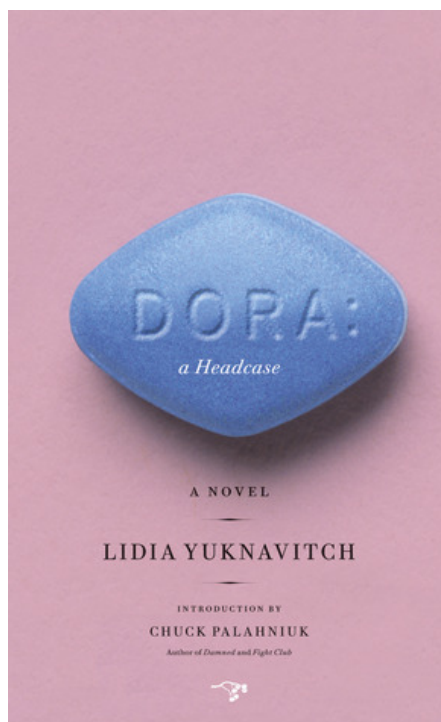




Dora: A Headcase

Lidia Yuknavitch , Chuck Palahniuk (Introduction)

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Ida needs a shrink . . . or so her philandering father thinks, and he sends her to a Seattle psychiatrist. Immediately wise to the head games of her new shrink, whom she nicknames Siggy, Ida begins a coming-of-age journey. At the beginning of her therapy, Ida, whose alter ego is Dora, and her small posse of pals engage in "art attacks." Ida's in love with her friend Obsidian, but when she gets close to intimacy, she faints or loses her voice. Ida and her friends hatch a plan to secretly film Siggy and make an experimental art film. But something goes wrong at a crucial moment—at a nearby hospital Ida finds her father suffering a heart attack. While Ida loses her voice, a rough cut of her experimental film has gone viral, and unethical media agents are hunting her down. A chase ensues in which everyone wants what Ida has.

Dora: A Headcase Details

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From Reader Review Dora: A Headcase for online ebook

jo says

this is extraordinary and beautiful. i can see how it may not be everyone's cup of tea -- kind of the same reason why, say, virginia woolf is not everyone's cup of tea. there are writers who are utterly and unflinchingly original. this is nothing if not unflinching. it doesn't hold anything back. it says what it has to say and it doesn't mince words.

i hope to be able to write a longer review soon. my one suggestion, if you read it, is to read freud's *Dora: An Analysis of a Case of Hysteria*. your reading of this book will be all the richer and fuller.

P.S. don't listen to chuck palahniuk. you cannot possibly compare this book to a boybook. there is a quantum leap in operation that prevents comparison. this is a girlbook (NOT a girlybook) through and through. also, honestly, i wouldn't know what book to compare it to. it's its own very lovely, very shocking book.

so let me try to say more. lidia yuknavitch has clearly studied the heck out of freud's most famous case study. two of freud's major faults in his treatment of dora are a. silly interpretative moves and b. *not believing dora*. yuknavitch tackles those faults head on. she leaves all the interpretations intact (all freud's quotes are from the *Analysis*) and puts them in front of a very sad but extremely spunky, ballsy, and angry 16 year old (am i getting the age right?). the circumstances of ida/dora's life are pretty much the same in the two works, with full update to the 21st century in Y's rendition: super sad mother who's given up on life and daughter, super self-involved father engaged in an unsavory affair, shocking turn of events in which the father basically sells the daughter to his lover's husband in order to keep things quietly humming along.

this whole drama, in freud's analysis and in yuknavitch's rendition, is reproduced on dora's body. dora has problems with her voice, which comes and goes at will. in one great line (in Y's book) dora says, "My silence? It's what kept the house in order." and here let me say that i love the way Y deals with the silencing of girls who know and feel "too much." yes, dora loses her voice (then gets it again, then loses it again, etc.), but she doesn't go down. she fights back by incessantly recording other people's voices with a super duper digital recorder, and by creating films in which the voices of others (stupid voices, ordinary voices, regular city noise, etc.) form the soundtrack. when she does have her voice, dora is the most mouthy, offensive, obscene teenager you've ever met. this has shocked some readers, especially given the fact that the book is written in dora's voice so the offensiveness is not only between quotes but also in the narrative.

