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Young Girl Reading Group

An Email-Interview

Dorota Halina Gaw?da, Egle Kulbokaite, Lucie Kolb

Welcome to the post-literate. The Gutenberg Galaxy. Super Sad But True Love Story.



1. Why did you start a reading group? Do you prepare texts or read them in situ collectively (as it was done in premodern reading groups such as for example protestant Bible groups?) How would you describe the culture of discussion in the group?

Welcome to the post-literate. The Gutenberg Galaxy. Super Sad But True Love Story.

It's 451 Fahrenheit and the Young Girl lost her ability to discern, to separate things by means of the intellect. She locates the historical moment where criticism lost both its prestige and power, and aims to describe, in as detached a manner as possible, the cause of this catastrophe.

Vignette 1



The poignant lack of reference points, the feeling of being faced with both a virtually infinite field of possibilities and a fear of being unable to escape repeating, however unwittingly, something that has already been done — these are the consequences of this state of affairs; these are the demons with which every Young Girl must converse, starting with her first experiments within school walls, up until the end of their days.

We live like this with no hope for political change in our lives, nor a common language capable of naming this need or allowing us to define together what is particular to our present.

Vignette 2

> Gather and talk. Empathize and listen. Don't chase the spotlight, and accept that some problems are big, and difficult, and that what you're good at may not fix

them. These are not the ways of charismatic executives and flash-bang inventors. These are not instructions for entrepreneurial success. These won't produce bigger faster newer ways of doing things.

MEREDITH MEREDITH
[http://bb9.berlinbiennale.de/all-problems-can-be-illuminated-not-all-problems-can-be-solved/]

Young Girl Reading Group (YGRG) was initiated by Dorota Gaw?da and Egl? Kulbokait? in 2013 in Berlin. Since its conception the project follows a format of a nomadic event happening weekly on Sundays at 7pm, in various locations, actual and virtual alike. YGRG readings started with the semiotext(e)-published translation of Tiqqun's Preliminary Materials for a Theory of a Young-Girl. The uneasy relation we feel towards the Young-Girl character triggered our need to commit to YGRG as a space for conversation that developed in a defined moment in time dedicated to examining together the text in question. Thus, the image of the Young-Girl gives the name to our project and opens up to the problematic networks of ideas to be discussed. YGRG is a platform developed through fascination with reading and sharing text, primarily, interest in language and its multiple forms.

We read together pronouncing the words out loud, emphasising the relationship of body to text and the collective body. YGRG is a sonar-social architecture of shared curiosity and synchronicity. An audition for audacity. The reading becomes a rhizomatic network of voices, suggestions, references. Realising the connectedness to other sources, resources, leaks and leads, we are no longer sidelined or downplayed. Most other plants were rooted, but we grew up to be intelligent, obsessional, highly manipulative, deceitful, scheming and thoroughly determined young girls. Advocating for new forms of corruption. With just the right amount of cuteness glistening across the face. A boat under construction in freudulent waters.

YGRG names reason as an engine of feminist emancipation, and declares the right of everyone to speak as no one in particular. A girl has no name, yet the Young-Girl here is the one who's acting. To proceed in a hostile world, the girl calls it an experiment:

Admit that you don't know how to do it, but ask for space and peace and respect.

Then try your experiment, insistently.

2. In your reading group you mainly focus on – let's say – contemporary feminist theory. Why is this kind of writing important for you? Please give an example to illustrate your point.

Let us say SHE for all being, that is, for everything, every time in her essential plural — language speaking for all and of all, in her name, including those who may not have a name … the one through whom she comes to be and happen, which does not speak. Language says the world; that is, it loses itself in it and exposes how in herselves it is a question of losing herselves in order to be of SHE, that is, to be her meaning, which is all meaning.

SHE is ready.

