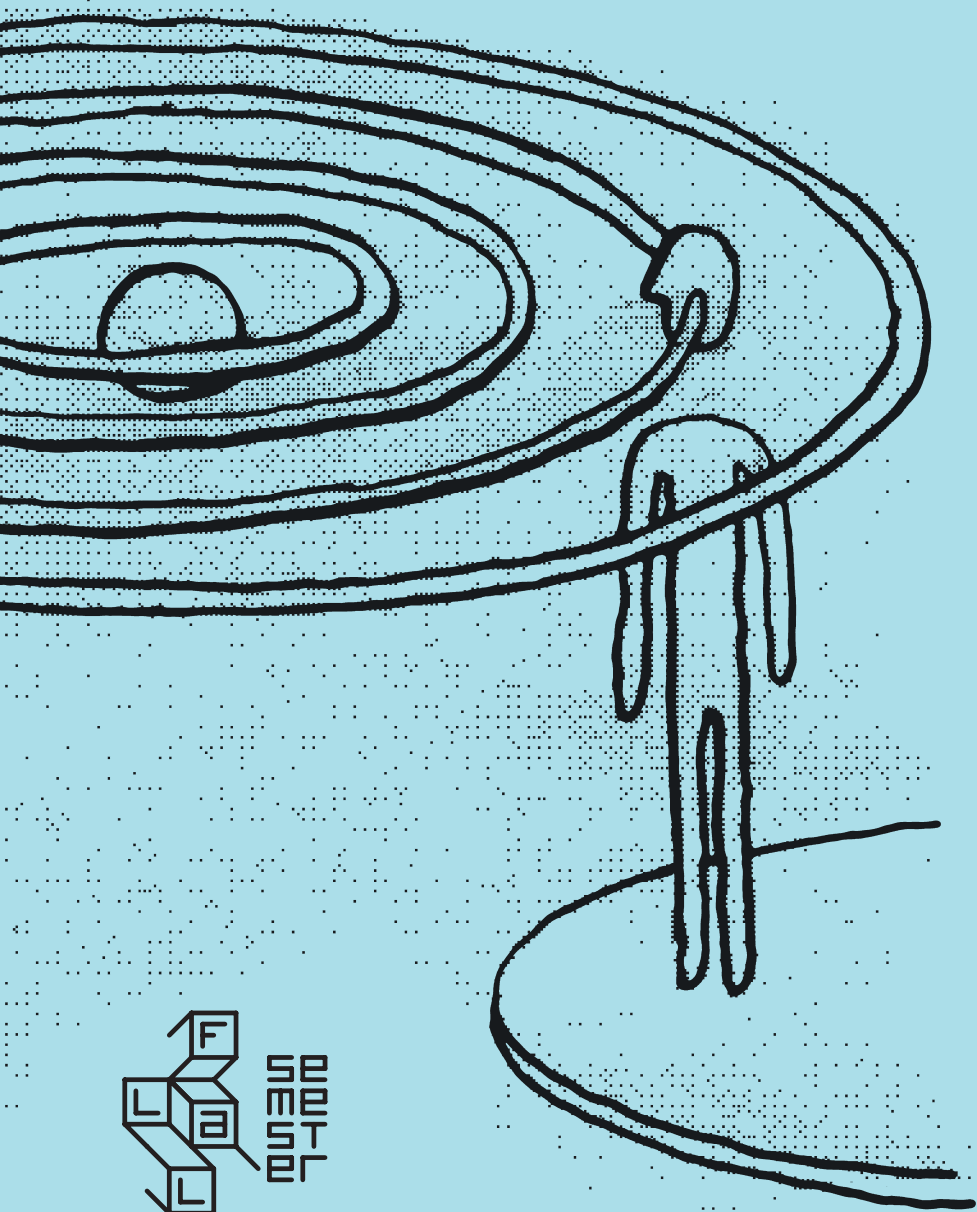


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Loving  
the  
Alien





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# "Loving the Alien": A Post-Post- Human Manifesto

Esposito points out, "for life to remain as such, it must submit itself to an alien force that, if not entirely hostile, at least inhibits its development" (Esposito 2011: 8)

In this essay I will explore the ambivalent position of the alien within the context of one of the themes for this workshop: "Intimacy with the Cosmos", in order to reflect upon the question of whether there is a place for a non-body politic? The theme invites reflection on scales beyond the grasp of the human – the micro and the macro and the proliferation thereof considered not as a fixed object, a self, or even another. As the organisers suggest, this is "matter organized extensively and intensively in such arrangements as trajectories, vectors and modulated fields. They are simultaneously local, global and universal. These forces in and of themselves may not be either purely corporeal or transcendental, but they pressure us and we feel them. We may care more about them than they do of us. Somewhere between magnetic resonance and cognitive dissonance exists our interface with the cosmos. Since where the Real begins and ends is no longer for us to decide, we must give in. Maybe we should love the alien and find such a thing as a post-human manifesto or a post-human post-manifesto? The what and where are the means and ends to speculating on what we don't know. Lurking there may be fissures, mutations, grafts and splices into things becoming other things. We could then speculate on how inhabitable those spaces are and if we want to go there. Thus, we should discuss—at least for the course of three days—on whether or not there is a place for a non-body politic?"