but that's how dora speaks. that's how dora gets mad. that's how dora fights the manipulation of adults and freud's relentless attempts at subjugating her sexuality in the name of a sexist view of things in which penises are very powerful and attractive objects and vaginas are very meek and passive objects. dora is not politically correct. not even close. dora is sixteen and hurt and angry.

dora also cuts herself. her cuts are not just injury: they are *writing*. she writes a new body on her own body. she writes her voice on her body. she doesn't have much to make herself heard, at least to herself, and she uses it to the max.

dora has a wonderful girlfriend whom she adores but with whom she can't make love, or ever make out, because the terrible "transgression" of expressing a woman-on-woman, or simply a female sexuality causes her to pass out.

in the meantime, freud is not a complete asshole. after all, he's the only adult in authority who pays any attention at all (though dora has a little posse of great, queer, allegedly marginalized friends who are family and salvation and home). so there are some nice moments between dora and sig, alongside some entirely cringe-making moments which you might or might not be able to endure.

as someone who loves psychoanalysis i was happy to see that it wasn't entirely thrown under the bus. freud (the real-life guy) really screwed up with dora, but psychoanalysts (some of them at least) have learned a thing or two between then and now, and they are some of the few mental health professionals who still listen, and pay attention, and hear you.

underneath all of dora's spunk, or alongside it, there's a ton of pain: the pain of abandonment by her parents, the pain of denial of her sexuality, the pain of the utter silencing of her self. i have the impression one or two or a thousand girls and boys might find themselves in dora and say, with her, fuck yeah. cuz kids nowadays, and perhaps always, need all the help they can get.

here's a really excellent word of advice, straight out of dora's mouth, for every adult who finds him or herself in a position of helping kids, especially girl kids, and maybe girl non-kids too: "Um, brainbuster? Next time you work with a female? Ask her which city her body is. Or ocean. Give her poetry books written by women. Like Sylvia Plath and Anne Sexton and H.D. and Adrienne Rich and Mary Oliver and Emily Dickinson. Let her draw or pain or sign a self before. You. Say. A. Word."

finally, i want to say that this book's language will bring tear of joy to your eyes. also: it's really hilarious. like, LOL hilarious. and heartbreaking. and still hilarious.

Bilge B says

Dili içten, samimi ve ak?c?yd?. Biraz güldüm biraz üzüldüm. Daha yava? akan, s?k?c? bir ?ey bulmay? bekliyordum öyle olmad?. Biraz kurcalad?m orijinal vakay?, ana hatlar? oldu?u gibi ancak ayr?nt?lar? ne kadar gerçe?e sad?k kalm?? bilemiyorum hikayenin o kadar detayl? bakamad?m henüz. O sebeple detaylar?n kurgu oldu?unu varsay?yorum.

Günümüzde ya da birkaç y?l öncesinde günümüzden geçiyor kitap, bunu da beklemiyordum, Mac ve iPhone falan görünce ?a?? oldum bir an.

Güzeldi, okumas? keyifliydi ve bunun yan?nda insanda gerçek hikayeyi ara?t?rma iste?i b?rak?yor, o aç?dan da çok ba?ar?l? oldu?unu dü?ünüyorum.