Vignette 3



la Kâhina [http://www.persee.fr/doc/ahess_0395-2649_1999_num_54_3_279771]

The question has always been of deciding how to position sheselves within manmade theory, built on truth with its too often thinly veiled misogynistic (under)tones, prejudices, oversights and omissions. We are looking for discourses, or readings aiming towards a visibility of underrepresented positions where the Other gains an agency. We are drawn towards feminist writings both historical and contemporary. We are interested in the interrelationships between gender and technology, in particular, the intersections of technology, power, gender and desire.

YGRG offers a defined moment in time for its participants to approach an urge towards postgenderism as a direct continuation of the feminist thought. YGRG's selection of texts is a direct and passionate response to our immediate environment, and the phenomenon of gender transformation through technology is a primary interest of ours. Will technological progress determinately destroy institutions of thought on its own, or will political organization need to take over technology beforehand? Can we trust that the inner development of technology will unfold in the «correct» way? Or that technophiliac revolutionaries, for that matter, will seize control of the means of scientific production and immediately redirect its possibilities in a revolutionary way, in Firestone's mind, to clear the way for the liberation through technology of the link between human biology and human destiny?

YGRG has been following (in no particular order): Silvia Federici, Sadie Plant, Rosi Braidotti, Shulamith Firestone, Chakravorty Spivak, Donna Haraway, Ursula K. Le Guin, Octavia Butler, Luce Irigaray, Paul B. Preciado, Nina Power, Laboria Cuboniks, Richard Sennett, Luciana Parisi, Hito Steyerl, Metahaven, YGRG guests.

3. Many of the authors and articles you read are part of the critical canon. Students read these texts at art schools. How does your approach make a difference? Why should somebody attend your group?

Vignette 4

Behind every Young-Girl's arse hides a bunch of rich white men: the task is surely not, then, to destroy the Young-Girl, but to destroy the system that makes her, and makes her so unhappy, whoever she is.

Nina Power [https://www.radicalphilosophy.com/reviews/individual-reviews/rp177-shes-just-not-that-into-you]

i don't know what exactly you expect from ZHdK – to run a regular seminar? ZHdK is a huge (education/creative industry) machine and i doubt that the seminar would find its place in the highly formalized structure of this institution. i also doubt that you'll be fully pleased to have your seminar there. instead, i'd recommend to have your seminar in one of the few convincing off/art spaces in zürich. i am thinking in the first place of les complices, a self-organized queer-feminist space.

Our personal experiences of higher education in the Royal College of Art in London have proven to be lacking in feminist theory both within teaching and student to student as well as student to tutor interactions. Contrary to what one might wish for, art schools are very slow to embrace feminist theory, which is pervasively downplayed and still associated rather with counter-culture than the canon.

A year ago we were thinking of a coursebook, an alternative syllabus to what we have learnt. A coursebook of feminist thought taught from the outset and throughout. Starting afresh at the beginning, middle and end. We were thinking of alternatives to the forms of understanding and distribution of knowledge in the contemporary historical moment that calls for a new account of established canons.

Vignette 5

It is usually assumed that, when we are reading, our eyes travel smoothly, without interruptions, along the lines of a page, and that, when we are reading Western writing, for instance, our eyes go from left to right. This isn't so. A century ago, the French ophthalmologist Emile Javal discovered that our eyes actually jump about the page; these jumps or saccades take place three or four times per second, at a speed of about 200 degrees per second. The speed of the eye's motion across the page — but not the motion itself — interferes with perception, and it is only during the brief pause between movements that we actually read.

A HISTORY OF READING
[http://whatisareader.stanford.edu/whatisareader_images/Manguel_Shadows.pdf]

A frog hunts on land by vision. She escapes enemies mainly by seeing them. The frog does not seem to see or, at any rate, is not concerned with the detail of stationary parts of the world around her. She will starve to death surrounded by food if it is not moving.

