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# (Ex)citation: Citational Eros in Academic Texts

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## >> Introduction: Love at First Cite

Citation can be sexy. Anyone who has experienced a hit of dopamine or a lurch of the stomach upon seeing their name in print in an acknowledgement section or footnote would have to agree. I suspect that this thrill is produced, at least in part, by the unique structures of power and desire that constitute academic sociality: the bonds of oppression, affection, affiliation, or intrigue that continue to shape who counts, and who is counted in academic circles. If each particular idea or set of ideas is a strand in a network of thinkers, then citation is the point at which they connect, contest, perhaps penetrate, briefly couple or coincide. Every citational reference point is a potent node. As a marker of conversation, as the point of connection at intersecting vectors of knowledge, a citation brings with it both the thrill of recognition and the thrill of being admitted to a club. It can also, like many an erotic experience, be a little unmooring.

Weirdly, though, most discussions of citation I encounter sidestep these affective thrills in favor of a staler analogy: that of reproductive futurism. This is true even in my own field of queer theory, where it is now not uncommon to mark specific "generations" of queer scholarship. One need only read this special issue of *Diacritics* to glean how prevalent this language is: we read about Black feminist theory's "Black foremothers," citation as ownership and by extension inheritance or indebtedness, uncited ideas as ideas left in "stillbirth," and the citation of biological mothers as part of a radical collective project. To be sure, this metaphor manifests in different ways, each with various political effects; nonetheless, it remains true that often scholars speak of citation as textual evidence through which readers might trace a family tree.

Considering queer theory's commitment to theorizing relationships outside of a traditional heterosexist and/or reproductive-futuristic framework, it strikes me as odd that attempts to construct a canon of queer or proto-queer theory often repeat, rhetorically at least, the very same Oedipal attachments that said theory often seeks to complicate. The notion of intellectual inheritance, with all its reproductive implications, seems ironic, if not wholly inapt, for a field traditionally suspicious of linear familial structures. Since first noting this irony, I have amassed a collection of instances in which works of queer criticism employ or analyze academic citational practice. I explore two examples in this essay, in the hopes of thinking citation otherwise: first, a 1991 essay by Lee Edelman, published in the influential collection *Inside/Out*: *Lesbian Theories, Gay Theories* (edited by Diana Fuss); second, a short essay by D.A. Miller memorializing critic Barbara Johnson, which was part of the "Critical Bonds" special issue of *GLQ* in 2011. Edelman's piece emerged in the moment of queer theory's academic debut, in a volume that helped inaugurate the field; Miller's text was published after two decades of scholarship cemented queer theory firmly within academic institutions. As such, the two articles mark related and particular moments in a longer history of queer theory. Despite the twenty-year gap, both present a specific way of thinking about citation, one that doesn't always lend itself to neat and tidy, or progressively linear metaphors of inheritance, progression, or generation.

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Turned on by these two pieces, I propose an "erotic of citation" in much the same way that Lynne Huffer, in her writings on Michel Foucault's *Madness and Civilization*, proposes an erotic of the archive.[1] Huffer calls for a new style of queer critique, one that is, as Foucault describes it, "driven by the 'physical vibration' experienced in consulting the archive."[2] My own readerly encounter with both of these texts—performed in the following pages—accounts for an eros of citation, in order to reveal how citation confuses what we think we know about knowledge production. The confusion might open up space to think more laterally and creatively about how ideas are created, disseminated, and felt.

## >> Case One: The Disturbing Drag of a D

When I first began this search for alternative citational metaphors, I was happy to rediscover *Inside/Out*. Mostly, I was glad for the opportunity to revisit an old book from my own library, complete with my undergraduate-thesis-prep marginalia on the side. Near the end of the introduction, Fuss quotes Foucault: "'What we need,' Foucault writes in 'The Gay Science,' is 'a radical break, a change in orientation, objectives, and vocabulary.'" Though Fuss "remains suspicious of the faith Foucault places in epistemological 'breaks,'" she admits that "the call for new orientations . . . is . . . a seductive one."[3] Revisiting *Inside/Out*, I, too, waxed nostalgic for a moment outside of my own. It was (and always is) thrilling for me to pick up a book from a different affective moment in queer theory's history, a moment still charged with academic excitement and urgency born both out of the AIDS crisis and the culture wars: politically charged, with high stakes, not yet fully institutionalized. "Queer" meant many things then, and means many things now, but rereading the introduction to *Inside/Out*, I had the feeling that the "queer" of this theory compendium is still twisting, still turning, as the four-fold knot on the book cover suggests.