Nicole Cleary says

I love fast paced stories with strong female voice, dark pathos, resilience, bold sexuality, and wicked humor. Dora: a Headcase has it all! Like Lidia's earlier work (The Chronology of Water), this book provoked a lot of thinking about "mental illness". Whereas it would be easy to see Ida/Dora through the lens of mental illness, I found myself really admiring her strength, creativity, intelligence and dogged determination as she experienced a painful adolescence undercut by family dysfunction. Her choice in friends, in how she related to her therapist (Sigmund Freud), in how she experienced and medicated her pain, and how she expressed her art left me breathless ~ Wow!!! Her character reminded me very much of Stieg Larsson's Lisbeth Salander (Girl With the Dragon Tattoo). Sometimes behavior we might consider as illness is really a

reasonable/adaptive response to f*****d up situations. Dora: a Headcase is a fast paced, totally engaging ride that left me admiring Lidia Yuknavitch even more than I did after her first book. Can't wait for what she turns out next!

Sarah Schantz says

This book is a satire, and must be read as one; this way the author can be allowed the poetic license crucial in telling this story and taking this revenge on Freud. Yuknavitch has proved herself as a fiction writer. She has captured the voice of a strong but wounded teenage girl. As usual, her prose is exquisite (although I will admit there are times where I think a little editing would make it sing even more). I wish the publishers didn't rely so heavily on using her ties to Chuck Palahniuk as a way to sell her writing. I don't think Dora is a female fight club. It is something else. I think the two authors do well for each other as far as participating in the same writing group, but Yuknavitch doesn't need his stamp on every piece of her work she puts out.

After growing up in America, I'm glad the young girl voice is finally getting some exposure. I've read some of the other reviews on here regarding the "grating" voice of Dora. This is how I felt reading *The Catcher in the Rye* (I love Salinger's short stories). Not listening to these girls in any shape or form harms the entire society. I'd be interested to see Dora and *The Catcher in the Rye* taught side by side.

christa says

There are some things you should know about Lidia Yuknavitch: She is in the top tier of people making sentences in 2012. She packs more color into three lines of text than some people get into a photograph. And her voice is loud, man. Bold and unwavering, honest and fearless. Distinctly of this place in time. Like an alto opera singer performing an original pop song shredding Chris Brown. If your internet travels lead you to her byline, by all means read her.

Yuknavitch's novel "Dora a Headcase" is a retelling of the story of Freud's Dora, a topic that is a playground for feminist critique. Whether that's your jam or a real eye-rolling inducing prospect consider that you could read this story and know nothing of Dora, but suspect you've heard tell of her escapades on Nick Jr. Psychology 101 is not a prerequisite for this novel. Where Freud's Dora was billed as hysterical, her dreams interpreted to sexual attraction to her father, Yuknavitch creates a powerful teenager who will use her sessions with Sig -- as she calls him -- in a massive work of art. She's got a camera hidden on his desk and an audio recorder crammed into her Dora the Explorer purse and she's got some moves from the Wile E. Coyote playbook to throw at her therapist.

Her real name is Ida and she's in her mid-teens and her home life is beyond fucked. Mom, once a classical pianist, is now zombieified by self medication. Dad is sawing away at the buxom Mrs. K while Mr. K has tried to jam his tongue down Ida's throat. Ida has a posse of friends that includes Marlene, a transexual with hella maternal instinct, Little Teena, big, gay and plays the piano like a dream, Ave Maria is the bulimic with a bank account and Obsidian, a beautiful Native American girl who keeps a sharp piece of obsidian on a necklace in case she has to cut someone. Ida is mad about Obsidian, but every time things start to get pant-y between them, Ida blacks out. They create performance art, they dine and dash and they trade prescription medication and literature.

Ida is troubled and brilliant, a dangerous combo meal for authority figures who abandon or otherwise ignore her or those who deconstruct her behavior and link it to sexual feelings toward her father. She's a young

artist and everything around her is fodder for her film: Sound bites from Sig, the metronome of her Doc Martens as she runs down the sidewalk, voicemail messages from a stranger who wants something from her. When, in the course of recording, she finds that Old Sig has big plans for his case file on her, she draws up a sophisticated retaliation that includes more than the recommended daily allowance of Viagra and a Farrah Fawcett wig.