How might we approach this theme and set of questions if we recognise what I am calling the "inhumanism of the human" as well as the "humanism of the inhuman" (although the term humanism might need unmooring from its grounding in specific conceptions of distinctly human agency and values); what is already "in" the human and "inhuman formation"? How can we develop a non-body politics which recognises the complexity of different scales of matter, some of which have been fundamentally changed, altered and reformed as part of human-technological industrial practices? In this context, what counts as a body? Where does this leave "us" and our capacity to apprehend, experience, live and commune with the "alien"? Does this question still assume a sovereign human subject (white and masterful) encountering a foreign element that exposes how entrenched political and even biological resistance to otherness is? What resists our capacity to truly understand or prehend fragility, finality, death, dying, torture, extinction, brutality, and our increasing anxieties about the future when the human (as a generic and unmarked) species is displaced from its fantasy of mastery, boundedness and control?

In order to address some of these questions I will bring together a number of different debates from "new biologies" to "alien phenomenologies" that provide some ways of framing a possible non-body politics founded on radical relationality, contingency and "inhuman formation" that might go some small way to recognising what might be at stake. I write as a media and cultural theorist who works at the intersection of body studies, affect studies and genealogies of science, particularly those that have taken the human as their subject and prefix (psychology, psychiatry, for example). This essay will develop a distinctly queer and feminist orientation to some of these questions, as they impact on related debates (object-oriented ontologies, speculative realisms etc). I will argue that for a non-body politics to exist we need to invent speculative sciences at the intersection of the arts, humanities and sciences that will help us comprehend and importantly act as part of a non-body politics. I will argue that in order for radical change and transformation to be possible we need to address the very human grids of intelligibility, which prevent the kind of

psychosocial forms of recognition, which might allow such a politics to be grasped and enacted.

## **Loving the Alien**

Aliens have not particularly found a hospitable milieu within the set of conditions of life that we call "The Earth". Popular culture has been rife with alien visitations, and conspiracy theories are abound with inexplicable phenomena, oddities, "strange stuff", puzzles and paradoxes, which gesture towards alternate realities and visitations by "things" not of this world. The trope of visitation presumes an entity not of this world, which encroaches and even disrupts what might count as life, and particularly forms of life, which might challenge human sense making and grids of intelligibility. The alien exists at the nexus of different scales of matter, including the planetary, biological and the popular, disclosing a cosmos that exceeds current systems of thought as well as displacing the human from its apparent centre.

One iconic image of an alien visitation that evokes images of alternate imaginaries is that of the late David Bowie appearing in the film, *The Man Who Fell to Earth*. Bowie falls to earth on a mission to save his own species dying from a lack of water as a result of a catastrophic drought. Throughout the film, as well as being out-of-space (extra-terrestrial), Bowie's character, Jerome Newton, is also presented as out-of-time, represented perhaps by his androgyny and enviable fashion sense. Although the alien in this context is aligned to extra-sensory perceptions, superior intelligences and technological prowess the ending is all too human. Through the exploitation of the alien by the human, Jerome Newton, is exposed, cheated and incarcerated such that his mission to transport water back to his own planet is thwarted by alcoholism and depression.

He is made "thing-like", outside of human connection, and as a hybrid human-alien life form discloses the intimate cultural connection made between the alien and psychopathology. Newton becomes haunted by persistent telepathic images of his own family dying, and his failure to return home and save his

species. The film explores the etymological connection between haunting and home<sup>1</sup>, and what it might feel like to not feel at home in one's surroundings, milieu, country, planet or even body, a familiar theme to many who experience their own embodiment as "thing-like". This haunting persists in his own torment and anguish made worse by Newton's addiction to alcohol, which does little to quell his troubles and anxiety.

We can see in this science fiction how haunting and to be haunted are also a synonym for frequency or persistence, as well as referring to the source of a trouble or anxiety. The themes of persistence, frequency, and the source of something that troubles or causes anxiety, as well as the more familiar link between the alien and haunting are all themes and connections made between the alien and the human, which expose the limits and boundaries of what counts as human within this specific conjuncture. The alien points to processes, practices, entities and registers of experience that we don't know or quite understand but is brought into the human realm through exploitation, bodily vulnerability, deprivation and feelings of loss and longing.

As a political figuration the alien has found a more hospitable home within the context of queer and critical race politics providing a range of creative and critical responses to the cultural convergences made between the alien and the queer and/or black person. Within the context of Afrofuturism, for example, the alien has provided the conditions for the shaping of a "performative image" that can be inhabited, lived and practiced, specifically through micro-registers of experience, such as music<sup>2</sup>. The focus on practices and forms which do not conform to a specific semiotics of identities, for example, enacts a particular "politics of race" that exposes how the inhuman already exists within what counts as human life, even if submerged, occluded, disavowed and disqualified. Afrofuturism aligns the alien not to things "not of this world" (the extra-terrestrial), but rather to the "alien-on-earth" and to those submerged and displaced histories, peoples, events and practices, which can be re-moved (that is put back into circulation) in order to explore the "transformative potential" of the Alien<sup>3</sup>. As Beatrice Ferrara (2012) has argued: "African-Americans are, in a very real sense, the descendants of alien abductees; they inhabit a sci-fi nightmare in which unseen

but no less impassable force fields of intolerance frustrate their movement; official histories undo what has been done; and technology is too often brought to bear on black bodies (branding, forced sterilization, the Tuskegee experiment, and tasers come readily to mind)".

As Ferrara argues, "if no one on Planet Earth can be considered human anymore" then where does this leave politics and the potential for change and transformation?

### **Erasing the human (again)**

The human has been under erasure within philosophy in different ways for decades. Within the present, critiques of the human as an agential, bounded subject now meet a form of erasure, which includes talk of the anthropocene and the end of the human and even the extinction of the planet<sup>4</sup>. This geo-political epoch sits alongside the impotence of human problem solving and capacity to understand the financial entities, objects and practices enacted by global finance capitalism, for example (see Seigworth and Tiessen, 2012). These objects and entities appear to have their own unanticipated and autonomous agencies and effects. Where once anxieties about creation were displaced onto the robot or fictional monsters such as Frankenstein, now our inability to understand the unanticipated consequences and mutations of life as it develops within the current conjuncture prevents us from truly grappling with the "humanism of the inhuman" and the "inhumanism of the human"<sup>5</sup>.

