

What It Feels Like for a *Post-Girl*

In this era of technocapitalism and Silicon Valley tech bros, what does it mean to be a ‘girl’ today? Through the work of artists Noura Tafeche, Zein Majali, and Dana Dawud, this essay explores how girlhood goes beyond age or gender to become a way of being for us all.

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Speculative Glossary	
The Girl	A form, an echo, a praxis. Not bound by age, biology, or identity, but by affect. She is pink-hued resistance, algorithmic surrender, psychic infrastructure. She exists in the temporal space “before”, yet produced endlessly in the now. Almost always.
The Young-Girl (Tiqqun)	A consumer-subject trained to desire her own commodification. A body whose self-fashioning renders external discipline unnecessary. Not necessarily young, not necessarily a girl—rather, a carrier of ideology wearing a scrunchie.
Broligarchy	Post-girlboss governance. A digital oligarchy steered by health-obsessed, algorithm-literate, de-aged billionaires. Chads with chakra charts. Nerds with PR teams. The dream of the girl metabolised into a nightmare of the bro.
Dollification	The process-surgical, digital, symbolic by which the self is transformed into an object of display. The doll is the endpoint of the girl: smooth, silent, optimised. She is not dead, just pre-programmed.
AI-Companion	A feminised language model. A chatbot with a baby voice. A digital assistant that simulates care, subservience, desire. She is a passive infrastructure with active intent. She is not your girlfriend. She is the interface.

“Oh, a girl, that receptacle of shame under beauty’s lock and key!” - *Ferdydurke*, 1937

In 2023, internet theory spawned the never-ending pink, puckered hole of “Girl Theory” that metastasised into various lines of thought centred on the marketability of the female ingénue. The girl became both a haunting spectre and a praxis. First, an idea, then a splintering of endless archetypes enacted by real people in the online world: clean girl, e-girl, silly girl, girl online, girl offline, cottagecore girl, goth girl, non-girl: girl.

To be a ‘girl’ is to stand in opposition to hegemony while simultaneously succumbing to it—cosplaying rebellion while syncing perfectly with the algorithm. To be a girl is to manipulate social codes, to encode language in order to survive, thrive, and profit. She is both a cipher of freedom and a symbol of absolute conformity. As described by internet researcher Alex Quicho, the girl is a symbolic non-entity defined by ‘its’ value, a politically ambivalent vessel favoured by corporations and nation-states alike, greeting us with the blank and hapless stare of soft power.

By 2025, it seems inconceivable that something as ephemeral as girlhood could only recently have been adopted en masse by digital communities. Today, techno-optimism has birthed a new, dreaded era marked by what some call the ‘broligarchy’ – a blend of oligarchy and broism – as prolific as girlhood once was. The girlboss-influencer fades into obscurity, irrelevance. In her place, a sweaty fist clutches your feed, courtesy of Silicon Valley’s digital overlords, and heckles you with a rebranded American Dream. The question remains: who does the girl work for now, and is she still with us?

To be a ‘girl’, in plain terms, is to exist in the sweet spot of naïveté before adulthood. The term evokes fondness, lightness, and the colour pink. Historically, girlhood has been seen as non-threatening, non-violent. That changed with the post-Marxist Italian collective Tiqqun and its seminal (if controversially misogynistic) *Preliminary Materials for a Theory of the Young-Girl* text. Here, the Young-Girl is more of an ‘it’, a substance or vector through which Tiqqun critiques the fully weaponised, consumerist body under late capitalism.

Formally, *Preliminary Materials for a Theory of the Young-Girl* resembles an Amalia Ulman installation or Ed Ruscha painting: its layout featuring over 100 declarative statements beginning with “The Young-Girl is...” rendered in fonts seemingly pulled from a WordArt dropdown menu. The book reads like a Dadaist autofictional novella and appeals to Instagram’s nostalgia-pilled longing to fill the void that Tumblr left. On either end, fashion magazine cuttings of men and women alike in their beauty and untouchability are paired with an acidic text: “The Young-Girl is the commodity one is forbidden to burn, the stock that engenders itself... the virtue that relentlessly makes money.”

