

This talk has been reworked into a paper: Abrahams, Annie and Guez, Emmanuel (2019) ““The machinic author” Artist’s Statement: The Reading Club”, *Journal of Creative Writing Studies*: Vol. 4: Iss.1, Article 8. ISSN: 2474-2937. Available at: <https://scholarworks.rit.edu/jcws/vol4/iss1/8>

slide 1

Diffraction Reading in the Reading Club

reflection and refraction only displace/mirror, never bring a radical new viewpoint

Communication eloCork 2019.
Annie Abrahams. Independent artist.

slide 2

We nooses tous des bastardi elettronici che usano lingue globali

Reading Club session during eloPorto2017. July 21 2017.
Ours Lingages by Annie Abrahams (translation Rui Torres).
With as reariters: Lily Robert-Foley, Camille Bloomfield, Jonathan Baillehache and Jan de Weille.

Reading Club

Info
Archives

Performances Reading Club Saison 1

À venir

Archives

June 20 2019 8:15 pm (UTC+01:00)	lingagens Lancaster University Infos
16 juin 2018	Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris + en ligne Encodées Infos
Nov. 1 2017	SCRIPTING THE OTHER Apparatus_is {Other-s} Infos
21-07-2017 10.15 pm	Ours Lingages - ELO 2017 Mosteiro de São Bento da Vitória, Porto. Infos

Reading Club is an ongoing project by Emmanuel Guez and Annie Abrahams started in 2013.

<http://readingclub.fr/events/5956491d9da50cf70d000004/0/text>

click (cinematic archive of the performance as backdrop) + read
In this communication I would like to discuss referring, to Karen Barad, Donna Haraway and Iris van der Tuin among others, how the Reading Club can be considered an example of

a diffractive reading and writing practice.

From 2013, I have been working with Emmanuel Guez on a project called the Reading Club. It is an online venue for collaborative reading and writing, both of which occur within a precisely defined framework. "Rearriters" are invited to read a given text and to rewrite it within a set number of characters. The public also gets involved, reading and commenting in a chat field. Performances have been held in various languages (sometimes simultaneously), including code.

Show event page - original text of *We nooses...* - chat window, public voice, logfile - cinematographic archive

slide 3
explain colors - no colors, char settings, min max, duration, speed.

The screenshot shows the Reading Club interface. On the left is a navigation menu with 'Reading Club' at the top, followed by 'Info', 'Archives', 'CONNECTED AS ANNIE', 'Users', 'Pads' (highlighted), 'Chat', 'Events', 'Pages', and 'Logout'. The main area is titled 'Pads / Edit lingagens [stopped]'. It has tabs for 'Info' and 'Users'. Under 'Info', there's a 'Name' field with 'lingagens', an 'Initial Text' field with a paragraph of Hungarian text, and a 'Text limits' section with 'Enable colors' (unchecked), 'Timeline speed' (300), 'Duration' (20), 'Minimum length' (200), and 'Maximum length' (1500). On the right, there's a code editor showing JavaScript code for a 'lingagens' pad, including a 'prompt_name' function and a 'var text' variable. Below the code editor is a 'Text limits' section with 'Enable colors' (unchecked), 'Duration' (20), 'Timeline speed' (300), 'Minimum length' (200), and 'Maximum length' (1500).

slide 4

an intertextual playground,
a laboratory
and an
interpretive arena

read

The Reading Club (the interface is an adaption by Clement Charmet of the collective writing tool called etherpad – code is on git hub) was originally announced as, all at once **an intertextual playground, a laboratory and an interpretive arena**. It was meant to be a device to explore collaborative reading on the web and to test (once more) the status of the authors.

slide 5

enabling constraints = sets of designed constraints that are meant to create specific conditions for creative interaction where something is set to happen, but there is no preconceived notion of exactly what the outcome will be or should be.

Joel McKim, *Of Microperception and Micropolitics, An Interview with Brian Massumi*, INFLExions No. 3, October 2009. http://www.inflexions.org/n3_massumihtml.html

read

But it is more. Through the admin settings the Reading Club's interface becomes an acting partner in the writing : it doesn't write itself, but it “makes” the writing. These settings function as what Brian Massumi and Erin Manning call “enabling constraints”: “sets of designed constraints that are meant to create specific conditions for creative interaction where something is set to happen, but there is no preconceived notion of exactly what the outcome will be or should be.”

The screenshot shows a web page with a colorful header and a main text area. The text discusses the Reading Club's performance and its digital nature. It mentions that the club is a project started by Emmanuel Guetz and Annie Abrahams in 2013, involving more than 40 different readers in English and French. The text describes the club as a space for collaborative reading and writing, where participants interact with the text and each other in real-time.

