I'm like a pdf but a girl
Girlblogging as a nomadic pedagogy

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For mama,
the Russian hacker. Thanks for forcing me to read books
outside of school.

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Abstract

What does it mean to be a young researcher for a better future? Inspired by piracy research by members of the Centre of Postdigital Cultures at Coventry University and cyberfeminist renditions such as Laboria Cuboniks' Xenofeminism, Legacy Russell's Glitch Feminism, and Mindy Seu's Cyberfeminist Index, I position the archival and curatorial piracy done by girlbloggers on Tumblr as a pedagogical nomadism with political potency. Through a literary and ethnographic analysis of the Tumblr platform that is supplemented by my own experiences, I explore how girlblogging practices encourage an ambulatory approach to research, but also to self-creation as a young person. In girlblogging, one finds a new form of cyberfeminist pedagogy that is youth-accessible and culturally viral.

thefig

im like a pdf but a girl

16,089 notes   Sep 18th, 2021   ••• ⇄ ♡

Tumblr post by @thefig from where my title originates.

The Beauty of the Baud

"I know everyone here… even if I've never met them, never talked to them, may never hear from them again… I know you all…"
– The Hacker Manifesto/The Conscience of a Hacker, 1986 ([72](#))

Call it what you want: immanence, subjectivity, self-indulgence. I'm a 21st century American; I can't get out of myself. What is exterior to me and pulls me to it is just funhouse mirrors for what I already have, or think that I have. I can't tell if this is an ancient thing for which art was made for – the recognition of the self in the other – or the consumerist desire to bathe oneself in the protective balm of niche-ly commodifiable symbols until one loses their base humanity. Maybe both. But, luckily for me, I'm also (if it's not clear already) a drama queen. And drama queens are blessed and cursed with the delectable ability to connect their banalities with Tragic themes like universal love, righteous crimes, and forests of magic. They are the ideal storytellers. This is an ethnographical report about the dissemination of information on a digital platform. It is also a story about the desire to find ourselves in others' words, and the power of those words to create identity with their spread.

The bud for this project bloomed when I came upon the Pirate Care project and syllabus created by open source researchers Valeria Graziano, Marcell Mars, and Tomislav Medak, which "reflects and brings together those care initiatives which are taking risks by operating in the narrow grey zones left open between different knowledges, institutions and laws, inviting all to participate in a exploration of the mutual implications of care and technology that dare questioning the ideology of private property, work and metrics" ([56](#)). The syllabus navigates examples as diverse as shadow libraries, migrant rescue, and mutual aid of the unhoused, all with comprehensive resource guides and classroom-friendly exercises. While I was meltingly astounded by both the breadth and accessibility of the syllabus, it also nudged me to consider my own acts of digital piracy. Completing high school in a small and relatively conservative international school in Hong Kong, I did not have much teaching

or support around several areas I was interested in, such politics, feminism, and philosophy. In order to satiate myself, I used peer-gathered resources on Tumblr to understand which books and essays might be important to these fields – and to find ways to access them, at a time when local bookshops and libraries in my city were only increasing in censorship. Tumblr users were inventive with their piracy, drawing their links from shadow library giants like Scihub and Libgen (example ref) or creating their own public Google Drives of files, with folders that categorized content by subtopic (example ref). The structure of the site allowed for these materials to circulate seamlessly, and I have collected them for years under #ref on my blog.

While this practice of pedagogical caretaking amongst peers is often skewed by pre-established dogmas of the bloggers, the structure of Tumblr encourages addendums and repurposings of an OP's (original poster's) text, meaning that each resource is in a constant becoming. Although Tumblr is by no means the most efficient or functional site for academic resources – I would now place Are.na (53) or Humanities Commons (57) among websites worthy of that title – it is unique in its accessibility, customizability, and flexibility of content production that makes it both appeal to young people and encourage creative practice and discourse. I have explored Tumblr as a cultural counterpublic for queer girls before in my 2021 work "Calling All Tumblrinas" (10), but I would like to now extend my analysis to the networked *pedagogy* performed by young people on Tumblr and the cyberfeminist genealogy they become part of by participating in this curation, dissemination, and discussion of academic information.

Throughout this piece, I will use the term *girlblogger* in reference to young people in their late teens and 20s that have been on Tumblr for a long time, and participate in the act of curating a blog, either via reblogs or uploaded content (or both). It is not in reference to the newly arisen waif/coquette "aesthetic" (69) which is associated with Lana Del Rey, nepotism babies, and pro-ana. The word *girl* here also works more as a symbol for marginalized identities that use Tumblr as a counterpublic, resulting in an uneven demographic, than it does explicitly females (10). I use girlblogger as a descriptor for this demographic rather than Tumblrina because it is simply easier

to turn into a verb – *girlblogging* vs. *Tumblrina...ing* – and because it explicitly highlights the act of blogging. While the girlblogger herself is a gushing, indelible, and intrepid heroine, the act of girlblogging is really what correlates to the process-based post-Deleuze theory that I draw from.

The networked, affect-based circulation of texts on Tumblr directly informed the research methods that I employed for this piece and how I documented them, and continue to document them. Doing my best to be rhizomatic and molecular, I was a wanderer between fields as diverse as new media studies, philosophy, data science, anthropology, cybernetics, and literature. I scoured through 90s feminist journals, typed keywords into Youtube and Vimeo and Spotify, and, yes, used the very-broken Tumblr search bar to find texts that could be of reference to me. I also ambulated Wikipedia's entries on the history of piracy and its associated philosophical movements. I found shadow libraries *of* shadow libraries. Indeed, I would say a majority of my research was spent reflecting on the organization of data, rather than the data itself. I was bemused, almost to the point of drowning, by the poeticism of the hypertextual approach – how could one thing actually be so many?

This watery and hyperthermal landscape of information led me to conclude that I could never reach the tail-ends of internet piracy or of cyberfeminism, my two major areas of concern. Thus, this piece operates more as an immanent exemplar of the hypertextual valleys that populate new media studies, rather than a totally linear or conclusive paper. Acknowledging the nature of this research to be sublime, slippery, and portal-ed, this text is at times mythological and meandering. While I stick to some academic convention to keep some legibility and legitimacy, the ideas on postmodern literary art posed by 90's project The Electronic Labyrinth ([82]), drove me to incorporate multiplicity and non-chronology into the work. Inspired by their discussion of hypertext, as well as its deployment in libraries like Memory of the World ([60]) and The Cyberfeminist Index ([62]), I have simplified the Harvard referencing system to my hypertextual preference. Each source has a unique number that is used in in-text citations as a hyperlink to where I got the source from. This is to increase legibility of the text, make

access to my sources very easy, and also provide a direct and immediate acknowledgement to the open-source databases that have been both the object of and the resource for this study. In the bibliography, the full details of each source are provided. I will also be updating an Are.na folder with all of the sources contained for easy access, and creating a Tumblr #ref post with a summarized bibliography that is fully hyperlinked.

I have also implicated Tumblr itself in the research process by posting my thoughts and reading excerpts under the tag *#diss* on my blog, in addition to tags *#on _* and author names that each post correlates to. Other bloggers have the chance to comment, reblog, and retag these posts, making this project expand beyond my isolated labour. I additionally created a short survey in which bloggers could speak at length on the pedagogy, curation, and community that they found on the site, which received 120 responses and can be found as a complete archive on Google Sheets ([75](#)). Seeing a perpetual unfolding in these areas of research, I will additionally keep updating my research journal at #diss beyond the submission date for this piece.

And now, sweet reader, I release you into the wild report of this blue and infinite place.

1. Scene

Dashboarding into the blue

"Sometimes we drug ourselves with dreams of new ideas. The head will save us. The brain alone will set us free. But there are no new ideas still waiting in the wings to save us as women, as human. There are only old and forgotten ones, new combinations, extrapolations and recognitions from within ourselves, along with the renewed courage to try them out."
– Audre Lorde, "Poetry is Not a Luxury", 1985 ([19](#))

In 2017, founder and CEO of Tumblr, David Karp, decided to resign. He sent an email announcing his resignation to all of his employees entitled "According to all known laws of aviation, a bee should not be able to fly" – the iconic opening line from The Bee Movie, an animation film that's been memed to death by Tumblr users – and posted the email on his own Tumblr blog ([79](#)). Karp is a geeky-looking high school dropout genius that began his programming career at 11 after reading *HTML for Dummies* and beginning to build blogging interfaces for local businesses ([40](#)). Tumblr itself was a side project he created at 21, in 2006, to help gain visiblity for his tech consultancy, … until it started being so successful that he was no longer able to respond to clients. Karp wanted to create a site designed for "tumble-logging" (what would now be called "microblogging"), a form of blogging that prioritizes short, multimedia-flexible posts rather than long-form journaling ([107](#)). Hence, "Tumblr". Despite Karp's early efforts to keep the company small, avoid Silicon Valley competition culture, avoid ads, and resist buyouts, Yahoo's CEO Marissa Mayer eventually passed it out of his hands for a staggering 1.1 billion, with Karp remaining as CEO ([32](#)). Despite Yahoo's attempts to monetize on the site, the anonymous nature of its userbase and its permissiveness of NSFW content meant that it was difficult to engage advertisers and investors. As other major social media platforms like Twitter and Instagram geared towards profitable schemes of identity-focused content and sponsored "influencer" culture, Tumblr's value plummeted to 3 million, for which it was sold to the owner of Wordpress.com in 2019 ([32](#)). Its commercial failure masks its role as a brewing place for long-standing fashion trends ([52](#)), memes that are then exported onto Instagram and Twitter ([102](#)), and discourse among
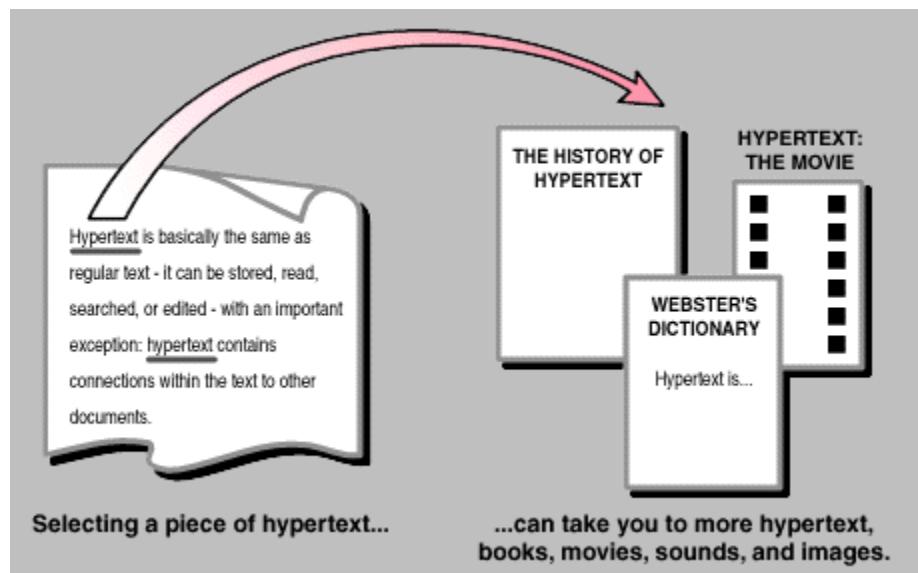
youth around serious topics like gender, race, and contemporary politics ([20](#)).