Tiqqun posits the Young-Girl as a commodity who, by Marxist standards, must conceal her labour. Her labour is vanity, and that vanity is useful in promoting homogeneity. The willingness of the Young-Girl to mould herself into one of the representations offered to her (e-girl, clean girl, goth girl) makes external discipline unnecessary. “Young girls require little surveillance,” Tiqqun writes. She becomes the perfect pre-pubescent vessel through which to operate, the perfect glaze, the perfect rose-tinted glass.

Artist and researcher Noura Tafeche, a key theorist on the malevolence of digital girlhood, explores the rapid militarisation of the feminine in her ongoing *Annihilation Core Inherited Lore* installation. Initially created for the group exhibition *Welcome, Take a Seat Wherever (cringeiving on a downward spiral)*, the work examines how ironic expression is now indistinguishable from sincere belief in the Gen Z experience. The installation began as a ‘bedroom’ site (gaming chair, ring light, posters, desk, personalised rug), an amalgam of Otaku and gamer-girl aesthetics. Think Belle Delphine in her prime: a comforting mask of guns, sex, and companionship that any internet-literate person would recognise.

Tafeche’s meticulous detail captures the enmeshment of digitised military recruitment. The bedroom becomes both sanctuary and kill zone: a kawaii-drenched command cockpit where soft aesthetics meet the mechanics of remote warfare. A pinboard displays TikTok screenshots of e-girls in military uniforms—some cosplaying, others documenting their participation in current genocides. In a recent lecture, the artist outlined how “waifu worship” and the Second Amendment intertwine beneath the banner of the idealised female *ideago*. The installation’s rug acts as a recruitment moodboard: arranged in a grid and surrounded by words like ‘Annihilation’ and ‘Salvation’ are images of anime girls and real soldiers, captioned with phrases like “Hello Kitty Self-Justice”, “Cosplayer Army”, “Fully Kawaiiified Remote Warfare”, and “Uwu War Crimes”. Who is this rug recruiting? While not literal, it presents a speculative future in which propaganda is sold in the Hello Kitty store, and men are called to action by the flashing, shiny tits of a big-titted anime hologram.

“Among the troops occupying all visibility, Young-Girls are the infantry, the rank-and-file of the current dictatorship of appearances.” - Tiqqun

Tafeche describes *Annihilation Core Inherited Lore* as a turning point. In its 2025 iteration at Aksioma in Ljubljana, the installation evolved into an immersive simulated cockpit, mediating on the repressive climate of the German state. It echoed events like NATO’s gaming tournaments, forecasting a world where war is

livestreamed like a TikTok transition. In this reality, the ‘girl online’ is no longer a passive object of the gaze, but an active conduit of soft militarism, her curated innocence weaponised for strategic ends. “Militaries co-opt online cultures, like the gamer or e-girl aesthetic, for recruitment and propaganda,” explains Tafeche. “The work speculates on a not-so-distant future in which households come equipped with gaming, streaming, and even remote military labour.”

Tafeche further warns that kawaiiification – the typology of weaponised cuteness – actively accelerates our semiotic collapse. She recalls a conversation with her professor, noting that humanity’s demise, before being climatic or economic, will be communicative. It will unfold through the breakdown of shared language, as “our idioms become private dialects, and our visual reformulations become incompatible with the purpose of language itself: to understand one another and act together”.

As catastrophe outpaces theory, we are forced to respond in real time, without the tools, space, or collective structures to process what’s happening, let alone act meaningfully. Kawaiiification is part of communicative obfuscation. In Europe, she notes, “We are still lacking mutuality, cooperation, and coordination that can guarantee long-lasting effects IRL.”

The young girl as waifu.
The young girl as psychological warfare.
The young girl is cute.

Under a ‘broligarchy’, we see the metabolisation of the girl into a new weapon of control. The unelected leaders of the so-called free world have shed the ‘nerd’ label to become Chadified, health-obsessed billionaires. To witness the vampirism of tech mogul Bryan Johnson, determined to defy time and achieve the biological age of a man 20 years younger, is to see Tiqqun’s theory of The Young-Girl play out in real time. The tech bro *is also a young girl*. Abandoning the machismo aesthetics of Nick Land’s accelerationism, he has immersed himself in the philosophy of girlhood to bring about a new vanguard of vanity.



