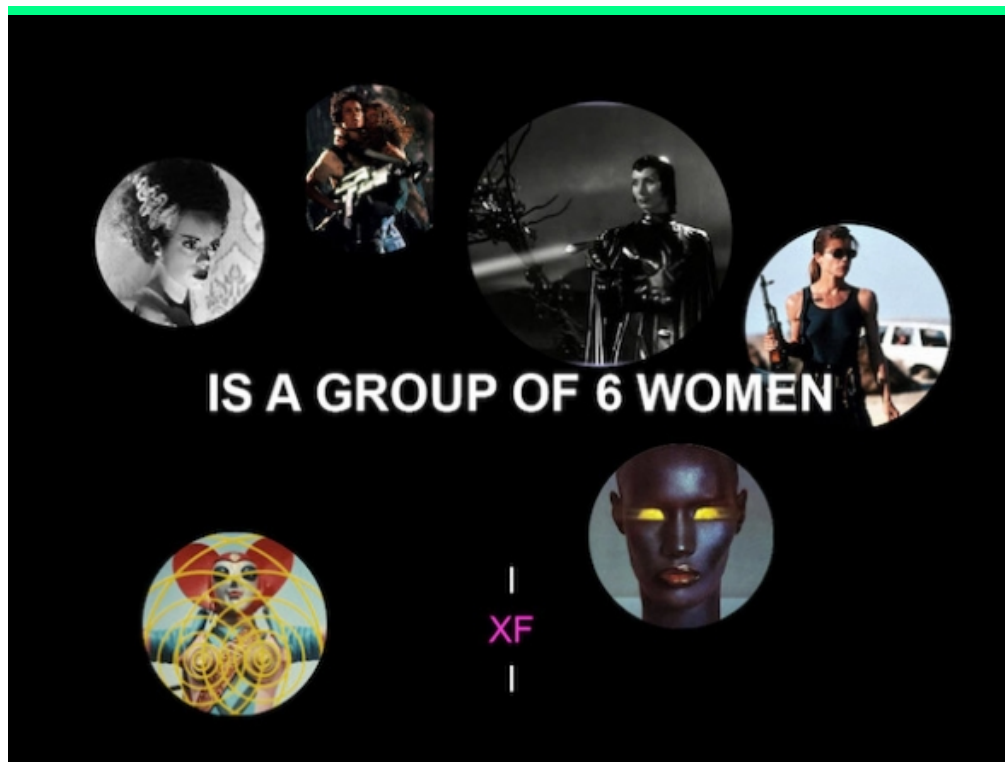


## APPROPRIATING THE ALIEN: A CRITIQUE OF XENOFEMINISM

By Annie Goh , 29 July 2019

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The *Xenofeminist Manifesto* claims, among many things, rationalism and technology as core to a renewed futurist feminist project. However, given the provenance of its moniker and its 'pro-enlightenment' position, Annie Goh asks, WTF exactly is XF?

The Laboria Cuboniks collective launched the *Xenofeminist Manifesto (XFM)* in Berlin's Schinkel Pavillon on a Tuesday evening in late May 2015. There was excitement in the room as members of the collective who were present took turns in reading the manifesto out loud, proclaiming the exhilarating ideas of their project. The German translation had already been printed and was being launched as part of the publication *Dea Ex Machina* by Merve Verlag. This featured the manifesto, an introduction by Helen Hester and Armen Avanessian, as well as a selection of contemporary and historical texts by feminist academics taking positions on posthumanism, technology, noise, ecology and cyberfeminisms of various guises.-

The *XFM* demanded that the 'emancipatory potential of technology' (0x03, *XFM*) become the foundation of a new and exciting feminist vision which is 'at ease with computation' (0x07), defies the contemporary decelerating tendencies of 'melancholy' and 'illusion' (0x09) with a xenofeminist rationalism (0x04) and ultimately aims for 'the abolition of class, gender, and race' as its emancipatory objective (0x0F). Its bold and tenacious prose announced xenofeminism as a unique and striking feminist voice. With its adamant 'anti-naturalism' (0x11) and its prizing of the synthetic (0x07), the manifesto's final statement memorably resounded in the room: 'If nature is unjust, change

nature!' (0x1A). There was a brash audacity to the project which enticed, even if it all appeared somewhat cryptic to the audience.

Since then the manifesto has been widely circulated, translated into twelve languages and is championed within a specific stratum of art, new media institutions and academia. It has been rapidly incorporated into syllabi around the world and is frequently referenced in feminist debates, particularly those oriented towards technology.<sup>2</sup> The late Mark Fisher heaped praise on the collective for 'definitively grasp[ing] feminism back from the [...] hands of the moralising-spiteful petit-bourgeoisie'.<sup>3</sup> Correspondingly, it has been endowed with the cultural cachet of a distinctly hyped brand of left political theorising.

When Helen Hester, one of Laboria Cuboniks' founding members, later published the single-authored book *Xenofeminism* in 2018, Polity Press proclaimed that XF was 'one of the most exciting intellectual trends in contemporary feminism'.<sup>4</sup> Hester's book is theoretically detailed in a way that the manifesto form precludes, but both share a commitment to a boldly immodest universalism (0x05, 0x0F) of Promethean cunning and innovation (0x06); Hester's book re-affirms xenofeminism as 'a technomaterialist, anti-naturalist and gender abolitionist form of feminism'.<sup>5</sup>

Much of what the manifesto declared, particularly its putative intersectional technofeminist agenda, seemed to be in line with the sort of reinvigorated cyberfeminism I had also been thinking about in my curatorial and educational work of that time. My interests were piqued. Yet, if xenofeminism is characterised as *rescuing* contemporary feminism from a whole host of sorry demises, then some closer scrutiny of its key claims is in order.

## What the F is XF?

The Greek *xenos* means 'strange' or 'foreign', and the prefix 'xeno' commonly denotes 'relating to a foreigner or foreigners'. The name 'xenofeminism' is one of the first things people often query and I recall an audience question at the book launch regarding the prefix 'xeno', in relation to how the collective negotiated any proximity it might therefore seem to have to the commonly associated word 'xenophobia'. A somewhat awkward answer came back from the collective to the effect that: 'among us (the authors), some of us are queer, some of us are trans, some of us are mothers [...] we are all white and from the Global North.' Yet, we were assured that the manifesto's subtitle, 'a Politics for Alienation', associated xenofeminism with the notion of 'alienness', but not the 'xeno' of 'xenophobia'. Further on, I will unpack the ambiguities of *XFM's* use of Marx's concept of 'alienation'. For now, with xenophobia being a very real and pressing issue in the context of the contemporary resurgence of the far-right, and with the well-known rise of white nationalist and Islamophobic feminisms, to make this immediate equivalence of 'xeno' with 'alienness' and attempt to fill it with positive rather than negative content, cannot be regarded as straightforward.



