

The Alien Protocol: steps towards a communism of the strange

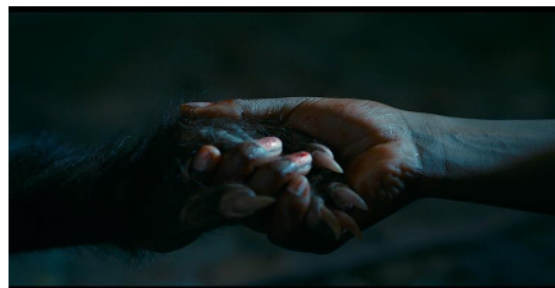
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Abstract: “The Alien Protocol” is neither a manifesto, nor a program, but a series of metaphysical and metapolitical formulas on how the category of *alien* could found a communism 1) neither centered on the reappropriation of an essence or the delimitation of a territory on which to install a strictly local way of life, 2) nor on the belief of a way out of geo-capitalism through the intensification of its global logic: an alien communism refuses a retreat to territorial identity as much as the acceleration of techno-capitalist alienation.

Keywords: communism; strange; alien; alienation; Alienocene.

We have become two friends of the strange creatures
in the clouds ... and we are now loosened from the
gravity of identity's land.
Mahmoud Darwish
Who Am I, Without Exile? (translated by Fady Joudah)

“You don't know where they are,” the recorded voice says, “hiding under cities or already in an orbital station; in the undercommons or in the undercomets; up in the trees or among you, looking at you as you listen, looking like you; unless they're waiting for you on the asteroid you're trying to mine, on the planet you'd like to colonize, or on the Earth, near a pipeline. The welcoming committee might be rather cold. Rather icy. Rather hostile, burning like a volcano. Each attempt to thwart the capitalienist reshaping of the universe generates its own Alien Protocol, its solar politics, its moon-dressed subversion, its trans-species ferocity, its reservoir of imagination, its communism of the strange.”



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As boas maneiras (Marco Dutra and Juliana Rojas, 2017)

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“With each reading, each iteration, the Alien Protocol is no longer the same,” the recorded voice says, “constantly rewriting itself – my voice is already no longer my voice. A music drones; one hears a-human sounds; the clatter of useless instruments; vanished languages persisting despite propaganda; intermittently living specters; not aliens but formations-alien, beings propelled by the drive of the strange.”

Alien Protocol, 1:

**Let the alien force be,
deliver it from its colonial,
capitalist,
racial,
gendered,
technological capture,
so that it innervates a communism of the strange**

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Warning: “The Alien Protocol” is neither a manifesto, nor a program, but a series of metaphysical and metapolitical formulas on how the category of alien could found a communism 1) neither centered on the reappropriation of an essence or the delimitation of a territory on which to install a strictly local way of life, 2) nor on the belief of a way out of geo-capitalism through the intensification of its global logic: an alien communism refuses a retreat to territorial identity as much as the acceleration of techno-capitalist alienation.¹

The formulas that this text compiles are thus to be pasted on documents – any documents – that we can read here or there and on which we might write – *prôtokollon* meaning etymologically “that which is pasted first”; a bit like reminders we write in a hurry because we are afraid of forgetting something important, afraid of being swept away by the wave of the strange that is slowly submerging the universe and revealing, behind the Anthropocene, an Alienocene. Taken on pieces of paper and transcribed in this

¹ Many thanks to Emery Jenson for proofreading this article.

essay, these notes are based on readings (Frantz Fanon, Toni Morrison, Zakiyyah Iman Jackson, Karl Marx, Emmanuel Lévinas, Mark Fischer, Fred Moten, Gilles Deleuze) and are accompanied by film images (*As Boas Maneiras*, *Annihilation*, *Arrival*) and texts' excerpts given without comment (Will Alexander, Dénetem Touam Bona), alien fragments "fallen from an obscure disaster".

The main thesis I develop here is that it is better to speak of alien force or alien-ness rather than alien, as this category can be picked up by the apparatuses of power and their mortifying passion for identity. Between the alien as identity and the alienation proper to the unimportant differences that nonetheless feed the Principle of Identity, stands an alien-ness that traverses the strangers whose encounter a communism might favor.

Alien Protocol, 2:

Traversing the differences again against the Principle of Identity

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Off-site dialectic and the game of the five drives

Alien is a term subjected to the force it strives to apprehend, as if the word itself radiated in a language that has become strange. The strange becomes familiar, and the familiar becomes opaque, incomprehensible.