In "Calling All Tumblrinas" I follow theorist Paul Byron in defining Tumblr as a counterpublic, or a "smaller public with "different sets of practices, membership, and 'rules'" that often form because a group is "not feeling visible or is not able to express themselves" in the majority of spaces ([10](#)). As Alex Fataall summarizes in an encyclopedia entry for *The International Encyclopedia of Anthropology*, the term counterpublic originated from social theorist Michael Warner's 2002 article "Publics and Counterpublics" ([8](#)). Warner asserts that rather than there being 'one' public that contains a social totality, there are actually an infinite number of publics that are organized by the production and distribution of texts – writing, speech, and other artifacts of idea-forming. This idea that publication could precede the public, in the sense that informational artifact becomes the birthplace of a new community, fascinates me. It really links well to how Legacy Russell, the author of *Glitch Feminism*, described a publication as a "meeting place" in a Zoom conversation with Mindy Seu ([67](#)). While Russell speaks in reference to her book here, her assertion of publication-as-meeting-place can be cross-applied to social media content. As a site composed of both written and visual text, I want to theorize Tumblr as both counterpublic and publication itself: it is its own text. However, It is a postmodern text, in the sense that it is collaged of many, many multimedia texts with countless origins, which together form a dancing textual ecosystem.

The Electronic Labyrinth mentions a beautiful idea of the *Docuverse*, a universal conception of all the text available on the internet: "Here lies the dream of the universal library––every word ever recorded knit together in a mosaic of knowledge, just waiting for the holy command to bring it forth" ([83](#)). While this excerpt acknowledges cyberspace as already endless and encyclopaedic, the page goes on to see the current Docuverse as a sign of humanity's "age old desire for a Heavenly City" in which there can finally be a definitive "closure" in the global text that produces a meaning of life. But how does the positionality of this "closure" change in a digital, interconnected landscape where a start or end is as rare as a diamond? The Labyrinth

uses the term *hypertext* to describe this swampy characteristic of the internet:

"Hypertext is the presentation of information as a linked network of nodes which readers are free to navigate in a non-linear fashion. It allows for multiple authors, a blurring of the author and reader functions, extended works with diffuse boundaries, and multiple reading paths."

The Media Studies department at Vancouver Island University visually illustrates hypertext. ([97](#))
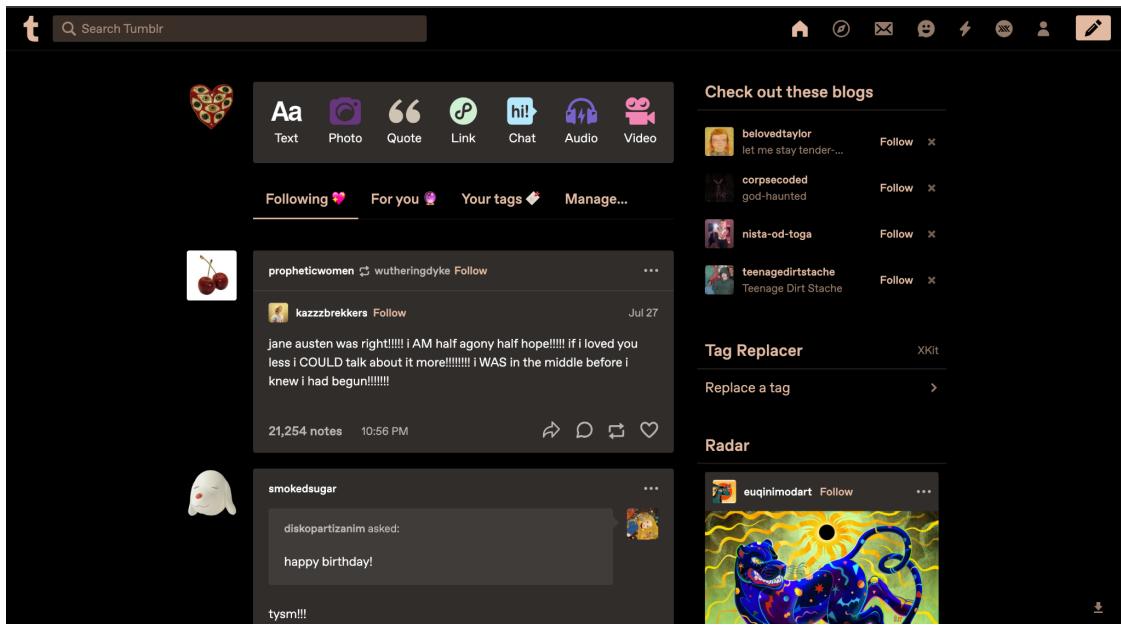
This term hypertext is reflected in the post suggestion algorithms, link features, and collaborative posting possibilities like commenting and reposting in many social media sites. In their passage on "closure", the Labyrinth positions hypertextual narratives as breaking away from the naturalization of closure: hypertext elicits "pleasure not from the inevitability of an ending, but from the multiplicity of openings" ([81](#)). In other words, reading a social media site as a publication entails moving the focus from a definitive conclusion on the site's "meaning" towards an immersed explorative charting of its possibilities in meaning-making. Since there is no linearity in hypertext that can let you read from point A to point B as an observer, you are cast into the text, made to find your own way from point A to point B. Hypertext *requires* subjective experience in its literary analysis.

While David Karp, the hipster anti-hero, was not trying to make a hotspot for feminist pedagogy with his tumble-logging startup, he made some decisively anti-commercialist design choices that would later on allow Tumblr to flourish in its possibilities for user creativity and self-exploration, producing a highly decentralized hypertext. Allow yourself, in the following chapters, to fall into the ridges and grooves from which would arise the girlblogger.

1.1 Net/work
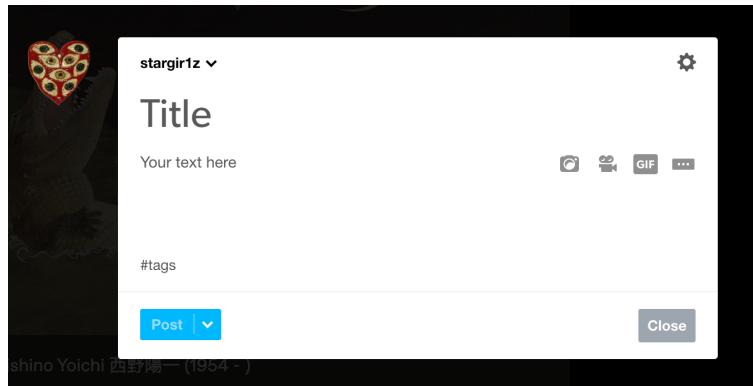
I have been asked by various friends over the years to help them "learn to use" or "get into" Tumblr. This has resulted in several occurrences in which I create a blog for someone, help them customize it, and give them lists of people to follow, only for them to abandon it within a week with the complaint that it is just too hard to use. As someone who has been on Tumblr since I was 13, this reading of the interface as esoteric or difficult to use is hard to perceive from an inside perspective. One thing is immediately clear: that same esoteric nature is the same insulator that made the site such a strong counterpublic for its fandoms and social justice discourses. But what constitutes this armour that steers away users of other social media and attracts weirdos, amateur philosophers, storytellers, and specialists of all kinds?

The general structure of Tumblr seems to allow for an amount of customization in content structure that is far more intense than places like Instagram and Pinterest. I believe that this freedom requires a more active participation in curating your experience as a user, even though it is less focused on original content than influencer-dominated places like Instagram, Facebook, and Snapchat. Your presentation of others' content through your feed, paired with the easy integration of sources, links, and interior organization (something that is near impossible on Instagram), becomes a gallery of references in which tidiness will ultimately benefit you.
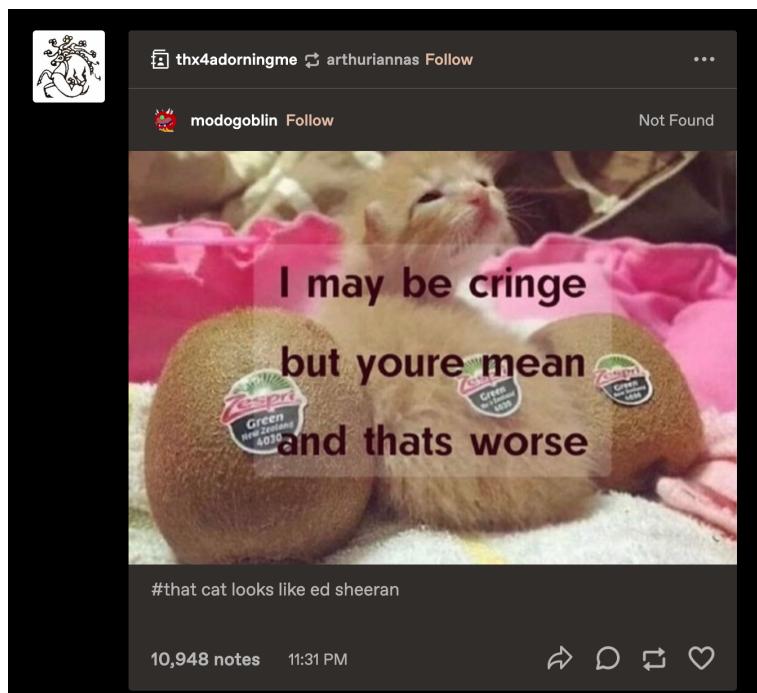
My Tumblr dashboard upon reloading on Thursday Dec 1 at 10:58 PM. It is heavily modded (mostly against ads and newer Yahoo-ey features, and for colour scheme) using the browser extension XKit.

Tumblr primarily works on two functions: 'post' and 'reblog'. You can post in several different starting mediums which Tumblr displays to you as options upon pressing the 'new post' button, but ultimately you are free to collage as many mediums as you would like into a singular post. This post, upon completion, goes onto your own blog's 'feed', or stream of content, and onto the 'dashboard' of all the users who follow you. Users can then 'reblog' your post onto their own blog, and can add their own media onto your post. Anyone who reblogs from *them* will receive *their* modified version of your post, and so on. However, the username of the original poster (OP) and of subsequent contributors remain visible on that version. This allows for a high level of collaborative authorship in the sense that as a post gets filtered through the Tumblr ecosystem, it can receive many add-ons and ultimately create countless versions of the same original post. It is kind of like a multiverse: with each reblog, there is another chance for the post to take a different trajectory.

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The default 'new post' after selecting 'text'. You can add links, images, videos, and audios. The text is also highly customizable in size, font, and orientation.