The six authors of the *Xenofeminist Manifesto* originally met in Berlin in 2014 at the conference 'Emancipation as Navigation', whose organisers were associated with Alex Williams and Nick Srnicek and their *#Accelerationist Manifesto* (*#AACM*)<sup>6</sup>, which had made a splash in left political circles a year earlier. The collective later known as Laboria Cuboniks was similarly borne of the intellectual and philosophical milieu of speculative realism and object-oriented ontology. There are several echoes of *#AACM* in the *XFM*, such as: the diagnosis of the left's melancholic inertia; the faith in the liberatory potential of technology; the denigration of 'folk politics' and scorn for localism; a devotion to Prometheanism<sup>7</sup>—and a presumption of the urgent necessity to 'scale-up' automatised production. The *XFM*, then, appears to have emerged as a feminist response to the *#AACM*, which had been subject to criticisms of constituting a new form of 'macho techno-nihilism'. Indeed, 'accelero-feminism' was one of the names which circulated around these ideas before xenofeminism was settled upon.<sup>8</sup>

Mirroring *#AACM*'s denigration of the left's purported lack of imagination and the 'neo-primitive localism' of its 'folk politics', the *XFM* likewise declares that an excess of modesty is hampering progress toward the superior vision of feminism it proposes.<sup>9</sup> Prometheanism is adopted by xenofeminism to signal its ambition, rejection of reactionary ideals and stagnant 'melancholia', denounced as a necessary pitfall of the futile pursuit of local activism.<sup>10</sup> 'Feminism must be a rationalism' (0x04), they state; 'the real emancipatory potential of technology remains unrealized' (0x03). Again echoing the *#AACM*, which sought to 'accelerate the process of technological evolution',<sup>11</sup>—the central importance of technology — however ambiguously defined — to both accelerationist and xenofeminist agendas is clear.<sup>12</sup>

The influence of Marxist-feminist Shulamith Firestone on XF is also apparent here. Firestone's rejection of the 'tyranny' of biological reproduction as a fate of 'nature' overlaps with XF's conviction that technology plays a central role in a potential feminist revolution.<sup>13</sup>— In demanding a contemporary feminism which has 'imagination, dexterity and persistence' (0x01), is at ease with the increasingly highly technologised world, and can cope with the complexity of contemporary fast-paced realities, the *XFM* certainly shares many aims with those feminist technoscience artists, activists and scholars of the 1990s who challenged typically masculinist-coded technological domains.<sup>14</sup>— But in many of these cyberfeminist and technofeminist debates, technology was not an unambiguous cause for celebration. The *XFM* is at its most convincing when foregrounding a trans-led, gender-queer use of biohacking as a Xenofeminist technology, articulating, with Firestonian bravado, a much-needed and vocal attack

on the cis-heteronormative nuclear family.<sup>15</sup> Yet, where it is cogent on the gender-abolitionist, open-source-inspired reconstructability of sex and gender, xenofeminist technology is less articulate when it comes to race and class.<sup>16</sup>

According to the *XFM*, the universal needs a 'profound reworking' (0x0F) in order to 'sift new universals from the ashes of the false' (0x10). These new universals are notionally delineated from Eurocentric universalism (pace Williams and Srnicek), and are assured to be 'intersectional'. 'The universal must be grasped as generic, which is to say, intersectional [...] built from the bottom up – or, better, laterally, opening new lines of transit across an uneven landscape' (0x0F). Yet it is hard to imagine how this 'bottom-up' universalism radically departs from Eurocentricism when there is little effort made to divest the overburdened term 'universalism' of its whiteness, historically and epistemologically (more on this below). The concept of the 'generic', a likely nod to the notion of the 'generic set' (derived from mathematical set theory, and popularised in philosophy primarily through the work of Alain Badiou), is conceptually underdeveloped, but the suggestive purchase of such formalism<sup>17</sup> on the power dynamics inherent in intersectionality seems questionable or, at best, in need of better articulation.—



Image: Okayultra & the Retro Wave image generator

### Alienated and Loving it<sup>18</sup>

Despite appearing prominently in its subtitle, 'a politics of alienation', the *XFM* curiously does not detail in any significant depth *how* the concept of alienation is meant. It is clear that in the project of accelerationism, its proponents were keen to appropriate a quasi-Marxist heritage. Four guide quotes by Marx (1858), Firestone (1970), Sadie Plant and Nick Land (1994) and Williams and Srnicek (2013), placed at the front of the #ACC volume edited by Robin MacKay and Armen Avanessian, attest to the conscious willing-into-being of a particular intellectual vector.<sup>19</sup> The decision to begin this anthology of 'accelerationist' writings with the 'Fragment on Machines' (from the *Grundrisse*) suggests Marx as a spectral father figure lurking behind Land's call to accelerate capitalism. Yet, this relatively peripheral text within Marx's oeuvre, widely misread in the years preceding the #ACC's publication, and by now absurdly inflated, construes him as an ardent technological fetishist, proselytising for the full automation of labour. As David Cunningham's critique of accelerationism points out: 'one would have to ignore a great many other passages in the *Grundrisse* [not to mention Marx's other writings] to think that this is, for Marx, anything like a simple matter'.<sup>20</sup> Both the #ACCM and the *XFM* are careful to put caveats in place against accusations of technoutopianism, however, technology nevertheless recurs in both manifestos as an open realm of untapped potential in a manner which is primarily celebratory. There *XFM's* use of the term 'alienation' also has a dubious quasi-Marxian inflection.

Actual references to 'the alien' and 'alienation' which qualify the 'xeno' prefix of xenofeminism appear fairly sparsely within the manifesto.<sup>21</sup> There are in fact four discernible ways 'alienation' is being used. Firstly, in 'we are all alienated – but have we ever been otherwise?', there is a sense of generalised social alienation, as a typical modern 'illness'. Secondly, and building on this, there is the idea of being alienated 'as a woman'. This proposes that, 'we, as women, have long been excluded from fully participating in a patriarchal society. Let us seize this exclusion as a productive asset'. The univocal 'we', deployed without a convincing account of difference, is addressed further below. Thirdly, as a 'creature on the offensive', serving 'all of our alien kin' and 'construct[ing] an alien future', we find the figure of a 'sci-fi alien' which feeds from cyberculture's and CCRU's long-existing obsession with artificial intelligence, possibilities of non-human consciousness and sexy feminised cyborgs à la Rachel in *Bladerunner* or Molly in *Neuromancer*. Finally, there are the allusions to the alienation of labour which hint at the

XFM's quasi-Marxist inheritances (which overlap in part with humanist Hegelian notions of alienation underpinning the first meaning).<sup>22</sup>



Image: CCRU, *Abstract Culture: Digital Hyperstition*, pamphlet, c.1999

There are rich feminist histories of appropriating the notion of alienhood, but xenofeminism's use of the 'alien' locates itself in a different lineage from these approaches, as laid out below.<sup>23</sup> Perhaps it is the polysemous conflation of all of these familiar tropes which has led to xenofeminism's sustained appeal to certain strata of the theory-art spheres of cultural production (meaning those who might buy into any or all of these notions of the 'alien'). In what follows, I outline three issues embedded within the 'xeno' of xenofeminism which saddle it with significant contradictions vis à vis its purported emancipatory aims: the universalisation of alienation; the uneven politics of the human-alien relation; and the problem of labour in accelerationism.