Far away, the alien suddenly appears very close to us; seen from within, it seems outside; outside, it reminds us of something from within. The extra-terrestrial is the terrestrial intensified, and the human feels her roots in the sky, like trees do.

Object of love, we must learn to hate it.

Wonderful alien, horrifying alien.

We can learn to negotiate with it (Octavia Butler), but sometimes we must also learn to fight it (Frantz Fanon).

"As if I spoke as someone separate from the species, seems, at first glance, a stunning incantatory arrogance carrying in its wake an alien psychic posture. Not assumption, nor a brazen violation telepathic with pre-maturity. Let me say there exists great debility within the human circumstance, there seems to be a repetitive encirclement corroded by abrasive frontality. And, it is this great corrosion empowered by American induction that's condoned at its core by devolutive reason. Such reason creates kinetics of illusion, where the emptied body never arrives at its own substantiveness, this being the policy of the soul as corrupted inner dearth, of fatigue as ongoing example".²

² ALEXANDER, *Across the vapour gulf*.

Alien is a dialectic term, which invites us to refuse fixing ourselves on difference or identity, on immanence or transcendence. But it is a dialectics that tends to escape from the machine when the latter jams, **/PHORICAL DRIVES, or the communication of nothingness through the use of metaphors/** repeats itself and is satisfied with transforming the negative into positive and the positive into negative, a somnolent dialectics inadvertently flattening the spirals on the circles, **/DRIVES OF THE UNSCATHED, or immunizing oneself—in vain—against death/**, forgetting the points of unlooping, the phase shifts.³ As if the alien had to change his matter and her form only when necessary **/LIFE DRIVES, or love affirming itself through forms/**, from then on creating his own conduits, her own channels, their labyrinth. For the alien sometimes sets itself up as an assured figure, wanting to be like no other: a soil-drilling alien, an imperial alien, a colonial alien **/DEATH DRIVES, or the autonomized destruction/**, changing everything within him – viral alien. Opposed to which is a counter-viral alien, not immunological but excessive, exceeding the frames of transmission, cursed, Bataille remastered by Baudrillard under the faceted gaze of Kathy Acker's Black Tarentula. Alien who says nothing but corresponds with you, with a distant air, twinkling among the stars. Impenetrable alien, with a form of communication that only she seems able to understand. Unless this attempt at communication is just a game, an impossible-to-unify pentagon, the semblance of a message, formulated by an alien who may mean nothing, who has no intention of meaning, who isn't really trying to talk to you but simply to exist, to exist until the present moment will reveal its infinity – an alien that would only be there to remind you of the enigma **/PULSIONS OF THE STRANGE, or existence as a bottomless game/**.

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"You don't know where they come from," one reads on the leaflet plastered to the Dome where the Breathing Ones took refuge, "from beyond or from here below, from tomorrow or from the past. Because you do not know that every Alien Protocol consists in bringing together the unfulfilled past and the future that has been in advance abolished. An Alien Protocol is not so much about where to gather as when; it is about the refugees of time, those whom the Breathing Ones, with their oxygen masks and drones, are trying by all means to exterminate".

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Othering = producing the Same

One cannot therefore identify the alien; it is even what precisely, ontologically, cannot happen to the alien; and when – politically, economically, racially, sexually – it nonetheless happens, when one assigns the alien an identity, it is always a catastrophe – police operations, societies of control, societies of clairvoyance, card indexing,

³ REICH, *Come out*.

facebooking, “plasticizing” inclusions (Zakiyyah Iman Jackson) and exclusions, murders, ethnocides and genocides /**DEATH DRIVES**/.