Users can also add tags, which do not "reblog" with the post and remain only on their version of it. When a tag is clicked, the feed will display all posts from that blog that contain that tag, i.e. *stargir1z.tumblr.com/tagged/diss*. These posts will also show up in the global feed of that tag, i.e. *tumblr.com/tagged/diss*. Thus, the tag is used for interior organization, global visibility, and also to add comments on reblogged posts without directly interfering with the text. It's like a public annotation:
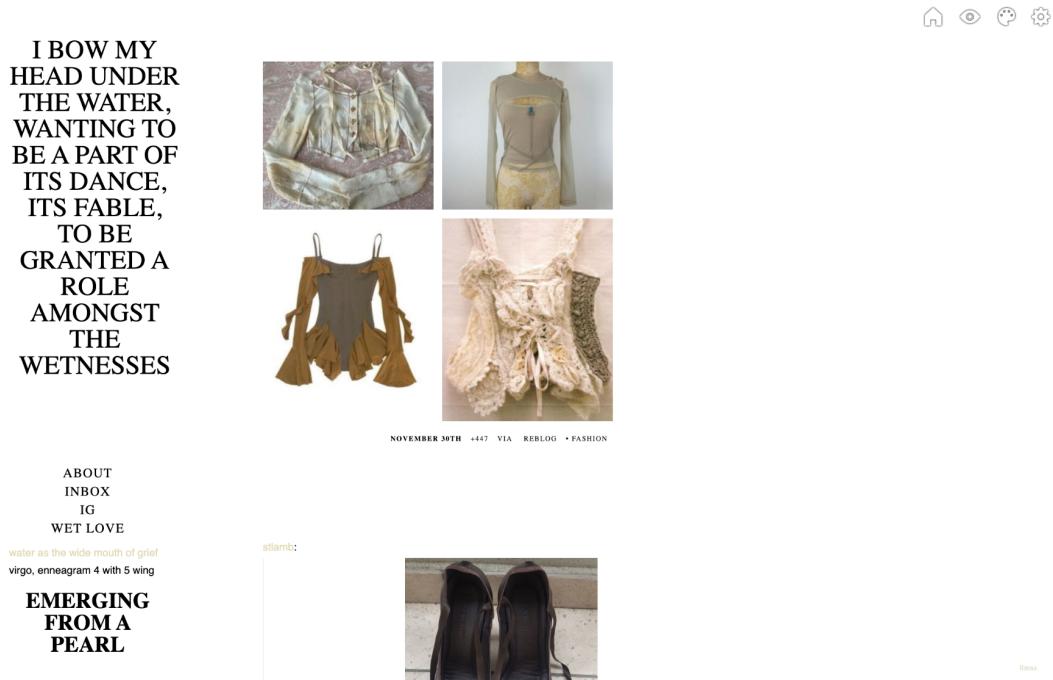
Here, user @thx4adorningme reblogs a post from @arthuriannas in which OP is @modogoblin. She does not add anything to the post itself but tags, #that cat looks like ed sheeran. This tag will be visible on her reblog when her followers see it on their dashboard.

A post will also carry a number of 'notes', which is the total amount of likes, reblogs, and comments that a post has received. While one can somewhat deduce the popularity of a blog from the average notes on their original posts, follower counts on Tumblr can only be seen by the user themselves.

The dashboard, as opposed to Instagram, is still organized chronologically, displaying the posts and reblogs of everyone who you follow. Until recently, there were no 'suggested posts' or even a very functional explore page. While those sorts of features have indeed come about in the past couple years, most users have a negative attitude towards them and prefer a truly self-made dashboard contained by people they follow. The 'suggested posts' algorithm is also extremely faulty. It recently handed me a whole Iliad of Omegaverse fanfiction. Similarly, Post+, which works as a sort of internal Patreon, was recently introduced, but I don't know anyone who uses it. User designed plug-ins like X-Kit carry extensions that take a lot of these dashboard-invasive features away on desktop ([92](#)). Due to the reblog-oriented design of the site combined with these long-standing anti-commercial norms within the community, there is little reward for making commodifiable content. This means that those blogs that contain exceptional ratios of original posts, such as @distantvoices, who compiles fashion editorials and shows ([73](#)), and @tinyghosts, who posts poetry and literary quotes ([100](#)), are motivated by their own desire to document and distribute their research as opposed as to creating a 'brand' as one would be capable of with that content on Instagram.

Another factor that distinguishes Tumblr is that, on desktop, your own site (username.tumblr.com) can be customized with HTML, CSS, and JavaScript in any way you would like. This has created a marketplace in which many people offer their custom 'theme' codes to others for free, as long as they're credited, or allow others to use their 'theme' as a base code from which to modify. Due to this feature, I learned basic HTML at 14 in order to create a custom homescreen and extra pages for my fanblogs. Mobile version also allows you to customize the colour scheme, headers, and links at the top of your blog. This is the feature that truly distinguishes Tumblr from another 'reblog' based site like
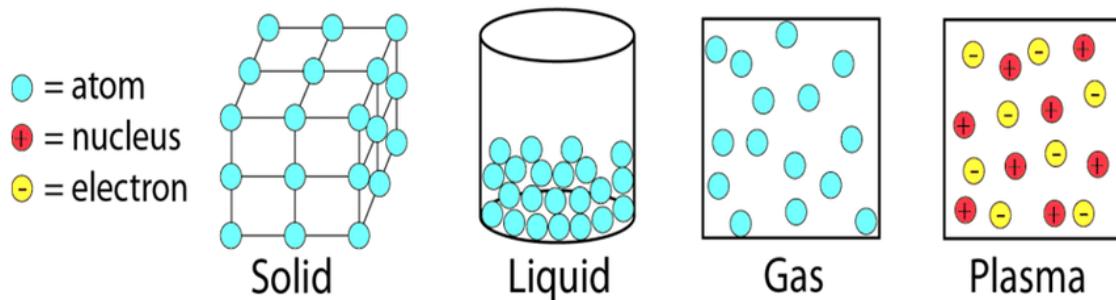
Pinterest – the blog does not just contain a text to be read, but is also a text in its visual design.

I BOW MY HEAD UNDER THE WATER, WANTING TO BE A PART OF ITS DANCE, ITS FABLE, TO BE GRANTED A ROLE AMONGST THE WETNESSES

ABOUT
INBOX
IG
WET LOVE

water as the wide mouth of grief
virgo, enneagram 4 with 5 wing

EMERGING FROM A PEARL

NOVEMBER 30TH   +447   VIA   REBLOG   • FASHION

stlamb:

Stargir1z.tumblr.com contains a custom theme that I modified, complete with an about page and external links. As I have gotten older, I have redesigned it several times.
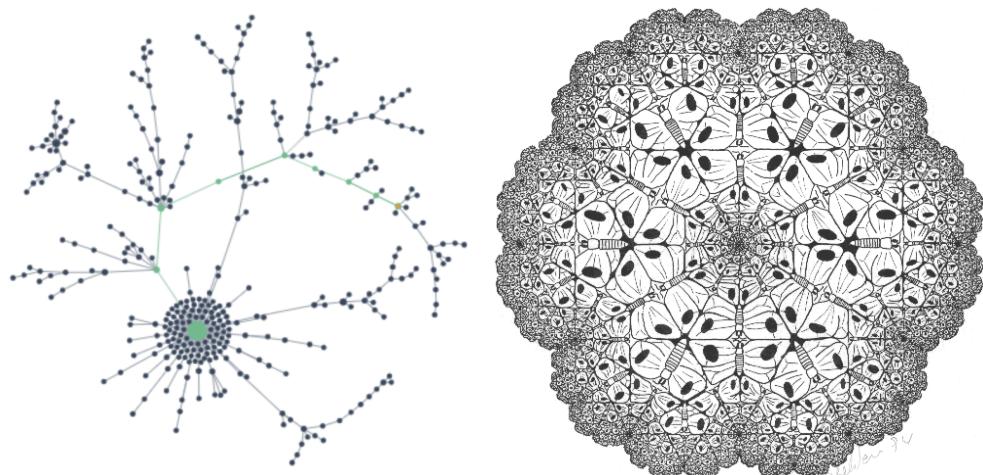
In a paper about aleatory research methods, Kyle Vealey and Jeffrey Gerding discuss the Geoffrey Sirc's 'Box Logic', a new method of essayism that dismisses with the "linear, unified, and cohesive student prose" that is required in typical academia, in favour of the free-form emotional association that is used by placing things inside of a 'box'. "The process of linking and connecting ideas, texts, or images in a box-logic culminates, for Sirc, in the fostering of an aesthetic, or the "passional possibilities" of a poetic" ([12]). Tumblr seems to follow this Box Logic of curated multimedia, but importantly, a blog's box-contents retain the usernames and connected pages of its previous holders. In following case-studies of the reblog and of the tag, I will highlight what this collaborative authorship and its deprioritization of the individual means for information distribution on Tumblr, and thus, the possibilities for communal meaning-making.

1.2 Plasmic posting

Graphic guide to different forms of matter from a chemistry article on ResearchGate. ([109](#))

Only a few months ago, I learned that there is a fourth state of matter called plasma. For those who might have also nearly failed chemistry, plasma is a superhot state of matter in which the nucleus of an atom becomes separate from its electrons, causing a swirling mass of negatively charged electrons and positively charged ions that change elements constantly ([104](#)). As a Tumblr post moves throughout the ecosystem, it becomes plasmic in the sense that the nucleus – the original blog and its associated themes, intentions, and politics – is displaced from its post, the electron that is swarming through myriads of reblogs in a recontextualization whirlwind. The reblog is an act of *fractalization*, in which the informational story opens, opens, and opens into deviations.

A graphic illustration of how reblogs work from @engineering ("We, y'know, built Tumblr and stuff") followed by a classic fractal.

In Proposition 3 of their plateau "Nomadology", Deleuze and Guattari illustrate the difference between a minor "nomad" science and the major "royal" science ([7], pg. 17-19). They align nomadic science with a "hydraulic" model of flows as opposed to the objects and classifications of royal science, noting that nomadism is found in the processes of science rather than in its conclusions:

"Finally, the model is problematic, rather than theorematic: figures are considered only from the viewpoint of the affections that befall them- sections, ablations, adjunctions, projections….This involves all kinds of deformations, transmutations, passages to the limit, operations in which each figure designates an "event" …Whereas the theorem belongs to the rational order, the problem is affective and is inseparable from the metamorphoses, generations, and creations within science itself."

Drawing a correlation between the 'opening' nature of hypertext described in 1.0 and the problematic nature of nomadic research that Deleuze and Guattari illustrate here, the reblog seems to be constituted of this sort of outward flowering in which more questions arrive than answers. While its existence begins with the nuclear OP's creation of the post, its formation is continuous and regenerative as it moves throughout the landscape of Tumblr and fractalizes as it reaches varying audiences with their own associations, reflections, and commentary. Whereas a traditional informative text, such as a book or a lecture, relies on a linear argument that arrives at a conclusion, true linearity is not possible on Tumblr due to how the reblog splits its hairs into countless timelines.

