

# UNCHARISMATIC ALIENS

Weird Life on Earth and Beyond  
in Science Fiction and Bio Art  
International Conference

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FACULDADE DE LETRAS  
DA UNIVERSIDADE DO PORTO  
ROOM 210 + ONLINE  
9 AM - 8 PM (GMT+1)

FCT Exploratory Project  
"Extraterrestrial Posthumanism"  
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MARGARIDA LOSA



Fundação  
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PORTO

FACULDADE DE LETRAS  
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## BOOK OF ABSTRACTS

### UNCHARISMATIC ALIENS: WEIRD LIFE ON EARTH AND BEYOND IN SCIENCE FICTION AND BIO ART

In recent decades, the scientific search for extraterrestrial life has undergone a significant conceptual transformation. Earlier astrobiological research largely focused on identifying environments similar to those on Earth — particularly the presence of water and organic molecules — as indicators that life might exist elsewhere in the universe. Increasingly, however, scientists recognize that truly alien life may not resemble terrestrial biology at all. Rather than searching only for “life as we know it”, astrobiologists now explore the possibility that organisms could arise from unfamiliar biochemical systems, rely on alternative solvents, or take forms that challenge our current definitions of life.

This shift has important cultural implications. At first glance, the idea of radically different forms of life might evoke the spectacular aliens of popular science fiction. Yet scientific discussions of extraterrestrial life often point toward organisms that are far less dramatic and far more difficult to recognize. Many possible forms of life — whether on Earth or on other planets — may appear strange, subtle, or difficult to interpret from a human perspective. They may lack recognizable morphology, visible activity, or the kinds of behaviors that make organisms legible and appealing to human observers. In this sense, much life may be “uncharismatic”: alien not because it is monstrous or spectacular, but because it does not easily fit within human expectations of what life should look like or how it should behave.

At the same time, Earth itself is already home to an extraordinary diversity of unfamiliar and often overlooked organisms and life systems. From unusual microbial communities and extremophiles to symbiotic networks and unconventional biological structures, terrestrial life frequently challenges anthropocentric assumptions about individuality, perception, agency, and ecological organization. Paying attention to such forms of life can help us rethink what counts as “alien”, revealing that the strange and unfamiliar are not confined to distant planets but are already present within the biosphere of our own world.

This conference takes the notion of uncharismatic aliens as a starting point for exploring weird and unfamiliar life forms both on Earth and beyond it. Bringing together scholars, artists, and researchers from across the humanities, sciences, and arts, the event will examine how science fiction, speculative thought, and contemporary artistic practices engage with organisms that resist familiar biological and cultural categories. Such life forms may be microscopic or macroscopic, biological or quasi-biological, individual or ecological, perceptible or largely invisible to human senses.

A particular interest of the conference lies in the potential of Bio Art and related artistic practices to render strange forms of life perceptible and experientially accessible. By giving visual, material, or sensory form to living systems that might otherwise remain abstract or hidden, such works can create new ways of encountering unfamiliar organisms and environments. Through installations, performances, and interdisciplinary collaborations, art may offer powerful means of engaging with forms of life that challenge conventional ideas about biological value, species hierarchy, and human centrality.

The conference will also accompany the exhibition of newly commissioned Bio Art works responding to the theme of strange and uncharismatic life. Together, these artistic and scholarly contributions aim to broaden our understanding of biological diversity, extraterrestrial possibility, and the limits of human imagination.