### 'We' the Aliens

There is a widespread understanding of the continued problem of the 'we' of intersectional feminisms. Nevertheless, the opening paragraph of the XFM proposes: 'We are all alienated – but have we ever been otherwise?' (0x01). Although some nods are given (near the end, in section 0x14), which disaggregate the 'we' and 'us' used throughout, the implied shared subject position – which infers that 'we' are somehow all equally alienated – creates particular difficulties when attached to the accelerationist injunction to go for *more* not less alienation. We need to go through alienation to be free, we are told.

This elision of difference has been a longstanding issue of contention and difficulty in feminism, and this is especially so for race-critical, Black and Indigenous feminisms. In Octavia Butler's *Xenogenesis* trilogy, xenophobia and racial difference unavoidably haunt the science-fiction narrative of post-apocalyptic human-alien biological-sexual reproduction. Lilith, the main protagonist, is faced with pain, conflict, abjection and pleasure which constantly disrupt the human-alien binary, depicting, as elsewhere in Butler's work, the complex and often contradictory modalities of African-American women's lives under slavery. Over and over again, theorists of race have critiqued

humanist discourses and aligned alienation *qua* dehumanisation as inseparable from histories of racial violence and the subjugation of colonialism and slavery. 'Our struggle was a struggle against alienation', said Aimé Césaire, commenting on the birth of the Negritude movement.<sup>24</sup> Where humanity or legal personhood has not historically been afforded to racialised minorities, as the terminology of US citizenship law still reminds us, the figure of the alien has often been mobilised to explore these disparities.<sup>25</sup> Whilst the *XFM* brazenly affirms alienation as a generic condition, it painfully overlooks the large number of post-, decolonial and critical-race thinkers who have (in all their diversity) dealt with the central constitution of race in the idea of the human and the uneven distribution of subjecthood in relation to the non-white foreigner as alien.<sup>26</sup>



Image: Still from Dianne Bauer's *XF Take 4*, 2017

Reason, rationalism and new xenofeminist universalisms are asserted alongside this call for greater alienation. Xenofeminism, 'names reason as an engine of feminist emancipation, and declares the right of everyone to speak as no one in particular' (0x04), underscoring a particularly glib take on Spivak's famous interrogation of the stakes of the legibility, translatability and communicability of subaltern subjectivities.<sup>27</sup> Reclaiming rationality is another arena where neglecting to account for the co-constitutive processes of coloniality/modernity indicates a lack of coherence in the xenofeminist programme. Decolonial scholars, such as Aníbal Quijano, Walter D. Mignolo, Boaventura de Sousa Santos and María Lugones, have insisted upon the inextricability of modernity from the material and epistemological violences of colonialism. The Enlightenment, including its values of reason and rationality, has always coexisted with its 'darker side' (Mignolo) of violent, racialised and gendered subjugation on a mass scale (a construal completely antithetical to Land's 'edgy', 'gothic' neo-reactionary theorisation of the 'Dark Enlightenment'). Without acknowledging the complicity of Eurocentric progress-oriented narratives with the systematic injustices of capitalism, patriarchy and colonialism, flippantly asserting the existence of 'non-Western' or non-European reason and rationality in xenofeminism appears like an after-thought. The resurrection of a universalism which does not actively 'provincialise' by acknowledging the epistemological histories of coloniality and whiteness can only serve to reinforce world-making and world-governing Eurocentricism.

If the subjectivity of the *XFM* remains cloaked in whiteness, then the justification to embrace alienation is based on a false assumption of the uniform distribution of societal oppressions. It was, of course, precisely the *non-equivocal* nature of white and Black women's oppressions which motivated Kimberlé Crenshaw's coining of the now widely used term 'intersectionality', which is liberally cited to support the *XFM*'s emancipatory agenda. More recently, Sirma Bilge has diagnosed the dilution, neutralisation and erasure of race in its analytic use as a 'whitening' of intersectionality; its establishment as a model in itself has also been variously assessed for its affordances and limitations.<sup>28</sup> As Donna Haraway reminds us in *The Cyborg Manifesto*, 'White women, including socialist-feminists, discovered (that is, were forced kicking and screaming to notice) the non-innocence of the category "woman".'<sup>29</sup> Yet, pointing to this persistent Eurocentrism should not be confused with a plea for diversity, or to simply 'include race' in a rights-driven liberal version of identity politics. It is, however, a renewed call for attention to the dangers of glossing over the inequalities of race, gender, class, sexuality, ability and the real-existing politics of agency, which a presumed equivalence of oppression and in turn alienation evades. The 'xeno' of xenofeminism uses alienness univocally and performs the marginalised position of 'being alienated' whilst it elides the differences implicated in the dynamics of marginalisation.

Williams and Srnicek went to some lengths to attempt to distinguish their left-accelerationism from the so-called right-accelerationism associated with the renegade British 'philosopher' turned neo-reactionary figurehead, Nick Land. To what extent the xenofeminists as a collective wish to associate or disassociate themselves from Land is still unclear. Benjamin Noys, who himself coined the term 'accelerationism', concedes its appeal as an aesthetic whilst delivering one of the most incisive critiques of it, in both its Landian and revived forms.<sup>30</sup>— I argue that there are both associative and intellectual arguments which trouble xenofeminism's self-proclaimed leveraging of emancipatory, intersectional technofeminisms.

In terms of the association between Land and xenofeminism, the argument is not particularly complicated. Land's fondness for the 'xeno' prefix is indisputable. Land's 1997 essay 'Meltdown', oft cited by his followers, refers to 'xenodata', 'xenosentience' and 'xenogenetics', and his engagements with the far right began on his infamous blog 'Outside In', which was hosted at the address 'xenosystems.net'.<sup>31</sup> While academics might argue that conflating Land's later interactions with the far right with his earlier work is questionable, for those active in anti-racist struggles there remains a distinctly uncomfortable proximity between Land's xenophobia and his liberal usage of the prefix 'xeno,' particularly since its re-appropriation has arguably come to overcode the various justifications given for reinvigorating his legacy.<sup>32</sup> Larne Abse Gogarty's work on 'The Art Right' and Ana Teixeira Pinto on 'Artwashing' have provided extremely useful accounts of the continued adulation of Land in certain corners of the art world. Meanwhile Sophie Lewis has recently pointed to XF's 'dark lineage' leading on from Land.<sup>33</sup>—

Beyond these connections to Land, there are other issues which complicate xenofeminism's emancipatory vision. One might look for a xenofeminist pre-history in 'Cyberpositive', the 1994 essay co-authored by Nick Land and Sadie Plant, and in the latter's 1995 book, *Zeros + Ones*, a key cyberfeminist text which excavated feminised histories of computation and mathematics with a view to recoding the masculine-dominated realm of cyberspace.<sup>34</sup> Plant's account contains sharp criticisms of utopian dreams of virtuality, by, for example, highlighting the effects of a burgeoning and increasingly automated global electronics industry on the largely female workforce of the global south. Yet, while Plant successfully invoked the poetic provocations of cyberfeminist technologies past, present and future, the ambiguity of her gesture was at the time nevertheless challenged by feminist technologists for lacking any viable political agenda – the book's merely rhetorical radicality opening up a dubiously vague virtual space for the post-humanist subject to disappear within.<sup>35</sup>—