While stumbling around this Deleuzian concept of nomadology, I came upon the concept of "psychical nomadism", which originates from anarchist writer Hakim Bey's text *T.A.Z.: The Temporary Autonomous Zone, Ontological Anarchy, Poetic Terrorism* ([2]) and his reappropriation of nomadology. Wikipedia defines *psychical nomadism* as "the practice of taking as one needs from any moral, religious, political, ethical, or whatever system, and leaving behind the parts of that system found to be unappealing" ([105]). This anarchic reading of Deleuzian nomadology is reflected in how a Tumblr user displaces the

context and correlations that an OP might have had for their post, and instead implants their own symbolism into the text. The reblog feature, indeed, encourages a sort of *productive theft* in which information is corrupted and reincorporated into a user's own paradigms. Even before any act of documented piracy, the reblog already becomes piratic in its creation of fragments, holes, and problems in someone else's piece of mind. Bey frequently makes (somewhat problematic) analogies between the practice of psychic nomadism and early Mediterranean piracy ([2](#)).

"These nomads practice the razzia, they are corsairs, they are viruses; they have both need and desire for TAZs, camps of black tents under the desert stars, interzones, hidden fortified oases along secret caravan routes, "liberated" bits of jungle and bad-land, no-go areas, black markets, and underground bazaars."

It's important to acknowledge that the term 'razzia' that Bey uses here is derived from the word for slave raids conducted by North African pirates that encaptured hundreds of thousands of people for the Ottoman slave trade from the middle ages to the 1800s ([106](#)). This connotation makes the use of the term highly questionable, especially since Bey is advocating for ontological warfare rather than any sort of physical theft, and is also advocating for the creation of spaces that protect vulnerable groups of people rather than imprison them. As noted by the Critical Art Ensemble in their theorization of Electronic Civil Disobedience, or the use of civil disobedience practices like "trespass and blocking" in order to resist panoptic surveillance, digital practices of piracy are inherently nonviolent due to the removal of the physical sphere ([93](#)). Digital piracy also does not destroy or "steal" the original like traditional piracy does, but rather allows for a user-based reappropriation. Bey has a very esoterically anarchic style of writing that was influenced by authors like William Burroughs. He frequently uses terms derived from acts of violence to describe psychic nomadism; for example, characterizing it as a "guerilla operation" through which T. A. Z.'s (Temporary Autonomous Zones) are born. These T. A. Z.'s are small, short-lived spaces that escape the surveillance that reinforces state hegemony and allow for counter-hegemonic ideas to sprout like weeds ([93](#)). While I take inspiration from his conception of pirates as counter-public creators, I want to appropriate psychic nomadism towards a communal pedagogy,

found through reblogging, that focuses not particularly on the direct destruction of capitalist power, but rather on an independent construction of safe spaces for marginalized people that can, later on, provide the strength and knowledge to understand the oppressive systems that we are subjected to and imagine a world possible outside of capitalism.

It is also important to acknowledge that Tumblr is still owned by a corporation that profits off of every reblog – and thus, this nomadism is practiced from within a site of capitalism itself, which provides both the stability of legality and profit-incentivised community growth to Tumblr users, and the instability of external surveillance guiding what is and isn't allowed. However, the 'hands off' mentality of its founder has caused a disproportionate amount of leeway between user content and user surveillance, compared to platforms like Instagram. This makes it a key playing field for demographics that are not initially anti-capitalist, but end up exposed to counter-hegemonic texts and practices that might be removed on more mainstream platforms, such as the #ref post and its inherent digital piracy. An example is how "shadow-banning", and also just the non-chronological algorithmic dashboard, has disadvantaged many leftist and feminist accounts on Instagram.

The fractal, plasmic nature of the reblog, and its clandestine weave on Tumblr, allows for a continuous re-production of meaning as a post circulates through the site. It encroaches on hegemonic ideas of authorship and rebels through its very nature, as well as the under-surveillanced content it enables to circulate.

1.3 Tagging into wetness

In her talk with Legacy Russell, Mindy Seu mentioned that the origin of the hash (#) can be traced to a symbol of the town square ([67](#)). While I could not find a source for this claim, it did cause me to look into the history of the hash. It derives from the Roman abbreviation *lb* or *libra pondo* ("pound weight") that originated in the fourteenth century ([38](#)) and was stylised in a cursive font that slowly transformed into the modern hash. Later on, its meaning doubled into also being used as a shorthand for "number", and was incorporated into early programming languages. The first use of the hash for content grouping, or what came to be called tagging, on social media derives from a suggestion in a tweet by blogger Chris Messina ([89](#)), which was subsequently adopted by Twitter, and quickly followed by other platforms.

The tweet that started it all.

What is notable is that Messina vocally did not want to claim any financial profit off of his idea, and preferred to watch it permeate freely across platforms. He sees the hashtag as a communal tool "born of the Internet" that "should be owned by no one". Thus, the hashtag itself doubles as a symbol for communal meaning-making in cyberspace.

Why didn't the creator of the hashtag patent the concept?

Chris Messina
Creator of the hashtag. · Featured on Forbes and The Independent · Updated 7y

Originally Answered: Why didn't the creator of Hashtag patent the concept?

For two reasons, primarily:

1. claiming a government-granted monopoly on the use of hashtags would have likely inhibited their adoption, which was the antithesis of what I was hoping for, which was broad-based adoption and support — across networks and mediums.

2. I had no interest in making money (directly) off hashtags. They are born of the Internet, and should be owned by no one. The value and satisfaction I derive from seeing my funny little hack used as widely as it is today is valuable enough for me to be relieved that I had the foresight not to try to lock down this stupidly simple but effective idea.

Messina answers a Quora question about why he did not privatize his idea.

However, the concept of tagging in order to group content by one's own classification system originates further back than even the usage of the hashtag. The term *folksonomy* was coined by Peter Vander Wal in 2007 as a portmanteau of "folk" and "taxonomy" (46), and describes the practice of collaborative tagging as shown in early internet services like the bookmarking service del.icio.us, which allowed users to "save" urls to a cloud with added tags that sort their content (33).

A screenshot from a del.icio.us homepage.

Compared to formal classification systems, folksonomy allows for a prioritization of subjectivity. The user applies their own political, aesthetic, and emotional imperatives in their content curation, resulting in bricolages of information that could span multiple media formats, disciplines, and centuries in its origin. A tag's four lines show two perpendicular paths crossing, overlapping, contaminating each other with their meaning.

One of my favorite tag phenomena on Tumblr is the *#hole theory* created by blogger Mika, 21, also known as @arairah/@meerschweinchen1993 ([88](#)). Hole theory exemplifies an interdisciplinary exploration of longing through the collection of literary, academic, cinematic, artistic, and photographic texts that Mika incorporates into the "holycule", as well as their own written responses to asks and submissions sent by other users. Examples of posts tagged with #hole theory include A Mark Fisher quote about his concept of the eerie ([87](#)), mathematical diagrams of spirals ([103](#)), a text-post by @iamoutofideas that says "looks thru a glory hole & sees a train coming straight towards me" ([77](#)), a picture of a sudden abyss in a prairie ([85](#)), and a gifset from Maya Deren's surrealist film Meshes of the Afternoon ([108](#)). The tag brings together texts without regard for their high or low culture, in a postmodern synthesis around one multiplicitous word. In one post, Mika provides a definition of hole theory:

the hole is proof of presence by its absence. lack presupposes existence. 'if I show you a piece of paper with a puncture stabbed through you're not going to be thinking of the paper, all you'll imagine is what could have done the stabbing' - @brownbearemoji. anne carosn said '[...] the desirability of the love object derives, in part, from its lack. to whom is it lacking? to the lover. if we follow the trajectory [of desire] we consistently find it tracing out this same route: it moves out from the lover toward the beloved, then ricochets back to the lover himself and the hole in him, unnoticed before. who is the subject of most love poems? not the beloved. it is that hole.' a footprint (hole) cannot exist in a reality devoid of feet and tangentially every hunger (hole) and every desire (hole) proof their own satisfaction by the lack of the same. human bodies simply have too many holes in them. to achieve equipartition we must strive to fill them - breath to fill the hole of the lung, eat to fill the hole of the stomach and don't even get me started on wombs. it's also why toddlers stuff toys up their nose and cain ate able in this essay I will show how the mirror image is the ontological and semiotic opposite of the hole.

   Even in Mika's own writing, they incorporate a quotation of another blog and another to Anne Carson, showing how their own understanding of hole theory is informed by an archival gathering *through which* commonality is synthesized. As well, while Mika originated the concept, a search for #hole theory on the general Tumblr site now brings up posts from dozens of blogs that reinterpret it through their own understanding of media ([101](#)). *Hole theory*, as a text, exemplifies the communal meaning making that is possible on Tumblr through the tag system, and how that process forces one to confront divisions maintained in conventional pedagogical circles and question their necessity, especially in the arts and humanities. In Western education, it is traditional to divide subjects by their factual content, especially valorizing chronology and physical location. However, today's world is increasingly global to the point where the localized public sphere becomes inseparable from a larger cultural context that is transferring information across cyberspace every millisecond. This means that identity formation is no longer totally, or even mostly, reliant on physical

communities, but rather communities of affect that transcend space. This means that folksonomy's interdisciplinary, anti-chronological, and a-locational nature provides a kind of cyber-based meaning-making that has increasing relevance to postmodern identity, and the communities through which those identities are formed.

The more cross-contamination of sources happens through folksonomy, the more of a quality I have called *wetness* appears. *Wetness* is informational connectivity; it can also be called a smooth space, virality, plasma, sublimity, or just simply, dreaming. It is that quality by which something turns into everything, that the Surrealists tried to put on film and that Haraway sees in nature. Absolute wetness is probably just Spinoza's God. It's also that feeling when you read a poem that makes your brain shortwire, and you can't describe it as being about anything except, well, life. (I actually have a #on life on my blog). I prefer *wetness* to "connectivity" because it adds a sort of physical sensation to the term that I see reflected in the affect of informational connectivity on Tumblr. When I read tags like #hole theory, I have a feeling of immersion in a textual web that transcends time and space, and that is also inseparable from my own thoughts and feelings. Wetness reminds us of ourselves; that part is for sure. Just like we are 70% water and indivisible from the ocean and its many limbs, the text is indivisible from the hydra of textual history. Wetness exposes this flowing ecosystem as the piratic girlblogger tramples on the masks of individual excerpts and blood-lets their commonality, leaking onto the dashboard.

2. Character
We make the girl by blogging

"The more people participate in the process of their own education .... of defining what kind of production to produce, and for what and why, the more the people participate in the development of their selves."
– Paulo Freire, *We Make the Road by Walking*, 1990 ([11](#))

We Make the Road By Walking is a book that records several conversations between radical educators Paulo Freire and Myles Horton. I found it for free online at 16 after learning about Paulo Freire from Tumblr, and read the whole PDF, mostly in classes I couldn't pay attention in. Ironically, or perhaps affirmatively, one of the chapters is called "I was always getting in trouble for reading at school". As a teen that felt that much of her education was stiffly inapplicable and stiflingly depersonalized, the book felt like the maternal embrace of recognition that I had waited years for. Seeing 'real adults' suggest that education should be personalized to a community's curiosities and political needs made me feel like my dissatisfaction with school was at least a little grounded in reality – and that the alternatives I dreamed of were possible. While I saw most of my internet activity at the time as a mere escapism, I now see that the identity production I participated in online through girlblogging was a form of pedagogy in and of itself, that refracted Freirean practices, such as discourse-based learning and diminishing teacher-student hierarchy, into a cyberspace realm.