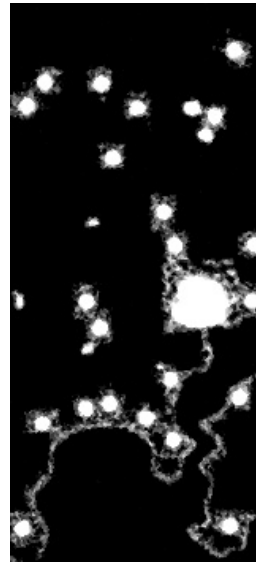
### ORGANIZING COMMITTEE

João Paulo Guimarães  
Ana P. H. Salvan  
Lizzie Smith  
Inês de Caldas Martins

***His Master's Voice (1968)*  
and the fourth narcissistic  
injury to mankind**

**António Pedro Marques**

The 1968 science fiction / philosophical novel by Stanislaw Lem is a notoriously dense and bleak epistemological treatise on the limits of human understanding towards the possibility of the Other outside Earth and beyond the possibility of communication and reach. In it, as well as in his other «contact» stories, Lem radicalises the epistemological desolation of Plato's *Theaetetus* in order to attack modern science's positivist *hubris*, proposing that not even an apophatic knowledge is possible in an incomprehensibly vast and opaque universe. Leaning on epistemology, theology, cosmology, astrobiology and multiple forms of life proposed by science fiction, this communication explores the possibility of alien life as an already ongoing fourth narcissistic injury to mankind, following the three wounds famously proposed by Sigmund Freud in 1917. Science fiction has historically functioned as a cultural laboratory for the imagination of the Other, a rehearsal space in which humanity processes, in narrative form, encounters it has not yet had. Yet this rehearsal is structurally compromised: the alien of science fiction is invariably conceived through human cognitive and perceptual categories, driven by human-legible motivations, and constrained by human narrative logic. Far from genuinely preparing us for radical alterity, science fiction may be deepening our anthropocentric assumptions under the guise of transcending them, making the eventual encounter, if it comes, more rather than less disorienting. The fourth narcissistic injury, this communication argues, is not an event awaiting confirmation but a condition already imposed by the structure of the cosmos – curiously and conversely, a condition that may be the only universally recognisable *qualia* among intelligent species.

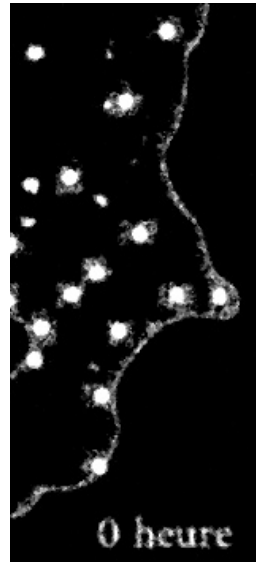


**ANTÓNIO PEDRO MARQUES** is a PhD candidate at Faculdade de Letras da Universidade do Porto, where he is working on a thesis around the concept of the «enemy» in Herberto Helder's and Sean Bonney's poetry. As a PhD candidate, he is a researcher at ILCML – Instituto de Literatura Comparada Margarida Losa. Since 2026, he is part of the exploratory project “Extraterrestrial Post-humanism – The Search for Alien Life in Astrobiology, Science-Fiction and Art” (FCT – Fundação para a Ciência e a Tecnologia), reflecting his research interests in science fiction.

**“Estranhos sinais de saturno”:  
A confrontation between astrobiology  
and esoteric ufology from the poetry  
of Roberto Piva**

**Victor Riker**

Astrobiology and esoteric ufology present themselves as completely different approaches both relating to extraterrestrial life. Whereas esoteric ufology focuses on the predominance of spiritually and technologically advanced beings, astrobiology has been focusing more and more on the uncharismatic extraterrestrial forms of life, like bacteria and other beings that lack in the theatrics of aliens in pop culture. To confront these two disciplines, one a serious scientific field and the other an esoteric and paranoid mishmash of beliefs, one is forced to analyse how human thought tends towards the definition of otherness and outsidership as still too human and comfortable for human thought. To confront these two, we can look into the work of Roberto Piva, whose poetry during his latter years was dedicated to a mix of shamanism and ethnopoetics, constantly pointing towards ufology, ecology and extasiatic mysticism. This period of his production was reunited under the title “Estranhos Sinais de Saturno” (Strange Signals from Saturn) in 2008. Analysing some of the poems written by him during this period, such as the poem “Óvnis” and “UFOS Proustianos na estação geral dos sonhos”, we can confront how his poetry allows for a making kin with the trouble (along the thought of Donna Haraway), reshaping the hierarchy of beings established by the anthropocentric subjugation of nature-otherness, while, at the same time, reducing the existence of alien life to higher beings still too charismatically human. Piva’s poetry, thus, makes it possible to confront how astrobiology undoes human bias (tied to the aesthetic category of charisma as a sort of understanding and desirability), while esoteric ufology heightens it under the pretence of negating it.