In Land and Plant's 'Cyberpositive' we witness an archetypical accelerationist gesture, which sees the authors reject the 'moderate' self-stabilising homeostasis of Norbert Wiener's cybernetics, and instead advocate the heady excess and unknown instabilities of 'cyberpositive processes' and future catastrophe. We also see the idiosyncratic fusion between Marxist-Hegelian notions of alienation and cybernetic end-of-history disasterism, which typifies and prefigures the *XFM*: 'Alienation used to diagnose the condition of a population becoming foreign to itself offering a prognosis that still promised recovery. All that is over. We are all foreigners now, no longer alienated but alien'.<sup>36</sup>— Where the essay states, 'women and other aliens constitute an immensely disproportionate number of schizophrenics, frozen by tranquilizers and antischizophrenic drugs', we likewise see xenofeminism prefigured by a skewed minoritarianism which romanticises (and flattens) the alterity of women, foreigners, and schizophrenics.

If Plant's project can be criticised for evoking a space of virtuality where the role of the subject is too loosely defined, the Landian accelerationist injunction demands substantial conceptual gymnastics to adjust it to xenofeminism's purported intersectionality. Read in light of Land's nihilistic appetite for accelerating capitalism, the demand for more alienation reveals untenable contradictions when we consider it in relation to the contentious arguments around conceptions of the human, or compare the positions of Land's anti-humanism (with its proximity to trans-humanism) with the fundamentally antithetical tenets of critical feminist post-humanisms. Land obsesses over 'the singularity' – Kurzweil's fantasy of the imminent supercession of the human race by intelligent machines – a position underpinned by a kind of 'hatred of humans'. Jeremy Gilbert has detailed how in the 1990s CCRU's 'sneering scepticism' of British cultural studies and the legacy of the New Left went hand-in-hand with Land's longstanding cyber-right-libertarianism, making his subsequent shift to outright fascism less than surprising, at least to Gilbert.<sup>37</sup>— Land's version of 'anti-humanism' concedes to a romanticisation of the alien as a distinct and absolute other, implying a human subjectivity with more in common with liberal humanism than it would like to admit. The deliberate disregard of the messy complexity of human subjectivity (and existing configurations of race, gender and class), whilst partly rooted in understandable suspicions about liberal humanism, can be regarded as at least

partially responsible for triggering the embrace of 'dark nihilism and gothic paranoia' and techno-dystopianism/futurist fantasy spearheaded by Land.<sup>38</sup>—

The enthusiastic jettisoning of the problem of the subject is what makes it so difficult to marry the accelerationist and social justice-oriented tenets of xenofeminism. If the exuberant antagonism towards the all-too-human skeletons in cultural studies' closet was answered by the CCRU's anti-academicism, it makes converting this legacy into viable feminist political-theoretical positions invariably challenging. Intersectionality is a theory of power, but xenofeminism's vague and elusive conceptualisation of its subject leaves it with only a selective understanding of how power operates. Indeed, philosopher and literary scholar Sylvia Wynter's efforts to understand the different 'genres of human' might prove a more appropriate endeavour. Acknowledging the conflation of the human with modern Western European man in the enlightenment can account for the structural racism by which 'lower ethnoclasses' emerge from the histories of imperialism, colonialism and chattel slavery, and this framework has explanatory power in discerning the various stakes of humanism's complex and problematic legacy, including post- and trans-humanisms of different guises. Crucially, Wynter also retains some optimism about rehabilitating or 're-enchanting' humanism, as arduous and complex a task as this remains.<sup>39</sup>—

## Non-labouring Aliens

The XFM's inverted quasi-Marxist flexes, where more alienation leads to freedom, give rise to a third set of conceptual difficulties. The alienation (*Entfremdung*) of the labouring worker as a relation of un-freedom which Marx diagnosed in his early work alludes to the inhumanity of a continuing process of dispossession. Yet by the time the *Communist Manifesto* was written, Marx had already begun to denounce alienation as 'philosophical nonsense', recognising its rootedness in Hegelian humanism and its inability to account for, or address, the material conditions of labour under capitalism. Although later Marx continued to toy with similar ideas, albeit framed as objectification (*vergegenständlichen*) within political economy there is no viable correlation to the XFM's enthusiasm for alienation. Noys pertinently articulates a key contradiction of accelerationism's supposed overcoming of capitalism, which is also discernible in xenofeminism: 'the accelerationist solution of speeding through labor is false'; it does not remove the problem of labour under capitalism, instead it violently glosses over it. To celebrate acceleration and the integration of 'man' and 'machine' is to be enamoured with the masochism and perverse enjoyment of (alienated) labour, represented in Land's, #ACCM and the XFM's sci-fi imagery. Crucially this leads to the conceptual conflation of widely divergent conditions of labour and distinct modalities of exploitation in late capitalism. The heady rush of the Landian accelerationist teleology follows capitalism's self-destructive logic, investing in a highly speculative end state with absolutely no regard – if not an outright contempt – for the human cost this project would entail. Ironically, then, a supposedly anti-capitalist force becomes materially indiscernible from capitalism itself and, with no concessions made to the violence of its lived experiences, arrives at what Noys refers to as 'Deleuzian Thatcherism'.<sup>40</sup>— Under Landian accelerationism, the question of labour is nihilistically circumvented.

As an aesthetic and as a metaphor, 'more alienation' might seduce some, but a power-sensitive materialist analysis leaves XF's 'bottom-up universalism' riddled with inconsistencies. While debates about essential human nature rooted in 19th century humanism have moved on to 20th and 21st century anti- and post-humanisms of various guises, the flattening of labour enacted in Landian accelerationism and carried over into xenofeminism fails to disaggregate the unequal lived conditions of labour and the historically specific forms which this labour takes in capitalism. Xenofeminism makes Deleuzian Thatcherism only more efficient in the guise of the 'neoliberal girl'; its lines of flight are merely reinforced by feminised labour's 'promise of value-added capital'.<sup>41</sup>—

If ACC's and XF's Prometheanism and diagnosis of the left's lack of imagination is taken seriously, one might first raise concerns about the presumptive ingenuity of Land and his adherents.<sup>42</sup>— Landian accelerationism is proposed as a programme which can transcend the limits of capitalism by driving into its sadistic excesses, but, as Noys points out, it remains limited by its neoliberal, Thatcherite, pseudo-transgressive imaginary.<sup>43</sup>— Once a supposed anti-capitalist force mimics capitalism itself, and once supposed anti-fascist movements mimic fascism itself, the end result of such impoverished imaginations is in sight.<sup>44</sup>—