This book isn't perfect, but it's an admirable stab at it. Sticking to the Dora template boxes Yuknavitch in a bit and occasionally feels like a forced bit of plot, specifically when Ida-Dora reveals her dreams and when she loses her voice. And sometimes her antics feel like the antics of Chuck Palahniuk's casts of misfits as seen in his pre-"Rant" golden era. (Palahniuk writes the foreword to "Dora" and also lives in the same region, so it's a good chance they are either drawn together as similar writers or are mutually influenced by each other).

Yuknavitch's memoir "The Chronology of Water" was released last year and is the better of the two books. But with "Dora," she shows versatility and the ability to use her skill set to build something completely different. With the former, she bores into your brain and it's like popping Lortab and watching the jellyfish channel. With the latter she gives a cunning don't-fuck-with-me edge and technological dexterity to a teen that has, for eons, been billed as "hysterical."

Roxanne says

I am so sorry Lidia - but this one does not hold a candle to The Chronology of Water. Headcase was like a Fantasy B Movie, along the lines of a slasher movie without the slash. I can see that you worked out your anger at psychotherapists and anyone in authority. And I can see that you may attract other teen girls who need a voice for their anger. But the characters were out of a ridiculous B movie, and I mean ridiculous. Not edgy, but ridiculous. I really had to skim the last half. And the final blow was the - shall I say - windfall laid upon Ida/Dora. Did you mean for this to be a representation of a teen girls' fantasy? Because if so I think it will be lost on those who could have benefitted from your book most. Sort of seemed like you wrote a sensationalistic/B-movie/teen angst/angry girl with all the bells and whistles. You pulled out all the stops. Way too gratuitous. It's hard to support you with this book.

Autumn says

Such a disappointment! Much like "The Chronology of Water", Yuknavitch starts strong, and ends weakly. Really weakly. While for most part I was blown away by "The Chronology of Water" - it was definitely well-written, and absolutely captivating - "Dora" on the other hand, comes across as any old YA novel out there. And if you've read "The Chronology", you can very plainly see that "Dora" is simply a modernization of Yuknavitch's own adolescence. (Or at least many of the parts previously written about in "The Chronology".) And like some desperate parent trying to be "hip", Yuknavitch's narration as a 15 year old girl was just plain embarrassing. (Do you know of any modern teens who use the word "bitchin'" as an adjective? That was outdated when I was a teen.) I definitely saw a lot of my younger self in Ida/Dora, pulling a lot of the same cry for attention shit. Maybe being an adult, being in the real world has jaded me and it was hard to empathize with a spoiled, rich girl and her spoiled, rich friends. These are the kind of kids I see in the mall and roll my eyes at. I was one of those kids and I was a stupid fucker because of it. I apologize to my mother every day because of it.

Reading this book actually made me angry to tell you the truth. Ida/Dora/Lidia Yuknavitch all are these flawed characters, but everything is handed to them. Everything works out in the end. And that's maybe why

I can't empathize with this novel. Happy endings aren't realistic, and in this case (more so in her novel than her memoir) it's just not believable. That sounds horrible to write, but in the case of "Dora" it's very much the truth. Dora was never a victim, and the redemption is not her own, it wasn't something she earned, it's something she lucked into, something she stumbled upon after taking advantage of so many people. If you're going to give your character a happy ending, fine. But make them work for it or DESERVE it at the very least.

Damla Cerrah says

Dora, tam bir anti kahraman. ?tici, rahats?zl?k verici, huzursuzlu?u ve mutsuzlu?u okurken size de ge?en cinsten.

Hikaye ilgin?, yaz?m dili berrak olsa da bizim y?ld?zlar?m?z pek bar??mad?

Deb says

I thought maybe Palahniuk was exaggerating when he said Dora was a girls' *Fight Club*.

I was wrong.

I thought maybe Ida wouldn't have much to say to me. I had my trouble when I was a young adult. Lots of it, but not like Ida's.

I was wrong.