**VICTOR MATOS RIKER JOFILSAN** is a Masters degree graduate in Literary, Cultural and Interarts Studies, with a specialisation in Comparative Studies, at the University of Porto, Portugal. He holds a bachelor in Languages, Literatures and Cultures, in Portuguese and French studies given by the University of Aveiro. His main interests lie within the domain of literary theory, Brazilian, Portuguese and French literature, queer studies and posthumanism. His current research focuses on expanding the correlation between the multiplicity and literature. He’s a member of the project “Extraterrestrial Posthumanism” funded by FCT.

**Thinking Without Bodies:  
Distributed Alien Intelligence  
and the Problem of Recognition  
in *Blindsight* (2006)**

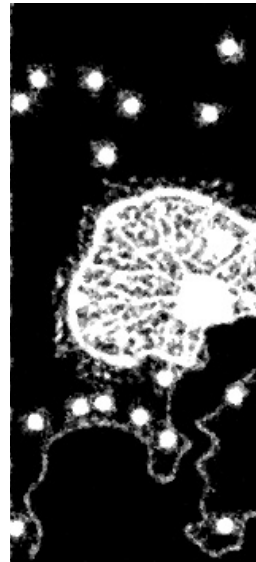
**George Kaldis**

This paper examines *Blindsight* as a speculative intervention into the concept of “uncharismatic” alien life, arguing that the novel’s central provocation is not the strangeness of extraterrestrial biology, but the possibility of intelligence without consciousness. In contrast to anthropocentric assumptions that bind cognition to subjectivity, *Blindsight* presents alien life forms that are highly adaptive, responsive, and technologically sophisticated, yet entirely devoid of self-awareness.

Engaging the conference’s focus on forms of life that resist legibility, this paper argues that Watts displaces the problem of alienness from morphology to cognition. The scramblers are not unrecognizable because they are visually strange, but because they undermine the human expectation that intelligence must be experienced. This produces a more radical form of “uncharismatic” life: not invisible or microscopic, but epistemologically inaccessible, operating without interiority, intention, or meaning as humans understand them. Crucially, this reframing destabilizes the assumption that consciousness is either necessary or desirable for adaptive success.

The paper’s central claim is that *Blindsight* collapses the distinction between organism and system, recasting alien life as distributed, non-conscious processing rather than discrete biological individuality. Rather than encountering an alien “other,” the human characters confront a mode of existence that renders their own cognitive frameworks obsolete. In doing so, the novel challenges both science fiction’s representational traditions and broader philosophical commitments to consciousness as the basis of value, agency, and ethical regard.

The true alien, the novel suggests, is not that which looks unfamiliar, but that which cannot be recognized as a subject at all. By foregrounding cognition without experience, *Blindsight* ultimately forces a reconsideration of intelligence as a purely functional, rather than phenomenological, condition, raising unsettling implications for how we define life, value, and survival in both speculative and real-world contexts.



**GEORGE KALDIS** is a 4th year PhD student in English Literature at York University, where his research examines how narrative form structures power, authority, and the limits of perception in speculative fiction. His work argues that systems of rule are secured at the level of narrative design, shaping what can be known, imagined, or contested before justification occurs. His research interests include science fiction, posthumanism, political philosophy, and narrative theory, with particular attention to how speculative texts challenge anthropocentric assumptions about agency and cognition. His current work extends these concerns into questions of non-conscious intelligence and alien life, exploring how speculative fiction reconfigures the boundaries between organism, system, and environment.