## Freedom from What, for What?



In their manifesto, Laboria Cuboniks promote a freedom from ‘the muck of immediacy’ (0X01). They denounce the ‘puritanical politics of shame – which fetishizes oppression as if it were a blessing’ (0x0C) and speak sceptically about ‘social justice’ and ‘privilege-checking’ (0X0D). What is being referred to as ‘puritanism’ seems to be the currently prevalent internet call-out culture, which undeniably has its limitations. Yet for feminists there is much at stake in mimicking alt-right terminology such as ‘SJWs’ (Social Justice Warriors) and the (implied) ‘oppression Olympics’. Who are the ‘spiteful moralizing feminists’, which Fisher alluded to in his praise of xenofeminism, and which the manifesto echoes? Are they adherents of the toxic white conservative feminisms which uphold SWERFism and TERFism, or the intersectional grassroots feminisms which are often dismissed as reductively ‘identitarian’ when inconveniently articulating real and ongoing oppressions? Given how the aforementioned CCRU inheritance dumped the messy complexities of meatspace for a more machinic futurism, and positioned cyberspace as offering the potential of ‘escaping the strictures of essentialist identity categories’, but actually ended up fetishising oppression (0X0C), XF panders dangerously to a cyber-libertarianism which thinks it possible to escape identity categories entirely, merely ‘because of’ cyberspace, and which would rather denounce ‘woke’-cultures than attend to on- and offline racialising, gendered, and classed structures of power.<sup>45</sup> ‘We want superior forms of corruption’ (0X0C), the *XFM* proclaims, without offering much to suggest how the complexity of the body – unavoidably still divided into marked and unmarked – is to be negotiated.

Within ‘Bromethean’ cultural milieus<sup>46</sup>— audacious assertions pertaining to various fundamentals of anti-racist feminisms have been left unremarked. In an interview with Laboria Cuboniks on xenofeminist technologies (re-quoted affirmatively in Helen Hester’s book), Lucca Fraser is asked whether she thinks the master’s tools could dismantle the master’s house. Fraser answers emphatically ‘Yes. Both literally and figuratively yes.’<sup>47</sup> This essential tenet of Black lesbian feminist thought, which sought to portray the *impossibility* of an ‘outside’ to white supremacist capitalist heteropatriarchy, is thus whimsically overturned by the invention of xenofeminism. It is ironic to note that Lorde wrote this defiant critique specifically about white feminist academia’s disregard of difference, chastising those who believe themselves able to beat the master with his tools as those who, ultimately, are still supported by the ‘master’s house’.<sup>48</sup>—

Such are the stubborn obstacles to XF’s intersectional universalism from below. There is no proper account of difference in its push to reinvent universalism; there is no sufficient acknowledgement of the uneven stakes of humanness and subjecthood; and there is no convincing analysis of how global capitalist production enforces and reinforces existing dynamics of racialised, gendered, classed power. Lorde’s essay on the master’s house serves, then, as a reminder of the sheer amount of work which would need to be done to assert non-European, non-Cartesian universalisms ‘from below’.

However, this is not all to say a xenofeminism is not possible. There are a few glimmers illuminating where we might imagine such a project emerging. Aria Dean draws on a lineage which foregrounds race in accelerationism and the CCRU through Kodwo Eshun’s work on afrofuturism, defining coalescences between black radical culture and accelerationism as ‘blaccelerationism’.<sup>49</sup> Dean follows afropessimism’s lead in taking the black subject as the ontological outside of humanity, theorising the inhuman subject of accelerationism through the disruptive Black non-subject via Cedric Robinson’s theory of racial capitalism. Sarat Maharaj’s *Xeno-epistemics* provides a contrapuntal, race-critical, anti-Cartesian position, which plays with the ‘xeno’ prefix, interrogating its potentials as alterity, as foreignness, as difference, with Duchampian irony.<sup>50</sup> Hester’s single-authored book *Xenofeminism* argues for a xeno-solidarity of kinship, rooted in a ‘xeno-hospitality’ which strongly refutes the essentialist, cis-heteronormative and capitalist models of kinship which underpin the traditional nuclear family. One might wish to pursue Derrida’s writings on generosity to the xeno as the ‘outsider’, or on the rights of asylum-seekers, refugees and immigrants and the ethics of hospitality. The *XFM*’s lack of consideration of the historic whiteness of humanist and post-humanist discourses, and its silent continuation of a Landian heritage, make it clear that it has thus far failed to do this urgent work, even while it exuberantly reminds us that technology is certainly a central battleground for today’s feminisms. Effectively, for all of its laudable ambitions to be a ‘feminism of unprecedented cunning, scale, and vision’ (0x00), as long as race and class remain analytical add-ons – afterthoughts bolted on to the category of gender – and the constant racialised and classed sociopolitical relations of humanness and non-humanness are neglected as central to the construction of subjectivity (however negated), then xenofeminism will have serious obstacles to contend with.<sup>51</sup>— Its cyberpositive acceleration of alienation and tick-box intersectionality require robust elaboration to be recognised as the kind of difficult and sustained work that a proper renegotiation of the embattled terrain of feminist post-humanisms requires. In appropriating the alien, the contradictions of xenofeminism merely expose an inability to take seriously the real contemporary power dynamics of categorical humanness.

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1 Armen Avanessian and Helen Hester, eds., *Dea ex machina*, trans. Jennifer Sophia Theodor, Gesine Stempel, and Stephan Geene, Internationaler Merve-Diskurs 425 (Berlin: Merve Verlag, 2015). The essays in this volume are by Rosi Braidotti, Shulamith Firestone, Donna Haraway, Nina Power, Paul B. Preciado, Alexandra Pirici & Raluca Voinea and Lisa Nakamura.

2 For example, the XFM has been featured in *e-flux* (2016), at the Post-Cyber Feminist International at the ICA London (2017) and was presented at Tate Modern, London (2018). It was also re-published by Verso Books: Laboria Cuboniks, *The Xenofeminism Manifesto: A Politics for Alienation* (New York: Verso, 2018).

3 'After Accelerationism: The Xenofeminist Manifesto' 11 June, 2015, <http://tripleampersand.org/after-accelerationism-the-xenofeminist-manifesto/> .

4 Helen Hester, *Xenofeminism*, Cambridge, UK Medford, MA: Polity, 2018.

5 Ibid., 6.

6 Alex Williams and Nick Srnicek, '#ACCELERATE MANIFESTO for an Accelerationist Politics', *Critical Legal Thinking* (blog), May 14, 2013, <http://criticallegalthinking.com/2013/05/14/accele...>

7 See Alberto Toscano, 'A Plea for Prometheus', *Critical Horizons*, Vol.10, No.2, pp.241-256; Alberto Toscano, 'The Prejudice Against Prometheus', October, 2013, <https://cengizerdem.wordpress.com/2013/10/25/the-prejudice-against-prometheus-alberto-toscano/> and Bassam El Baroni, 'Prometheanism 2.0', <https://dutchartinstitute.eu/page/8367/bassam-el-baroni-prometheanism-2-0-introduction-part-2>. For a synthesis of xenofeminist ideas of rationalism and abstraction with Marxist-feminist theories of labour, see: Helen Hester, 'Promethean Labours and Domestic Realism', <https://www.e-flux.com/architecture/artificial-labor/140680/promethean-labors-and-domestic-realism/>

8 *Dea ex machina*, op. cit., 12. The blurb of Avanessian and Hester's *Dea ex machina* describes the project as reclaiming the technofeminist genealogies of Williams and Srnicek's #ACC Manifesto and defends it against accusations of 'macho techno-nihilism'. Robin James preferred to call it 'pink accelerationism': <https://twitter.com/doctaj/status/979323718622240768>.