Paradoxically, or according to the logic of a dialectics no longer supercharged from off-site (*hors-site*), a dialectics which has become toxic, identifying the alien is a matter of what Toni Morrison describes with the term “Othering”, consisting of “constructing an Other”, an “outsider” – a construction that has found its constructed Other par excellence with the slave:

“the necessity of rendering the slave a foreign species appears to be a desperate attempt to confirm one’s own self as normal... It’s as though [the slave owners] are shouting, “I am not a beast! I’m not a beast! I torture the helpless to prove I am not weak.” The danger of sympathizing with the stranger is the possibility of becoming a stranger. To lose one’s racial-ized rank is to lose one’s own valued and enshrined difference”.⁴

It is when the other, who however is only otherness, only difference in its marvelous and troubling opacity, is assigned to an identity, when her difference is essentialized, fixed, circumscribed, put in cage, in norms, when the other is forced to be always the same with always the same defects (“laziness”... “cunning” ... “lying” ... “a bestial sexuality” ... we know alas all the stigmata of racialization) that conversely, the one who only wants to be the same – the one who /**DRIVES OF THE UNSCATHED**/ fantasizes his identity, believes to be superior, protected from death and alienation – believes himself to be other. Othering is becoming the same in being the other. How can we get out of this trap of Othering that constructs the other by denying otherness? What drives must we summon against both the drives of the unscathed (to immunize oneself, by destroying with the help of the death drives) and the death drives (to destroy, by immunizing oneself with the drives of the unscathed)?⁵

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The species from elsewhere and “the others” (Frantz Fanon)

The solution to our problem could be to start by marking fundamental differences between several kinds of aliens. For there are dangerous aliens: they come to conquer, to crush in blood, to exploit mines. And it is indeed as aliens that Frantz Fanon, in *The Wretched of the Earth*, defines the colonists. By colonizing the territory, the settler makes the colonized subject something non-human, belonging to a species other than the human one, he “dehumanizes” him by using “zoological terms.”⁶

However, it is not only comparisons with the animal that are at stake, but also, Fanon tells us, with plants - “this plant rhythm” – and with the mineral kingdom – see the “quasi-mineral framework” in which the “innovative dynamism of colonial mercantilism” is inscribed, the “sedimented” aggressiveness of the colonized subject, the “pseudo-petrification” of the colonized, his “stone serenity” and his “crystalline permanence,”

⁴ MORRISON, *The origin of others*, pp. 29-30.

⁵ About the unscathed, cf. DERRIDA, *Faith and knowledge in Acts of Religion*, edited by Gil Anidjar and my book *L'indemne*.

⁶ FANON, *The wretched of the Earth*, p. 7.

etc.⁷ The colonial world is therefore “compartmentalized,” “divided in two” and inhabited by two “different species,” the one that is zoologized, vegetalized, mineralized, and the one that can claim to be human:

In the colonies the foreigner [*l'étranger venu d'ailleurs*, the stranger coming from elsewhere] imposed himself using his cannons and machines. Despite the success of his pacification [*domestication*], in spite of his appropriation, the colonist always remains a foreigner [*un étranger*]. It is not the factories, the estates, or the bank account which primarily characterize the “ruling class”. The ruling species is first and foremost the outsider from elsewhere [*celle qui vient d'ailleurs*, that which comes from elsewhere], different from the indigenous population [*celle qui ne ressemble pas aux autochtones*, the one that does not resemble the natives], “the others”.⁸

We can note that the settler, at the end of his Othering operation, does not seem to become truly human. Hence this violent hiatus:

1) By the process of rejection of the colonized subject out of humanity, or – symmetrically – by the inclusion of the colonized in humanity in the mode of his bestialization,⁹ the colonist identifies himself as the ideal embodiment (stable, excepted from the necessity of change imposed on those who have to adapt to the world shaped by the colonist) of humankind;

2) But what the colonized knows is the other side of the process imposed by the colonist: the latter does not change once he has bloodily appropriated the territory. In the eyes of the colonized, the settler is not a human being, he is the one who comes from elsewhere, the one who remains an alien. He is therefore an alien pretending to be, and to define, the human.

The logic of the alien in a human form is therefore not necessarily a logic of science fiction; or science fiction must be rethought from the colonial schema. Think for example of *The Man who Fell to Earth*¹⁰: after a forced landing on the Earth while seeking out water for his dried-up planet, the character played by David Bowie is exploited, humiliated, and ends up an alcoholic – this is what happens to a being who is considered illegitimately human. As he is subjected to barbaric experimentation, his human-looking eyes are welded to the alien eyes they once covered: he is now the prisoner of a diminished human form, which has lost the ability to be alien, to present his alien interiority – he has been stripped of his alien strength.

And it is indeed to two forms of otherness that Fanon's text introduces us:

1) That of the species coming from elsewhere, the colonial alien coming from Europe, the imperial alien spreading from the United States of America, etc.;

2) And that of the “others,” who are said to be “*autochtones* (natives),” those for whom the self (*auto*) comes from the Earth (*khthôn*).