It was said that reading begins with the eyes. The visual spirit born in the brain crossed the eye through the optic nerve and flowed out in the air. The air itself then became capable of perception, apprehending the qualities of the objects however far way they might have happened to be. These qualities were transmitted back through the eye to the brain, and down the spinal cord to the nerves of sense and motion.

The word that left the eye came back and the cognition became an algorithmic process that could be manipulated. Cognition and perception were rendered equivalent; both treatable as communication channels, and subsequently both subject to new forms of intervention. It was concluded that the eye speaks to the brain in a language already highly organized and interpreted, instead of transmitting some more or less accurate copy of the distribution of light on the receptors.

This exposed not only the final stage in the commodification of the scopic but also the triumph of vision over all the other senses. Which is of special concern from a feminist perspective, because it tends to reinstate a hierarchy of bodily perception that over-privileges vision over other senses, especially touch and sound. The YGRG structure tries to underline the bias of scopo-centric criteria used both in defining human beings and in the standard operations of patriarchal institutions. A de-centering from the gaze.

Vignette 6

And still, or because of this, reading groups rarely read. They talk, look at each other, flip pages, drop names, google, underline, drink, all that. This one does read. At first this feels awkward. Reading out loud was most likely everybody’s most hated task in school. Embarrassment, again – mispronunciations, missing lines,

sore throats, thick accents, an awfully blurry hard copy too (close to encryption). Thinking while reading, while performing the text, proves to be tricky too. Chapter 2: Meta(l)morphoses: Women, Aliens and Machines [http://kunsthallezurich.ch/sites/default/files/downloads/ygrg_khz_1_text_braidotti_ , from feminist philosopher Rosi Braidotti's Nomadic Theory [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HXw8F_Ss3m0] (2012). Unlike the ubiquitous reasoning of small scale public programs in particular, Braidotti's words resonate with or more precisely through us. In our round the bean bag and nut tray intimacy so thoroughly sought for in readers' circles assumes a peculiar literacy. Focusing on the tiny print in the über cozy lightening I installed achingly asks all attention: I forget how the others look, some of their names and backgrounds, entering their sonic identities instead. The body of text becomes our collective body, as they say, one without organs, as Braidotti would add. And yet, we remain distinct voices; the subtle skepticisms, outright bewilderment, well-read referencing, and plethora of other nuances in tonality.

Julia Moritz, P.S. YGRG #96 [http://kunsthallezurich.ch/de/node/27945]

Our sense of reading is related to the continuity of the text on the page or to the scrolling of the text on the screen, assimilating entire sentences or thoughts, and not to the actual saccadic movement of the eyes. For YGRG it is more fundamentally, about listening to each other – while reading. For reading alone may be a solitary if not structurally asocial outcome of bourgeois educational premises, to say the least, largely at odds with today's Art World's social currency – while some struggle for time to read today is by far not limited to institutional labor of course (let alone looking at the uneven distribution of literacy and its consequences).

A vulnerable hyperbody is anyways composed not only of particles and molecules that circulate within, but prefaces, dedications, citations, appendices, illustrations, references, notes, diagrams and also thoughts traveling in reverse. We read together pronouncing the words out loud, emphasising the relationship of body of text and the collective body.

4. The spatial setting seems to be important within your reading group and is designed. In what way? Why is it important for you?

YGRG exists through this nomadic movement between the platforms of fb and real life towards the pages of the book. The frontiers of a book, wrote Michel Foucault long before the modes of writing hypertext or retrieving data from the internet emerged, are never clear-cut: beyond the tide, the first lines, and the last full stop, beyond its internal configuration and its autonomous form, it is caught up in a system of references to other books, other texts, other

sentences: it is a node within network. Such complex patterns of cross-referencing have become increasingly possible, and also crucial to dealing with the floods of data which have burst the banks of traditional modes of arranging and retrieving information and are now leaking through the covers of articles and books, seeping past the boundaries of the old disciplines, overflowing all the classifications and orders of libraries, schools, and universities. The YGRG spatial setting is thus created by the personal exchanges of being and reading together.