In different areas across science, philosophy and the humanities, we witness a contemporary trend across the humanities and social sciences to explore and identify some of the common ontologies emerging across the sciences and humanities, which emphasise the complex, processual, indeterminate, contingent, non-linear, relational nature of phenomena constantly open to effects from contiguous processes. These arguments are being advanced in relation to the fields of genetics and the biological sciences (including epigenetics and the microbiome), mathematics, quantum physics and the physics of small particles, the neurosciences

(particularly the social and critical neurosciences), affect theories across media and cultural theory (see Gregg and Seigworth, 2010), new materialisms (Coole and Frost, 2010), as well as the neurosciences of affect and emotion (see Wetherell, 2012).

These common ontologies are grounded in concepts such as biosocialities (Rabinow, 1996), naturecultures (Haraway, 2003), entanglement (Barad, 2007), assemblage, flow, turbulence, emergence, becoming, relationality, intra-action, co-evolution, co-emergence, the machinic, to name just some of the heuristics and new biosocial languages being deployed. In their wake, relationships between the social and the natural, the mind and body, the cognitive and the affective, the human and the technical and biology and identity are being reformed (see Blackman and Venn, 2010: 7).

The assumption of emergent shared ontologies across the sciences, humanities and social sciences connects with a trend towards process, indeterminacy and relationality across other fields, including the field of affect studies, new materialism, feminist, queer and trans studies, critical race studies and so forth. This includes a breaking down of the distinction between human and other life forms, between binary genders, between past, present and future, self and other, material and immaterial, and many other dichotomous forms of thought and practice. However, what is often left unchallenged or under-challenged are the more conservative psychosocial understandings of human subjectivity found within the psychological sciences (and which underpin neoliberal rationalities), which are much harder to challenge, contest and overturn. This is an enduring problem despite the aforementioned philosophical commitments to process, radical relationality and indeterminacy.

Let me give you an example from biology, which illustrates what might be at stake.

### **The New Biologies**

"Life deals in mixed cultures" (Sagan, 2009)

In a forthcoming special issue of the journal, *Body & Society* exploring the theme of "The New Biologies: Epigenetics,



the Microbiome and Immunity", Hannah Landecker (2016) takes a micro-scale of matter, bacteria, in order to open up what I am calling the "inhumanism of the human" and the "humanism of the inhuman". The background to Landecker's engagements is a question of the status and boundaries of human life within the context of bacteria, fungi and viruses. In the context of immunity, for example, it is now recognised particularly through studies of the microbiome, that humans are "motley crews", as Sagan has argued where she argues that the human is always-already "More than Human"<sup>6</sup>. In order to understand the significance of what we might call "commune systems" rather than immune systems (see Cohen, 2009), Sagan argues that we are becoming "stressed by what is repressed". Turning her gaze on Anthropology, the study of humanity, she argues that we are witnessing the –"return of the ghost of what was excluded, in this case all the systems, living and nonliving, which make our kind possible."

Invoking the figure of the alien Sagan draws on the writing of Clair Fulsome<sup>7</sup> published some thirty years ago, who invited readers to imagine what might happen as a result of a particular alien visitation; what might remain if a human or human life was extinguished:

"What would remain would be a ghostly image, the skin outlined by a shimmer of bacteria, fungi, round worms, pinworms and various other microbial inhabitants. The gut would appear as a densely packed tube of anaerobic and aerobic bacteria, yeasts, and other microorganisms. Could one look in more detail, viruses of hundreds of kinds would be apparent throughout all tissues. We are far from unique. Any animal or plant would prove to be a similar seething zoo of microbes. (Folsome 1985)"

This image enacts a levelling of the differences between human and so-called non-human species, enacting a particular form of posthumanism or more-than-humanism, which draws on concepts such as entanglement, commingling, co-habitation, co-evolution and co-enactment in order to describe just what we are doing when we are being human. Scales matter, and in this case the prehension or grasping of microscales of matter as part of the co-evolution of human life is framed as a problem of "crowd control", where as Sagan suggests, "Considering that life has been growing on Earth for some 3.8 billion years, it is not

surprising that life has grown into itself, eaten itself, and merged with itself. Crowd control has long been an issue."

However, she argues, as have many others, that the concept of immunity-as-self-defence (Cohen), a particular form of crowd control where the immune system is taken to act as a defence mechanism against pathogens (what Cohen calls a form of biopolitical individualisation), and has the potential to become overwhelmed, does not suffice as a model for a non-human or posthuman ethics. Erin Manning (2009) has also referred to this approach to immuno-politics as based on a nationalistic model of territory, which reinstates distinct borders and boundaries. In her challenge, Sagan argues that we might think of the immune system's evolution as more akin to an employment bureau, selecting the symbionts that we co-exist with, rather than existing as something akin to processes and practices of state securitization. We are she suggests composites, anthropods, as bizarre if not more so than space aliens. Thus evolution is a process of co-evolution in what she refers to as a process of symbiogenesis.

Is this the kind of recognition needed for a posthuman or more-than-human ethics that might underpin what it could mean to "love the alien"? What would it take for a radical shift in understanding personhood for this to be brought into a non-body politics? There has of course been a vast scholarship, particularly within feminist science studies, which have partially explored these questions, and it is not my intention to reproduce this here<sup>8</sup>. Sagan's arguments are particularly interesting in the context of the argument I am developing because she also turns her attention to the "psychosocial" and the interdependence and relationality of mind-matter relations: In other words, the realm of personality, behaviour, character, mood and disposition and their relationship to the more-than-human or what I am calling inhuman.