9 Critics have argued that the binary which #ACC sets up with localism and its others is flatly ungenerous to long and complex histories of left political activism. A number of criticisms have emerged illuminating the problematics of this easy dismissal of localism, with David Bell & Sophie Lewis and Joseph Kay in particular drawing out the racialised and neo-colonial implications within Accelerationism's project of full automation and hi-tech global commodity production chains. <https://thedisorderofthings.com/2015/11/05/why-we-cant-let-the-machines-do-it-a-response-to-inventing-the-future/> and <https://thedisorderofthings.com/2015/11/04/postcapitalist-ecology-a-comment-on-inventing-the-future/>

10 Prometheanism is positioned as a viable route out of issues plaguing contemporary feminism, implied to be 'folk political' with reference to 'postmodern identity politics' and 'contemporary ecofeminism', as 'struggl[ing] to adequately address these challenges in a manner capable of producing substantial and enduring change' (0x06). The 'melancholy' 'endemic to the left' is accused of 'factionalism and petty moralizing' (0x09). Yet such an unreconstructed denigration of 'melancholy' clashes with challenges posed by disability studies scholars over how physical and mental differences are often stigmatised and coded as inferior in cultural discourses. As an illustration of the prevalence of discourses of disability in cultural studies broadly conceived, see: Rosemarie Garland-Thomson, 'Feminist Disability Studies', *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* Vol.30, No.2 (Winter 2005) pp.1557-1587.

11 'Accelerate: Manifesto for an Accelerationist Politics', op. cit.

12 The choice of 'Laboria Cuboniks' as a name, an anagram of Nicolas Bourbaki – the pseudonym of a group of early twentieth century French mathematicians – encapsulates the championing of rationalism, abstraction and a

renewed universalism as solutions for the 'problems' of localism.

**13** Even if one might argue that the naturalistic feminisms which Firestone's work was positioned against have moved on significantly since the 1970s.

**14** Judy Wajcman has distinguished between 'technofeminism' as a more general framework for feminist debates on new technologies, and 'cyberfeminism' as a specific strand within it. Whereas Wajcman's charge of cyberfeminism's supposed utopian tendencies relies upon the commonly used co-ordinates of VNS Matrix and Sadie Plant (and perhaps Old Boys Network), it overlooks overtly critical cyberfeminist attitudes towards technology evident at the time, in work such as that by the SubRosa collective. Susanna Paasonen's account provides a useful mapping of cyberfeminism, including by highlighting some of its less well-remembered facets. Judy Wajcman, *TechnoFeminism*. Cambridge; Malden, MA: Polity, 2004 and Susanna Paasonen, 'Revisiting Cyberfeminism', *Communications* Vol.36 No3, 2011.

**15** Recent discussions in the art and theory worlds have poignantly demonstrated how necessary an avowedly trans-inclusive feminism is in the age of resurgent transphobia.

**16** Here, Angela Davis' critique of Firestone's obtuse racial politics might be useful in illuminating some of the problems of subordinating analyses of race and class to gender: 'Racism in general, so Firestone claims, is actually an extension of sexism [...] she develops a construct defining the white man as father, the white woman as wife and mother, and Black people as the children. Transposing Freud's theory of the Oedipus Complex into racial terms, Firestone implies that Black men harbor an uncontrollable desire for sexual relations with white women. They want to kill the father and sleep with the mother [...]. Whether innocently or consciously [Firestone and others] have facilitated the resurrection of the timeworn myth of the Black rapist.' Angela Y. Davis, *Women, Race, & Class*, New York: Random House, 1981, p.181-182.

**17** This connection to Alain Badiou is inferred since the aforementioned French mathematics research collective Nicolas Bourbaki was a guiding influence on Badiou's mathematics, particularly in his *magnum opus*, *Being and Event*, (Trans. Oliver Feltham), London: Continuum, 2005.

**18** This is one of the final lines of the collectively authored CCRU essay 'Swarmachines', 1996.

**19** Robin Mackay and Armen Avanessian (eds.), *#Accelerate: The Accelerationalist Reader*, Falmouth: Urbanomic, 2014.

**20** David Cunningham, 'A Marxist Heresy?', *Radical Philosophy*, No.191, May, 2015, <https://www.radicalphilosophy.com/article/a-marxis...>

**21** 'XF seizes alienation as an impetus to generate new worlds. We are all alienated – but have we ever been otherwise? It is through, and not despite, our alienated condition that we can free ourselves from the muck of immediacy. Freedom is not a given – and it's certainly not given by anything 'natural'. The construction of freedom involves not less but more alienation; alienation is the labour of freedom's construction.' (0x01); 'The radical opportunities afforded by developing (and alienating) forms of technological mediation should no longer be put to use in the exclusive interests of capital, which, by design, only benefits the few.' (0x08) 'XF is an affirmative creature on the offensive, fiercely insisting on the possibility of large-scale social change for all of our alien kin.' (0x0A). 'Xenofeminism indexes the desire to construct an alien future.' (0x1A)

**22** The CCRU, or Cybernetic Cultural Research Unit, was a self-styled 'renegade' academic group based at Warwick University in the 1990s led by Nick Land and Sadie Plant. It was known for its 'theory-fiction', inspired by the philosophy and writings of Deleuze and Guattari, Lyotard, Virilio and Bataille, as well as the histories of cybernetics and computing, the science fiction of William Gibson, rave culture, digital networked technologies and the occult. See Simon Reynolds' classic account, <http://reynoldsretro.blogspot.com/2014/04/renegade-academia-ccru.html>, which notes Judith Williamson's criticisms of the CCRU as harbouring 'inevitabilism' negating the role of human agency in capitalism.

**23** For example, in feminist film studies, Barbara Creed's re-reading of the Kristevan maternal abject in Ridley Scott's *Alien* subverts patriarchal understandings of the 'abject' site of the female body; in feminist posthumanism, Sarah Kember has assessed the dyad alien/human for its potential as a relational mode. Barbara Creed, *The Monstrous-Feminine: Film, Feminism, Psychoanalysis*, London: Routledge, 1993; S. Kember, 'No Humans Allowed? The Alien in/as Feminist Theory', *Feminist Theory*, Vol.12, No.2, 2011, pp.183–99.

**24** Interview with Aimé Césaire conducted by René Depestre in Aimé Césaire, *Discourse on Colonialism*, New York: Monthly Review Press, 2000, p.89.

**25** Black studies scholars have theorised how deeply anchored racialisation is in the modern idea of the human; scholars such as Cedric Robinson, Saidiya Hartman and Fred Moten have variously theorised the dehumanisation, unfreedom, animal or 'object' status of black subjects as the property of slave-owners. Alexander G. Weheliye's

*Habeas Viscus* eloquently describes Black feminist theorisations of the human vis-à-vis the legal body. Of those who mention alienation explicitly, in addition to Césaire's aforementioned comment, Frantz Fanon wrote on psychological alienation and lived experiences of racism as a Martinican colonial subject in France, and Gloria Anzaldúa's *Borderlands* speaks of experiences of racialised alienation growing up in between two cultures on the Mexico-US border and the formation of a new *mestiza* consciousness.

