



## INTRODUCTION

### *Feminist Futurities in Practice: Mapping Bodies, Spaces, and Possibilities*

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In a moment where precarity surrounds us and the chaotic forces of political power go unchecked (and feel never ending) it is important to pause and recognize nothing is inevitable and futures can be imagined into being through intentional and tactical practices, often in community via coalitional solidarities. This is the spirit with which we bring you this special issue of *(Un)Disturbed: A Journal of Feminist Voices*. This second issue of the journal is itself part of a future we have imagined into being where we offer a platform for queer, feminist, anti-racist scholarship, activism, and creative work to be brought together for the purposes of refusing what is and articulating what can be. This includes considering the possibilities of our feminist futures as necessary responses to the history that shapes and sometimes constrains us. Such histories inform the structures we live and move within and map our bodies in particular, often regulatory ways. The current full-scale attempts by conservative lobbyists and lawmakers to limit the rights of women, racialized, migrant, and gender-non-conforming bodies globally makes this all to clear.

We are thus moved in pulling together this issue by Angela Davis's (2016) profound observation that "our histories never unfold in isolation" and that "often we discover that those other stories are actually our own stories" (135). For us this resonates powerfully through the diverse collection of voices assembled in this special issue of *(Un)Disturbed*. As we grapple with the urgent

need to imagine and actualize feminist futurities—those speculative frameworks that envision radical, inclusive futures beyond patriarchal and white supremacist structures—these contributions demonstrate that such futures are not abstract utopias but are actively being negotiated, embodied, and lived through our present-day struggles, resistances, and acts of care. And they have always been part of our landscape, and will continue to be, as long as social justice efforts are required.

This special issue emerges at a critical juncture when the entanglements between past, present, and future demand our careful attention. The contributors to this volume illuminate how feminist futurities are not merely aspirational visions but are actively constructed through the intimate work of living in feminist and queer bodies—bodies that refuse containment, that bleed across boundaries, that resist categorization, and that create new possibilities through their very existence. From the academic corridors where Middle Eastern intersectionality is mapped and theorized, to the stages where spoken word poetry transforms public spaces into sites of queer resistance, to the digital installations where trans\* 'toxicity' becomes a form of radical critique; these pieces collectively demonstrate that feminist futures are being born in the present moment through acts of embodied resistance, creative expression, and scholarly intervention. If indeed, as Davis asserts "our histories never unfold in isolation," then we invite you as readers to learn through these contributions about perspectives, experiences, and histories that edge up against those that you bring to the conversation. In these interstices between our bodies, worlds, experiences, the hopeful future of mutual care and shared efforts can truly unfold.

### ***Intersectionality and Matrix of Domination***

Central to this collection is an understanding that bodies, particularly marginalized bodies, serve as both the sites where oppressive structures are inscribed and the locations from which transformative futures emerge. Farinaz Basmechi's comprehensive meta-analysis and data collection reveals how scholarly attention to women's issues in the Middle East has been shaped by intersecting

systems of patriarchy, religion, and state control. At the same time, Basmechi's work also points toward the necessity of developing more responsive theoretical frameworks that can account for what she calls the "Middle Eastern Matrix of Domination." Similarly, Hannah Maitland's exploration of mother-daughter relationships demonstrates how familial bonds can stretch to contain "differently gendered and familial futurities," particularly as families navigate questions of trans-inclusivity and gender expansiveness. These explorations of embodied experience extend into more experimental territories through the work of artists and poets who use their bodies as both medium and message. Viridian Sylvae's "Pharmakon, my Becoming-Toxic" offers a particularly striking example of how trans\* embodiment can be reconceptualized not as pathology but as a form of radical critique—a "poisonous cure" that exposes the toxic foundations of cisgender society. Through projection-mapping installations that refuse to separate the digital from the corporeal, Sylvae demonstrates how new media technologies can serve feminist goals while avoiding the techno-optimism that often characterizes cyborg feminism. The intimate poetry of Jenna Dobbelsteyn traces a different path toward self-acceptance and queer futurity, mapping the journey from isolation and self-denial toward community and belonging. Her "Queer Snapshots" reveal how feminist futures are often accessed through small, daily acts of recognition and acceptance—the choice to love rather than hide, to build relationships that honor rather than diminish queer identity. Meanwhile, Evangeline Holtz-Schramek's "*digital receptacle*" provides a stark counterpoint, documenting the persistent violence of everyday misogyny while questioning where "textual references to feminism have led us."