Verging on what might be considered neuro-reductionism, or a new form of socio-biology, she invites readers to consider how neurotransmitters such as dopamine and their relationship to the more-than-human or inhuman might affect behaviour and disposition, including attention, sociability, and risk-taking. She considers how toxoplasma

infections, which modulate dopamine levels might affect mood, disposition and character in humans (extrapolating from mice, cats and kitty litter!), in order to tell a gendered story about one particular symbiotic relationship between human and bacteria: another similar story refers to candida albicans as another "inner alien", which can have psychosocial affects on mood and wellbeing. Here she posits a correlation between bacteria, mood and gendered norms and dispositions, which extend human behaviour into new realms of possibility, potentiality, constraint and limits.

My argument in this essay extends Sagan's psychosocial argument although I want to situate the psychosocial within a broader matrix of relational dynamics. I argue that in order to posit what might prevent the human grasping or prehending its own conditions of life, evolution and even extinction, it is the registers of the psychosocial that need attending to (in that sense I do not think subjectivity is over, obsolete or defunct). In this context Sagan turns her attention to science and "myth-science" in order to account for our inability to recognise the radical revisioning of life that the prehension of our mixed natures might or even should entail. In short, she makes an argument that echoes the argument I am making in this essay to account for the limits of human sense making and intelligibility. She argues that scientific reason has prevented the development of a more speculative; that is an open, adventurous and creative science that might allow for new practices, understandings, and ethics to emerge that can do justice to radical rationality and contingency.

It has not that this has never been grasped (the Greeks got there, as did Whitehead and other 19th/early 20th century philosophers and scientists), but it has been closed down by scientific reason. I would add to this there are possibilities, or what Derrida has termed "archives of the Future" throughout genealogies of science that exist in a submerged and displaced form that might help us, but they exist as minor agencies haunting what has taken form. We require histories or what Rhineberger called historicities to grasp the not-yet-known if we are in with a chance of adaptation and co-existence, which

will allow the human to continue in whatever imaginable, and even unimaginable form.

Rheinberger's focus on historicities refers to the argument that science always contains more stories than have or even could be told. The concept of historicity, draws attention to the multiplicity of times that intrude within experimental systems. The concept also draws attention to science as a story-telling machine, where as he argues; 'an experimental system has more stories to tell than the experimenter at any given moment is trying to tell with it' (Rheinberger, 1994: 77). He equates this dynamic potential to older narratives that persist in the future, as well as 'fragments of narratives that have not yet been told' (ibid: 77). Rheinberger also characterises this potential dynamism as an excess, which escapes definition. Science has different momentums, and allows for a potential tinkering, or what he also characterises as a form of 're-moving' – that is putting something back into circulation (ibid: 78).

I have pursued this as a method, what I call transmedial storytelling in my current book, *Haunted Data: Transmedia, Affect, Weird Science and Archives of the Future*. The book explores speculative science within the context of the "turn to affect" offering a reconfiguration of the psychosocial within this context. Some of this will enter into arguments made in the second part of the essay. In the conclusion to this section I will finish by showing what might be at stake if we take historicity seriously as a method of grasping or prehending some of the parameters of a possible non-body politics. So to finish this section I will refer to Hannah Landecker's work. I think she has gone some way to drawing out the parameters of a non-body ethics within the context of the so-called new biologies.

Landecker primarily explores the social and historical context of biotechnologies and the life sciences and has a specific interest in microbiology, epigenetics, the microbiome and cellular life forms. Her article in *Body & Society* is situated within current concerns about the global problem of antibiotic resistance and argues for an understanding of the materiality of history as well as the historicity of matter. Landecker's writing skilfully uses historical archives and puts them to work by

re-moving or putting them back into circulation in the present. As she cogently shows the historical records, which trace the circulation of antibiotics into what she calls an "industrialized biological" disclose how its history has become inscribed into the biology of bacteria itself. Revealing that history and biology are thoroughly entangled and matter to each other in ways that have serious consequences for antibiotic and human futures, she develops the concept of the "biology of history", to demonstrate how 'human historical events and processes have materialized as biological events and processes and ecologies'.

Biology not only matters in this example, but what comes to be recognised and produced as biological data already bears the material traces of human and technological histories that cannot be divorced or separated from what takes form. As she suggests; 'The bacteria of today are not the bacteria of yesterday, whether that change is registered culturally, genetically, physiologically, ecologically or medically'. This raises important questions about what exactly counts as biological data given the historicity of matter and the materiality of history and suggests that the important question of antibiotic resistance might be shifted away from 'bacteria' (understood as a ontologically distinct entity) to a new more relational ontological register.

This argument chimes with Sagan's but also brings an important material-technical-industrial argument into the complex composite life forms that we might differentiate as human and bacterial. It provides a layer and level of macro-scale to the micro-scale and shows not only that histories matter, but that they literally materialize in symbiotic life forms that show both the inhumanism of the human<sup>9</sup> and the humanism of the inhuman. In my view the radical shift in consciousness, including scientific reason, which would allow for a non-body politics to emerge that recognizes this is continually repealed, disqualified and disavowed by some of the very conservative understandings of subjectivity (ie., practices of subjectification in the Foucauldian sense) that refuse or fail to go away. Some of these will be explored in the second half of this essay. To conclude this section I will finish with a quote from Sagan:

"I believe anthropology's new engagement with the nonhuman may be another example of "the return of the scientific repressed," but I believe it also represents increasing pressure on us to become more integrated into more biodiverse, energetically stable ecosystems. Populations tend to be most numerous in the generations prior to their collapse. Stem cells and pioneer species spread rapidly but become integrated in slower growing adult organisms and ecosystems that optimize and sustain energy use. In this light humanity as a whole seems to be ending the insular rapid-growth phase typical of immature thermodynamic living systems. This view provides a possible new positive interpretation of Kafka's witty lament, "There is hope, but not for us."