However, one could argue that Fanon put “the others” in quotation marks for a precise reason: they are the others of the colonizer, the others of the Othering, the others who

⁷ FANON, *Les damnés de la terre*. I use the original French text here because the English translation frequently erases the vegetal and mineral analogies that Fanon keeps using.

⁸ FANON, *The wretched of the Earth*, p. 5.

⁹ Cf. ZAKIYYAH, *Becoming human*, pp. 23, 27 e 35.

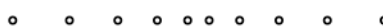
¹⁰ *THE Man who Fell to Earth*: Nicolas Roeg.

are rejected and identified as “the others”, integrated by the very operation of rejection. Without a doubt – but are we going to offer to the colonist the monopoly of the alien, of otherness? So there would be no real other than the one embodied by the exo-species that came to exploit and to enslave? It would perhaps be preferable to affirm that the self, the self of Fanon’s natives – the auto – of these “autochtones” – who are “others”, is much more strange than the colonists believe. For they are animal, plants, and stones, they have this strangeness of beings without an id-entity whereas it is the identity of a non-humanity or of an almost human – a failed humanity – that the settler tries to impose on them. They are “this headless, tailless cohort”, humans who are somehow not animal enough, animalized people for whom “decolonization is truly the creation of new men”, “a new language and a new humanity”. They are a sort of humans that you have never seen before, and who can in no way be reduced to autochthonous subjects, because the Earth itself will be different when, once rid of the colonial alien, they will have become these new humans.



New humans? Or another kind of alien? A humalien? An extra-terrestrial on the terrestrial surface? An heterochthonous subject? In the cosmo-speculation that I propose instead of a science-fiction narrative, it is not the alien taking a human form that I am trying to think from now on, but the alien that would unveil another form of humanity – unless it is the human itself that we need to move away from, by becoming even more animal, plant-like, mineral-like, even more acephalous so as to embody the intellect in another way, in packs, in the crystal-form of an amodern dream.

“The “cimarron” is a runaway slave..., a man who, in his mad rush, tears off his servant’s livery to take on the streaked shadow of the foliage. His liberation proceeds from a becoming-wild, an immersion in the forest that makes him a sylvan creature... The marooning is a paradoxical process: to escape from the animal power of the master—from the condition of human cattle—requires a becoming-animal, a proliferation in the form of packs, of hordes, of indocile and imperceptible multitudes. From prey to predator.”¹¹



Alien becomings (on Afro-futurism)

For, after all, why would anyone want to be human? Is it not in the name of the human as it should be (stable, identical, immune, White) that humans are expelled from the status of human or locked into a failed humanity? Why not, then, become an other-than-human, a radical alien who – unlike the colonial alien – has cosmological desires, para-human and anti-human dreams, meta-terrestrial and trans-terrestrial views? This is what the Afro-futurist perspective proposes, right from the start with the whimsical musician and poet Sun Ra who declares that he was born on Saturn or from a race of angels.¹²

¹¹ BONA, *Fugitif, où cours-tu?*, pp. 25 e 34.

¹² Cf. my essay *The black angel of history*.

The human Earth did not want to welcome them? There was no place for Black subjects? Then let us leave the Earth, Sun Ra sings, because this world is not our home.

But the fundamental ambiguity of the alien is no less central to Afro-futurist culture. For as Mark Sinker has shown in his pioneering 1992 article *Loving the alien: in advance of the landing*, the apocalypse of slavery is like the equivalent of an alien abduction, with the colonizers being comparable to extra-terrestrials beings.¹³ The alien is thus still, as it already was for Fanon, a dangerous being; but it is a being with whom it is perhaps necessary to negotiate, as Octavia Butler proposes in *Lilith's Brood*. In this famous trilogy, an alien race saves the human species from complete extinction only by forcing the latter to share its genes with it, this exchange giving rise to mutations for both species, the humans becoming an "alien Humanity".¹⁴

This double becoming-alien that Butler narrates teaches us something important: we should never say alien in the singular, alien is always a multiplicity. This is said conversely: as soon as the alien is One, as soon as he believes himself, constructs himself as alone, unique and unscathed, untouchable, the war (of extermination) is imminent.