With this history in mind, I returned to an early essay by Lee Edelman, which was published as chapter four of *Inside/Out* under the title "Seeing Things: Representation, the Scene of Surveillance, and the Spectacle of Gay Male Sex." While this was by and large an excited return, it was also a slightly reluctant one. My reluctance grew from the citational trouble Edelman already presented for me: Lee is a former professor of mine, and it was under him that I first studied queer theory. In many ways, as a queer critic raised in the wake of Edelman's 2004 *No Future: Queer Theory and the Death Drive*—a groundbreaking work of the queer theoretical canon—I'm in many ways the intellectual "child" of Edelman's brand of antisocial Lacanian theory. Of course, given *No Future*'s central thesis, I use "child" here ironically: Edelman's book is commonly understood as a polemic against the societal figure of the child, at once positioned against and constituted by the figure of the queer. At the same time, the fact that "child" is a legible metaphor highlights how certain kinds of knowledge affiliation so often get couched in Oedipal terms. Once again it proves hard to move away from the very logic of Oedipal citation that allows for and renders intelligible my

self-description as the "child" of a text; or, even more perversely, as a "child," in some ways, of Edelman.

In "Seeing Things," Edelman argues that representations of sodomy trouble ways of thinking that equate citation with linear familial generation. His primary example is Harold Bloom's theory of authorial influence. Representations of sodomy queer the canon of philosophy itself. Examining Jacques Derrida's *The Post Card*, Edelman attempts a queer psychoanalytic reading of a scene of sodomy as imagined by Derrida. In his essay, Derrida daydreams about sex between Socrates and Plato. Edelman argues that the surprise encounters with these imagined or represented scenes of sodomy produce instability and shock in the "onlooker"/reader—be that Sigmund Freud, made anxious and uncertain by the Wolf Man's story of a sodomitical primal scene, or Derrida, ruminating on the "catastrophe" of anal sex between two forefathers of Western philosophy (to use a term already smacking of patrilineage).[4] But Edelman is quick to point out that the true "scandal" of these queer scenes is not that they are deviations from a usually straightforward method of citation, but rather that they betray a fundamentally "queer" (or, at least, homosexual) impulse as the driving force of philosophy and "psychoanalysis as an offshoot of philosophy."[5]

This is not a simple case of homophobic anxiety, however. For Edelman, this scandal is ontological. Artfully collapsing spatial behinds with temporal ones, Edelman argues that the disorientation of *temporal* positionality (metalepsis, the substitution of cause and effect) threatening Freud and Derrida is bound up with a *spatial* behind-ing, what he terms "the danger historically associated in Euro-American culture with the spectacle or representation of the sodomitical scene between men."[6] Thus, he writes:

> What haunts Derrida is not just (whatever "just" in this case might mean) the homophobic, homosocial, homoerotic, and homosexual relations that endlessly circulate within—and as—the "philosophical tradition"; at issue for him is the irreducibility of both sodomy and writing to a binary logic predicated on the determinacy of presence or absence.[7]

In this way, citations that become so crucial to our understandings of traditional Western philosophical history are troubled even as they cite. A citation is a look backward; to cite something is to bring a historical or philosophical moment from the past back to the present, linking the dissemination of information not to a progressive forward movement but instead to a constant, backward-looking chain of repeated references. These repetitions disrupt (or, more to the point, queer) the imagined history of Harold Bloom's theory of influence, the progressive Oedipal theory of Freud, and the heterosexual reproductive futurism later laid out in Edelman's *No Future: Queer Theory and the Death Drive*. The linear time structure of reproductive, progressive history, dependent on the family's generational reproduction, aligns non-reproductive sex acts with a repetitive, dehistoricizing, and regressive drive. By betraying citation as retroactive, the metalepsis of sodomy described by Derrida and Edelman illustrates the disruptive, queer temporal logic of citation. For Edelman, citation is queer by virtue of these philosophical couplings: the history of ideas is always already queer due to its own

repetitious, backward-looking drives.

Even so, such inversions remain tied to a hierarchical generational logic of citation. Although Edelman might critique Bloom's notion of anxiety for its straight reading of what Edelman and Derrida refigure as a queer filiation, the logic of philosophy is still one of either going forward or backward, of progressing or regressing. In this way, arguments that queer the Oedipal relation end up mirroring, however unintentionally, the patriarchal logic of traditional histories of philosophy: Plato might now be before/behind Socrates, but Socrates and Plato remain points in a linear, if not quite progressive, philosophical lineage, one still dominated by a few dead men.