### **Feeling the Future or Feeling Futures**

What prevents a non-body politics from taking hold even at a time of ecological and environmental crisis where there is talk of the extinction of the human and melancholic predictions about human-futures? What shifts would need to occur for a radical non-body politics to emerge. What would it mean within this context to "love the alien"?

The question of the cosmos and our attempts to commune with processes, entities and practices taken to be invisible, unseen, unknown or immaterial is of course not a new concern. However, with the rise of new technological practices, including quantum computing, quantum cryptology, and practices that modulate the nano and micro-registers of experience, our prehension of the immaterial has converged with new forms of governance that attempt to govern through the immaterial and discontinuous temporalities or speculative futures. This includes new forms of speculative forecast and quantification that attempt to predict and shape futures-not-yet-known. We see, for example, the rise of computational cultures, networked practices, and a concern with registers of experience, which challenge the rational agentive human subject. Regimes of anticipation, for example, have become the new forms of quantification and thought-style marking out present concerns<sup>10</sup>.

The feminist science studies scholars, Adams et al (2009) have argued that governance has increasingly moved from regimes of truth to regimes of anticipation; that is to attempts to govern and shape futures-yet-to-come. As they suggest: 'anticipation.... emerges at a moment of actuarial saturation, when one realises that the sciences of the actual can be abandoned or ignored to be replaced by a knowledge that the truth about the future can be known by way of speculative forecast, itself relying on proliferating modes of prediction' (p. 247).

These strategies and modalities of anticipation appear at a time when we are witnessing worsening inequities between rich and poor, the entrenchment of nationalisms and fundamentalisms across the globe, and the question of whose and which lives matter, black, white, human and non-human. If *Loving the Alien* is about feeling futures that we cannot comprehend and that expose the limits of human problem and sensemaking, what kind of body-politic should or could we inhabit? The future is a hot topic and if the figure of the alien gestures towards futures-not-yet-known or beyond human comprehension, where does this leave human-futures in a world that refuses to be organised around the desires, actions and capacities of the fiction of human autonomous selfhood? My argument will be that despite the radical overturning of the idea of the distinct human life form that we witness in Sagan's work, for example, our capacity to truly develop a non-body politic is limited by the endurance of rather conservative psychosocial assumptions about subjectivity. This will be illustrated in the next section.

### **The fiction of autonomous selfhood**

Despite the philosophical and conceptual issues that we have explored thus far, which point towards the importance of prehending a radical relationality and contingency as part of a non-body politics, this is perpetually closed down by the endurance of the "fiction of autonomous selfhood". As an example, a particular brand of futurism abounds in the United States, fuelled perhaps by a new therapy culture where self-proclaimed futurists not only advise on what individuals can do

to maximize their own potentials, recovery, successes and health, but also turn their gaze to what consumption will become; what shopping will look and feel like in the future. As David Houle, futurist to Oprah Winfrey and the communities she enacts asks: 'People like to shop. Americans like to shop. American women in particular like to shop. According to futurist David Houle, in the past 40 years, shopping went from something one did when something was needed to a leisure activity in and of itself. With changes in economics and technology, what will shopping look like in the next 10 years?''

Of course the future of shopping is not a banal concern. Consumption is placed as a central driver of economic recovery across many neoliberal countries, where we are urged, encouraged or incited to buy property, goods, services or lifestyles to help develop and strengthen failing systems of governance. The prediction of how and what we will shop for is therefore a concern for politicians, governments, economists and even our own perceived wellbeing. Trendspotting - predicting the future - is big business. But of course the trendspotting that is taking form is no crystal ball gazing and neither is it a solely human activity. Non-human agencies are at the forefront of not simply predicting, but in a recursive relationship, also shaping what we will come to want and importantly buy.

One of David Houle's futurist predictions, for example, is that the ubiquity of on-line shopping in our lives will not destroy one of the main non-places, to use Mark Auge's (2009) term - shopping malls. Shopping malls are generic places of transit where the experience of shopping, he argues, as an embodied, sensory and sensual practice is crucial. The irony of giving a talk to business executives in a carefully and hermetically sealed air-conditioned shopping mall in Dubai is not lost on Houle. He reflects on how one of his predictions was made in a mall in the desert, which had a ski slope for skiing and snowboarding (despite the 40 degree desert temperatures outside)! However, experiential shopping omits or overlooks the role non-human agencies play in shaping our desires.

As Luciana Parisi (2013) amongst many others have argued, algorithms, that is practices of machine-learning, which seek to preempt and shape what we desire, are already at work



in shaping possible futures out of the patterns, anomalies, accidents and multiple media transactions that we make throughout our lives. As she argues, algorithms are no longer to be thought of as instructions or rules to perform tasks at the level of computation, but are 'performing entities: actualities that select, evaluate, transform and produce data' (p.ix). She argues that increasingly computation and computational entities have pervaded culture and to that extent are our co-creating partners in what might come to be. It is interesting in this context that Parisi evokes the Alien (or the alien subject of AI) as a metonym for agencies and actions that are beyond human comprehension and activity. She argues that we live increasingly in computational cultures and as Adrian Mackenzie (2013) has argued, what defines computation and the practices of software programmers, for example, are attempts to anticipate and shape the future rather than predict timeless truths, regularities and laws.