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Communism, accelerationism, and the critique of alienation

Having elucidated the ambiguity of the reality-alien, I would like to reread Kodwo Eshun's statement that wonderfully defines the essence of Afrofuturism: "Away from alienation. Into the arms of the alien".¹⁵ The opposition here is very clear between alien and alienation, and seems to indicate a possible way out of alienation: not towards more identity, more self, more reappropriation, but towards more difference, more otherness, more dis-appropriation. Such an interpretation would be compatible with the accelerationist theses: to get out of capitalism, it is necessary not to withdraw from it, but to go beyond it from within, to unleash the inventiveness that it limits, "the only way out is through" – that is to say, as Matt Colquhoun comments in his great edition of Mark Fisher's intense, and moving, last lectures, "the only way out is forwards; forwards in time and in history. There is no going back in the reified past".¹⁶ Thus one would only get out of alienation by accelerating its historical process, by becoming even more alien and not by trying to regain a kind of pure essence, non-historical and in this sense non-alien, not alien to oneself.

However, let us remember what alienation means for Marx – for the so-called young Marx, since the concept of alienation will later disappear in favor of that of exploitation, as it will be analyzed in *Capital*. The analysis of alienation begins in the *Manuscripts of 1844* with the study of the alienated object, which is foreign to me even though I produced it. The object "stands opposed to [labour] as *something alien*, as a *power independent* of the producer". The more value labor creates, the more valueless the worker becomes – infernal logic, poisonous dialectic. Of course, if the object

¹³ On this point, cf. SINKER, *Loving the Alien*.

¹⁴ BUTLER, *Lilith's brood*, p. 449.

¹⁵ ESHUN, *More brilliant than the sun*, p. 157.

¹⁶ COLQUHOUN, Introduction to *Postcapitalist desires*, pp. 28-29.

produced is like a sort of Frankenstein's monster, it is because labor itself is alienated: the arms of the worker are in the arms of another. It is unclear to me how, on the one hand, accelerating the becoming-alien could be good in this situation, and on the other, how throwing oneself into, say, the arms of pension funds would be a way out of alienation from within. Hence these preliminary indications:

Alien Protocol, 3:

**do not accept the alienated world,
do not intensify it,
do not develop it,
- interrupt it**

But should we fantasize, then, a kind of non-alien identity, a paradisiacal state preceding the alienated world of capitalism? On the contrary, the past can be remade from the present when the present refuses hell and generates a transitory paradise: a critique of alienation can be initiated from experiences which show, in an exemplary way, what the defense of a world opposed to capitalism might be. Paradise cannot be defined as a world that precedes history, because such a scheme only confirms the linear vision of history of the victors, of those who believe in progress and for whom the past is reified like Louise Michel's tomb should be, should eternally be according to them. It is therefore from within *and* against the imposed course of linear history, and not before or after it, that paradise gives reality to another temporality, where the spiritual forces of the past and the speculative forces of the future meet. Such is the alien communism, which defines less beings than temporal operations and where the common is what emerges like a flash in the night of melancholic atoms.

Alien Protocol, 4:

the only way through is out

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There are no aliens, but alien-ness

The alien is therefore not in itself what is to be loved; but love is the affect that tells us how to relate to aliens within a renewed communism. What became clear to me as I investigated the notion of alien is that it might be wrong to consider this term as a noun. We should perhaps say: there are no aliens, but there is alien-ness. And this alien-ness is distributed in very diverse situations, sometimes completely opposed to each other: 1) changing the outside into transcendence, into a frontier, into an immunological technique, alien-ness can concentrate and fix itself in State power, in spectacular



perfusion that the social networks impose on us, to the point of affecting our neuronal circuits; 2) or it can defix itself, let be the outside that it indexes, and give place to unexpected forms of existences.

This is why we must be wary of a formula like “we are all aliens” because it cancels out fundamental political and existential differences. I am an expatriate, but I am not an exile;¹⁷ being white is not the same as being black, etc. Instead of: “we are all aliens,” rather: we are all traversed by alien-ness; but we do not all react in unison, we do not symbolize alien-ness in the same way, we do not live it in the same way, we hate it or we love it.

