject, which is the other side of the human. To focus on the individual as the harbinger of identity, to make the politics about the individual, is to reinstall a mediation that knows in advance how to recognize the human as orienter of experience. The problem of identity must instead be engaged from the perspective of Wynter’s “descriptive statement” of the human. This category of the human, as Wynter underscores, is concerned to perpetuate a *genre* of the human (Wynter, 2015, p. 9). What kinds of sociality cut across this genre?

The kind of identity politics Moten gestures toward remains attached to the genre of the human installed by the colonial practices that still serve as the ground from which we claim our identities. It is no doubt the case that many if not most critiques of identity serve to sideline those very people who have already been uncounted. It is also clearly the case that from a perspective always pretending to be neutral, critiques of identity serve to reinstall the primacy of the white, neurotypical subject-position. This brand of identity-politics policing refuses to be sensitive to the ways in which exclusion from the category of the human continues to permit the perpetuation of violence and segregation. And, too often, as Moten underscores, it proposes no creative encounter with sociality, no other ways of thinking of alliance. It proposes no other ways.

A critique of identity-politics must always be an engagement with what else it can mean to be human *as praxis*. A critique of identity-politics must commit to more-than human forms of sociality. It must come from the unsettledness of giving up on the genre of the human too many of us take for granted. A critique of identity-politics must coincide with the creation of new modes of existence that privilege not our preconstituted position but engage deeply with the will to art that opens the world to minor gestures. A critique of identity-politics can therefore never be spoken in our name. Beginning the middle, working from a politics of immediation, a critique of identity-politics must learn to compose with the haecceities that exceed us, with the subtractions that make us.

I consider neurotypicality to be a pervasive form of identity politics that, precisely because it mostly remains unspoken, has profound effects on the conditions of experience for anyone who doesn’t easily fit within the parameters it sets up to frame the human. These parameters tend to be based on the policing of intelligence and, by extension, of the very capacity to know.

The policing of the category of the human happens in an infinite number of ways. Two that stand out in relation to neurodiversity are the performance of exclusion based on motor difference and on spoken language. Bodies that tic, stim, bodies

that appear disorganized, are too often considered to be bodies without anything to say. Before even taking the time to listen, these bodies are overlooked, cast aside. Intelligent bodies are bodies that stand still, their subjectivity demonstrated by the very fact that they seem to control their gestures. Bodies that command their own movements are knowing bodies. Add to this modes of communication that are not oriented around speech and you have full-fledged exclusion. The consequences are complex: neurodiversity too often continues to be excluded from mainstream education not because the neurodiverse are not fully capable of participating, but because accommodations will not be made for their modes of functioning. This is not only due to the lack of imagination within education. This is also due to a widespread neurotypical account of knowledge that gives no value to other ways of coming to knowledge and feels no urgency to learn how else learning can happen. Autistic Amy Sequenzia knows this situation well. She explains:

I am a self-advocate and I can type my thoughts. But, at the moment I show up with my communication device and an aide, my credibility, in the eyes of most neurotypical people, is diminished.

This is a constant battle for non-speaking autistics. Even the ones among us who have demonstrated, many times, their capabilities, and who have succeeded despite all the hurdles a disability imposes, these successful cases don't seem to be enough to end the myths: that non-speaking autistics cannot self-advocate; that the so-called "low-functioning" cannot think by themselves, cannot have ideas or opinions. Looking very disabled or needing more physical help does not make us unable to think, being critical, being able to analyze (Sequenzia, 2012).

To know cannot be limited to the way the neurotypicality understands knowledge. "We, autistics, have tried hard and accepted the neurotypical way of doing things to make it easier for non-autistic people to understand us, interact with us," Sequenzia continues (Sequenzia, 2012). Neurotypicality cannot be the barometer of experience, and, by extension, nor can the very category of the human upheld by neurotypicality.

This extends to black life, which is also excluded from the *genre* of the human, as argued throughout. Black life is neurodiverse to the core if neurodiversity speaks to a difference that cannot be assimilated. It follows, then, that any critique of neurotypicality—which will always be a critique of identity politics as I understand it, must be extended such that it can also become a critique of racism and colonization and any other exclusion perpetuated by the category of the human.

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To do this work, modes of knowing differently must be valued. These modes can include language, but to situate them only within language would be once again to put the human at the center. So many other forms of knowing are active in the conjugation between atmosphere and subtraction. These modes include movement, texture, touch, and they include much more that is too mere for us to perceive. These too are worth study, and this is the work decolonization must take up.

Finally, following Moten, we must not "leave politics to its own uncriticized devices." We must be careful not to situate politics in the realm of those very categories that exclude us, the "we" we are becoming. A politics of immediation orients around a concept of the political that itself must be invented anew with each occasion of experience. With this call for invention comes an urgency to be vigilant about the category of the human, to think differently about where "we" begin and end, and to create movements of thought, modes of knowing, that depart from a place that is infested with the legacy of colonialism and the barren imagination it leaves behind. Turning instead to the aesthetic yield of experience in the making, what if we began with the haecceities that blur our contours, seeing these new ecologies not as less-than the subjects we are accustomed to being, but as infinitely more-than.

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## AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

The author confirms being the sole contributor of this work and has approved it for publication.

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**Conflict of Interest Statement:** The author declares that the research was conducted in the absence of any commercial or financial relationships that could be construed as a potential conflict of interest.

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