Within this context we witness the rise of modalities of speculative forecast, anticipation, preemption, human and non-human agencies who all seek to shape the future at a time where the future of the planet, the human, and for some 'life itself' is under threat. Millennial fantasies abound in film, literature and TV - contemplating the end of the planet and of a possible time of past, present and future. These scenarios stage possible futures that defy forecast or even comprehension. Futurology as a form of speculation, anticipation and intervention into the future, is thus shaping a new cultural imaginary within and across business, government, finance, economics, as well as creating new forms of therapy culture.

Thus futurology, with its hope for engineering possible futures different to now, is situated within melancholic and sometimes bleak predictions for the legacies (environmental, economic, and otherwise) that current generations will bequeath to others. Futurology assumes therefore that the future is not fixed, and therefore the inevitable outcome of the present. Neither does it have to be an extended present, which repeats the problems of the past. The trend analysis and forecasting which are part of futurology combine machinic forms of pattern recognition with human consensual vision - what kind of future do we want - and on the basis of this vision how can we get

there? The invitation to 'plan backwards' enacts a form of 'global foresight', which remediates the capacity to anticipate the future once associated with psychic phenomena, such as clairvoyance and precognition, within a technical apparatus. This includes a range of actors and agencies, which include software and data analytics, business consultants, economists, policy makers, NGO's, speculative narratives and different modalities of visioning (blurring the distinction between science and science fiction, for example). These help to create a distributed and mediated form of networked collective intelligence<sup>12</sup>. Or at least the hope is that 'Tomorrow can be Built Today'.

### **Post-Post-human manifesto**

One of the key anxieties driving the human within the context of non-human agencies and actors in the present is the question of the survival of the human. However, the kind of human at the forefront of such survival strategies is one understood through the fiction of the autonomous selfhood; ie., one that posits the human as a bounded, agential centre of experience attempting to plan for a future by maximizing all the tools at its disposal, including different forms of futurology aided by non-human actors and agencies. This is about the extension of the human into the future, rather than its radical displacement or decentring and enacts a familiar fantasy of control and omnipotence. It meets and revives another fantasy of human survival that has a long genealogy and that can be found across many religions. This fantasy probes the survival of the human beyond death, beyond corporeality, and beyond personality in a non-corporeal or immaterial form.

Frederick Myers (1903), for example, who coined the term telepathy in the 19th century also wrote two volumes of a book called "Human Personality and its Survival of Bodily Death", where he argued that all manner of psychic entities and phenomena, including telepathy, clairvoyance, automatic writing and so forth, were evidence of human personality existing beyond death. Myers was an odd fellow but one who always remained noncommittal about whether telepathy, for example, as a mode of

communication actually existed. This more positivist question was deferred to one, which was more speculative or what the historian of science, Ian Hacking (1988) has termed non-theoretical. I have likened this conjuncture found within early psychic research to a form of experimentation, which explored what it might mean to experiment with the extraordinary and improbable. It was shaped through a more performative or counterfactual experimental assemblage that might form the basis for a speculative science and more innovative propositions (Stengers).

As many media archaeologists have argued, this more speculative science was part of a broader cultural imaginary, which took the possibility of psychic phenomena (extra-sensory perception) into the shaping and formation of early media technologies and practices, showing the reciprocal and interdependent relationships constructed between 19th century psychic research and the development of modern media technologies, such as TV, radio, cinema, telegraphy and the printing press. In this sense communicating with the dead, the alien, the unseen, invisible and immaterial was part of a potent cultural imaginary which showed the permeable boundaries between philosophy, science, media, and culture in the realization of what came to be.

Many of the key process philosophers who have become so important for contemporary theorising (affect, new materialism, speculative philosophies) were also part of this imaginary; this includes Henri Bergson, William James, Gabriel Tarde and Boris Sidis, as I argue in my book, *Immaterial Bodies: Affect, Embodiment, Mediation* (2012). Although there was something distinct or unique about human personality that could endure after death, psychological processes and practices were also those which extended the human into a web of relational connections with human and non-human actors and agents which blurred the boundaries between the material and the immaterial, the human and the technical, the dead and alive and the human and the non-human. This was a distinct psychic imaginary, which approached psychological processes as more indeterminate, contingent and distributed and provided a discontinuity with what was later to take form within psychology as the 'fiction of autonomous selfhood'<sup>13</sup>. Important for my argument is to consider what happened to

psychic research and the imaginaries that it shaped as psychology professionalised throughout the 20th century. As many have argued, following the writings of Michel Foucault, psychology was to become a key science of population management, rather than the science of the individual it proclaimed to be. It was to provide some of the key techniques, concepts, strategies and understandings that shaped a variety of practices of self and social regulation. It is within this context that psychic research was expunged, excised and even exorcised from psychology, migrating into a form of "weird science" that has to be continually policed by sceptics in order to disavow, disallow and disqualify those anomalies, puzzles and contradictions that might threaten or disrupt its normative ideal or image. In this sense science is always hauntological, where science is haunted by both the histories and excesses of its' own storytelling. I argue that these excesses surface in "queer aggregations" or haunted data to be mined, poached, and put to work in newly emergent contexts and settings. This argument might form the basis for a speculative science, which could open to new forms of humanness that allow for the emergence of a non-body politics founded upon the decentring of the human from its privileged throne. This is also a speculative science, which recognises the role of artists, philosophers and humanities scholars in shaping sciences, which are more open, creative and adventurous.