### ***Reclaiming the Grotesque and the Toxic***

A particularly compelling thread running through this collection concerns the reclamation of what Jacqueline Cardoso and Amaya Kodituwakku, drawing on the work of Bakhtin, analyze as "the grotesque"—those aspects of embodied experience that dominant culture renders abject, dangerous, or polluting. Their dialogic exploration of "Tripartite Nightmares and Feminist Dreams"

demonstrates how feminist reclamation work might involve not just challenging negative representations but actively embracing what has been labeled toxic or monstrous. This work resonates powerfully with Ayra Alex Thomas's analysis of menstrual taboos through Mary Douglas's framework of pollution and purity, where menstrual blood becomes a site for understanding how "dirt" can serve as both a threat to social order and a source of creative possibility. The question of toxicity takes on particular urgency in light of Mackenzie Edwards and Mollie Cronin's examination of fat feminist "anti-resolutions"—the deliberate choice to "stay fat" in the face of cultural imperatives toward bodily optimization. Their analysis of digital fat activism reveals how platforms like Instagram can serve as sites for disrupting "straight time" and its linear narratives of progress, instead embracing what they term "fat temporality" where alternative futurities become possible. This work joins a broader conversation about how bodies that refuse normative expectations can serve as vehicles for imagining different ways of being in the world.

### ***Spaces of Possibility***

The contributors to this issue consistently demonstrate that feminist futurities are not simply imagined but are actively practiced in specific spaces and contexts. Jessica Van de Kemp's exploration of spoken word poetry reveals how "liminal spaces"—cafés, bookstores, community centers—can be transformed into stages for queer visibility and resistance, particularly in rural contexts where such visibility carries heightened risks. Her analysis of both live performance and digital platforms like Button Poetry demonstrates how feminist futures are constructed through acts of voice and presence that refuse the privatization of queer experience. This attention to spatial politics extends across several contributions. Maitland's work shows how domestic spaces—specifically the mother-daughter relationship—can become laboratories for testing new forms of gender-expansive kinship. Edwards and Cronin's analysis reveals how social media platforms can be leveraged to create "queer communities" that challenge dominant narratives about bodies and temporality. Even Basmechi's academic analysis points toward the need for theoretical frame

works that can account for the specific spatial and cultural contexts of Middle Eastern feminisms rather than imposing Western models.

Perhaps most significantly, this collection demonstrates the generative potential of methodological experimentation as key spaces of possibility in feminist works. Several contributors employ innovative approaches that blur the boundaries between academic analysis and creative practice, between lived experience and what is counted as scholarly knowledge. Cardoso and Kodituwakku's dialogic structure mirrors the collaborative ethos they advocate, while their accompanying zine demonstrates how academic insights can be translated into accessible, material forms of knowledge sharing. Sylvae's autotheoretical approach combines personal narrative, critical theory, and artistic practice in ways that challenge conventional academic boundaries while maintaining intellectual rigor. The poetry and creative writing included in this issue—from Dobbelsteyn's intimate verse to Holtz-Schramek's experimental prose—serve not merely as illustrations of the theoretical concepts under discussion but as forms of feminist scholarship in their own right. These creative contributions demonstrate how lived experience can generate theoretical insights that more traditional academic approaches might miss, while also modeling forms of knowledge production that are more accessible and emotionally resonant.

