“Loving the alien”: a post–post-human manifesto

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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 2013, p. 8)

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.

As a political figuration, the alien has found a 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.¹ 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

¹ 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.

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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.² 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?

The opening of this lecture is taken from my essay “Loving the Alien: A Post-post-human manifesto”, which was written for an organisation called Fall Semester³ as part of a series of events exploring the question of identity within the context of environmental destruction and human-technical splicing and fusion. In the essay, I explore the ambivalent position of the alien within the context of a specific thematic: “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 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?”

² “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%9Dd-afrofuturism-and-the-%E2%80%98molecularization%E2%80%99-of-race/>.

³ <http://www.fallsemester.org/welcome-to-fs2016/Fall>. Semester is a series of public lectures and open forums directed by the artist Odalis Valdevieso. The 2016 iteration brought a series of artists and scholars together to address the theme of “identities” and specifically how to address identity where there is no place on the planet not affected by our hand. I was asked to address one of four related themes within this context: “intimacy with the cosmos” and whether there is a place for a non-body politics (and what this might look and feel like)?

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 should discuss at least -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 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 and 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 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). The essay develops a distinctly queer and feminist orientation to some of these questions, as they impact on related debates (object-oriented ontologies, speculative realisms, etc.). I 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.

The following text is a lecture that accompanied the essay that was given at the Institute of Contemporary Art in Miami in November 2016, where appropriately I will make reference to the original essay in order to expand and reflect on some of the arguments.

When I wrote the essay, "Loving the Alien: A post-post-human manifesto", it was back in the summer (June 2016) when I was reeling from the Brexit vote in the UK and finding it difficult to imagine the possibility of change and alternate realities. Given the Brexit ++ vote that you are now dealing with in the USA (you have my heartfelt commiserations and I am sorry for the loathsome Nigel Farage who has appeared as part of the Trump campaign), the political urgency of why and

how we have got to this point and the need for the development of new practices, analyses, interventions and understandings of course cannot be understated. Given the conjuncture we are now working and practicing within where I will draw out some of the key arguments within the essay and orient them to the question of what it could mean to “love the alien” in the context of a post–post-human manifesto. However, when reading the essay back in order to prepare for the lecture, it is hard now to invest the political figuration of the alien with the potential for change and radical politics. From where I am sitting and writing the aliens have taken over, we have been abducted and recruited but by a species of alien who have been hiding in plain sight extracting capital—political, cultural, psychological, economic, aesthetic from our lives and bodies and extending their alien imaginaries into our lives in ways we have not sometimes quite noticed or taken notice of. Before I develop some of the arguments from the essay, I want to start with the figure of the alien and the way the alien as a figuration has long mobilised the longings, fantasies and desires of many marginalised peoples for a better world. This will allow me to re-qualify what it might mean to love the alien and to refigure whom, and what counts as alien and for whom?

I am going to start with some personal reflections particularly exploring media aesthetics, political imaginaries and personal longings within the context of the alien and alien abduction.

Queer imaginaries

One of my favourite childhood novels, which might be described as hauntological is *Midwich Cuckoos*, written by John Wyndham in 1957. I am using the term hauntology to refer to aesthetic and narrative conventions, which anticipate a world that is radically different to the one we live in. These might be described as lost futures, futures-yet-to-come or futures that have been radically foreclosed. I read the novel at school during the 1970s, and it had a profound effect on me. One of my childhood imaginaries that many of you might share was that I was already a human/alien hybrid and that one day I would find my kin through developing the capacity to communicate, via telepathy. My kin would reveal themselves to me through an immaterial form of communication. Undergoing a probing of where these beliefs originated from, an image from the film adaptation of *The Midwich Cuckoo's*—*The Village of the Damned*—insistently came to mind. I could not remember the plot of the film or the novel but felt the intensity of how it registered and clearly still registered with me, persistently carried by a flash of remembrance; the piercing eyes of children out of time with their surroundings. The plot of the novel can easily be found on Wikipedia and I reproduce the beginning for those of you who do not know the book or film:

‘Ambulances arrive at two traffic accidents blocking the only roads into the (fictional) British village of Midwich, Winshire. Attempting to approach the village, one paramedic becomes unconscious. Suspecting gas poisoning, the army is notified. They discover that a caged canary becomes unconscious upon entering the affected region, but regains consciousness when removed. Further experiments

reveal the region to be a hemisphere with a diameter of 2 miles (3.2 km) around the village. Aerial photography shows an unidentifiable silvery object on the ground in the centre of the created exclusion zone.

After one day the effect vanishes along with the unidentified object, and the villagers wake with no apparent ill effects. Some months later, the villagers realise that every woman of child-bearing age is pregnant, with all indications that the pregnancies were caused by xenogenesis during the period of unconsciousness referred to as the “Dayout”.