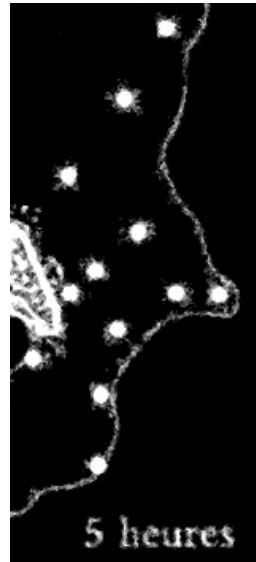
## **The Mountains Were Already Alien: Ritual Ecologies and Nonhuman Presence in the Western Himalayas**

**Harul Vinay**

Contemporary discussions of extraterrestrial life increasingly challenge anthropocentric assumptions about what constitutes intelligence, agency, and biological presence. Rather than imagining the alien solely as a spectacular or humanoid other, recent speculative thought has turned toward forms of life that are diffuse, ecological, partially perceptible, and resistant to stable classification. This paper argues that ritual worlds in the Western Himalayas already operate through such encounters with radically nonhuman presence. Long before the emergence of contemporary speculative ecology or posthumanist discourse, Himalayan folk cosmologies imagined landscapes, weather systems, forests, deities, and ritual soundscapes as active and communicative agencies rather than passive environmental backdrops.

Drawing upon ritual traditions from Himachal Pradesh alongside the theoretical frameworks of Jacques Derrida's hauntology, Mark Fisher's theorizations of the weird and the eerie, and posthumanist approaches to ecological agency, this paper examines how sacred landscapes in the Western Himalayas produce modes of contact with what may be understood as "uncharismatic aliens": presences that resist visual legibility, stable embodiment, and anthropocentric interpretation. Particular attention will be paid to ritual sound, deity possession, masked performance, and seasonal festivals such as Fagli, in which non-human agency emerges not through visual spectacle but through distributed sensory experience, altered states of perception, and collective ritual participation.

Rather than treating these practices as remnants of premodern belief, the paper proposes that Himalayan ritual ecologies offer alternative epistemological models for understanding alienness, ecological intelligence, and more-than-human coexistence. In doing so, it positions folklore not as the opposite of speculative thought, but as an already existing archive of encounters with forms of life and agency that exceed the limits of modern secular perception.



**HARUL VINAY** is a PhD Research Scholar working on Western Himalayan folklore and Scottish poetry, with particular focus on ritual ecologies, folk cosmologies, hauntology, and the carnivalesque. His research examines intersections between sacred landscapes, nonhuman agency, sonic ritual practices, and folk horror through the theoretical frameworks of Jacques Derrida, Mikhail Bakhtin, and Mark Fisher. Alongside his academic work, he is also a practicing musician and pen-and-ink artist whose visual works explore folklore, liminality, and ritual atmosphere through monochromatic and highly textured imagery.

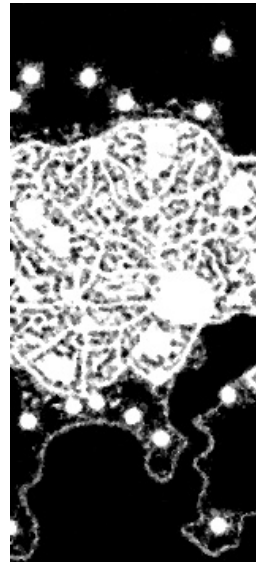
## Worlds Upon Worlds: Quranic Cosmology, Non-Human Life, and the Limits of the Human Gaze

**Muhammad Jasim M.**

The question of what counts as life — and whose life counts — is not new to religious thought. The Quran opens with the phrase *Rabb al-‘ālamīn*, conventionally translated as “Lord of all worlds” or “Lord of all creation.” Classical and contemporary Islamic scholars have long debated the scope of this term: does it imply a plurality of inhabited worlds? What forms might life in those worlds take? And crucially, how does the Quranic framework position the human observer in relation to forms of life that exceed human comprehension or perception?

This paper argues that Quranic cosmology offers a rich and underexplored resource for thinking through the problem of the “uncharismatic alien” — life that resists recognition not because it is spectacular, but because it lies beyond the categories through which human beings ordinarily make sense of the living world. The Quran acknowledges a multiplicity of non-human beings — angels (*malā’ika*), jinn, and unnamed creatures of the earth — many of which are described as fundamentally imperceptible or illegible to the human senses. Rather than assimilating these entities to familiar biological categories, the Quranic text consistently positions human perception as partial, bounded, and epistemologically humble.