In the previous chapter, I demonstrated that the nomadology of the reblog and the wetness of the tag establish Tumblr as a site potent for information recontextualization. In this second chapter, I want to show how this psychic nomadism allows the contours of the girlblogger to come to fruition. As an OP of text as well as a disseminator of other's texts, the girlblogger is inherently a cultural producer, and thus, a pedagogue. Her formatting of language, and her recontextualization of adopted cultural ideas, tends to a micro-pedagogy that has the potential for cultural *puissance* if other users circulate her curations. In a page titled "Computers, Pedagogy, and Composition", The Electronic Labyrinth notes "A number of studies emphasize the

new role of the teacher in a collaborative writing environment; no longer the central authoritarian evaluator, the pedagogue now becomes consultant, co-writer, coach, and editor" ([80](#)). They reference educational theorists Deborah Holdstein and Cynthia Selfe, Carolyn Handa, Carolyn Boiarsky, and Thomas Barker and Fred Kemp to support this claim about new media pedagogy. I cast the girlblogger in the role of teacher, but not in a way that distinguishes her as "above" the peers that receive her curated information. However, she does have a curriculum like any other teacher, determined by her personal lines of inquiry and the aesthetic sense that springs from her own associations. The curriculum is, of course, the blog – a meeting place borne of subjectivity and psychic nomadism.

What's important to note is that girlblogger probably doesn't mean to be a teacher. She means to feed herself with content and mutuals that satiate her informational diet. Indeed, a lot of the responders to my survey question, *"what do the network of mutuals/people you follow on tumblr mean to you? how do they differ from IRL acquaintances?"* describe seeing their mutuals as mere sources of content or just someone to reflect their own interests: "they serve as a comforting web that i feel free from social contracts with", "tumblr is an entertainment app, rather than a social one", "Practically nothing. They're a silly profile picture to me" ([75](#)). For many Tumblr users, blogging is merely a self-pleasure or self-record with little concern for the community. However, the act of learning – of acquiring new information and habits – is something that we do constantly, even in leisure. As the girlblogger sorts through the dashboard, she both learns in her exposure and teaches through her reblog. And of course, not all girlbloggers are unaware of their effect as a teacher – in fact, those who are, are probably the ones with the most cultural reverb, as they produce a larger amount of OP content. In these vignettes on the facets of the girlblogger, we will see common formations in Tumblr hypertext curricula, and what larger practices they connect to outside of Tumblr.

2.1 Girlblogger as **librarian**

In 2015, the academic publisher giant Elsevier sued the online shadow library Sci-hub, run by Kazakh programmer, student, and "pirate queen" Alexandra Elbakyan ([35](#)). Sci-hub hosts hundreds of thousands of academic articles for free, jumping publishers' paywalls that often charge 30+ dollars for a single pdf. The access fees for institutions are also blasphemously high, and have been drastically increasing in recent years, so much so that Harvard issued a statement in 2012 saying that the school can no longer afford major publishers' fees and is urging for its faculty to support open-access publishing instead ([45](#)). Due to these rises in cost for both individual and institutional access, sites like Sci-Hub, Lib-Gen, and other shadow libraries have become a crucial resource for young researchers.

As a teen looking for affordable English language essays and academia, #ref posts on Tumblr formed both my informational understanding of the open-access movement and my own piratic modus operandi. #Ref is a loose folksonomic label for lists and links that function as a 'reference' for information, used by many girlbloggers with academic interests. Many #ref posts educate on the methods of pirating content, or provide direct access to pirated content through hyperlinks to shadow library items, user-made Google drives, or Wetransfers. With the recent appearance of Are.na, a social creative research platform where users can upload multimedia content including entire pdfs, book and article links on newer #ref posts often link to Are.na blocks. These examples of posts that I have tagged #ref display how the intention of the OP girlblogger is to share and categorize information for public use by her community, as she creates an annotated link or mini-syllabus that is then nomadologically cast into the ecosystem.

Free PDF Books on race, gender, sexuality, class, and culture

flanneryogonner:

Found from various places online:

The Pedagogy of the Oppressed by Paulo Freire

Angela Y. Davis - Are Prisons Obsolete?

Angela Y. Davis - Race, Women, and Class

The Communist Manifesto - Marx and Engels

Sister Outsider: Essays and Speeches by Audre Lorde

Three Guineas by Virginia Woolf

Critical Race Theory: An Introduction by Richard Delgado and Jean Stefancic

The Black Image in the White Mind: Media and Race in America- Robert M. Entman and Andrew Rojecki

Ain't I a Woman: Black Women and Feminism - bell hooks

Feminism is for Everybody - bell hooks

outlaw culture - bell hooks

Faces at the Bottom of the Well - Derrick Bell

Sex, Power, and Consent - Anastasia Powell

I am Your Sister - Audre Lorde

Patricia Hill Collins - Black Feminist Thought

Gender Trouble - Judith Butler

Four books by Frantz Fanon

Their Eyes Were Watching God - Zora Neale Hurston

Medical Apartheid - Harriet Washington

Fear of a Queer Planet: Queer Politics and Social Theory - edited by Michael Warner

Colonialism/Postcolonialism - Ania Loomba

Discipline and Punish - Michel Foucault

The Gloria Anzaldua Reader

Capitalist Realism: Is There No Alternative? by Mark Fisher

This Bridge Called by Back: Writings by Radical Women of Color by Cherríe Moraga & Gloria Anzaldúa

What is Cultural Studies? - John Storey

Cultural Theory and Popular Culture - John Storey

The Disability Studies Reader

Michel Foucault - Interviews and Other Writings

Michel Foucault - The History of Sexuality, Vol. 1, Vol. 2, Vol. 3

Michel Foucault - The Archeology of Knowledge

This blog also has a lot more.

(Sorry they aren't organized very well.)

the age of social media: a reading list

note: all hyperlinked texts are either open-access academic works or public-facing articles, & most other texts are accessible through various pdf-hosting websites.

books

- the age of surveillance capitalism by shoshanna zuboff (2019)
- the burnout society by byung-chul han, tr. erik butler (2015)
- control: digitality as cultural logic by seb franklin (2015)
- dark matters: on the surveillance of blackness by simone browne (2015)
- the death algorithm and other digital dilemmas by roberto simanowski, tr. jefferson chase (2018)
- the end of forgetting: growing up with social media by kate eichhorn (2019)
- in the swarm: digital politics by byung-chul han, tr. erik butler (2012)
- the politics of dating apps: gender, sexuality, and emergent publics in urban china by lik sam chan (2021)
- the transparency society by byung-chul han, tr. erik butler (2015)
- weaving the dark web: legitimacy on freenet, tor, and i2p by robert gehl (2018)

articles

- ambivalent influencers: feeling rules and the affective practice of anxiety in social media influencer work by mari lehto (2021)
- capitalism, patriarchy, slavery, and racism in the age of digital capitalism and digital labour by christian fuchs (2017)
- children are our future: resistance, addiction and the digital natives by rob horning (2010)
- #dadtribe: performing sharenting labour to commercialise involved fatherhood by mario campana, astrid van den bossche, and bryoney miller (2020)
- disintegrated bodies from cyborg microcelebrities to capital flow: a post-phenomenological investigation of disembodiment by riad salameh (2021)
- the drama of metrics: status, spectacle, and resistance among youtube drama creators by angèle christin and rebecca lewis (2021)
- #familygoals: family influencers, calibrated amateurism, and justifying young digital labor by crystal abidin (2017)
- fragments on microcelebrity by rob horning (2012)
- imagined affordances of instagram and the fantastical authenticity of female gulf-arab social media influencers by zoe hurley (2019)
- improbable curators: analysing nostalgia, authorship and audience on tumblr microblogs by dinu gabriel munteanu (2017)
- instagram use, instamums, and anxiety in mothers of young children by mara moujaes and diarmuid verrier (2020)
- micromicrocelebrity: branding babies on the internet by crystal abidin (2015)
- power through the algorithm? participatory web cultures and the technological unconscious by david beer (2009)
- "running the numbers": modes of microcelebrity labor in queer women's self-representation on instagram and vine by stefanie duguay (2019)

btw. one of my professors showed us this website that's put together syllabi on a range of topics (e.g imperialism, the novel, pandemic/disease theory), in case anyone's interested ! i think you have to source the texts in question yourselves, but it's arranged pretty well imo

zlibrary gone… FUCK TIKTOK FUCK BOOKTOK I hope that app burns in hell

library genesis is still up (very similar site) and r/freemediaheckyeah and r/piracy have lots of other alternatives. zlib was the GOAT though. fuck tiktok

(originally commented. putting as a reblog as its important)

for anyone that wants to know about other sites, I also didn't know so this is a big help!!! thank you!

some sites i use to read online:
- https://libgen.li/
- https://www.pdfdrive.com/
- https://libretexts.org/
- https://openlibrary.org/
- https://novel80.com/
- https://www.allfreenovel.com/
- https://bookreadfree.com/
- https://allbookshub.com/
- http://thefreeonlinenovel.com/
- https://www.epub.pub/
- https://www.readingsanctuary.com/
- https://yes-pdf.com/
- https://www.booksfree.org/

if none of the links work if you just search up "(book title) read online free" there's almost always gonna be a pdf link and those are always good to read from too

In response to the lawsuit against Sci-hub, a coalition of the creators of several other shadow libraries, such as Memory of the World's Marcell Mars and Tomislav Medak (who also created the Pirate Care syllabus), Monoskop's Dušan Barok, and Ubuweb's Kenneth Goldsmith came together with a short letter entitled "In solidarity with Library Genesis and Scihub" ([78]). The letter urges the public to participate in "collective civil disobedience" by engaging in caretaking of the digital commons through the resharing of cultural information. As described by Petar Jandric and Ana Kuzmanic in their conversation with Mars and Medak on resharing practices, the Public Library project as a whole is a synthesis between Freirean critical pedagogy and hacker culture that originated in the Silicon Valley in the 90s ([16]). Indeed, the Critical Art Ensemble based its idea of "electronic civil disobedience" off of anti-government hacking demonstrations in the 90s ([93]). Thus, the civil disobedience practiced through information dissemination can be seen as both an act of pedagogy and as an act of nomadological resistance. The #ref post can be seen to answer this call for civil disobedience in its curation of piratic content.

Within their letter, the actors of the Public Library placed a quote from *The Guerilla Open Access Manifesto*, a short document written in 2008 by the late programmer and education activist Aaron Swartz. Swartz committed suicide at 26 after 2 years of fighting criminal charges placed upon him after he broke into the MIT campus to download millions of articles on JSTOR in an attempt to "liberate" them to the public ([37], [99]). The quote reads:

"We need to take information, wherever it is stored, make our copies and share them with the world. We need to take stuff that's out of copyright and add it to the archive. We need to buy secret databases and put them on the Web. We need to download scientific journals and upload them to file sharing networks. We need to fight for Guerilla Open Access. With enough of us, around the world, we'll not just send a strong message opposing the privatization of knowledge — we'll make it a thing of the past. Will you join us?"