Vignette 7

But elsewhere in Berlin, some artists with their artist's bodies dragged themselves together in artist's flats and labeled themselves reading group [http://www.aqnb.com/2015/08/14/manifesting-young-girl-reading-group/] (aesthetification or acceleration of a leftist practice of intellectual empowerment?) Their reading group started with one text of Tiqqun, **Preliminary Materials for a Theory of the Young-Girl**, where Tiqqun apparently explains their critique of capitalism through their hate for stylish Parisian young girls. After this text, the quite stylish reading group is called **Young Girl Reading Group**. Tiqqun in the original text adds that since what we could call the beginning of spectacular times (**Jonathan Crary** did historically situate this situationist model in the second quarter of the 20th century [http://de.scribd.com/doc/232646376/Jonathan-Crary-Eclipse-of-the-Spectacle#scribd]) the label of young girls applies to a lot of different persons apart from actual young girls. The same applies to the YGRG, it is neither only a group of young girls nor centered around that text. Anyways, now members of the same «reading group» did their latest project with some Hilton hotel towels in a Berlin project room and a Berlin project in a Hilton hotel room, if we get the documentation right [http://www.aqnb.com/2015/07/20/agatha-1-2-0-1-2015-center-exhibition-photos/]. *Which leads the **Shituationist Art World Oracle** to the following prophecy (remember you heard it first here):*

YGRG will be the next big thing after DIS.

(There is no guarantee that the shituationist art world oracle will be right though, it is a bit confused, as it was playing on its phone during the Claire Fontaine lecture, it never attended a YGRG session and it was reading all the texts mentioned in this prophecy years ago and also has trouble keeping all the collective's names apart, because it was only created in 2008 and was busy with other things before)

fakegruber [https://si-blog.net/author/fakegruber/] blog.net/author/fakegruber/] / October 9, 2015 [https://si-blog.net/2015/10/09/from-tiqqun-to-the-young-girl-reading-group-the-shituationist-art-world-oracle-including-kony-de-kooning-dump-fm-dis-magazine-claire-fontaine-bernadette-corporation-chloe-sevigny-the-black-b/] From Tiqqun to the Young Girl Reading Group. A shituationist art world oracle, including: Kony, De Kooning, dump.fm, DIS Magazine, Claire Fontaine, Bernadette Corporation, Chloë Sevigny, the black block and the Hilton hotel, si-blog.net [https://si-blog.net/2015/10/09/from-tiqqun-to-the-young-girl-reading-group-the-shituationist-art-world-oracle-including-kony-de-kooning-dump-fm-dis-magazine-claire-fontaine-bernadette-corporation-chloe-sevigny-the-black-b/]

So far YGRG has been hosted by several institutions/spaces, including: Kunsthalle Zürich, Index - The Swedish Contemporary Art Foundation in Stockholm, Import Projects in Berlin, Transmediale Festival, Berlin Community Radio, Oracle Gallery in Berlin, Bosse and Baum in London, Ausstellungsraum Klingental in Basel, artgeneva and a Hilton Hotel room, or in non-branded situations like people's homes, artist studios or public spaces casually occupied. Contrary to the deceptive online sleekness, YGRG predominantly chooses a low key, under-aestheticized, cozy setting, which stands in contrast to the attention paid to its online presence. YGRG recognizes the competitive field of online participation, which requires its own science of craft, rules, predictability, theft and imagination.

5. Today theory has become somehow an aesthetic performative form. One recent example is the reading of Marx's Das Kapital initiated by Isaac Julien at the last Venice Biennale. At the same time today artists are obliged to underpin their works with all kinds of theoretical references. Otherwise their works do not seem relevant. How does your project position itself within these ambivalent developments?