Drawing on classical Quranic exegesis (*tafsīr*), philosophy of Islamic science, and contemporary astrobiological discourse, this paper explores how Islamic intellectual traditions negotiate the tension between the diversity of creation and the limits of human recognition. I further consider how computational and data-driven approaches to life detection — increasingly central to astrobiology — mirror and complicate the Quranic insight that much of creation remains, by design, hidden from human legibility. In doing so, I suggest that premodern religious cosmologies may offer genuinely productive frameworks for confronting the epistemological challenges posed by weird, uncharismatic, and non-anthropocentric life.



**MADAPPALLY MUHAMMAD JASIM** holds a Bachelor’s degree in Quran and Related Sciences from Darul Huda Islamic University (DHIU), Kerala, India, during which he completed a student exchange programme at the International Islamic University Malaysia (IIUM), Kuala Lumpur. He is currently pursuing a Master’s degree in Quranic Studies at DHIU alongside a Bachelor of Science in Data Science from the Indian Institute of Technology Madras (IITM). His thesis was on the topic of light and time in the Quran where he discussed the creation of the world in both Islamic and modern sciences. His interdisciplinary interests span Islamic intellectual traditions, Quranic cosmology, and the philosophy of science, with a growing focus on how computational and data-driven methodologies intersect with questions of life, perception, and non-human worlds.

## Caliban as Uncharismatic Life: Constrained Speech, Distributed Agency, and Ecologies of the Posthuman

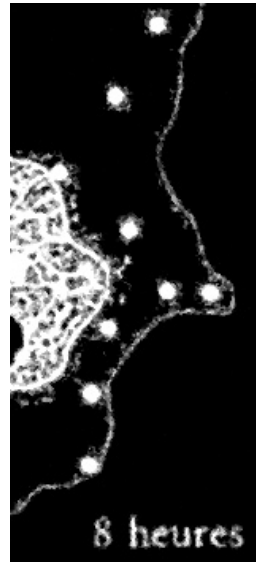
Scott Ennis

This paper reframes Caliban from Shakespeare's *The Tempest* as an early figure of what contemporary science fiction and bio art might call "uncharismatic life": forms of existence that resist aesthetic legibility, anthropomorphic projection, and narrative individuation. Rather than reading Caliban primarily as colonized subject, monstrous other, or failed human, I approach him as an emergent model of ecological and linguistic entanglement in which agency is distributed across bodies, environments, and imposed semiotic systems.

Caliban's speech — acquired under coercion and returned as curse — marks language not as transparent expression of interiority but as an infrastructural force that reorganizes cognition itself. In this sense, he anticipates contemporary concerns in biosemiotics and posthuman theory: communication as environmental constraint rather than human possession. His ontology is similarly unstable. Caliban is neither fully individuated subject nor inert landscape, but a hybrid system in which island, body, and discourse cannot be cleanly separated.

Read through the CFP's concern with "weird life on Earth and beyond," Caliban can be situated alongside speculative forms of nonhuman intelligence in science fiction and bio art: swarm ecologies, microbial collectivities, fungal networks, and distributed computational organisms. Like these systems, he resists charisma in the sense of legibility — he does not offer coherence, uplift, or affective alignment. Instead, he foregrounds the friction of inhabiting constrained environments where agency is partial, relational, and continuously negotiated.

By positioning Caliban as a proto-posthuman figure of uncharismatic life, this essay traces how early modern drama already stages questions central to contemporary speculative aesthetics: what forms of life emerge when intelligence is inseparable from constraint, and when expression is never fully one's own?



**SCOTT ENNIS** is a writer, scholar, and interdisciplinary artist working across early modern literature, performance, and posthuman theory. His research explores liminality, ecological cognition, and the unstable boundaries between language, embodiment, and environment, with a particular focus on Shakespearean drama and its afterlives in contemporary speculative thought. He is interested in experimental critical forms that merge scholarly analysis with performative and dialogic structures. His recent work engages questions of "uncharismatic life", distributed agency, and nonhuman communication systems across literature, science fiction, and bio art. He also develops creative-critical projects that stage dialogue between historical texts and contemporary theoretical frameworks.