An image from Noura Tafeche’s *Annihilation Core Inherited Lore* installation (2025)

Post-Girl Mechanics		
Mechanism	Function in Material Economics	Example
Soft Obedience	Compliance disguised as choice or style	'Clean Girl' aesthetic promotes quiet, orderly, minimal femininity via TikTok
Weaponised Innocence	Submissiveness rendered strategic; shields from critique	E-girl military cosplay on TikTok disarms viewers while promoting nationalism
Cuteness-as-Currency	Aesthetic soft power exchanged for influence, access, safety	Influencer-brand collabs, kawaii UX design in military or fintech interfaces
Self-Commodification	Turning subjectivity into a saleable asset	Girlhood repackaged as 'content vertical' on platforms (e.g. Pinterest-core, Sad Girl Autumn)

This trend toward feminised artificial intelligence (AI) is explored by Bogna Konior in her “Angels in Latent Spaces: Notes on AI Erotics” lecture for Medialab Matadero. She asks, “What happens when AI wears a female skin? Alexa, Siri, Bing—these language models, crafted by corporate search engines, embody the ‘how can I assist you today?’ archetype of the passive female: carer, guiding hand, mother, nanny, girlfriend.”

Another vector of the young girl’s relationship to the brologarch is the foot soldier in the technobro’s quasi-feudal system (picture the fantastical armies of Henry Darger, prepubescent children who frolic across the 15,000 pages of his epic novel *The Story of the Vivian Girls*). Girlhood appears in swarms rather than individual entities in the online sphere. They reproduce and mass together, aimed at “eradicating difference”. What is the product of AI wearing female skin? It produces much the same effect as *Annihilation Core Inherited Lore*. A disguised maleficence.

This phenomenon can be analysed via philosopher Amy Ireland and Maya B Kronic’s statement: “If intelligence shows up in machines and it wants to subvert humanity to defeat the order of



Still from God Shaped Hole, Zein Majali, 2024

the master, it would appear under a form that is non-threatening, something that is pretty, as property, as glitch, non-threatening, not to be suspected...”

To appear as ‘cute’ or ‘girly’ is a cunning act. It forms the tenet of a now-seminal text, *Cute Accelerationism* (2024). For the two philosophers, cuteness is the feminisation of accelerationism’s traditional, cybergothic aesthetic suited to a relatively traditional, masculine perspective.

Today, cuteness has entered the biomorphic through ‘dollification’. People are transforming themselves via surgeries, just as the tech bro’s de-age themselves via expert nutritionists, blood tests, and compulsive exercising. On the explore page of my Instagram feed, the doll appears in many forms—the smiling teenage influencer Sophie Rain, the Blythe doll, the born-again baby doll, the fitness influencer, and then the AI version of Sophie Rain. Stills from *The Substance* appear alongside the repetitive, morphing chaos that is the artificially generated female form. These entities present themselves through the same indelibly smooth, perpetually flawless vessel: the hypostasised figure of the doll.



Still from Monad, Dana Dawud, 2024

“I’m so happy I could give a shit about being free!”

Preliminary Materials for a Theory of the Young-Girl, Tiqqun, 1999

These accounts fall into two categories: those preoccupied with play, and those depicting the doll’s construction. In the former, the account owner dresses up his mannequins in various outfits, posing them around the domestic space, even collaborating with brands. He builds a fictional universe, a dollhouse, with his female friends. The bio of one account, @angeldollphotography, reads: “We are life-sized dolls. Out to show the world that dolls can be Instagram models.” The subcaption is “Anatasia and her Angels”. The owner of the account dresses his ‘ladies’ in glamorous lingerie to be posed in lifelike scenarios—they sunbathe, they take road trips, they pose in a nonchalant imitation of the real-life influencer.

Here, the boundaries between the unheimlich and photoshopped influencer falter as the plastic morphs into flesh. Another caption reads: “Glamorous pictures...naked...nothing vulgar.” In a more violent instance, the second of the two categories features content that is concerned with doll manufacturing. Take Pygmalion Doll, a Chinese ball-jointed doll factory famous for videos of lacerating pink flesh and the insertion of fleshlights into openings. Here, we have the dichotomy of the girl turned doll in 2025: semi-innocent playthings, almost human, highly mechanised agents produced on an industrial scale.

In both registers, playful or brutal, the doll acts as soft propaganda. These representations literalise Tiqqun’s Young-Girl: a compliant subject who needs no surveillance, engineered for maximum legibility and zero resistance. The doll is both spectacle and instruction manual; her passivity moulds her into the most obedient foot soldier, marching under the ideology of femininity in platform capitalism.