The screenshot shows the Reading Club interface with a dark theme. It displays the title 'Reading Club Performances Reading Club Saison 1' and the date '21 November 2015'. The interface includes sections for 'READING CLUB', 'EMMANUEL GUETZ AND ANNIE ABRAHAMS', 'MONTPELLIER, AVIGNON, FRANCE', 'BEGIN', 'AUTHORS', 'STATEMENT', 'METADATA', and 'EDITORIAL STATEMENT'. The metadata section lists the year as 2013, the language as French and English, and keywords as Oulipo, Networked, and Performance. The editorial statement section describes the club's purpose and the collaborative nature of the reading and writing process.

slide 6

read

The Reading Club has been included in an exhibition at The Jeu de Paume in Paris in 2013 and the Electronic Literature Collection Vol 3 in 2016. You can find its code on git hub. The Reading Club is a complex apparatus where text is floating, always changing, never the same. Text in the Reading Club is performing and moving, literally pushed around and also emotionally touching. Reariters are subjected to stress by the act of writing, implying deletion and addition. When a reariter erases another reariter, this is "felt". The reariters have no steady ground in the evolving text. They are continuously scanning their screen for interesting gaps, to be only very temporarily capable of introducing something, of making a mark in the stuttering story with no end. However, the limited time frame of each session interrupts the reariting process and brings it to an artificial end: a stop, that is not really one, because afterwards everyone can replay each session in an endless loop.

slide 7

Apparatus_is {Other-s} ... Session of the [Reading Club](#) in the frame of *Scripting the Other*, November 1st 2017. Reariters: Renee Carmichael, Emmanuel Guez, Nick Montfort, Zombectro. Original text by Annie Abrahams.

The screenshot shows the 'Reading Club' website interface. On the left, there is a vertical navigation menu with 'Info' and 'Archives' options. The main content area is titled 'Performances Reading Club Saison 1' and 'À venir'. Below this, there is a section for 'Archives' listing several past performances:

Date	Event Name	Location
June 20 2019 8:15 pm (UTC+01:00)	lingagens	Lancaster University
16 juin 2018	Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris + en ligne	Encodées
Nov. 1 2017	SCRIPTING THE OTHER	Apparatus_is {Other-s}
21-07-2017 10:15 pm	Ours Lingages - ELO 2017	Mosteiro de São Bento da Vitória, Porto.

Apparatus <http://readingclub.fr/events/59b26eef7c5ee7931f000003/0/fullscreen>
click + read

Because of the texts changing nature, thinking, through reading and writing, in the Reading Club can not be reflective. Moreover, inside the apparatus, it is not really clear what is causing what; where agency lies - the interaction is not between a few clearly distinguishable entities, but from within a whole, where interface, individual computers and keyboard characteristics, server conditions, as well as the original text, the words of the co-performers, the local light conditions and family situations are all entangled in what Karen Barad, theoretician and physician, would call the phenomenon of **intra-action**. Barad uses quantum physics to articulate a feminist view on the philosophy of science. She builds on Donna Haraway and Niels Bohr.

slide 8 + read

The surprise of an interpellation or of affect is taken to be a moment of insight that is of importance for the production of knowledge.

” Diffraction” by Iris van der Tuin in Posthuman Glossary, Bloomsbury Publishing Plc London New York, Editors Rosi Braidotti, Maria Hlavajova, p100.

slide 9

Diffraction does not produce “the same” displaced, as reflection and refraction do. Diffraction is a mapping of interference, not of replication, reflection, or reproduction.

The Promises of Monsters: A Regenerative Politics for Inappropriate/d Others Donna Jeanne Haraway, Routledge, 1992.

read

Thinking in/with the Reading Club is necessarily diffractive. “Diffraction”, says Haraway, “does not produce ‘the same’ displaced, as reflection and refraction do. Diffraction is a mapping of interference, not of replication, reflection, or reproduction.”

Thus the Reading Club manifests itself as a facilitator for a diffractive, distributed intelligence on-the-fly, creating text and relational patterns that do not depend on canons. It generates creative and unexpected “outcomes”. These are, in my opinion, not so much the texts produced, as the “diffractive moments” experienced by the reariters.

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” Diffraction” by Iris van der Tuin in *Posthuman Glossary*, Bloomsbury Publishing Plc London New York, Editors Rosi Braidotti, Maria Hlavajova, p100.

read

Van der Tuin in the *Posthuman Glossary* states concerning these diffractive moments: “The surprise of an interpellation or of affect is taken to be a moment of insight that is of importance for the production of knowledge.”

slide 11

Reariters have to **leave the self-centered reflective habits** of the classical writer, and accept the posture of a simple component who will never have an overview, but can **share in a dialogically reariting through one another with the hard-and-software.**

With their audience they are led **out of self reflexivity, out of systemised subjectivity**, out of a world that only reproduces what they already know into an intra-active “worlding”.

What is a worlding? What is an –ing? Does the addition of a suffix –ing denoting the verbal noun phrase shift the world from a being to a doing; to a gerundive and generative process?

Helen Palmer and Vicky Hunter 16 03 2018 <http://newmaterialism.eu/almanac/w/worlding>

read

Reariters have to leave the self-centred reflective habits of the classical writer, and to accept the posture of a simple component who will never have an overview, but can share in a