As seen in this quote, Swartz urged for those with access to academia to not only utilize pre-existing piracy, but also use

their privileges as those with connections to higher education institutions, and reshare the information that they had access to. In another part of the manifesto, he claims that "students, librarians, scientists" indeed have a "duty" to file share. Many of the girlbloggers that create #ref posts are students in higher education, especially Master's or Ph. D. programs in the humanities in which they specialize in an underdeveloped area of research. In the tags of one #ref post I came upon in my explorations, a masterpost of King Lear related cultural theory papers that are stored on a Google Drive, OP @allthepresidentsmen1975 writes (70):

#now is a good time to mention that I have jstor access so if you ever need anything (this goes for nonmutuals too!) feel free to ask <3 #king lear #shakespeare #articles #masterpost

As displayed by the first tag, this girlblogger acts as a librarian through their willingness to find and share information for more disadvantaged members of their community. Through their offer, they display a steadfast fidelity to the prioritization of the commons that Swartz advocated for, and the Public Library movement after him.

I'd like to add on to Swartz' analysis of informational classism to note that those girlbloggers with institutional access to paywalled depositories like JSTOR don't just enjoy a privilege of access, but also a privilege of time. Someone doing full-time further education in the humanities has the time to study beyond a bachelor's in the first place, to do a degree that is much harder to find a high-paying job in than STEM, and, most relevantly, the time to think about the resources that they have been presented with and how those resources are being taught. A university curriculum often betrays the biases of the institution and teachers behind it, which might be outdated to the social, political, and philosophical concerns confronting young people today. In making her own micro-curriculum through the #ref post, the girlblogger also creates something counterhegemonic by allowing her own young, often female and queer subjectivity to guide what is deemed as relevant *and* credible. Salem, 24, a responder to my survey, notes: "Reference posts allow me to lean on the analysis and thinking other relative experts have done, rather than wasting precious time

reinventing the wheel trying to sort informational wheat from chaff" ([75](#)). In this labor of subjectivity, we see another way in which the girlblogger evens out her privilege: she sacrifices some of her time to curate a summative syllabus that is going to save the time of her less advantaged peers by providing them with sources that have already been peer-blessed – deemed read-able and worthwhile by someone within their demographic, who has had the time to think about it.

Alexandra Elbakyan founded Sci-Hub when she herself was a science student in a Kazakhstan university with no institutional access. She was enamored with a futurist neuroscience concept called the "global brain", in which people would be able to universally store and transmit data across minds in real time ([35](#)). The paywalls that interfered with her research became "plaques… clogging up the flow of information", leading her to unclog through the programming of Sci-Hub ([35](#)). As girlbloggers employ their subjectivity to strew seedlings of information through #ref, they, too, plumb out the oppressive dams and archaic residues placed by publishing companies and the private property they stand for. In small piratic acts on Tumblr, we see a hand reaching out that does not deny but rather plunders its privilege – for the sake of the commons, the stories untold, the ever-teeming wetness.

2.2 Girlblogger as **spider**

In his own image for conceiving of the continuity between nature and culture, Lacan lights upon a figure conventionally characterised as feminine, the spider. In the 'textual work' that emerges from her body, one can see the web-traces of a kind of writing taking form 'in which one can grasp the limits, impasses, and dead ends that show the real acceding to the symbolic'. *Writing for Lacan is a mode of becoming-spider* – as indeed it was for Deleuze, in a slightly different way. [51]

"Instead, They Danced With Joy: An Event of Love" by Udoy Hasan ([15])

View of The Cosmic Dust Spider Web Orchestra (2017), an installation by Tomás Saraceno ([48])

In the installation *The Cosmic Dust Spider Web Orchestra,* visitors find themselves part of a rhythmic ensemble. A beam of light illuminates a cloud of cosmic dust, as its augmented presence is projected in a dimly lit room. A number of cameras live record the position and velocity of the particles, as they travel through space, transforming them into notes of sound that are reproduced in a set of loudspeakers spread out across the gallery space. The frequencies produced by the elements in this composition are conveyed to a spider web, at which a spider is plucking. The vibratory movements produced by the spider in its web, are amplified through a loudspeaker that is positioned below the beam of light. The reverberation animates the particles, causing fluctuations and collisions. The interaction between the spider and the cosmic dust is expanded by the presence of the visitors in the gallery, whose movements generate new variations in this ecosystem.

Explanation of the installation by Saraceno, as given by the Museo de Arte Moderno de Buenos Aires ([43])

Antique spider web window ([94](#))

What I want to say is this: for twenty-eight years I've been carrying on a love affair with words and the world and I've come to believe that the sheer magnitude of creation blesses us. The gross numbers, the uncountability of it; as if the world were a grand, grand room full of books and though we might read all we can we will never, ever outstrip its riches. A thought both unsettling and comforting. If we are stewards of the world, we are stewards of a charge beyond our comprehension; even now science can tell us less about the number of species we have on earth than about the number of stars in our galaxy. There is something important in the idea of this fecundity, this abundance, this escape hatch for our imaginations. I have read Robert Frost's poem "Design," and I have read Gordon Grice's essay on how the black widow spider kills her prey with ten times the amount of poison she needs, and I'm not one for making teleological arguments, but I can tell you that somehow, despite our savagery, we have been over-provided for, and I believe it is a sign of love.

"Fruits We'll Never Taste, Languages We'll Never Hear: The Need for Needless Complexity" by Beth Ann Fennelly ([9](#))

10.
This is what I am: watching the spider
rebuild—"patiently", they say,

but I recognize in her
impatience—my own—

the passion to make and make again
where such unmaking reigns

the refusal to be a victim
we have lived with violence so long

Am I to go on saying
for myself, for her

This is my body,
take and destroy it?

"Natural Resources" by Adrienne Rich ([23](#))

38

In his essay "Instead, They Danced With Joy", Udoy Hasan recounts the ideas of multiple philosophers to construct a theory of productive mis-reading as *becoming-spider*. He claims that the history of thought derives from each theorist "misunderstanding" their predecessor, and in this act of fragmented translation, something new is found. In his view, our predecessors deliver us "tools in language, master-signifiers, something that Lacan called quilting points. Points where meanings converge (albeit a mirage) and bears signification" (15). Hasan's essay is itself full of these "quilting points" – it contains a wooly, jouissanced excess of quotes and references from Lacan, Deleuze, and Zizek in order to articulate itself. It is an example of what we on Tumblr call *web-weaving*, applied to academic(-ish) philosophy.

Web-weaving is the practice of joining many excerpts from poetry, literature, journalism, and sometimes also visual sources such as paintings and photographs, together in one post in order to pull out a parallel. Often, this parallel is an ode or a grievance, or both, to a beautiful part of life. Topics I found include self-recognition through strangers (96), domestic acts of care in a world that might end (95), and the relationship between light and life (74). I performed my own brief web-weaving exercise before starting this chapter, on the previous two pages, to construct a short symbolic study of the spider, and interpret Hasan's becoming-spider in my own poetic methodology. Bridget, 21, succinctly summarizes the mindset of web-weaving in my survey (75):

"I think web weaving is a pretty beautiful way of communicating an idea. It's half delivering information and half collage art, and that part makes the first part even more effective. There are all these fragments floating around, and when we link them, we get to explore new contours of the same ideas."

I think that the construction of identity has always been about collaging the ideas and imagery from people who we speak to and those we worship from afar. But with a globalized digital landscape that allows content to circulate freely and be archived vastly, young people have more, and faster, opportunities to consume a farrago of media. In a community of those interested in humanities that have grown up on books and digital content, we unearth a keen eye for *hypertextuality*. We start to notice

that unrelated texts sometimes susurrate with the same tenderness – that unnameable and ancient attempt for safety, community, and pleasure. When we find human commonality in an assortment of texts, it brings a sort of joy that can be considered radical. As Salem (who has a blog devoted to web-weaving at @digital-assemblage) points out, web-weaving is representative of "the kind of recombination that is intrinsic but is discouraged by capitalism and a profit-motive-focused culture." Since the art form of web-weaving finds its power not in original "artwork" or writing, but rather in the collage of pre-existing materials, it questions the values of singular authorship, originality, and independence that we hold highest under capitalist modes of content production. In a media landscape dictated by rules of copyright and anti-plagiarism, what does it mean to derive new meaning from textual linkages? To base identity off of lines of flight, rather than static points? To become-spider?

In the chapter "Utopic Plagiarism, Hypertextuality, and Electronic Cultural Production" of *The Electronic Disturbance* from 1994, Critical Art Ensemble claims that under post-modernity, plagiarism should be considered a key strategy for the production of text. The art group notes that the idea of the "genius" has long been overrepresented compared to the collective, continuously evolving achievements of rhizomatic networks of people. They also vouch that the values of novelty and originality in pieces of text are valued due to their ability to bring in profit for the media industry, and that in truth, "information is most useful when it interacts with other information, rather than when it is deified and presented in a vacuum" ([6]). Thus, practices that use plagiarism as a starting point for meaning-making are disobedient in their disavowal of profitable new-ness. The girlblogger's web is a criss-crossed plummet into alternative textualities, where information is recognized as a fluid tool for subjectivities, rather than something square with its proper place in the essentialist's stockroom.

While web-weaving as a mode of textual production serves electronic civil disobedience through this questioning of values, it also allows a generation of young and often marginalized girlbloggers to make and find joyful encounters with the media

of the past by repurposing it into their own ideas. These literary webs often either reboot male/white/heterocentric/hegemonic texts into new configurations or scour and compile for female, femme, queer, and -of-color subjectivities that are then re-ignited into relevance by the counterpublic. (For example, queer poets like Mary Oliver, Richard Siken, and Chen Chen are 'household names' on the girlblogger landscape.) Through these re-inventive acts, girlbloggers strengthen the possibility of self-recognition in media for marginalized young people – themselves, the mutuals that relate, mutuals-in-law, and so on, as the productive misreading transmitted by web-weaves blows across cyberspace like the spuds of a dandelion.

In her chapter "Glitch As Error" in the seminal *Glitch Feminism*, Legacy Russell highlights the importance of content remix for queer people of color: "That is the error, that is the glitch: incessant cutting and stitching, breaking and healing, as is afforded by the digital as performative material within the context of the everyday" ([24](#)). "Cutting and stitching" here invokes the reinventive potency of collage as mentioned by Bridget – we see an unlikely valorization for fragments, left-overs, and loopholes through which meaning-making is possible. Just as spiders do, girlbloggers can make their web in any untamed corner or rumpty attic. The decay of texts, for a girlblogger, bears fresh and ready ambiguities that can be scavenged for new meaning. Like the productive misunderstanding Hasan finds in philosophical history, web-weaving is a dance of rupture, in which counter-hegemonic identity is foraged out of the *error*.

2.3 Girlblogger as **lover**

mjalti:

saying: being alive is worthwhile for its
own sake because i make it so.

AUGUST 21ST +24715 VIA REBLOG • FOR ME • ON ROMANCE • ON LOVE • ON UNIVERSAL LOVE • ON SELF LOVE • WORDS

An anonymous ask about romance sent to @mjalti, to which she responds with a gifset of a guy crying ([91](#)).