"Sometimes your whole life happens in those years, and the rest of your life it's just the same story playing out with different characters. I could die tomorrow and have lived the main ups and downs of life. Pain. Loss. Love. And what you all so fondly refer to as wisdom. Wanna know the difference between adult wisdom and young adult wisdom? You have the ability to look back at your past and interpret it. I have the ability to look at my present and live it with my whole body. Wanna know what we have in common? Dead dreams. Trust me when I say no adult likes to talk about that.

Plus how do you even know you adult humans have the right interpretations of your own lives? People are like books and movies. There are about a gazillion different interpretations. Deal with it."

Page 174.

I adore Dora.

kates says

I found this in Powells, an autographed copy, and bought it without thinking too much. I didn't know it was happening- I didn't think that after being swept away by *The Chronology of Water* earlier this year that another new book would fall into my lap 6 months later.

I read this in one sitting. Faithfully comparing my experience-as-reader to mine during Chronology.

Thinking: [yuknavitch]'s brave.

Thinking: this is going to be received like The Marriage Plot after Middlesex. (people are such dicks about that)

Thinking: why am I preoccupied with what the public response will be to this book?

Because I knew while I was reading that I was in the throes of the next thing. Its Yuknavitch. It's woman. It's poetry. It's word creation. It's brazen in a way that feels edgy in 2012. It's so fun to laugh in a dark way without sacrificing sincerity and that's what this book provided me.

This writing is important and I feel humbled to have chanced across it.

Taha says

"Böh-hüü, değil mi? Hayat adil de?il. Ama hayat?n aile diye bir arabada k?s?l?p kald?g?n?z ve her dönemeçte seksomanyak sap?k yetiskinlerin üstünüze atlad?g?, Disney'in kötü versiyonu bir korku tuneli de olmas? gerekmiyor, değil mi? Çocuklarınız için nas?l bir dünya tüneli yaratt??in?za bak?n. Uyu?turucular?n?z? istememize ?a?mamal?. En az?ndan bunu borçlusunuz."

-Ergenken bile ergenleri ve ergenli?i sevmeyen biri olarak, ergen (hem de emo k?vam?nda ergen) bir karakterin bak?? aç?s?yla kitab? okumak çok s?kt? beni.

-Kitapta gerçekten orijinal bir ?ekilde Freud'a at?flarda bulunulmas?n? falan bekliyordum ama tüm kitap Freud'un "Dora vakas?"n?n modernize hale getirilip romanla?t?r?lmas?ndan ba?ka bir i?lev görmüyor.

-Kitab?n çok zay?f bir hikayesi vard?. Tüm kitab? okuduktan sonra ?öyle oldum:

-Yine de kitaba 1 y?ld?z veremedim. Herhalde her ne kadar emo/ergence olsa da yeti?kinlerin kötülenmesi ho?uma gitti?i için o da:)

Rebecca says

Disturbing, but smart, entertaining, and gratifying as an illustration of people growing up despite their upbringing. I was shocked at the presentation as normal of prescription drug abuse among the teens in the book as well as their massive alcohol intake. I don't think that young teens can consent to sex and sexual acts with adults where there is not a balance of power; the teens in the book seemed to shrug off what I viewed as rape and forced sexual behavior imposed by adults. There was also an implication of trading sex for stuff by manipulating the adult. I don't know much about Freud's Dora; I did look her up in Wikipedia before I started reading, so I think I got the references. Compare Holden Caulfield in Catcher in the Rye. Fun to see contemporary references and technology about audio and film. Plus, enjoyed meeting the character Marlene.

The Wee Hen says

38 pages in and I'm totally over this book. I'm sure it's super. Gotten great reviews. Chuck Palahniuk wrote the forward and he's a god, right? (Never mind that I loved the movie "Fight Club" about 10,000,000 times more than I did the book. That never happens. You're always supposed to love the book more than the movie. But I saw the movie first, read the book years later. And it IS my favourite movie. But let's never mind all that.)