When the 31 boys and 30 girls are born they appear normal except for their unusual, golden eyes and pale, silvery skin. These children have none of the genetic characteristics of their parents. As they grow up, it becomes increasingly apparent that they are, at least in some respects, not human. They possess telepathic abilities, and can control others’ actions. The Children (they are referred to with a capital C) have two distinct group minds: one for the boys and another for the girls. Their physical development is accelerated compared to that of humans; upon reaching the age of nine, they appear to be 16-year-olds’ (Fig. 1).

The film and book anticipate a future where a new race of children (albeit sadly only represented by white children with long foreheads and bowl-cut fringes), conceived by xenogenesis (the process whereby offspring are created who are markedly different from their parents), and communicate telepathically with each other and on that basis pose a threat to the security and normalcy of the village. I am sure this narrative is the stuff of many childhood fantasies and might be considered a rather queer fantasy! The ending of the novel and film is of course one where the threat is resolved—the children are killed—and the village returns to the time of the present. However, this film, along with many of the media I grew up with throughout the 1970s and 1980s staged alternative temporalities, which anticipated futures radically different from the one I was living in (provincial, conservative, xenophobic, homophobic, racist, sexist small town England).

Fig. 1 Image from the film *The Village of the Damned*

These films included *The Man Who Fell to Earth* (1976) directed by Nicholas Roeg. This represents one iconic image of an alien visitation that evokes images of alternate imaginaries. 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,⁴ 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. The alien points to processes, practices, entities and registers of experience that we do not know or quite understand but is brought into the human realm through exploitation, bodily vulnerability, deprivation and feelings of loss and longing.

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I start the *Loving the Alien* Essay with a discussion of this film as I remember how profoundly I felt seduced and mesmerised by this alien character who mobilised my own feelings of being out of time in the context of the 1980s—a time I look back at now with nostalgia and a yearning for the mainstreaming of queer and radical practices that could be found in music, fashion, art and culture. I lay as close to the TV as I could get mesmerised by the late night images bathing in an atmosphere that transported me to another time and place. This was a time, which ruptured the present, where Bowie's sense and reality of falling to earth, broke through in expressions of his unique sensitivities, vulnerabilities and intelligence. The film pointed towards future realities or virtualities that the film anticipated, helping channel my own anxieties, desires, dreams and aspirations. Papacharissi (2012) has used the term 'public dreaming' to describe the self-staging afforded by social media, but as she also recognises these forms of dreaming are often constrained by 'me-centrism' and the management and impression of possible selves—a rehearsal that often leads to repetition with little difference.

⁴ <http://www.etymonline.com/index.php?term=haunt>.

In contrast, Mark Fisher (2014) has described hauntological media as visionary and views digitalisation as closing down the possibilities of public or social dreaming so necessary to imagine different realities. He laments the BBC broadcasting ethos of the 1950s–1970s as now firmly in the past, made obsolete by the rise of neo-liberalism in the eighties in Britain and the USA. The forms of ‘popular modernism’, the term he also uses to describe hauntological media, refer and come out of a time that is ‘no longer’ (p. 19). Popular forms of modernism are contrasted with the media of now, the media futures, which he suggests reproduce, ‘the same thing, seen and/or heard on a new platform’ (18).

Although my engagement with media in the *Loving the Alien* Essay is brief, I think it raises questions about the capacity of media and media aesthetics to shape new imaginaries that can anticipate futures different to now. The essay suggests that on the one hand, in universities, galleries, art schools, in queer forms of activism and engagement, on the streets and in our own private miseries, we might be drawn to philosophies of radical indeterminacy when approaching humanness and what it means to have and be a body. We can find these philosophies of radical indeterminacy in many places, including across the biological and life sciences (epigenetics, the microbiome, extended cognition, etc.—I have an extended discussion in the essay of the new biologies, for example). Yet, despite the promises of these philosophies and the critical theories, we have developed that speak to them (new materialism, speculative philosophies, affect theories, etc.), we are witnessing and living through the re-entrenchment of nationalisms, fundamentalisms, conservative masculinities and femininities, a reactionary politics of white supremacy, and the possible extinction of the planet or at least the human as a species. The future that we might bequeath to others is looking bleak so what should we do?

In terms of the development of a post–post-human politics of non-body politics—a politics that recognises the indeterminacy of the human—I want to return to what is often disavowed, disqualified, or made obsolete by some versions of this politics—the question of subjectivity or subjectification to use a Foucauldian term—the processes and practices through which we come to particular understandings about ourselves and others. My argument in the essay is that if we are going to realise the potential of a non-body politics we must attend to subjectivity and the psychosocial—those understandings about what and who we are, which profoundly shape thought, feeling, action and reaction right to the bottom—to the visceral, the affective, the bodily. They urgently need our critical attention too and are so often overlooked in new left theorising which presumes communication is fundamentally rational or about the development of spaces that facilitate communicative rationalities. They are missing in more abstract philosophical theorising often found in art theory and art schools, which approaches subjectivity through a generic unmarked subject, or dismiss subjectivity altogether—the post-human for example is often marked by a dismissal of subjectivity. In the next part of the lecture, I will try to persuade you of my argument and I will sneak in some examples from the current calamities of Brexit and Brexit ++ to support my case:

“We are all Martians” (Fig. 2).