Alien Protocol, 5:

loving the alien-ness

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The alien is the encounter with alien-ness

Because the alien is not first somebody, nor even a collective of subjects, we need to shift the center of our theoretical attention and argue the following: the alien is first of all the encounter with alien-ness. If science fiction has widely explored the question of the encounter, it is because the extraterrestrial being expresses par excellence the opacity of the stranger who comes to meet us, about whom we know nothing. We don't know if s/he wishes us good or ill, if s/he brings us war or salvation (this is one of the themes, for example, of the film *Arrival*). And it is right at the heart of this encounter that doubt will creep in: did it really take place, was it real or imaginary? Did I dream this being who was so different? (In this respect, it should be noted that the first encounter between a Martian woman and an Earthbound, in Bradbury's *The Martian Chronicles*, takes place in a dream). Did I meet a human posing as an alien, or an alien posing as a human? Madness is looming, and language is lacking, because a common language is missing, especially when we don't even know what for the other is language (these noises? these signs? these colors?).

This is because, as in any true encounter, on Earth or elsewhere, the real is at stake, in the sense defined by Bataille and Lacan after him: if reality is the name of a realized possibility, the real is the impossible. In every encounter something is realized, and something remains impossible, ontologically unrealizable. Alien is the encounter with that which cannot be totally grasped, that which gives itself to me, to my senses and to my comprehension, only in an obscure, non-objective way, stemming from what in each subject exceeds the subject, below and beyond it. Alien is the experience of non-relation within the relation: just as “there is no such thing as a sexual relationship” (Lacan), one could say that there is no such thing as an alien relationship – and it is

¹⁷ Cf. SAID, *Reflections on exile and other essays*.

indeed for this reason that the encounter can happen, because of this vacant space, of this definitive subjective non-coincidence where desire takes its source.

And then, what am I going to do with this encounter? Will I attribute reason, humanity, sensitivity to the other person, or will I deny them?

“The question is not, ‘Can they reason?’ nor, ‘Can they talk?’ but ‘Can they suffer?’” (Jeremy Bentham, Introduction to the principles of morals and legislation)

Alien is the encounter, but the encounter can be refused, and the other then becomes the object of an extortion, of a manipulation by the “master”, the colonial power, ExxonMobil, *International Thief Thief* (Fela Kuti). Reduced to nothing, to almost nothing, the other becomes an object in front of which a subject stands. To refuse the encounter, to become immune to it, to destroy that which makes it possible, to transform the alien non-relation into slavery, into domination, is to refuse the bringing into presence, the drawing closest, of the most distant. For to encounter comes from French “*encontrer*”, in the sense of: to find on one’s path something that one did not expect to find, to find oneself in the presence of something unexpected. What is surprising is the sudden proximity with the alien, even if it is difficult to measure this proximity and the distance it conceals. The title of Steven Spielberg’s 1977 sci-fi monument, *Close Encounters of the Third Kind*, implies a gradation in this proximity: there are encounters of the first kind, where one discovers traces that seem to be those of extra-terrestrials, then there is the fact of seeing a UFO, and so on until the supreme encounter – the face-to-face encounter, even if one does not know which face is involved, and whether the alien really has a face.



Arrival (Denis Villeneuve, 2016)



Leibniz with Levinas on an exoplanet populated by Heideggerians having liquidated their Heimat syndrome

The “face” of the other... I should do justice to Lévinas’ powerful philosophy, to the way he explains how the other precedes and inaugurates any subjective formation. And as François-David Sebbah has shown, the face for Lévinas is not a purely human property: any being, whether extraterrestrial or not, can potentially be the bearer of a face, that is to say, can be the stranger who appeals, however silently, to my responsibility.¹⁸

It should be noted, however, that alien does not define something necessarily transcendent (it is only one possibility), rather something queer, unassignable to a single ontological modality. Moreover, it doesn’t seem to me that we have to fear – as it is the case for Lévinas in *Totality and infinity: an essay on exteriority* – that otherness necessarily disappears, swallowed up, in the interiority of a subject (Lévinas had in view Socrates and the philosophical subject who finds the truth by remembering it, as an *anamnesis*, like Plato explains in *Phaedo* for instance). For otherness only risks dissolving into the self when the human subjectivity itself disappears and becomes – as we experience it today - a dividual surface recombined according to capitalist demands, a one-dimensional object shaped by technologies seeking to reduce difference to identity, singularity to a predictable trajectory. But, crucially, interiority is not in itself the death sentence of exteriority, it is rather the foundering, failing interiorities, those that can no longer do without technological addictions, digital drugs, that become refractory to the outside that they can no longer metabolize, symbolize within themselves.