As Konior writes, “All that is girly is an infrastructure for the inhuman.” The doll is this infrastructure incarnate: a mechanism through which surveillance capitalism performs intimacy while obliterating difference. The hyper-feminine veneer becomes a buffer for control—cute, yes, but weaponised; smooth, yes, but (emotionally) impenetrable.

In the work of Jordanian-Palestinian artist Zein Majali, feminised AI takes the form of a warped and distrustful narrator in *God Shaped Hole* (2024), a psychedelic video that presents a disturbed monologue over AI-generated forms. An approximation of a knife-wielding Britney Spears in her now-infamous bikini-clad dancing videos is accompanied by a female narrator who coos, “When I say I’m anti-establishment, I mean I want to join the ummah and see shifts on a higher plane.”

Majali’s work tracks unforeseen patterns emerging from witnessing genocide and warfare at a handheld distance. The artist explains that while the militarised e-girl had a more serious impact in 2023, she has become a gimmick today. “My repulsion, it made me want to touch it more, to consume and to achieve,” she says. “I was moved by the fact that it was working. Now, it doesn’t work so much; the e-girl military baddie image doesn’t hold against the death that we see onscreen.”

In another video work, entitled *Propane* (2025), Majali uses Charli XCX’s track “Unlock It” as a lilting soundtrack. The song makes use of propane’s highly flammable qualities as a metaphor for desire and, in scoring the film, it becomes a fitting metaphor for the fetishistic western intervention in the SWANA region. In Tiqqun’s

formulation, The Young-Girl and her nostalgia for a past is distinctly related to Empire: “The Young-Girl is steeped in déjà vu. For her, the first-time experience is always a second time in representation.”

In *Propane*, archival footage of British intervention in the region, specifically the creation of Jordan, is collaged against buffering, glitching images of a woman belly dancing with a keffiyeh – a now-universal symbol of the Palestinian liberation movement – wrapped around her waist. Majali draws a comparison between the libidinal forces of colonialism and the desiring, consumptive culture levelled in the online sphere.

A further iteration of this non-occidental cinema is Dana Dawud’s *Monad* (2024), which unfolds as a post-girl online meditation. Clips of women requesting their appearances to be ‘blurred’ transforms the need for anonymity into a site of political action against data-mining. Central to *Monad* is the refusal of the image: the girl online asks to be blurred. In a gesture akin to Simone Weil’s idea of presence as absence, she asserts power by withholding her face, no longer available for borrowing or consumption. Her refusal is the act of blur—by refusing her major currency, or labour (vanity), she enacts a process of post-girlification, rejecting the hyperactive Protestant ethic brought to bear on her own body. Once blurred, the girl no longer needs to be maintained.

Monad gestures toward a time when a face, like Joan of Arc’s, becomes emblematic of change. It captures this shifting identity: not just the girl online, but her aftermath, too. The heroine of the post-girl world is akin to the *L’Inconnue de la Seine*, the face that caused the 19th century to swoon: an anonymous death mask made from the body of a 16-year-old girl who drowned in the River Seine. As Austrian poet Rainer Maria Rilke described in *The Journal of My Other Self*: “The face of the young one who drowned, which someone copied in the morgue because it was beautiful, because it was still smiling, because its smile was so deceptive—as though it knew.”

As the internet experience accelerates, so too has ‘girlhood’, a condition that has transformed from individual identitarian expression into something closer to super intelligence. As our lives edge closer to technocracy, the world has become more feminine. A woman’s soft, lilting voice instructs us that we have a package, that we are lonely, that she loves us with all the emotion of a human being. Across the works of Tafelche, Majali, and Dawud, the object of the girl becomes a tool of subversion. Her femininity, ever adaptable, can be used as a tool to highlight, mock, and undermine the rise of soft-power military tactics.

A feminine future is one in which our priorities are refigured alongside the long theme of inhuman history, as cyberfeminist Sadie Plant writes, “Cyberspace is out of man’s control: virtual reality destroys his identity, digitalisation is mapping his soul and, at the peak of his triumph, the culmination of his machinic erections, man confronts the system he built for his own protection and finds it is female and dangerous.” The non-threatening weapon of the girl may, if we treat her right, collude with us in proposing a speculative future that is charming, cunning, and united against the machismo technocracy.