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Furious
Technological Feminism and Digital Futures

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Preface

Furious: Technological Feminism and Digital Futures is an angry feminist intervention disputing the masculinization of computational culture and cultural theory. It draws on feminist genealogies, traditions of writing and approaches to science and technology in order to provide an alternative to heavily material and object oriented turns and to the masculinism, scientism and anti-feminism that dominate both cultural and knowledge production.

The book highlights the need to contest the regressively gendered and very often sexist politics of digital media forms, practices and study. It stresses the need to counter ideologies of scientism and anti-feminism and to reconnect feminist practices of thinking and writing with the contemporary problematic in order to re-conceptualize digital media and broader technological futures, pervasive mediation and increasing automation.

Technological transformations are accelerating in the world. There is a tendency in digital technology and innovation to celebrate the new, to rely on the technical fix and to promise futures in which good consumers are empowered. Discourses of big data dominate in political, economic and educational fields as well as in practices of media consumption. At the same time, the fields of digital media and digital humanities scholarship have a tendency to venerate technical forms and essences and to adopt gendered writing and citation practices. This is marked by, for example, the way that critical theory is considered separate from feminist thought, and the way that the material turn, object orientation and scientism is valorized. In this context, it is important to intervene, to offer a critique, and to contest those writing practices and

politics. This book does so by foregrounding feminist traditions and contributions to media and cultural theory. Its aim is to offer alternative modes of knowledge production and to outline intersectional feminist values and visions of digital media and technological futures. *Furious: Technological Feminism and Digital Futures* frames the digital as a space of antagonism within which it is possible to rethink critical and political positions, including feminism. It does so in order to reformulate a sense of where we are, as differentiated subjects in technoculture, and to re-think what needs to be done.

The book operationalizes its critique through structure and writing styles as well as scholarship. A preface provides a guide into the mode of address adopted in the introductory chapter, which is followed by three inquiries and a conclusion. This first chapter intervenes in the field through a mode of feminist poetics drawn from a history of collaborations and forms of address within feminist writing. The three inquiry chapters which follow, do their work through an attention in turn to: 1) bodies and selves; 2) work and home; and 3) environment and world. The final chapter develops a set of propositions about futures, knowledge and technology. The text draws attention to questions of authorship and citation and stresses the validity of the modes of writing explored in the inquiry chapters.

Co-written by three leading scholars in the field of feminist media and science and technology studies, this book generates a playful, serious, writerly and furious tradition

of feminist writing and critique, in order to challenge the erasure of feminism and the (attendant) gendering of technological environments in the present, and in order contest the technocratic utopias that are too often aligned with media theory and masculine metaphysics.

The book's introduction is interventional in form and content. It is a form of poetic writing that recalls a specific tradition of feminist writing and that signals, thereby, an incursion into the current problematic, understood as the digital, or post-digital. Here, the authors outline a concern with the naturalization of the digital: of big data, smart things and computable everything. They identify a collusion in this respect, between industry and academia, and argue that too often media theorizing and technological fantasizing come together in the pursuit of beautiful abstractions – of unmediated things in themselves. Asking the rhetorical question of who needs language in a subjectless, extinct, object-oriented world, this chapter maintains that absenting ourselves, as humans (albeit as humans in differential relations with technology) from our own futures, engaging in fantasies in which an automated world inscribes itself, is a dangerous sleight of hand, a trick that feminist writing, that feminists writing together, might yet undo.

Scale, Subject and Stories: Unreal Objects examines the genome as a beautiful abstraction and a mode of technological fantasizing that scales up from one to many, the individual genome to the population and the species, promising future lives of preservation and post-human perfection. By re-scaling to the story of one particular subject, 'my mother', this chapter demonstrates how the fantasy of the genome as a thing in itself, an unreal object inscribing the future of life, is precisely a dangerous

sleight of hand, a fatal trick played on one life, a fable that this instance of feminists writing can reveal and re-story, but in this case, not undo.

Bland Ambition? Automation's Missing Visions revisits concepts of freedom and control, technological reduction and augmentation at a time when the automation of home and domestic work is once again accelerating, reproducing a nostalgically gendered narrative and iconography that demands feminist inquiry and intervention. It begins with a critique of automation fever – speculations about the end of work, for example – as both narrow in focus and lacking ambition, failing to see beyond gendered divisions of home and work, leisure and labour, production and reproduction. If automation fever (incorporating many current theories of accelerationism) offers familiar, linear, smooth and predictable passageways to the future, in which gender and social division no longer seem to matter, what alternate or missing visions might feminism offer? What more ambitious future might we imagine and what role does automation play in it?

Driving At The Anthropocene, or, Let's Get Out of Here: How? calls for an end to the circular, endgame scenarios of the Anthropocene, in which the survival of technological man ('there never was a technological woman') – of Man and his tools – is predicated on his extinction. It uses driving as a narratological device for thinking (driving at) and moving through the world differently, in between divisions of salvation and damnation, ends and beginnings; the rocks and hard places that trap some subjects more than others, precluding their mutual becoming in, and with the environment. Such entrapment, understood here as the futility and false universality of the "we're [all] fucked" version of the Anthropocene, recalls the Jewish, French Algerian, Feminist

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theorist Hélène Cixous' 1970s injunction: 'let's get out of here!' The pertinent question, one that the chapter goes on to explore, is how? In doing so, it identifies the need to transit from one protagonist's point of view to those it excludes.

The final chapter is part summary and part projection. Following the previous chapter, which seeks to de-colonize the debate on future environments by driving out of the anthropos scene, it outlines a concept of radical intersectionality as a modus operandi, a way of living better together with, through, and as technology (at all scales).

It also offers a performance review with a difference: a review of the book's performances. What were we trying, not only to say, but to *do*, in our writing? How far did we get? How to go on? Perhaps from manifesto to manual - in an attempt to avoid reproducing the same old politics, divisions of thought and compensatory habits of mind, this chapter sets out a series of propositions for radically intersectional feminist technofutures, propositions that might contribute to a manual, or indicate how to move towards a future that is rescaled, re-storied, more ambitious and more just.