In other words in order for a non-body politics to emerge that might attend to the radical indeterminacy of the human, we need a radical change in processes and practices of subjectification (that is the processes and practices through which we understand and act upon ourselves). This of course needs a philosophy and ethics that can think beyond what John Durham Peters in his most recent book, *The Marvellous Clouds: Towards a Philosophy of Elemental Media* (2015: 8) calls "the culture-nature, subject-object, and humanist-scientist divides". Although Peters book pays no attention to the feminist work in this area which has advocated new figurations, such as naturecultures (Haraway), he does point towards one of the key obstacles preventing a new philosophy of media to emerge:

"Though we need to think beyond the aforementioned divides, there are stubborn reasons why we cannot. These

distinctions are both unbearable and unavoidable, in ways we will see. Humans are beings who cannot separate and cannot help but separate subject and object" (ibid: 9).

I wonder about the fatalism of this statement and its appeals to something fixed about humans that cannot change. I do think the inability to think beyond a subject/object distinction is peculiar to humans in particular times and places. It has not always been the case and arguably is rather an imperialist statement to make. It is a divide however that has formed the psychological sciences as they have entered into and shaped contemporary biopolitics. It is not in my view transhistorical, but rather a form of biopolitical individualization that has a long history but is subject to change.

This in my mind points towards one of the conditions underpinning a post-post-human ethics that needs to challenge the apriori's of those sciences, which take the human as their subject and object. This has formed the basis of my academic work and activism within the Hearing Voices Movement over many decades, and in my teaching with media practitioners keen to change the world and open to new ways of thinking, being and experiencing themselves, others, life and the cosmos. It is in all the fracture-lines, hesitations, anomalies, gaps and contradictions that there are possibilities for mining, poaching and shaping new politics, both personal and political and which extend the question of what counts as a body.

## **Conclusion**

So to sum up, the human subject must confront its own historicities, historicalities, as well as co-evolution and entanglement with all that is often excluded from human life; what I call both the inhuman of the human and the humanism of the inhuman. This would be a revolution indeed, and one that would finally place the human under erasure and allow for the contemplation of human-futures which might allow a "love of the alien" I hope that this provides some leads and detours for an interesting discussion about whether there is a place for a non-body politics and in that respect what might count

as a body once the human body is confronted with its own indeterminacy and radical relationality. Part of this politics must be to finally dispense with any view of a generic human life and suffering and confront the inalienable forces that have already condemned some lives to a necropolitics that determines who and what is allowed into the realm of the human and who and what is disqualified.

I will end this essay by reproducing point 4 from the conclusion to my forthcoming book, *Haunted Data, Transmedia, Affect, Weird Science and Archives of the Future*, which explicitly relates to some trends within contemporary philosophising and particularly what has become known as "new materialisms":

"4. New materialisms. The human subject is not over or post and subjectivity is not obsolete. We should not banish the human from discussions of the digital subject or consciousness, but we do need radically revised notions of body-world-consciousness relations compatible with 21st century media. What it means to be human has continually been qualified and re-qualified when we look at other contexts and conjunctures. Some of what has created the displacement of the subject within new materialisms and related perspectives comes out of a refusal of conservative psychological theories of will and intentionality, which shaped other disciplines, such as quantum mechanics. Certain psychologies have travelled while others remain at the level of fantasy, fiction, myth or impossibility. Psychology needs a makeover in order to make good on the promises of new materialisms to return the dynamism to matter. If we do not pay attention we reinstate problematic mind-matter relations, which end in panpsychism and other forms of speculative realism. Objects might indeed feel, think or refuse our concerns but what human subjects might and indeed could become in our 'humanity' (Kirby, 2010) is one that opens to speculative thinking that challenges the 'post' in all its forms".

1 <http://www.etymonline.com/index.php?term=haunt>

2 Particularly music which appeals to more bodily, non-cognitive, affective registers; what are often described as pre-personal or asignifying. This includes overlapping rhythms, voice distortions, repetitive vocal samples and irregular syncopation, See the "hyperdub" music of the late British Black musician, Stephen Gordon, known as "The SpaceApe", for example: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The\\_Spaceape](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Spaceape)

3 "Afrofuturism can therefore easily be ascribed to the number of counter-cultural practices that work as weapons to contest the racist "appetite for sameness and symmetry". More specifically, the afrofuturist idea that, since the arrival of the first 'space ship' (i.e. since the Atlantic Trade) no one on 'Planet Earth' can be considered as human anymore, but is rather a singular mutation of a still ongoing process of contact and transformation between species, inserts this cultural movement straight into the number of attempts aiming not just for a displacement of blackness as a homogeneous discursive construct, but also for a dynamic understanding of blackness which would challenge the 'essentialism/ non-essentialism' binary division within late Eighties' cultural theory".

<http://www.darkmatter101.org/site/2012/11/29/%E2%80%9Cmy-measurement-of-race-is-rate-of-vibration%E2%80%9D-afrofuturism-and-the-%E2%80%98molecularization%E2%80%99-of-race/>

4 Also see the writing of Joanna Zylinka (2014) *Minimal Ethics for the Anthropocene*, Open Humanities Press <http://quod.lib.umich.edu/cgi/p/pod/dod-idx/>

*minimal-ethics-for-the-anthropocene.pdf?c=ohp;idno=12917741.0001.001*

5 Mbembe, A (2003) *Necropolitics*. *Public Culture* 15(1):11-40.

6 Sagan, Dorion. "The Human is More than Human: Interspecies Communities and the New "Facts of Life"."» *Theorizing the Contemporary*, Cultural Anthropology website, April 24, 2011. <https://culanth.org/fieldsights/228-the-human-is-more-than-human-interspecies-communities-and-the-new-facts-of-life>

7 Folsome, Clair, 1985. "Microbes," in *The Biosphere Catalogue*, ed. T. P. Snyder (Fort Worth, Texas: Synergetic Press), 51–56.