### ***Temporal Complexities***

A crucial insight emerging from this collection concerns the complex temporalities of feminist futurity. Rather than simple linear progression from oppression to liberation, these contributors reveal how feminist futures are characterized by what we might call "queer temporalities"—non-linear, recursive, and multiply-determined. Maitland's analysis of "cruel optimism" in family relationships shows how the desire for feminist futures can itself become a source of frustration when those futures seem perpetually deferred. Edwards and Cronin's concept of "fat temporality" challenges progress narratives that assume all change must be toward optimization, instead embracing forms of temporal resistance. This temporal complexity is perhaps most poignantly captured in the poetry

and personal narratives included in this issue. Dobbelsteyn's progression from self-denial to self-acceptance is not presented as a simple triumph but as an ongoing negotiation with past pain and future possibility. Van de Kemp's analysis of spoken word performance reveals how individual acts of voice can create moments of collective recognition that temporarily interrupt oppressive temporalities while pointing toward different possibilities.

### ***Intersectional Futures and Patriarchal Constraints***

Throughout this collection, contributors demonstrate their commitment to intersectional analyses that refuse to separate different forms of oppression and resistance. Basmechi's work explicitly calls for theoretical frameworks that can account for the intersection of patriarchy, religion, state violence, and colonial domination in Middle Eastern contexts. Thomas's analysis of menstrual taboos shows how systems of pollution and purity operate across multiple axes of difference, while pointing toward the need for more inclusive understandings of menstruation that don't assume cisgender female embodiment. The attention to intersectionality is particularly evident in the creative contributions. Cardoso and Kodituwakku's exploration of the grotesque explicitly connects questions of beauty standards, disability representation, queer villains, and religious oppression, demonstrating how different forms of marginalization can be understood through shared frameworks while maintaining attention to their specific manifestations. Edwards and Cronin's work on fat activism shows how size-based oppression intersects with other forms of marginalization while also revealing how digital platforms can be used to build coalitions across difference.

This collection also honestly confronts the limitations and challenges facing feminist futurity projects. Several contributors note how their own positionalities—often white, educated, relatively privileged—shape their access to platforms and audiences. Edwards and Cronin explicitly acknowledge how digital fat activism has been dominated by white voices despite the foundational work of fat Black women and women of colour.

Van de Kemp recognizes how her own experiences performing in rural spaces are shaped by her relative privilege and safety. These acknowledgments point toward larger questions about who gets to imagine feminist futures and whose voices are centered in these imaginative projects. The collection demonstrates both the generative potential of feminist futurity thinking and the ongoing need for more inclusive approaches that center the voices and experiences of those most marginalized by current systems.

## ***Looking Forward***

As we look toward the future directions suggested by this issue, several key themes emerge. First, there is a clear need for methodological experimentation that bridges academic analysis and creative practice, individual experience and collective struggle, local knowledge and global solidarity. The innovative approaches demonstrated here—from dialogic academic writing to autotheoretical analysis to creative-critical hybrid texts—suggest rich possibilities for feminist scholarship that can speak across different audiences and contexts. Second, this collection points toward the importance of spatial and temporal analyses that can account for the complex ways that feminist futures are both imagined and practiced. Whether through digital platforms, live performance spaces, family relationships, or academic institutions, feminist futures are not abstract concepts but are actively constructed through specific practices in particular contexts. These contributions demonstrate the ongoing relevance of embodied experience as both a site of oppression and a source of resistance. From the mother-daughter relationships negotiating trans-inclusive futures to the fat bodies rejecting optimization imperatives to the bleeding bodies that refuse gendered categorization, this collection shows how feminist futures are being lived through and with bodies that insist on their own complexity and resistance to containment.

The voices assembled in this special issue of (Un)Disturbed ultimately demonstrate that feminist futurities are not distant utopias but are actively being constructed through the

daily work of living in feminist and queer bodies. Their stories—individual and collective, academic and creative, hopeful and frustrated—remind us that the futures we seek are not separate from the presents we inhabit but are emerging through our current struggles, resistances, and acts of imagination. As we continue to learn from each other through our shared feminist stories, we discover not only that our stories are interconnected but that through their telling and retelling, we are actively creating the feminist futures we seek to inhabit.