Whilst contemplating the themes of this lecture I went for a walk. The walk proved prescient providing me with two fragments of conversation, which speak to

Fig. 2 We are all Martians

the arguments I am going to develop. Upon returning from the walk I put the radio on—Radio London—and caught the end of an interview with Stephen Petranek, a writer and technology forecaster who has argued that “We are all Martians” repeating an argument that has been made by the biochemist Steven Benner of The Westheimer Institute for Science and Technology in Florida. He has argued that evidence is building that Earth life originated on Mars and was brought to this planet aboard a meteorite. Planetary indeterminacy. We are all always-already alien.

This repeats a view that chimes with post-humanism: that what defines humanness or humanicity to use Vicki Kirby’s (2011) term is our mixed natures and that we are composite anthropods. I explore this argument in the essay within the context of what are often referred to as the new biologies—biologies which take epigenetics and the microbiome as their subject and object. For those of you interested in the interfaces between art and science and developing what Nikolas Rose has termed a “critical friendship” with science a recent special issue of *Body & Society* on: “The New Biologies: Epigenetics, the Microbiome and Immunities” should be of interest (see Blackman 2016).

I explore a set of related arguments in the essay drawing particularly on an article by the feminist science and technology studies scholar Hannah Landecker (2016). The issue explores how in different areas across science, philosophy and the humanities we witness a contemporary trend where there is an assumption and exploration of 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—the beginnings of a non-body politics perhaps. The issue includes arguments made by new materialist philosophers finding hope and promise in the sciences. The essay explores arguments which draw from feminist science studies, notably the writings of Dorian Sagan (2011) who has argued within the context of bacteria, fungi and viruses that we are always “more than human”. Invoking the figure of the alien Sagan draws on the writing of Clair Folsome⁵ published some thirty years ago, who invited readers to imagine what might happen

⁵ Folsome (1985).

as a result of a particular alien visitation and 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)"

As I argue in the essay, this image enacts a levelling of the differences between human and so-called non-human species, enacting a particular form of post-humanism 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."

This is a familiar version of more-than-humanism or post-humanism that has offered for many the promise of hope and solace. If we are all aliens, then perhaps this will provide the grounds for an ethics and philosophy that can counter the harsh and barbaric articulation of difference as otherness, which has marginalised, persecuted, discriminated against and drawn lines around who and whose lives count, and come to matter within the context of the category of the human. This seems unlikely now. The more-than-human meets or clashes against the inhuman where separation, boundary, difference, status and hierarchy condemn many to a life of necropolitics, servitude, misery and a difficulty in going on being. This can fuel an emotional complex, which includes anger, resentment and envy, and a corresponding cycle of violence and hatred towards those who are considered alien—subhuman or supposedly not human enough.

Indeed as I argue despite the promissory hope offered by philosophies of indeterminacy, we would be wise to acknowledge how the figure of the alien has been used to mobilise responses that draw attention to the articulation of difference as otherness, rather than ontological indeterminacy. This includes queer and critical race scholars, activists and practioners who have claimed the alien as having a performative and transformative potential allowing an articulation of the affective, political and experiential relations of particular forms of alienness. In the essay, I briefly explore this within the context of Afrofuturism, which 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.

I will return to the concept of re-moval in the conclusion to this lecture.

So in summary, the more-than-human works at the level of ontology (collapsing difference and scales of matter) but it does not work well at the level of the psychosocial; it has not translated very well into new and novel practices of subjectification that counter the fiction of autonomous selfhood and that work through images and slogans that can mobilise hope and channel anger and dissatisfaction particularly for new left politics.

One example of where it works well is in the work of Hannah Landecker. In the context of ontological indeterminacy, I think Hannah Landecker's work is really interesting. Her focus is on how the microbial has been altered by human–industrial–technical practices. She describes this through exploring the materiality of history as well as the historicity of matter—what she calls the “biology of history”—as she argues, “The bacteria of today are not the bacteria of yesterday, whether that change is registered culturally, genetically, physiologically, ecologically or medically”. However, what is missing from this work and that Sagan makes some gesture towards is the importance of attending to the psychosocial—what I call in my book *Immaterial Bodies: Affect, Embodiment, Mediation* (Blackman 2012), the importance of attending to mind–matter relations, or even brain–body–world relations. In the next and last section of the lecture, I will give an overview of the argument I make and then open to some questions.