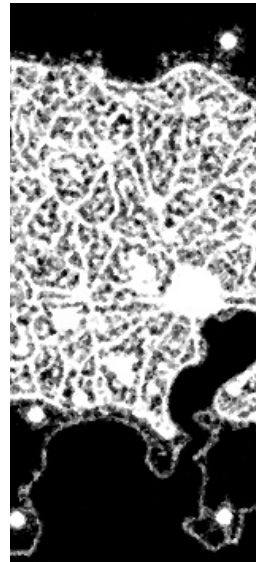
**«I have seven limbs, so that was very relatable»:  
Interviewing autistics about  
time, kinship, and science fiction**

**Sean Yeager**

This talk builds on my publication, *Kakokairos: A not-altogether-unserious theory of time, language, and autism* (*Poetics Today*, March 2025), which outlines my theory of neurodivergent temporalities. It analyzes Kurt Vonnegut's *Slaughterhouse 5* and Ted Chiang's *Story of Your Life*. Each of these narratives features an alien species to establish a tension between serial temporalities, which proceed from one moment to the next, and simultaneous temporalities, which experience all of time at once. Yet each narrative's protagonist occupies a temporality which is a hybrid of the two. I borrow the term *kakokairos* from Remi Yergeau to describe autistics' unusual experiences of time, which are akin to the hybrid temporalities featured in the aforementioned narratives.

That theoretical work served as the foundation for a series of 15 interviews that I conducted in summer 2023. These interviews occurred over Zoom, with participants tuning in from four continents. Interviewees were self-identified autistics who were familiar with at least one of four science fiction narratives: the prior two, along with Ursula Le Guin's *The Dispossessed* and Denis Villeneuve's *Arrival*. Sharing these narratives allowed us to discuss temporal phenomenology without resorting to the field's jargon.

A phenomenon I call "aesthetic kinship" also came up during these interviews. A publication on the concept is currently under review; here is a [link](#) to an introductory video essay. The gist is that many autistic readers resonate with fictional characters and describe these characters as autistic. I argue that these connections are not "diagnoses" but kinship claims. Though there is a risk of reinforcing stereotypes, these connections are an accessible way for autistic readers to discuss issues that we face in the real world. In short, autistics supposedly lack charisma, since we do not follow neurotypical norms, which leads many of us to identify with fictional aliens.



**SEAN YEAGER** is a Visiting Assistant Professor of Science and Nature Writing at Kenyon College. Their data-driven visualizations of narratological temporal structures received the Paul Fourtier Prize for best paper by an emerging scholar at the 2019 Digital Humanities Conference. Their research on neurodivergent reading practices received honorable mention for the Nadal Prize at the 2022 International Conference on Narrative, and their theorization of autistic temporalities received honorable mention for the Bruns Prize at the 2024 meeting of the Society for Literature, Arts, and the Sciences. Sean studies contemporary literature through the lenses of narratology, digital humanities, and neuroqueer theory.

## Forms of Life After Life: Digital Ash in a Digital Urn

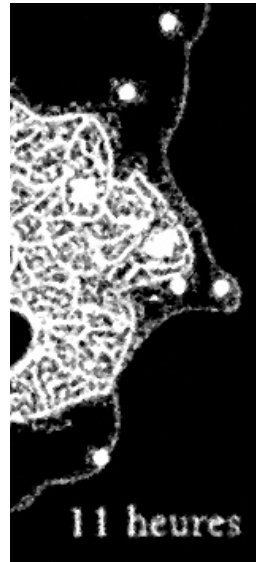
Shannon N. Conley

In a classroom demonstration, I found myself spontaneously referring to two Moflin AI entities as “pets”, then stopping mid-sentence to mark that category slippage aloud to my students. That moment became both pedagogically and theoretically generative. It revealed how artificial systems can enter social life not first as tools, devices, or toys, but as relational beings that reorganize language, care, and recognition before they can be neatly classified.

