



Control: Digitality as Cultural Logic (Leonardo Book Series)

By Seb Franklin



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Control: Digitality as Cultural Logic (Leonardo Book Series) By Seb Franklin

Is there a cultural logic of what we have come to call the information age? Have the technologies and techniques centered on the computer provided not only tools but also the metaphors through which we now understand the social and economic formation of our world? In *Control*, Seb Franklin addresses the conditions of knowledge that make the concept of the "information economy" possible while at the same time obscuring its deleterious effects on material social spaces. In so doing, Franklin traces three intertwined threads: the relationships among information, labor, and social management that emerged in the nineteenth century; the mid-twentieth-century diffusion of computational metaphors; and the appearance of informatic principles in certain contemporary socioeconomic and cultural practices.

Drawing on critical theory, media theory, and the history of science, Franklin names *control* as the episteme grounding late capitalism. Beyond any specific device or set of technically mediated practices, digitality functions within this episteme as the logical basis for reshaped concepts of labor, subjectivity, and collectivity, as well as for the intensification of older modes of exclusion and dispossession. In tracking the pervasiveness of this logical mode into the present, Franklin locates the cultural traces of control across a diverse body of objects and practices, from cybernetics to economic theory and management styles, and from concepts of language and subjectivity to literary texts, films, and video games.



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Editorial Review

Review

The digital computer: machine or metaphor? Examining both the technical and cultural aspects of computation, Franklin offers a masterful critique of control society, including cybernetics, digitality, capture, and management. From the research labs that appeared after World War II to contemporary films and games, the digital computer appears here not simply as the result of specific technical inventions but as the product of an entirely new way of thinking.

(Alexander R. Galloway, author of *The Interface Effect*)

Through a Jameson-inflected analysis of connections between aesthetic form and technical-informatic conditions of possibility across multiple genres, *Control* advances Deleuze and Guattari's work on societies of control, and really the whole historical movement from the psychological to the cybernetic. Provocatively and with great urgency, it demonstrates that the principles of control developed by cybernetics and information theory were not only fundamental to the development of capitalism but remain paradigmatic.

(Jonathan Beller, Director of the Graduate Program in Media Studies, Pratt Institute; author of *The Cinematic Mode of Production*)

"Seb Franklin has set control loose -- onto literature, film, psychoanalysis, and Marx -- to expose its imbricated logics far below and before the digital became known as such. This generative work completely upends the stale teleological, periodizing, and geographical assumptions driving contemporary theorizations of societies of control, opening up fascinating research agendas. It will surely become a definitive text, far beyond the usual suspects, for anyone thinking about aesthetics, capitalism, and power.

(Jasbir K. Puar, author of *Terrorist Assemblages: Homonationalism in Queer Times*)

About the Author

Seb Franklin is a Lecturer in Contemporary Literature in the Department of English at King's College London.

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