But something more interesting is going on here. Reading "Seeing Things" leads me back to the work Edelman was critiquing, *The Post Card* by Derrida. Sodomy is the primary obsession of this text: "For the moment, myself, I tell you that I see Plato getting an erection in Socrates' back and see the insane hubris of his prick, an interminable, disproportionate erection traversing Paris's head like a single idea and then the copyist's chair, before slowly eliding, still warm, under Socrates' right leg."[8] But it is also about doubling, confusion, and the stutter of citation: "The direction, the direction of this couple. . . . The one in the other, the one in front of the other, the one after the other, the one behind the other?"[9] Derrida also mentions Freud, Friedrich Nietzsche, and Martin Heidegger in the context of citation:

> From this point of view, N. believed Plato and overturned nothing at all. The entire "overturning" remained included in the program of this credulity. This is true . . . from Freud and from Heidegger. . . . Finally one begins no longer to understand what to come, to come before, to come after, to foresee, to come back all mean—along with the difference of the generations, and then to inherit, to write one's will, to dictate, to speak, to take dictation, etc. One is finally going to be able to love oneself.[10]

Once again, as I read, I found that my network of citations grew into a grid of associations that was at once explosive and anxiety-producing, exhilarating and erotic, a heterotopia of sorts, characterized—like Foucault's description of Jorge Luis Borges's Chinese dictionary—by an enumeration ad absurdum that unsettles, so that we are seized with disruptive and uncomfortable laughter. Is Derrida here getting at Foucault—with whom he has just had a falling out—via Nietzsche, much like Foucault gets at Jacques Lacan via Freud? Is this generational look back actually a reference to a contemporary?

Such disruptive logics continue toward the end of Edelman's essay, where he performs a close reading of a typo in the English translation of Freud: that is, the substitution of "d" for "p" in the verb "present." There follows, upon Edelman's disclosure of this strange substitution, a paragraph riffing on the many inversions and perversions of d/p and, later, b (as in *behind*):

> The "present" has thus been absented from this translation of the Freudian text through a Derridean "catastrophe," a sodomitical inversion or overthrow; "erroneously" positioned with its bottom up, the "p" has effected a sudden multiplication of its identity, has come out of the closet of typography in the disturbing drag of a "d".[11]

Edelman links such substitutions to *The Post Card*'s argument that "if 'S. is P.' according to Derrida, surely it is fair to meditate on this dislocation of 'p' by 'd': *P*lato, *p*hilosophy, *p*hallogocentrism, and *p*sychoanalysis *d*isarticulated by *D*errida and *d*econstruction."[12] The plot thickens if we bring in another text by Derrida, "To Do Justice to Freud," written several years after *The Post Card* about Foucault's *The History of Madness* and the initial debate that sparked the end of their friendship. In this essay, not only does Derrida claim to have previously "substituted Descartes for Freud" (another D, another substitution), but also recalls the spectacle of sodomy again, this time replacing Socrates and Plato: "Nietzsche *and* Freud are here conjoined, conjugated, like a couple, Nietzsche *and* Freud, and the conjunction of their coupling is also the copula-hinge or, if you prefer, the middle term of the modern proposition."[13]

Edelman's strategy of queering the canon relies on a logic of substitution and stuttering, one that confuses and deconstructs. It's ridiculous, but also fun. So as I read, I linger on the "disturbing drag of a 'd'" that (following Edelman's idiosyncratic reading) replaces the "p" of presence, philosophy, phallogocentrism, and Plato. Caught in the throes of Edelman's mad game of free association, I realize with delight that the lowercase "q" in queer is yet another inversion of the "d"/"p"/"b" shape. I can't help but think of another "p/d" connection, the American deconstructionist Paul de Man under whom Edelman studied at Yale. Shortly after his death from cancer in 1983, de Man's legacy was marred by posthumous scandal: he had, as a young man living in Belgium during Adolf Hitler's rise to power, written several newspaper articles urging collaboration with Nazi Germany. Three years later, another student of his, Barbara Johnson, writes in *The Wake of Deconstruction*:

> In the resurfacing of de Man's collaborationist essays, particularly the anti-Semitic one entitled "The Jews in Contemporary Literature," the "me" and the "us" were forced in new ways into the public sphere by the already public otherness of the lost-again other. Suddenly, de Man no longer belonged to the academy, but to history. And not as a hero, but as a villain.[14]

This other spectacular scandal, too, echoes in the background, polluting a family tree with bad blood, or perhaps just making queer theory's intellectual inheritance more complicated, making obvious—in the words of Kadji Amin—my own disturbing attachments (another "d").