**26** It is interesting to note that when Marie Thompson put forward a cogent argument on the whiteness of the 'ontological turn' pertaining to sound studies, citing a similar tendency in which the implied posthuman or inhuman subject occludes an awareness of differing racialisations of a (disavowed) human subjectivity, the philosopher whose work exemplified this penned a hostile response, not only re-iterating the very position which was criticised and making uncouth accusations of 'creationist' and 'Orientalist' tendencies of thought, but also referred to Thompson's *lack of reference to Laboria Cuboniks'* Xenofeminism, itself implied as the favourable feminist version of the ontological turn and speculative realism. Marie Thompson. 'Whiteness and the Ontological Turn in Sound Studies.' *Parallax* Vol.23, No.3, 2017, pp.266–82; Christoph Cox, 'Sonic Realism and Auditory Culture: A Reply to Marie Thompson and Annie Goh.' *Parallax* Vol.24, No.2, 2018, pp.234–42.

**27** Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, 'Can the Subaltern Speak?', in Cary Nelson and Lawrence Grossberg (eds.), *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture*, Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1988, 271–313.

**28** For example, Jennifer C. Nash appraises the possibilities and pitfalls of intersectionality's 'inclusive' theorising and Jasbir Puar contrasts the representationalism inherent in intersectionality, which often works to stabilise identity categories with the affective assemblage model which enables a messier understanding of co-constituted constellations of power. Jennifer C. Nash, 'Re-Thinking Intersectionality.' *Feminist Review*, Vol.89 No.1, pp.1–15. Jasbir K. Puar, *Terrorist Assemblages: Homonationalism in Queer Times*, Durham: Duke University Press, 2007; Bilge, Silma. 'Whitening Intersectionality: Evanescence of Race in Intersectionality Scholarship', in W. Hund & A. Lentin (eds), *Racism and Sociology*, Zürich: Lit, 2014, pp.175-205, available [https://www.academia.edu/11805835/Whitening\\_Intersectionality\\_Evanescence\\_of\\_Race\\_in\\_Intersectionality\\_Scholarship](https://www.academia.edu/11805835/Whitening_Intersectionality_Evanescence_of_Race_in_Intersectionality_Scholarship)

**29** Donna Haraway, 'A Cyborg Manifesto', in *Simians, Cyborgs, and Women: the Reinvention of Nature*. New York: Routledge, Haraway, 1991, p.157.

**30** Noys has reductively been dismissed as a 'kitsch Marxist' for arguing for the necessity of a perspective which encompasses class struggle. Benjamin Noys, *Malign Velocities: Accelerationism & Capitalism*, Winchester, UK & Washington, US: Zero Books, 2014. ; Benjamin Noys, 'Abandoning Accelerationism? Two Exits' 2014, available, [https://www.academia.edu/7167970/Abandoning\\_Accelerationism\\_Two\\_Exits](https://www.academia.edu/7167970/Abandoning_Accelerationism_Two_Exits)

**31** A Landian accelerationist politics of race, as found in the essay 'Hyperracism', which appeared on Richard Spencer's *Alternative Right* blog, casually derides 'ordinary racism' for not being future-oriented enough – a feat Land resolves by hypothesising that the acceleration of (neo-)eugenics technologies could form a transhuman super-race of the highest IQs. This is simply the logic of contemporary capitalism mystified through dubious scientism, as Shuja Haider has argued: "[t]he ugly underbelly of the conventional view of market society as a meritocracy is precisely Land's hyperracism: the assumption that some people are more fit than others, and their socioeconomic status is deserved. The contingent effects of specific historical tendencies and social institutions are exalted with the supposedly providential necessity of DNA.' Shuja Haider, 'The Darkness at the End of the Tunnel: Artificial Intelligence and Neoreaction', 28 March, 2017, <https://www.viewpointmag.com/2017/03/28/the-darkness-at-the-end-of-the-tunnel-artificial-intelligence-and-neoreaction>

**32** McKenzie Wark's 'On Nick Land' consciously counters the tendency to read a teleology of Land's more recent NRx writings into those of the 1980s and 1990s and does some valuable sign-posting of various forks and tendencies in his output. The essay outlines Land's work's philosophical and poetic innovations and seductions, explicating its cultish following and romanticist tendencies. Whilst Wark alludes to the ethical risks in repeating the old habits of Western romanticism – in the form of colonial imaginaries – the focus on intellectual history evades the urgency and seriousness of some of Land's recent political moves, including his long-standing attacks on 'leftist academics'. See <https://www.versobooks.com/blogs/3284-on-nick-land>, 17 June, 2017.

**33** Larne Abse Gogarty, 'The Art Right', *Art Monthly*, April 2017, No. 405; Ana Teixeira Pinto, 'Artwashing – on NRx and the Alt Right', *Texte Zur Kunst*, 4 July, 2017, <https://www.textezurkunst.de/articles/artwashing-web/>. Sophie Lewis, 'Cyborg Sentiments', *Red Pepper*, Mar. 2019, <https://www.redpepper.org.uk/cyborg-sentiments/>. For more on the campaign to shut down the LD50 art gallery, which staged events and exhibitions endorsing far-right political views, in East London in early 2017, see: <https://shutdownld50.tumblr.com/post/157441553836/racists-and-fascists-out-of-dalston-shut-down>, <https://shutdownld50.tumblr.com/post/157713539211/ld50s-fascist-conference-in-hackney-secrecy-and> and <https://shutdownld50.tumblr.com/post/158928600961/no-platform-for-land-on-nick-lands-racist>

**34** One might also look to the short 'theory-fiction' story 'Amphibious Maidens' by Suzanne Livingstone, Luciana Parisi and Anna Greenspan in *Abstract Culture*, Swarm 3, available at:  
[http://web.archive.org/web/20130621010011/http://www.ccru.net/swarm3/3\\_amph.htm](http://web.archive.org/web/20130621010011/http://www.ccru.net/swarm3/3_amph.htm)

**35** See for example, Caroline Bassett's 1997 critique, 'With a Little Help from Our (New) Friends?', 10 September, 1997, <http://www.metamute.org/editorial/articles/cyberfeminism-spcl-little-help-our-new-friends>

**36** Nick Land and Sadie Plant. 'Cyberpositive.' in *#Accelerate: The Accelerationalist Reader*, op. cit., p.306; p.312.

**37** Many of Land's former PhD students from the CCRU who went on to teach at UEL, Goldsmiths University and elsewhere continue to cite, publish and re-publish his work yet remain mysteriously silent on Land's neo-reactionary turn.