The philosophical operation would consist in plunging Lévinas into Leibniz’s *Monadology* (as reread by Deleuze) to propose this: the other does not have to be saved from her incorporation, his phagocytosis by a subject, because a subject is constituted by the outside through which s/he exists. The cosmic Outside is in the monad who unavoidably exists outside:

“As a monad, the *Dasein* needs no window in order first of all to look out toward something outside itself, not because, as Leibniz thinks, all beings are already accessible within its capsule, so that the monad can quite well be closed off and encapsulated within itself, but because the monad, the *Dasein*, in its own being (transcendence) is already outside, among other beings”.¹⁹

1) The cosmic exteriority traverses each monad, in which it invaginates, condenses, falls into lethargy, dreams, changes into a drive;

2) And the monad exists outside where it happens to meet the other as an alien, the alien-ness with which its cosmological impulse enters in correspondence. Each monad is a cosmonad.

¹⁸ Cf. SEBBAH, *Alien-effect*.

¹⁹ HEIDEGGER, *The basic problems of phenomenology*.

Alien Protocol, 6:

**Let's forge free minds,
awaken in them the sleeping outside,
actualize the alien virtual without an imperative of realization**

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“Not alien but remembered” (Toni Morrison with Gilles Deleuze)

There are no strangers. There are only versions of ourselves, many of which we have not embraced, most of which we wish to protect ourselves from. For the stranger is not foreign, she is random; not alien but remembered; and it is the randomness of the encounter with our already known – although unacknowledged – selves that summons a ripple of alarm.

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If indeed the stranger is the one I have made, and which I use to conceal my own foreignness, then, yes, there are no strangers. For what there is, is the chance encounter, but in the sense that it is chance itself that comes to encounter me. And this encounter is the moment by which my own stranger-ness is remembered: a virtual strangeness that I have not taken care to actualize; forgotten specters in the trunk of unfulfilled promises. The alien is what returns, not what becomes, confirming Deleuze's statement in his book on Nietzsche: “returning (*revenir*) is the being of that which becomes,” “return (*revenir*) is the being of becoming itself, the being which is affirmed in becoming”.²¹ The encounter with the other does not therefore consist in putting two entities in the same space, by appointment or during opening hours; rather, it is in the sudden correspondence of divergent space-times, awakening the oldest from the newest elements, that the encounter, however impossible, takes place.

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The Alienocene: out of time and out of place

Where the term Anthropocene and all the other terms that have followed it – Capitalocene, Plantationocene, etc. – seek to identify our era, to date a moment of mutation that took place in the past (it all began when “x”, “x” being the colonization of the Americas, Watts' machine, the nuclear test explosion in the desert on July 16, 1945, etc.), I propose the term Alienocene in order to go beyond this restricted temporality. The Alienocene refers to a past that did not happen – the unfulfilled promises of liberation and revolution – instead of being limited to a factual description, and conceives of the apocalypse as the weapon that power uses to forever prevent justice, freedom, love, and beauty from informing the future.

²⁰ MORRISON, *The origin of others*, pp. 29-30.

²¹ DELEUZE, *Nietzsche and philosophy*, pp. 48 e 24.

The Alienocene is certainly also based on a diagnosis of the times in which we live, and describes how the world is – climate change, neo-fascism, immunological racism, etc. – but it offers a space for thinking that allows us to refuse the hypnotic rehearsal of the endless list of horrors that overwhelm us. Out-of-time yet pulsing in the middle of time, the Alienocene considers the world that exists from the world that does not exist, from the world that should be, that should have been if a non-oppressive communism had taken place. The Alienocene offers the vantage point of nowhere from which the situations of the world can be assessed.

The widening of space-time that the Alienocene entails necessarily exceeds the terrestrial, Gaian frame: it is time to stop considering the cosmos as an appendage of the Earth, that is to finally acknowledge that the Copernican revolution has abolished the false cleavage between the sub-lunar and the supra-lunar, Earth and Heaven, here and out there, etc. The Outside is not severed from the Earth, such an idea only reintroduces a pre-Copernican world, a separation between a Great Outside, out there, and the Earth, here below: the Outside is virtually everywhere, only waiting for our actualizations to be perceived, imagined, thought of, here on Earth or on another planet – the Outside is geo-logical or marso-logical, venusological – and at another time. It is the whole cosmos that reveals its alien-ness, its alien space and its alien time.