I feel like much of popular media has sold us this idea of "falling in love"; of being total, immediate, helpless, and absolute in our need for another person. Romantic films oftentimes let the development of their characters fall to the dullest nadir of archetypes, whilst the two leads are constantly affirming their irreplaceable desire for each other – a desire they are passively binded to. If these characters are so boring, with such minimal signs of chemistry, what could they possibly *see* in each other? It feels almost as if love is conventionally an emergency escapism, in comparison to which, the rest of the world's beauty is faded and negated by one icon of love. When I was younger, this ideal made me think that one day, romantic love would *save* me, it would pluck me out of the droning, repetitive realm of

everyday life and forever shower me with rose petals and picnics and extra treats. Obviously, this is unrealistic. But it's more than just unrealistic – even if that kind of romantic love does happen, it's unsustainable, it's passive, and it lets you *hide*.

On Tumblr, I was introduced to several alternative definitions of love. As I navigated quotes from works by bell hooks, Erich Fromm, and David Richo, a theme came to fruition, and I was immediately converted. Rather than love being a helpless state that someone is blessed with, I began to see love as an *act*. A process, an encounter in which creation takes the forefront. Of course, there must be a fertile soil of passion to make the groundwork – but the love is not complete without the loving, without the integration of love into one's actions and thoughts. Love's possibilities had been blessed with agency all along – and the curational work of girlbloggers had opened my eyes to its jeweled gestures.

The above ask is a modern classic on Tumblr; it carries 25,000 notes at the time of writing and I feel that it truly sums up what the girlblogger mentality towards love is charged with: "being alive is worthwhile for its own sake because i make it so". It is well noted that the *cura* in "curator" derives from the Latin "to take care of". Implicit in the self-led practices of #ref, web weaving, and countless others – the opening of ask boxes for advice, the creation of tag and content directories, the use of /tw and /cw in tags – is a pedagogy of care. Content is cared for through its nomadological linking to other information and its repurpose into young, marginalized subjectivities that reignite its power. Community is cared for through the organization of this content for other's availability and use, through which girlbloggers utilise their intellectual privileges of access, time, and expertise in order to configure ready-made information for others of similar subjectivities. I still struggle to say the word *love* without automated, default, or ironic intentions, but I am risking it to say the act of blogging could be an act of loving.

In her piece on queer subcultures, Virginia Solomon uses the ideas of artists Sharon Hayes and Emily Roysdon to trace a methodology of queer love: "a lived critical engagement with and disarticulation of dominant culture" in which "appropriation and rearticulation—of occupying utterances from other times and

contexts and using them for one's own purposes" allows one into a "theater" of "politics, poetics, and aesthetics" ([28](#)). I loved this framework for how it equates love to the act of art-making, rather than any passive state. As nomadological subjects with tendencies towards wetness, girlbloggers exemplify queer love in their digital curation. Deriving content from all fields and eras, the girlblogger dismisses with a prioritization of chronology, localization, or original context, and instead stitches (to use the term Legacy Russell borrowed from micha cárdenas) together a curriculum for the play, joy, and exploration of the young, marginalized subjectivity.

The Orange

Wendy Cope

At lunchtime I bought a huge orange—
The size of it made us all laugh.
I peeled it and shared it with Robert and Dave—
They got quarters and I got a half.

And that orange, it made me so happy,
As ordinary things often do
Just lately. The shopping. A walk in the park.
This is peace and contentment. It's new.

The rest of the day was quite easy.
I did all the jobs on my list
And enjoyed them and had some time over.
I love you. I'm glad I exist.

"The Orange" by Wendy Cope, as featured in a web-weave about oranges by @modern-austen ([90](#)).

Above is the much-beloved poem "The Orange", which appears frequently in #ref posts and web weaves. It takes something very small and transforms it into a memorable joy. It also creates a feeling of agency in the sense that, *no, life isn't going to ever be perfectly sweet, and this world is full of injustice and peril, but you have the chance to stop pretending your life hasn't started yet, come out of hiding, and cultivate joy, and that*

cultivation is called love. Today I learned the word "inscendence": "the impulse not to rise above the world (transcendence) but to climb into it, seek its core" ([86](#)). I see this impulse reflected in the poetry, philosophy, and dialogue that many girlbloggers cherish – a desire to imbue everything with aching love. To root out the capitalistic idea that living itself need be mechanical or banal and that we need extra commodity thrills to charge up its meaning. Girlblogger pedagogy disobeys hegemony through the practice of joy; through both the act of finding content that sees beauty in unlikely places and the labor of organizing and redistributing that content. We don't know what the "core" of the world is, but the girlblogger believes it is love. Or rather, she dares to *make it so*.

\<wetness\>

She's learned how to be both. Have you? She's touching the rifts and moors of
a pelagic syllabary,
a sweet undone,
with the bottom of her palm, her thumbs, and the tips of her pinkies on the edge
of it all. She's left the local time and space behind for a white hole that might be God's eye. But she's not God, definitely not. Gods can't eat
Like she does. Gods can't stretch their calves out into viral water. Gods can't carry around that rapt, far-fetched infant of trust that coasts her
Towards pitiless *everything*. She's like if Venus
(that geek for endings)
chose instead to stay under that wombwater,
gleaming shell open,
never born, but always
remaking.

\</wetness\>

3. Community
Pirate feminism

"How do I know who I am until I have 'written' myself and read myself?"
– **Nabaneeta Dev Sen quoted in** *Acrobat*, **2021 (**[71](#)**)**

"I became myself, I found my body, through becoming, embodying, a glitch."
– **Legacy Russell,** *Glitch Feminism,* **2020 (**[24](#)**)**

In *Scene*, I outlined the functional flows of Tumblr and how two of its primary features, reblogging and tagging, encourage a psychic nomadism in its users. In *Character*, I explored how the girlblogger utilizes this digital landscape for curated information distribution, invoking a loving practice of libraries and webs that is ultimately a pedagogy of subjectivity. In *Community*, I trace back my digital genealogy to a word that is far older than Tumblr-variant girlblogging: cyberfeminism. Researcher Susanna Paasonen begins her "2011 piece "Revisiting Cyberfeminism" ([21](#)) with:

"Generally speaking, cyberfeminism signifies feminist appropriation of information and computer technology (ICT) on a both practical and theoretical level."

While this definition may seem clear, cyberfeminism itself presented broadly in its heat-period, the 1990s. As a term, it can be said to have originated from the art collective VNS Matrix's "Cyberfeminist Manifesto for the 21st Century" (1991) or from the work of British scholar Sadie Plant, who wrote *Zeros + Ones: Digital Women + the New Technoculture* (1996). As Paasonen notes in her overview of cyberfeminism's development, the movement presented itself through hacktivism and associated conferences, "riotgrrl" zines and blogs, and Donna Haraway-derived theory on the relationship between woman and technology ([21](#)). Paasonen notes that the term, already in 2001, has decreased in usage drastically due to the ironic humour against male dominance used by 90's cyberfeminists becoming outdated due to late capitalism's more liquid and dynamic presentations of inequality, as well as due to the utopic attitude

towards the internet losing appeal in an age of digital commodification and user surveillance. As I really couldn't paraphrase her clarity, I will quote her:

"In order to be both effective and affective, cyberfeminism would need to move beyond the negativity and reactivity of irony, and shift towards more productive engagements with contemporary technocultures in order to map out possible solutions for current social and economic inequalities that also take seriously the attraction and appeal of these very systems. This, again, is not a question of utopianism as figurations of ideal alternative societies, but one of strategies and tactics for living in the societies that we do. And if all this necessitates a move beyond both utopianism and irony, and experimentation with more positive and creative critical positions, it is fair to ask whether this kind of cyberfeminism would any longer be recognized as such."

There has been an insurgence in technology-based feminisms since the time of Paasonen's writing. As predicted, they do not don themselves "cyberfeminists", including Xenofeminism by the group Laboria Cuboniks (18) and Glitch Feminism by researcher Legacy Russell (24). These strains, while very different in their subjectivity, both focus heavily on destabilizing gender as a method of cultivating counterhegemony, as well as questioning the role of nature and the politics of bio-essentialism. They also both strongly emphasize the interplay between the digital reality and material reality, and recognize the internet as far from utopic. In this way, they take up Paasonen's call for strategies situated in overcoming interlocked systems of domination. I want to introduce another proto-strand of 21st century cyberfeminism through the pedagogy of subjectivity.

In her piece "Cyberfeminism with a Difference", Rosi Braidotti highlights the importance of "the empowerment of alternative forms of female subjectivity" in feminism(s) moving forward (3). Girlbloggers are not explicitly or exclusively female, but rather "shorthandedly" female in the sense that they are young people that feel the need to make use of counterpublics due to marginalization within primary public spaces such as schools, work, and other local networks. Taking inspiration from Legacy Russell's values queerness and gender performativity within the *Glitch Feminism* book, I choose to glitch the word "female" in this

sentence into a broader matrix of marginalized identities that make use of the digital sphere for their nurturing. Through girlblogging, marginalized young people *build* themselves using critical engagement with content. Through the act of informational blogging, they become. And become. And become. This fosters a new kind of subjectivity: a post-Deleuzian, affect-based, hyperscopic one that finds power in networked, multiplicitous symbolic language.

Mindy Seu's Cyberfeminist Index, a spread-sheet like database of cyberfeminist-related texts, and the upcoming print publication, has also greatly informed my interrogation of the relationship between feminist practice and digital pedagogy ([62](#)). Seu quotes Paasonen in two of her online talks ([66](#)) ([67](#)): "Connectivity has been called the genius of feminism." The subjectivity of the girlblogger is nothing if not connected. The practice of this subjectivity disobeys hegemony by questioning the value of single-author originality, or as Russell and Seu describe it, "the white male genius who works alone", in favor of the reblog-chain. It embraces open-access, to unclog the neuroses of the informational flow in cyberspace and, as bell hooks would say it, redistribute knowledge to *resist domination*. It weaves content in a stringed dance, eliciting an ancient connectivity and exposing the farce that is capitalism's worship of novelty. And all in all, it uses care of its information to highlight the beauty that is possible to see in our world, or rather, create with our subjectivity.

As a teen, girlblogging opened a window to other stories, histories, and frames of mind that made me realize just how much agency I have over how I use the information I consume. It taught me how to curate my own environment, as well as find beauty in many forms. Braidotti writes in her piece, "cyberfeminism needs to cultivate a culture of joy and affirmation" ([3](#)). Girlblogger practice reflects a cyberfeminist joymaking by its refusal to adhere to greediness of information or to passivity in love. Members of my survey frequently described Tumblr as a "bedroom", "museum", or "private library" ([75](#)). In this way, It gives a fertile content-soil for each user that encourages individual desire paths and experience the self-making found in independent exploration, but inevitably,

users find themselves in contact: borrowing, recontextualizing, weaving, touching. Making networked joy in the counterpublic.