What do we make of all these couplings, these folds, stutters, substitutions, and citations? Work rapidly became an elaborate game of connect-the-dots: Edelman referencing Lacan, Freud, and Derrida; Derrida, who was referencing Freud, Socrates, Plato, and (through Nietzsche) Foucault again. The result of such citation, attempted in illustration,

is a network that looks less like a linear history of theory and more like the "conspiracy theories" of a paranoid schizophrenic. What is madness, if not an excess of connections, a schizophrenic, exponential proliferation of causes and effects? The citation becomes a site of ex-citation, of displacement, of the feeling of getting outside oneself. This feeling allowed me to discover connections between thinkers that I had not previously made, and those discoveries led to further connections and layers of thought.

At the same time, this encounter with a web of citation is disciplinary, in that with each new discovery I felt newly bound in the complicated spider web of associations I saw forming between the theorists I was trying to investigate. I felt the dizzying effects of the fact that those cited here are all caught up in the feedback loop of being among the most cited theorists of citation in the academy.[15] To add to the feeling of redundancy, they are also all dead white men—Edelman's gleeful orgy of philosophers may in some ways queer the traditional canon, but it certainly makes no effort to adopt Sarah Ahmed's "strict citation policy" of not citing white men.[16] A different feeling emerges, not one of freedom and play, but of being trapped. What, after all, is the point of a web?

The citation becomes a site of ex-citation, of displacement, of the feeling of getting outside oneself.

These affective responses and their strange double play—on the one hand, anxiety over this eruption or proliferation of sources, and on the other an increased sense of claustrophobia as a web of famous names doubled back in on itself, with no use value in sight—were really made of the same stuff. The "interior" anxiety I felt approaching the dissolution of my personhood via my incorporation of the cast of characters could be read simply as the folding of my "exterior" response of encountering an array of others "outside of myself" inside out ("myself" here being understood in terms of the fold, not as a psychic self). Considering that this essay is in part about the eros of citation, I suppose it is understandable (maybe even somewhat legitimizing) that the point got away from me, got beyond my control, and, in a sense, slightly undid me.

### >> Case Two: The Critical Midwife

In 2011, the flagship queer theoretical journal *GLQ* published a small special issue titled "Queer Bonds." Joshua Weiner and Damon Young's special issue calls on theorists to think through queer socialities that have secured "space in the world without being reducible to violent modes of appropriative privilege."[17] They explicitly employ the language of familial filiation, marking themselves as part of a specific generation of queer theorists. They also name the academy as a queer social space, complete with its own fraught and affect-electrified bonds.

Weiner and Young construct their special issue in two parts: the first section is comprised of traditional essays centered around the theme "queer bonds," and the second section is made up of four mini essays, each featuring one well-known queer theorist

profiling another well-known queer theorist. The four mini essays are subsumed under the heading "Critical Bonds." From the start, this section seems rather strange. The section is not an afterthought—on the contrary, it takes up about a third of the issue. It is cordoned off by its own title page. Each essay is around five pages long. The titles in the "Critical Bonds" section all follow the same formula, "[critic x] on [critic y]": Carla Freccero's "Daddy's Girl—on Leo Bersani," Zakiyyah Iman Jackson's "Waking Nightmares—on David Marriott," Heather Love's "'His Way'—on D.A. Miller," and D.A. Miller's "Call for Papers—on Barbara Johnson" (the essay on which I focus here). One is reminded of the annual "Time 100" issue of *TIME* magazine, in which editors invite celebrity guest columnists to profile their fellow movers and shakers.

As it does in "Seeing Things," explicit citation in "Critical Bonds" devolves into a dizzying relation that undoes the very logics of the familial citational metaphor. The theorists in "Critical Bonds" in their own way all tarry with the negative; that is, they adhere to an antisocial project that is typically opposed to normative or reproductive family structures. Freccero, even as she offers an alternative method to Bersani's approach, remains provoked by his insistence on the antisocial. Jackson, in her piece on Marriot, writes about the "existential negation" of Blackness. Love, in her piece on Miller, seeks to draw out the classed valences of the regret, if not outright loss, that fuels much of his writing. Finally, Miller writes early on in his eulogy to Johnson that she "had no progeny—that too was the beauty of her achievement—yet she was midwife to a multitude."[18] It is this phrase that sent me into another dizzying spiral of associations.