“State surveillance has attempted to give me the notion to cease rumination on deeper psyche repartee. By engaging planes other than those of overt palpability one experiences the Sun as something other than a singular furnace at optimum cosmic distance. Therefore I understand myself to be a citizen within another two hundred billion galaxies stated by current astronomical assessment. According to delimited speculation, I seem suffused with spells of alien saturation. Within this tenor I can be accused of creating storms via infernal optic manipulation, or evinced as possessing an opaque and invisible code rife with sorcery as aural dimension”.²²

The Alienocene is consequently a space-time of conflicts:

1) In it proliferate the settler-aliens, the geo-capitalist aliens, the aliens of eco-fascism considering the foreigners as well as the indigenous people as alien species, the aliens that try to identify everything, to make everything neat, defined, to reduce the world in controllable parts in order to recombine and to foresee everything. These aliens are those who direct the ideological apparatuses of humanism, those who interpellate subjects as human precisely by excluding from this category those who will be considered as non-human, less-than-human, or almost human;

2) But, as we saw with Fanon, there are “the others,” those who let the alien-ness speak instead of trying to master it. According to Althusser, the “ideological apparatuses of the state” produce a subject by interpellating her, the response being a form of subjection – such as the policeman hailing someone who turns around when called and,

²² ALEXANDER, *Across the vapour gulf*, p. 17.

turning around, subjugates himself, accepts the order and the law. But, as Fred Moten notes, “it turns out that when the police calls them, there is a lot of people that don’t turn around because experience tells them that they need to run”.²³ I don’t want to unduly extend to everyone what Moten says about those who are the privileged victims of police violence; but the last few years have seen an intensification of police violence, both in neo-fascist and right-wing populist regimes and in social democracies (like France) that are finding it increasingly difficult to maintain their neo-liberal politics. In this respect, the desertion of the dominant forms of subjectivation – from the ideological apparatuses of the state to the ideological apparatuses of the human, including all the captures of attention orchestrated by the neuro-engineering of social networks – is proving to be more and more crucial and points to the ultimate challenge of the alien protocol: a new regime of subjectivity that, traversed by the alien force, would give rise to a communism of the strange.

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A communism of the strange

The important point is to see how the Alienocene is subject to non-symmetrical flows of barbaric aliens on the one hand and subversive alien-ness on the other, of aliens in power using the category of “human” to impose their politics of progress and of entities capable of letting return an alien-ness, be it human, non-human or inhuman.

Therefore, an alien communism consists neither in any reappropriation of the human essence, nor in an abandonment of the human to the profit of a post-human or of a cyborg. The aim, however, is far from a fascist ban on becomings - indeed, becoming-trans must be seconded, medically and symbolically, by society; but becoming other must leave room for returning other, which haunts becoming as its accursed share. It is only by leaving time and space to the return (*le revenir*) that we can perhaps escape the techno-capitalist commandment to change, to improve the body, ceaselessly upgrading it. In this sense, the alien communism, as the communism of Marx’s *Manuscripts of 1844*, is subjected to an anthropological protocol, in other words a re-elaboration of the human. But the new elaboration of the human that I am attempting to sketch out is neither submitted to the fetishist diktat of technology, nor to the fantasy of a non-technical organicity: the human liberates her alien condition by allowing the existence of a nature out of time, a liberation enabled by cosmological technologies, that is to say technologies understood as cosmological mediations and not as operators forcing the extortion of nature.

Just as alien-ness must not be left in the hands of geo-capitalist aliens, the communist politics of the Alienocene must not leave the outside to Elon Musk and the offshore economy, to those who have stolen, captured, and neutralized the outside.

²³ MOTEN, *A poetics of the undercommons*, p. 26.

Alien Protocol 7:

Delivering the Outside

The communism of the strange thus proposes an alternative protocol, incomplete, inchoate, to those who want to withdraw into their territory, their community, but also to those who think that capitalism must be accelerated. If there is indeed a “post-capitalist desire” (in the sense of Mark Fisher), it can neither be reduced to the local, nor intensify the global, neither be purely territorial, nor bet only on the absolute merits of deterritorialization.

Alien Protocol, 8:

**Open each territory to its off-place,
each present to its ghost-past,
each part of the Earth to its extra-terrestriality**

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