**38** As much as defenders of Land insist his close interactions with the far-right are ironic, the use of alt-right vocabulary to denigrate left-political positions, such as 'the Cathedral' or 'the red guard', can be considered sincere. For more on the dangerous slippage between such denouncements of 'Left progressivism' and far-right rhetoric around a 'white genocide' see Harrison Fluss & Landon Frim, 'Behemoth and Leviathan: The Fascist Bestiary of the Alt-Right', 21 Dec, 2017, <http://salvage.zone/in-print/behemoth-and-leviathan-the-fascist-bestiary-of-the-alt-right/>

**39** Sylvia Wynter, 2000. 'The Re-Enchantment of Humanism: An Interview with Sylvia Wynter', *Small Axe* 8 (September), pp.119–207.

**40** Alexander Galloway and Benjamin Noys, 'Crash and Burn: Debating Accelerationism', <https://www.3ammagazine.com/3am/crash-and-burn-deb...>

**41** Michelle Murphy, 'The Girl: Mergers of Feminism and Finance in Neoliberal Times', <http://sfoonline.barnard.edu/gender-justice-and-neoliberal-transformations/the-girl-mergers-of-feminism-and-finance-in-neoliberal-times/>

**42** Cf. Nick Land, 'Critique of Transcendental Miserablism', 15 January, 2007, <http://hyperstition.abstractdynamics.org/archives/...>

**43** E.g. 'Meltdown has a place for you as a schizophrenic HIV+ transsexual chinese-latino stim-addicted LA hooker with implanted mirrorshades and a bad attitude. Blitzed on a polydrug mix of 6-nova, synthetic serotonin, and female orgasm analogs, you have just iced three Turing cops with a highly cinematic 9mm automatic.' Nick Land, 'Meltdown', *Abstract Culture – Swarm 1*, available [http://web.archive.org/web/20130621011245/http://www.ccru.net/swarm1/1\\_melt.htm](http://web.archive.org/web/20130621011245/http://www.ccru.net/swarm1/1_melt.htm) (1997).

**44** At best you might get the techno-centric programme for social democracy of *Inventing the Future*, which no longer contain the accelerationist injunction apart from by name, or Hester's version of Xenofeminism, which supports grassroots movements' use of feminist technologies but also takes little else from Land apart from its name. At worst you might get Land's nihilistic 'dark, darker still' ramblings in which the infantile and empty transgression of edgelordism does little but re-affirm conservative and right-wing positions.

**45** Lest it be misread, from an 'identitarian' perspective, that I might be suggesting that the protagonists of this milieu (e.g. CCRU, Land-adherents, left and right accelerationists, xenofeminists, their affiliates) are all white, middle-class, cis-gendered, heterosexual, able-bodied etc., this is *not* the argument (nor is it true). However, I am questioning convenient straw-manning and vitriolic denunciations of identity politics. The 2017 '#AltWoke Manifesto', which aimed to 'critique[...] liberal "privilege"-based identity politics and re-situate [...] Left 'critical theory'-based identity politics into a technological framework', whilst carefully elaborating their own (anonymous) queer, sex-worker, immigrant, PoC author identities, are vocal advocates of accelerationism, Xenofeminism, and Landian agendas. Insofar as #AltWoke appears to be a more-or-less seamless addendum to #ACCM and #XFM, it similarly rehearses faith in transgression (because morality is 'inertia') and technology (because it is 'good'), both of which require further elaboration to be convincing beyond hyperbole. See: <http://tripleampersand.org/alt-woke-manifesto/>

**46** Cf. Alexander Galloway's blogpost on 'Brometheanism', <http://cultureandcommunication.org/galloway/brometheanism>

**47** Interview with Lucca Fraser in the Winter 2017 issue of *Canadian Art*. Available: <https://canadianart.ca/interviews/xenofeminism/>

**48** 'It is a particular academic arrogance to assume any discussion of feminist theory without examining our many differences, and without a significant input from poor women, Black and Third World women, and lesbians [...]. Those of us who stand outside the circle of this society's definition of acceptable women [...] know that survival is not an academic skill. It is learning how to take our differences and make them strengths. For the master's tools will

*never* dismantle the master's house. They may allow us temporarily to beat him at his own game, but they will never enable us to bring about genuine change. And this fact is only threatening to those women who still define the master's house as their only source of support.' Audre Lorde, 'The Master's Tools Will Never Dismantle the Master's House', in *Sister Outsider: Essays and Speeches*, Trumansburg, NY: Crossing Press, (1979) 1984.

49 Aria Dean, 'Notes on Blaceleration', e-flux Journal, No.87, December 2017, <https://www.e-flux.com/journal/87/169402/notes-on-blaceleration/>

50 Sarat Maharaj, 'Xeno-epistemics: Makeshift Kit for Visual Art as Knowledge Production and the Retinal Regimes', *Documenta 11* catalogue, Ostfildern-Ruit: Hatje Cantz, 2002.

51 Here, one might note that Arman Avanessian's edited volume *Ethnofuturisms* (launching under #XenoFuturisms) attempts to take heed of criticisms of 'Bromethanism' and 'acceleracism' and correspondingly features contributions by Aria Dean on Blacelerationism, Fatima Al Qadiri, Monira Al Qadiri and Sophia Al-Maria, on Gulf Futurisms, Kodwo Eshun on Afrofuturism, and Steve Goodman and Anna Greenspan on Sinofuturisms. Supposedly endeavouring to reconcile rising xenophobia with the appropriation of 'xeno' and sustained reverence for Landian ideas in this milieu, this careful curation of like-for-like ethnofuturisms per ethnicity of author (almost) appears to be a largely strategic attempt to retrofit accelerationist ideas as the vanguard for anti-racist praxis.

<https://www.merve.de/index.php/book/show/513>

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**john Mars**

4 years ago edited

Correction, for the author. Nick Land not once in his works back in the 1990's or even now, never ever stated that Accelerationism would be a way or even "program" to accelerate the end of Capitalism. Land not once stated a programmatic goal as to what an Accelerationist political or even economic theory is, not even in the Accelerationist manifesto did he do so. Now to clear this up, there is some continuing confusion not only on what Accelerationism is but also where it comes from. Land never uses accelerationist rhetoric like Nick Srnicek and Alex Williams do or xenofeminism, there is no political program embedded because the political analysis has already been anticipated by Deleuze's and Guattari's Anti-Oedipus. Land's anti-humanism and the idea of capital's deterritorializing power come from D&G's ultimate analysis that the human subject is a composite that can enter into fusions and couplings like a machine does. There is no stable subject a priori, white European male or otherwise. I feel this should be pointed out because the author implies that the anti-humanist legacy comes mainly from Land when it has a far older genealogy (even before D&G). Secondly, while I feel that the author is right that the complexities of human subjectivity are glossed over by much of Accelerationist works, she should realize that such an analysis is not within the field or philosophical horizons of the Landian "dark side of philosophy" genealogy. This is very important because post-humanist prometheanism is notably absent in Land, while it is present in xenofeminism and in the Accelerationist manifesto. But to be more precise, things like racial injustice or the "xeno"(alien) fetish in xenofeminism cannot have a left or right denomination in the traditional sense, but can only be described as evolving configurations (NOT subjective subaltern alterities within an overarching domineering narrative as Spivak claims). The Deleuzian lines of flight approach and the subjectivist post-colonialist approach will never be bridged and I feel it is pointless to compare them since there is such a profound elemental difference philosophically.

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