8 Including the important writings of Margaret Hird, Aryn, Margrit Shildrick, Sarah Franklin and many others.

9 I am using the term inhuman in this context in at least two distinct dictionary definitions:

- lacking human qualities of compassion and mercy; cruel and barbaric.

synonyms: cruel, harsh, inhumane, brutal, callous, sadistic, severe, savage, vicious, barbaric, barbarous; bestial, monstrous, fiendish, diabolical, evil, wicked, heinous; merciless, ruthless, pitiless, unpitiful, remorseless, cold-blooded, heartless, hard-hearted, stone-hearted, with a heart of stone, unforgiving; unkind, unkindly, inconsiderate, unsympathetic, unfeeling, uncaring; informalhard-boiled, hard-nosed; informalbeastly; archaicdastardly, sanguinary; rareegregious, flagitious

antonyms: humane, compassionate  
· 2.

not human in nature or character.  
"the inhuman scale of the dinosaurs"  
synonyms: non-human, non-mortal, monstrous, devilish, demonic, demoniac, ghostly;

**10** see Seigworth and Tiessen's (2012) analysis of the mythology of financial liquidity, what they also call the 'illusion of liquidity' (p. 64) and its future orientation and colonization of possible futures. As they go on to argue; 'The liquidity crisis is only one expression drawn from out of a whole web of credit driven colonizations that mortgage the future to fund today's human and more-than-human desires' (p. 68).

**11** Read more: <http://www.oprah.com/world/Futurist-David-Houle-Investigates-the-Future-of-Shopping#ixzz2rn2s6iKo>

**12** H G Wells is often cited as one of the founding figures of Future studies, for example. He is considered a notable seer whose fiction imaginatively staged possible futures and potentially predictive

scenarios, which anticipated futures-yet-to-come. As a journalist, popularizer and novelist H G Wells blurred fact and fiction in his own writing, publishing novels and short serialized stories of possible futures, which held wide appeal. Within the context of future studies, his volume, *Anticipations of the Reactions of Mechanical and Scientific Progress upon Human Life and Thought*, (1902) is often staged as a key moment and cornerstone in the development of Future Studies as a modern discipline.

**13** See for example Blackman et al (2008) "Creating Subjectivities". *Subjectivity*, Volume 22, issue 1, pages 1-27. Download for free by following this link: <http://link.springer.com/article/10.1057/sub.2008.8>





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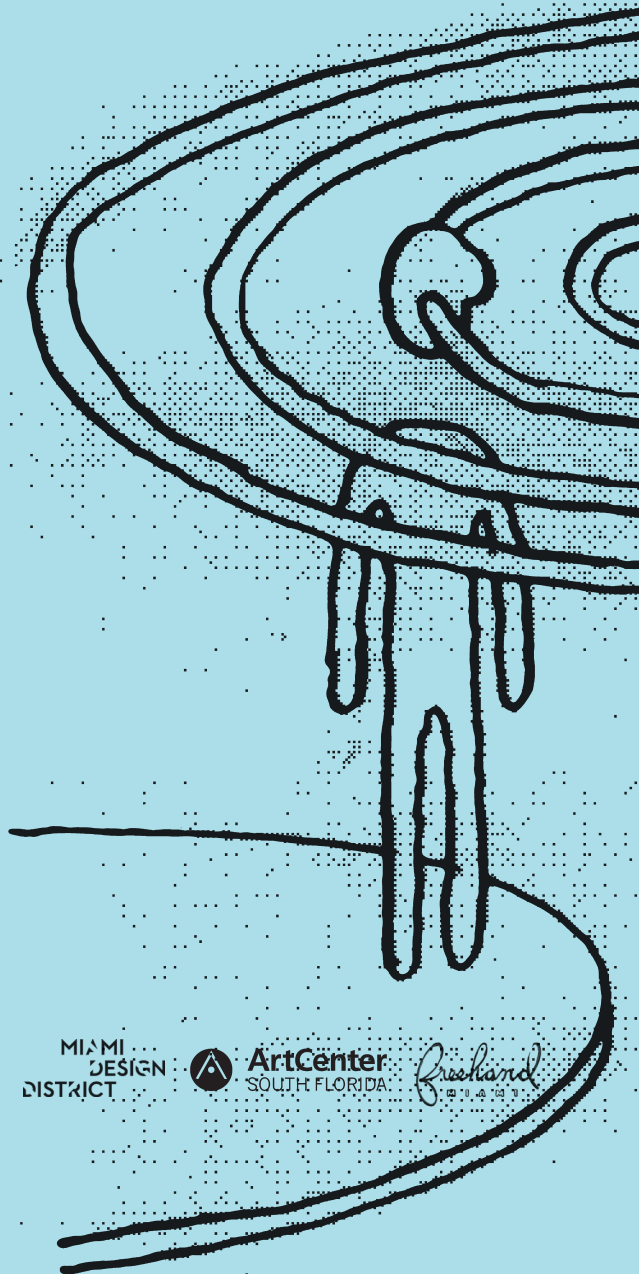
for its innovative approach to mental health research and it has been acclaimed by the Hearing Voices Network, Intervoice, and has been taken up in professional psychiatric contexts. She has just completed a manuscript *Haunted Data: Transmedia, Affect, Weird Science and Archives of the Future*. She is currently the co-Head of the Department of Media and Communications, Goldsmiths, University of London.



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