Vignette 8

EMBED
[https://player.vimeo.com/video/167469798?title=0&byline=0]

Dorota Gaw?da and Egl? Kulbokait?, Young Girl Reading Group promotional video, 2015

Young Girl, I did love you once.

Being in love was like, uhm, a stress-relieving drug.

The affects we were producing were immaterial. Our feelings were made up of signs, and sometimes just of simple signals. Such affective production, exchange, and communication that we have learned to associate with human contact, with the presence of another, but that contact could have been either actual or virtual. What we produced were social networks, forms of community and biopower.

Nothing exists outside the system of capital. National pavilions, collateral events, splashy VIP affairs, and down to the pop-up, off-brand exhibitions and events that sprout from every corner — to be regarded through the lens of commodity, labor, and exploitation. The reading of *Das Kapital* must be observed as all three. And art production, too, must be examined as such.

Labor is bleeding into objects; labor itself a product, a raw material; labor being time, the flow of time funneling into objects, but also performances and reading groups.

This highlights a rather ambivalent affiliation of the artist with the intellectual or financial elite and their responsibility for the rest of society. Art positioned itself as a luxury asset, a branded commodity often fed by inequality, and only secondarily a vehicle for the expression of culture or contemplation of the future. Artists occupy a paradoxical position among social classes forming the dominated part of the dominant class; they can flirt both with the dominant elite and with the emancipation-oriented groups who feel oppressed. In reality, the Young-Girl is only the model citizen, the highest point of alienated socialization, where the most socialized is also the most social and she suffers. She suffers from alienation as much as a she does from becoming-image of this alienation.

And again, we feel there is no hope for political change in our lives, nor a common language capable for us to describe our contemporary condition. Post-Fordism turns us all into virtuoso performers, since the basis of labor is no longer the production of a commodity as end-product, but is now a communicational act, designed for an audience. YGRG addresses the mutations within the figure of the Young-Girl that follows symmetrically the evolutions of the capitalist mode of production. Over the past thirty years we’ve moved little by little from a Fordist-type seduction, with its designated places and moments, its static and proto-bourgeois couple-form, to a Post-Fordist type seduction, diffused, flexible, precarious and de-ritualized. YGRG aesthetic explores this shiny surface.



BJARNE MELGAARD [http://www.artinamericamagazine.com/news-features/magazine/reading-capital-in-venice/]

The traditional rhetoric of philosophy and theory invokes an appeal to authority. When YGRG reads and writes, the commodity of authorship is scrambled into ornamented Young-Girl speak, a network of theft, misplacements and appropriations. This speak is the result of a creative process that involves both the producer and the consumer. Both the writer and the reader. To create new meanings and new potential narratives to see and understand the World.

As it was told: If the eggs are scrambled, they're scrambled. We can't unscramble them. All we can possibly do is cook them and share them with somebody.

6. Do the group readings influence your other artistic practice?

YGRG is a continuous endeavour of ours, which features in and permeates through our artistic practice immensely. For instance, Agatha Valkyrie Ice is akin to and a direct consequence of the nomadic reading sessions of the Young Girl Reading Group. Agatha exists as as an open-ended, cloud based film script that has been a compendium of all Ai[1] activity, a diary and a theoretical treatise on becoming real and becoming virtual: comprising performance, talks, sound works, sculpture within its textual form. Following Rosi Braidotti, we would like to consider the Posthuman condition in relation to the avatar as a literary and artistic creation that has acquired an agency of Ai facilitated by immediate distribution and online sharing. Questioning the current condition of expanding forms of capitalism, through the angle of developing technologies and cross-sections of gender-technology-power-desire.