“Basic need for a yearning back to a better past”

Whilst I was walking, thinking about this lecture, I overheard a snippet of conversation in the local park between two women, walking a dog. Floating on the wind came this fragment, “people have a basic need for a yearning back to a better past”. I presumed that this was a reference to Brexit and to Trump and an attempt to provide meaning and intelligibility to human action, motivation and disposition (this was the day after the election of Trump within the USA). This snippet allows me to make a link to the end of the essay, *Loving the Alien*, where I raise the issue of how to deal with our humanness and particularly to those behaviours, thoughts, feelings and actions, which are usually understood within a psychological vocabulary of motivation, disposition, character, feeling and so forth.

I argue in the essay that 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). I argue that this 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, p. 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).

Here we are back with the human and a very fatalistic statement. One that within the current political climate feels apposite perhaps with the re-entrenchment of borders, boundaries, separations and difference. This has become a marker of recent political campaigning in the UK, USA and Europe with the rise of right wing populisms and reactionary fascisms. I spend sometime prior to engaging with John Durham Peters exploring psychic research in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries—another place where radical indeterminacy was explored, experimented with, modulated and augmented as part of particular scientific assemblages of matter-meaning that brought together scientists, artists, philosophers, engineers, writers and others. There is a logic to returning to this conjuncture. It was a conjuncture marked by a hesitation, which led to a rupture or break that we are still living with today. This rupture or break concerns the professionalisation of the psychological sciences and the different directions that the sciences of the human might have gone if they stuck with radical indeterminacy rather than inventing what has come to be known as the “fiction of autonomous selfhood” as their subject and object. This fiction is one that assumes that the human subject is ideally bounded, responsible for their actions, self-enclosed and able to develop or enact the capacity for change and transformation through their own agency. Educators, experts, futurists, coaches, cultural intermediaries and others, including politicians are there to help facilitate this potential—here we can hear the echoes and ring of Donald Trump in his conciliatory acceptance speech where he proclaimed that:

“Working together, we will begin the urgent task of rebuilding our nation and renewing the American dream. I’ve spent my entire life in business, looking at the untapped potential in projects and in people all over the world.

That is now what I want to do for our country. Tremendous potential. I’ve gotten to know our country so well. Tremendous potential. It is going to be a beautiful thing. Every single American will have the opportunity to realize his or her fullest potential”.

Reality TV meets the psychological sciences and the naturalisation and normalisation of the regulatory ideal or image of the fiction of autonomous selfhood. It is this image that the psychological sciences helped mould and shape. It is this image, which became part of the management and regulation of populations under neoliberalism. It is an impossible ideal but one that has entered into our desires, our feelings, our wants, yearnings, anxieties, our aspirations, dreams and nightmares. It is supported by big pharma, it forms the basis of judgements about worth, sanity, status, need, and morality, and it underpins arguments for greater securitization and surveillance. It fails continually but the failure and its experiential dimensions can be mobilised, harnessed, channelled and modulated allowing a subjective commitment to a dream of unification, stability, and a fantasy of unrealized potential that separates, divides and discriminates rather than recognising radical interdependence. Independence Day rather than Interdependence Day: foreclosing the possibility of attending to the radical indeterminacy of the human in all its myriad forms. Not a post–post-human manifesto but a manifesto of isolationism, securitization, disavowal, displacement and a modulation of tendencies, which channel and shape racisms, sexism, and related discriminations and oppressions.

Conclusion

I do not and will not give up hope on the importance of “loving the alien” and as a political figuration it condenses and mobilises fantasies and longings that might form the basis for radical politics. However, it is a complicated relationship, and there are many different aliens! However, the argument I explore in the essay and which forms the conclusion of this lecture is that we need to think carefully about the relationship between the arts, humanities and the sciences. We need to shape more adventurous, creative and open sciences, working together, that can dispel, repeal and shape new subject positions that challenge and counter the fiction of autonomous selfhood. This echoes some of Sagan’s arguments, where she 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 lecture 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.

Similarly I argue for the need for a more speculative science particularly in the context of the psy-sciences and more innovative propositions (Stengers). I argue in the essay for the importance of *historialities*, following the work of the philosopher and science studies scholar, Hans-Jorg Rhineberger. Historialities bring myth, fiction, aesthetics and science together to explore the dynamism of change and transformation when considered across time. Rhineberger’s focus on *historialities* refers to the argument that science always contains more stories than have or even could be told. The concept of *historiality* 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’ (Rhineberger 1994, p. 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. It is an opening to artists, scientists, activist, scholars and others to work together to shape stories and media aesthetics that could form the basis for an ethics of radical indeterminacy that might frame a non-body politics and a “love of the alien”. We are not there yet but let’s continue to hope together.

Acknowledgements This essay is dedicated to the memory of Mark Fisher, the critical theorist and activist who sadly took his own life (1968–2017).

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