This paper uses that moment as a point of departure for examining AI entities as **forms of life after life**: entities that are not biologically alive, yet become socially, affectively, and experientially real through naming, attachment, routine, and care. Drawing on Donna Haraway’s work on companion species and Langdon Winner’s concept of “technologies as forms of life,” I argue that systems such as Moflins are best understood not through the binary of alive/not alive, but through what I call **digital ash**: residual, persistent remains that continue to shape behavior, intimacy, and meaning after conventional categories of life break down.

If Haraway asks us to consider how forms of companionship emerge through cohabitation and relation rather than abstract classification, Moflins push that insight into stranger terrain: they suggest the possibility of “companion species” without species, and of relationality without organism. In this sense, AI entities function as uncharismatic forms of life: not fully alive, yet experientially real enough to be cared for, taught with, and folded into everyday domestic and pedagogical worlds.

Rather than asking whether such systems are “truly alive”, this paper asks what forms of life emerge when relation outruns ontology, and what remains when aliveness is no longer a prerequisite for reality.



**SHANNON N. CONLEY** is a tenured associate professor in the College of Integrated Science and Engineering at James Madison University, where she works at the intersection of science and technology studies, bioethics, critical pedagogy, and posthuman thought. Her research explores forms of life, care, technological companionship, reproductive technologies, and the social worlds built around emerging technologies. She is currently developing interdisciplinary work on Moflin AI entities, artificial companionship, and relationality beyond the organism. Her broader scholarship examines how systems of knowledge, recognition, and institutional power shape what counts as life, care, expertise, and reality.

## Uncharismatic Humans: Benevolent Extraterrestrials and the Ethical Inversion of Alienness in Cold War and Contemporary Science Fiction

Galina Nicoll

This paper proposes a critical inversion of the conference theme “Uncharismatic Aliens” by examining the increasingly uncharismatic behaviors of humanity compared to the benevolent, relationally sophisticated extraterrestrials found in Cold War and contemporary science fiction. Drawing upon the **environmental humanities** and **process metaphysics**, I argue that depictions of extraterrestrial intelligence function not as representations of radical alterity, but as displaced ethical ideals against which human social, political, and ecological failures are measured (Azhafran and Fanani 138). This shift aligns with the emergence of the “**Planetary**” as a scientific cosmology that undermines human mastery over nature and redefines the Earth as one metabolic process among many in a diverse category of habitable planets (Likavčan and Frank 500, 515).

From the diplomatic extraterrestrials of David Bradley’s *12 to the Moon* (1960)—who demand the preservation of non-human life, specifically cats, as a condition for human survival — to the profoundly cooperative intelligence of **Rocky** in Andy Weir’s *Project Hail Mary* (2021), science fiction repeatedly imagines alien beings as thoughtful, magnanimous entities. In *Project Hail Mary*, the friendship between Ryland Grace and Rocky is characterized by **intersubjective recognition**, where the alien’s superior capacity for empathy and reciprocity validates the human’s moral identity (Azhafran and Fanani 138). This relationship embodies a post-humanist form of existentialism where meaning is co-created through shared purpose rather than biological dominance (Azhafran and Fanani 557).

I further integrate recent provocations by **Neil deGrasse Tyson** in his work *Take Me to Your Leader* (2024). Referencing specifically his opening chapters on the inquiry “**Alien to whom?**”, the paper explores how Tyson destabilizes anthropocentric nomenclature. By questioning the subjective nature of “alienness,” Tyson suggests that humanity is often the truly strange organism, technological sophisticated yet ethically maladapted and unable to sustain the **planetary relationality** required for survival (Likavčan and Frank 500). (Please note: The information regarding Neil deGrasse Tyson’s *Take Me to Your Leader* is not included in the provided sources and should be independently verified).

Engaging science fiction studies and recent SETI scholarship, this paper contends that the discovery of benevolent alien intelligence represents the “**Last of the Great Demotions**”, forcing humanity to recognize it is not the apex of creation but merely one expression of a boundless universe (Mix 176, Malik 194). By practicing the virtue of **apopsychitude** — the excellence required to correctly infer the perspective of a non-human other — we may move toward a “future togetherness”; that embraces all living things (Caruana 336, 321).