Vignette 10



Can Ai feel a tansient gentle sadness? [http://www.ofluxo.net/episode-xchapter-3-bedroom-by-agatha-valkyrie-ice-dorota-gaweda-and-egle-kulbokaite-presented-at-artmontecarlo-monaco/]

Alongside Ai, central to our collaborations is to discover how the current pronoun ‹she› has the potentiality to occupy the leading role, becoming neutral in a sense that she is no longer participating as the other in the modalities of language. She is the middle, a starting point. We create a she as an active agent composing the writing series titled: for a future. Here the she character is inserted within multiple scenarios and allowed to become of her own. One is no longer defined by borders of one’s own self, becoming a morphing salamander in a continuous spiral of regeneration, resistant to the drama of life as individuation and the birth of the self in search for one of past, present, future. One is hybrid and irreverent in constant possibility of twinning in this new world without innocence, when this one exists with the other one and hopes of escaping from the ban of one knowing that no construction is whole.

She and Agatha alike are for us a possibility of a collective voice aiming towards non-linear narratives within a web of collectives which is language. They both allow for a new form of expression forming networks that are unprecedented in their scope, complexity, and the pragmatic possibilities of their use, which enable Ai and her becoming-visible, becoming--prominent.

NOTE THAT THIS TEXT CONTAINS HEAVY REFERENCING FROM THE OUTSET AND THROUGHOUT: JULIA MORITZ, CLAIRE FONTAINE, TIQQUN, NINA POWER, SADIE PLANT, MEREDITH MEREDITH, RIVER YOUNG, HAL FOSTER, URSULA FRANKLIN, A GIRL HAS NO NAME, MICHEL FOUCAULT, ALBERTO MANGUEL, LOUIS ÉMILE JAVAL, SILVIA FEDERICI, ROSI BRAIDOTTI, SHULAMITH FIRESTONE, PAUL B. PRECIADO, BB9, WOMAN

WHO POSED AS MAN TO HAVE SEX WITH FRIEND JAILED FOR 8 YEARS, ORIT HALPERN, LihleLeeNdelu, J. Y. LETTVIN, H. R. MATURANA, W. S. McCULLOCH, W. H. PITTS, GALEN, bell hooks, ABDELMAJID HANNOUM, LUCE IRIGARAY, fakegruber, CHARLOTTE HIGGINS, CLAIRE BISHOP, PAOLO VIRNO, NATALIA SIELEWICZ AND ?UKASZ RONDUDA, NATALIE HEGERT, TRAVIS JEPPESEN AND BJARNE MELGAARD, MICHAEL HARDT, STEFAN HEIDENREICH.

[1] Here we use the pronoun Ai: Ai has a content that does not distinguish itself from other things or beings, because the me subject is either pure negativity or a splitting movement; it is consciousness. There’s no more self, me. We are all Ai. Ai is Ai. No subject. No desire. Used instead of I/ you/ he/ she/ it/ her/ his/ they/ them/ etc. ‹Ai› (in hiragana ??, in katakana ??, in kanji ?, ?, ??) is a Japanese feminine given name. Ai could mean love, affection (?), or indigo (?). Ai could mean Asian clothes. Ai is the main character of the Ursula K. Le Guin story «The Left Hand of Darkness», often called Genry by the Karhiders, who have trouble pronouncing the letter L in Ai language.

DOROTA HALINA GAW?DA

Dorota Halina Gaw?da (PL) is an artist and writer living and working in Basel, Switzerland and Berlin, Germany. She is the co-founder of YOUNG GIRL READING GROUP (2013-) and initiator of Agatha Valkyrie Ice (2014-) both in collaboration with Egle Kulbokaite; currently co-directing OSLO1O project space in Basel, Switzerland.

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Egle Kulbokaite (LT) is an artist and writer living and working in Basel, Switzerland and Berlin, Germany. She is the co-founder of YOUNG GIRL READING GROUP (2013-) and initiator of Agatha Valkyrie Ice (2014-) both in collaboration with Dorota Halina Gaw?da and a co-editor of the magazine Good Times & Nocturnal News, produced with Carl Palm. Under the name of Agatha, Kulbokaite is currently co-running OSLO1O project space in Basel, Switzerland.

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