The first problem I had with this book is that it is written in the language of a contemporary teenager and I'm just way way WAAAAAAAAAAAY too old to cope with that. I have a very hard time taking teenagers seriously, especially ones who are going very far out of their way to shock their elders. Frankly, when this sort of thing starts up I just shut down. No, I don't intend to be shocked by you. I just want you to shut up so I can go back to the thoughts rolling around in my middle-aged head. I don't get kids today anyway. All they want to do is dance in the club, get wasted and get down to as much orgying as they can pack into the giant humvee limo they fantasize about rolling around town in, pretending to be grownups so hard and so fast that one wonders, by the time they are 21 and they have done it all already what will be left for them to do? What kind of bizarre sexed-up, bath-salt-fueled, annoying, vapid, pointless Party Monsters have all my peers been raising? And how glad am I that I haven't added any of these people to the world?

My second problem? The shrink in the book blithers out tons of Freudian garbage to this teenage girl. Who in the hell is still going to shrink for Pure Straight Freudian therapy? Who sends a teenage girl to Pure Straight Freudian therapy? Haven't we as a culture moved WAY beyond that crap?

So no, I'm not going to continue this book. It's just a little too provocative, it's trying a bit too hard. So I'll be picking up Leigh Russell's "Cut Short" and heading back to my beloved UK for a nice mystery, thank you very much. This old hen really does prefer them above all.

Carolyn says

Yuknavitch is an amazing writer. Every sentence is perfection. And she nails the voice of an angry teenage girl, Dora/Ida, who has been failed or used by almost every significant adult in her life. Ida's rage fuels a series of cathartic acts of revenge, some of which had me laughing out loud. But the ending disappointingly implies (channeling Woolf's A Room of One's Own perhaps?) that what a woman really needs in the long run is financial independence. Ida manages to untether herself from her past, but the wounds inflicted early on remain unhealed. Realistic perhaps, but I was hoping for more for Ida in the long run.

karen says

so, if you like this character's voice, you will like this book. if it grates on you, you will find this book a drag. me, i am halfway in-between. i didn't mind it sometimes, but there were moments where i was wicked annoyed by how forced and deliberate the "cool" and "unique" voice was.

I shove the last of the bacon in my mouth. It's salty and rubbery yet crisp. What is bacon but fat and gristle and thin strips of ass meat? tastes like... family.

i spent some time eye rolling and imaginary character head-petting, "yes, yes, you are very very cool, ida/dora... putting safety pins in your t-shirts is very cool. creating "art attacks" in the mall and at restaurants and picking your nose to gross people out, and cutting and drugs and oh my, kissing a girl, how very edgy."

so on the one hand, you are yawning because of the strain of how impressed you are supposed to be with these rich girl punk rock antics, and on the other hand, you are thinking OH MY GOD, I USED TO BE SEVENTEEN! some of this seems so embarrassingly familiar. but it was cooler when i did it, i assure you.

well, maybe not. but i always wore clean underwear, so i am one up for hygiene.

how you personally react to this book will depend on whether you are the owner of the lawn, or the punk kids taking a dump on it.

a lot of it is showy artpunk nonsense, and no, thank you, i do *not* want to watch your film, nor read you describing it and telling me its meaning at the same time. i seen teen-rebellion before. live.

but then there are these other, quieter moments, that are truly lovely. basically, any scene with marlene, ida/dora's rwandan trannie bacon-frying bestie, is going to be worth reading the book for. these parts of the book read like francesca lia block, who has that effortless, floaty quality to her scenes, and whose shock value never seems quite as forced as some of the ones here. but these particular scenes evoke genuine emotion, not the brittle front she is putting up elsewhere.

this is another book that would probably do all right with a YA crowd - it's a little rougher than usual YA, and it is not marketed to them, but i think if anyone's gonna not be annoyed by a feisty teen voice...

don't be mad at me, keri!! i did like it, i'm just feeling particularly old and cranky tonight. write a better review than me - that'll teach me! but even you have to agree that even on the page, ave maria was the worst. i would kick her shrieking ass out of the store the second she set foot. no lie.