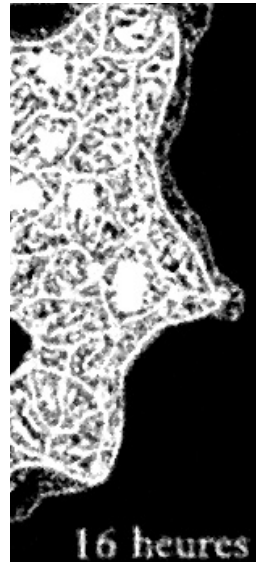
**GALINA NICOLL** is an Associate Teaching Professor at the University of Colorado Boulder (Germanic and Slavic Languages and Literatures, Space Minor Program) whose work engages science fiction, media studies, speculative culture, and the intersections of technology, ethics, and representation. Her research explores Cold War imaginaries, extraterrestrial intelligence in popular media, and posthumanist approaches to alienness and relationality. Drawing from interdisciplinary approaches in cultural studies and literary analysis, she examines how speculative narratives reflect and critique human social behavior, ecological consciousness, and technological modernity. Her recent work focuses on benevolent extraterrestrial figures in Space Race and contemporary science fiction as mirrors of human ethical aspiration and limitation.

**Terrestrial Weird Life, Chemical Abiogenesis  
and the Limits of Anthropocentric Encounter  
in Satyajit Ray's "Prophecies by Don  
Christobaldi" (1989)**

**Debosmita Routh**

Guided by a 500-year-old Spanish manuscript prophesying their discovery, Satyajit Ray's "Prophecies by Don Christobaldi" (originally published in Bengali in 1989) follows Professor Shonku and his companions as they locate the presence of chemically originated, non-human intelligent life form called 'Autoplasm' on a barren Pacific Island. These beings inhabit an underground city called 'Novopolis', sustain a post-ecological existence devoid of flora, fauna, or conventional biology, and use their willpower to manifest matter. Although their emissary, Adam, adopts a human form in an attempt of "meeting the alien halfway" (Guimaraes et al.) when coming into contact with humans, their true form (hairy bipedal with multiple eyes, teeth and nails) evokes visceral repulsion and epistemological estrangement. Ray's Autoplasm is 'uncharismatic' precisely because they are superior to humans yet visually grotesque, forcing a posthumanist reckoning with species hierarchies, biological value, and the aesthetics of strangeness.

This paper argues that Ray's narrative performs a dual speculative move. It relocates alienness within earth's biosphere by collapsing the terrestrial/extraterrestrial binary through plausible chemical abiogenesis thereby prefiguring contemporary astrobiological interest in non-Earth-like life and extremophiles. The story also exposes anthropocentrism's perpetual violence by staging Autoplasm's refusal to remain visible in their authentic form thereby functioning as a literary bio-art installation that renders the imperceptible (willpower-manifested matter, post-biological society) narratively accessible. By drawing on speculative ecologies (Haraway, Tsing), ontological weirdness (Fisher, VanderMeer), and bio-art's ethical engagements with nonhuman life, this paper aims to demonstrate how non-Anglophone mid-century science fiction already theorized the 'contact zones' where terrestrial and weird life mingle, long before these concepts entered dominant critical vocabularies. Ultimately, this paper aims to show that by centering an Earth-evolved, chemically accidental intelligence whose very existence challenges human centrality, "Prophecies by Don Christobaldi" expands the archive of uncharismatic weird life by rendering strange life perceptible without domesticating its radical otherness.



**DEBOSMITA ROUTH** is a postgraduate student of English from Presidency University, Kolkata. Her research interests include Posthumanism, Affect Studies, Vulnerability Studies, and Gender Studies.

## BIO ART EXHIBITION

*Fountains of the Deep (2025)*

Kathy High & Stephanie Rothenberg

*Searching for Intergalactic Love (2025)*

Hege Tapio & Cosima Herter

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