I'd like to name the pedagogy of subjectivity under which girlbloggers practice as *pirate feminism*. This borrows the nomadological conception of pirates in Hakim Bey's *Pirate Utopias*, the broader history of internet piracy and pirate parties that advocate for open-access, the open-access syllabus found in the Pirate Care project, and Gary Hall's work about challenging the neoliberal model of academia, *Pirate Philosophy*. Pirate feminism can be defined as *the practice of nomadologically self-curating a personal identity through transgressive acts of information distribution and repurposing*. It shares the quality with Glitch Feminism of exploring the potential of identity construction online; however, it is explicitly a pedagogy in the sense that it centers the curation and distribution of information as the method through which one *becomes themselves*. Pirate feminism is essentially a love letter to information and its possibilities for repurposing by a marginalized subject. A quote from a post I wrote:

"I have fallen in love, it seems, with the one thing that was destined for me above all other things… the ecstasy of information… the pure rivers of information, how they are poeticized, catalogued, and reseeded by my subjectivity once they enter my bloodstream… in the midst of art school and club life i have forgotten where my computer-girl consciousness actually shines. I love coopting information and making it beautiful."

What else is there to say?

In outlining *pirate feminism*, I struggle to promote a certain set of ethics in the traditional sense of the word, as it is an inherently self-led practice that should be malleable for one's nomadic needs. However, there are two key aesthetics that factor into its practice – *excess* and *molecularity* – which shall be briefly outlined.

3.0.1 Excess
Through promoting cross-contamination of sources in which new meaning is created, pirate feminism is a space of merge and melt. With the power of subjectivity and the opposition of

essentialism, no concept has an intrinsic meaning anymore – each word bleeds over and floods out in possibilities for becoming. Amongst this crime scene of excess, a concept must be redefined for each context and each subjectivity. Through this process, one develops a taste for scavenging, and thus, for discerning. Pirate feminism is a love of the treasure trove and a defeat of the fear of the "unknown". It builds one's curational and critical eyes to handle the waters of what is not *yet* connected.

Pirate feminism is also a submission to excess and an opportunity to bathe in loose ends. Mary, 30, notes on the Tumblr practice: "Girlblogging becomes a space of inhabiting womanhood differently, a space to be wounded, intensely enamored, exhausted, quirky. All the nuances, 'the accursed share' that has to be edited out of our public persona can be reclaimed" (75). Within pirate feminism, there is no need for true cohesion or finalism. While the control found in curation is key, true power is not always being in control, but rather knowing when to turn it off. In this way, pirate feminism makes love to the excesses of the self-identity(/ies) in ways that are disobedient under a culture that worships sellability. It calls on the Kristevan idea of female jouissance, and the Bataillean conception of love, and the Deleuzian becoming-imperceptible to liberate one into fluidity. It permits one to be hungry.

3.0.2 Molecularity

Deleuze and Guattari used the "molarity" vs. "molecularity" dichotomy to describe two different ways in which a map of concepts is understood. Molarity refers to a rigid and still delineation of concepts, such as man/woman or black/white, versus molecularity "develops transitory in-progress segmentations that endlessly open processes of becoming" (22). Pirate feminism attempts to operate in molecularity by emphasizing becoming oneself, rather than being oneself. By exposing oneself to a sublime cyber landscape of information that is continuously updated, there is, for better or for worse, little possibility for stillness. Pirate feminism encourages the loss of a need for stable definition, and instead finds power in flux.

As well, pirate feminism borrows Erich Fromm's advocating for prioritization for finding identity in experience over possession

([51](#51)). In a capitalist economy that riddles one with desire to own one's identity through representative commodities, it is reclamatory to find pleasure in the act of living itself. In pirate feminism, joy is found not in ownership over information, but in the reading, reworking, and channeling of that information with one's agency. In this way, the molecular beauty of information dissemination comes into the horizon. One is able to dance in response to ephemerality, rather than build anxiety on what fragile things are organically lost.

Through these two qualities, *wetness* arrives and the domain of the informational sublime takes over. Of course, wetness is not all good. It's all horizontal, no vertical. It's stunting, in the sense that you can get lost in your own web. In his article "Networks and their Discontents", William Kherbek brings up the Soviet cybernetic programme Ogas, which he says "collapsed under the weight of its own connectivity", to exemplify how connection is a neutral term ([39](#39)). Nurtured by Tumblr and other sites of heightened wetness, I often feel like Ogas, inside of my own head. My mind works in poeticisms and parallels and deja-vu's. I find it nearly impossible to write about one thing without writing about *everything*. In fact, trying to add some semblance of chronology and line-of-reasoning to this piece was immensely difficult for me, due to the fragmented and refracting nature of my mind. However, it also has made me immensely engaged in learning about many disciplines, resourceful in my search for beauty, and, most importantly, unafraid of change. I am unafraid of change because I know intimately the pleasure of becoming. I think that is the lesson of wetness, and of pirate feminism: to find power not in ownership, brand, product, but in *process*, and the communities you encounter along the way. It's a creative love, a *wet love*. For what is love but the encounter, and what you make of it?

I contain
the knowledge
of 1,000 blogs

Hat by @february-22, posted by @heavenrushesme ([76]).

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✿ Memes, textposts, and artifacts

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Here are the citation templates I created for Tumblr content.

Post on an OP's blog
@OPuser. (Day Month Year of posting.) "First sentence of post." Blog title *if existent*, Tumblr. Available at: hyperlink (Accessed Day Month Year).

Post on someone else's blog
@OPuser. (Day Month Year *of this version of the post, not the OP.*) "First sentence of post" in #tag by @thisbloguser. Blog title *if existent; of this blog, not the OP's*, Tumblr. Available at: hyperlink (Accessed Day Month Year).

Tag

@user. (Year-Year *if known*.) #tag. Blog title *if existent*, Tumblr. Available at: [hyperlink](#) (Accessed Day Month Year).

Entire Blog

@user. Blog title *if existent*, Tumblr. Available at: [hyperlink](#) (Accessed Day Month Year).

I also mirrored these formats in citations for other social media platforms.

*
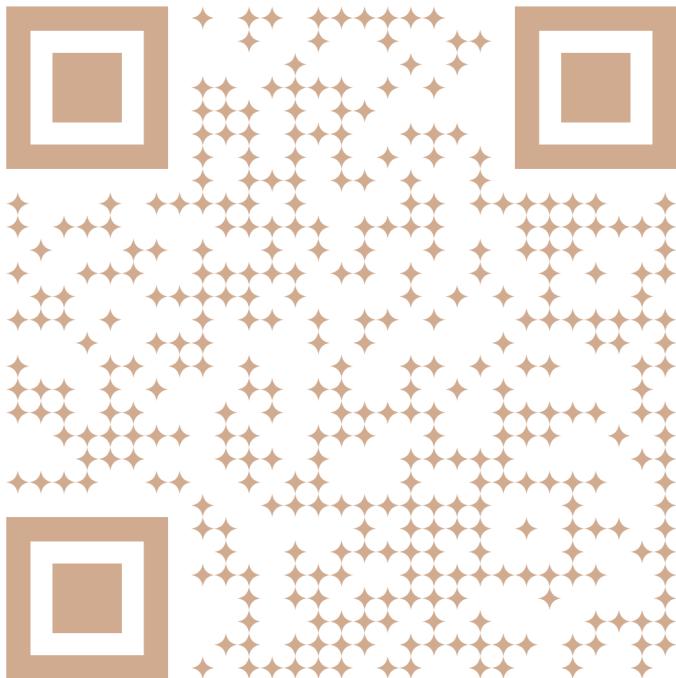
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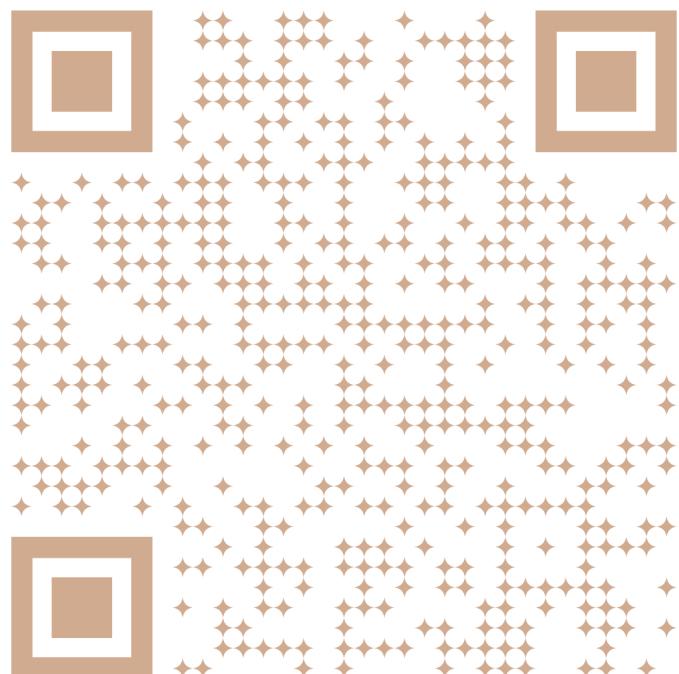
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#diss, a tag on my Tumblr blog that diaries the dissertation process.

"I'm like a pdf but a girl" Are.na masterfolder with subchannels for every section of the bibliography. Also contains a digital version of this document and supplementary materials.

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About the writer

My name is Ester. I am currently finishing my BA in arts criticism at Central Saint Martins. I am not a 'creative' or a 'content creator' or an 'artist'. I am a princess and tumblrina. I am interested in rapturous writing, technologies of sensuality, the National Gallery, curatorial sex, chess, reflexive pedagogy, becoming an earth-god, and the future. I want to be the queer lovechild of David Foster Wallace and Helene Cixous.

My work is inspired by intersectional strains of Left accelerationism which have a hopeful view to the liberatory potential of technology. Through my writing and self-characterization, I worldbuild a window to a post-wage labor life where lingering, self-mythologizing, poeticizing, co-creating, and pondering can form part of our daily habits – where the capacity for dreaming is not regarded as distractive or inefficient, but rather as a panacea (maybe the only one out there) that animates our cyclical nature. I write for people who saved themselves through dreaming, whether it was through novels or video games or, well, Tumblr. I write to fight for eroticism, luxury, and time – the time to play and dance and love, both on their own and with others, that I believe everyone deserves. Languidness is freedom.
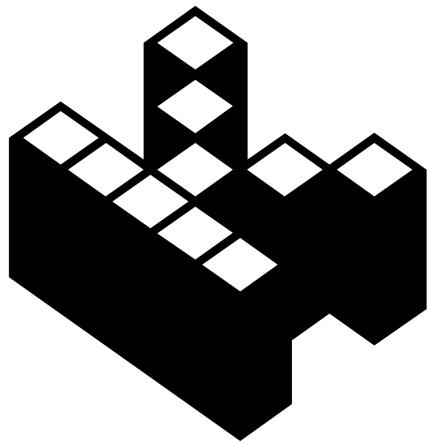
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@stargir1z
On Instagram and Tumblr
(with a number 1, not an l)

Please distribute and quote the content of this piece freely. However, I would appreciate my name, Ester Freider, being acknowledged for direct quotations of my writing, as well as terms such as 'girlblogging', 'wetness', and 'pirate feminism', that I created or repurposed through my theorization.