Implicit citations run deep in "Call for Papers": the piece is itself a response to Johnson's book review of Miller's critical monograph *Bringing Out Roland Barthes*, titled "Bringing Out D.A. Miller." Riffing off of her own close reading of his book, Miller points out the need for critics to take seriously the connotative language in Johnson's critical writing—language that might betray a more ambiguous, erotic, or linguistic Johnson, that is to say, perhaps, a "queerer" Johnson. In his eulogy, he laments that no critics have yet taken up Johnson's style, even though she herself is widely praised as a masterful close reader. Reading Johnson's book review as a disguised plea to be "brought out" herself as both an embodied and sexual being, Miller argues that there is a gap in the scholarship regarding Johnson's queerness, both biographically (insofar as Johnson was a woman who fucked women) and stylistically (a vaguer project, but one which, for Miller, is more interesting and worthwhile than any vulgar biographical outing of Johnson he or others could hope to accomplish).

Indeed, Miller's own apostrophic "call" also recalls Johnson's "Animation, Apostrophe, Abortion," in which she maps the rhetorical trope of apostrophe in a close reading of four poems by four different poets. Like much of Johnson's work, this essay takes the connection between real-world violence and rhetoric seriously, applying deconstructive techniques to grapple with the political stakes of language. In this influential essay, Johnson theorizes lyric poetry, particularly in the apostrophic mode, as an attempt to reanimate the dead. In her analysis of a 1963 Gwendolyn Brooks poem titled "The Mother," Johnson notes that the speaker's address to aborted children complicates terms

of address and loss in ways that echo but do not entirely mirror the losses at stake in traditional Romantic poetry. Here, because the distinction between self and other is less clear—the speaker's self is haunted and inhabited by the ghosts of those unborn fetuses who are ambiguous subjects—it is unclear to whom the apostrophe is really addressed. The (aborted, non-existent, ghostly) children in the poem are paradoxically called into existence only by eulogy, and thus are ambiguously dead/alive. This is the duplicitous rhetorical trick of anti-abortion political rhetoric: simply by virtue of it being rhetoric, it assumes as an axiom the very thing it is trying to prove, i.e. the subjecthood of the unborn child to which it rhetorically makes reference.

The ambiguity of fetal "death," Johnson goes on to say, points to the underlying cultural imperative for women to be mothers: an imperative so strong that to use the flesh for anything other than for childbirth amounts to a kind of infanticide. In Johnson's reading, while the male poet merely seems to make up for his inability to bear children by producing a poem (poet-as-mother), the female poet is seen as having to "choose" between person or poem (poet-as-child-murderer). Johnson maps the "belief long encoded into male poetic conventions" that would gender artistic production so that it seems as "though male writing were by nature procreative, while female writing is somehow by nature infanticidal."[19] Similarly, Johnson tells us, lesbians and mothers occupy two poles of the heterosexist imaginary. "Surprisingly, female specificity is represented in one of two ways to reduce the threat it poses: it is seen as either motherhood or lesbianism,"[20] she writes. Lesbians, as non-mothers, occupy a similar cultural position as female poets, in that both are imagined as choosing something else over having children.

All this is in the background of Miller's assertion that Johnson is mother to none; a covert, connotative citation of Johnson herself that both complicates and underscores Miller's point. His praise of Johnson for having no progeny flies in the face of a patriarchal and heterosexist order that would, as Johnson puts it, make motherhood "the standard a woman hasn't met ('She may be a CEO, but she's *childless*'), or lesbianism an accusation so monstrous it provokes denial if at all possible ('We know what her problem is: she *doesn't like men*')."[21] Nonetheless, though it may reverse the hierarchy of value inherent in the two subject positions, the categories "mother" and "lesbian" remain intact as categories in Miller's estimation.

The fact that Johnson had no progeny is a testament, in many ways, to her queer credentials: the point of Miller's essay, after all, is to "bring out" Barbara Johnson, reading her as both a lesbian critic and a queer stylist. Miller's praise of Johnson's non-motherhood as a beautiful achievement gestures towards a broader split between queerness and reproductive futurism, a split articulated by queer theory's antisocial theorists. Notably, Edelman's 1998 essay "The Future is Kid Stuff," a founding antisocial text, cites Johnson explicitly in a footnote. Edelman begins with an anecdote which itself takes place in Miller and Johnson's old academic stomping ground. Walking through Harvard Square (where Miller and Johnson were both once employed), Edelman sees an anti-abortion sign and believes it is directed at him:

> Not long ago, on a much-traveled corner in Cambridge, Massachusetts, opponents of the legal right to abortion posted an enormous image of a full-term fetus on a rented billboard accompanied by a single and unqualified assertion: "It's not a choice; it's a child." . . . As strange as it may seem for a gay man to say this, when I first encountered that billboard in Cambridge I read it as addressed to me. The sign, after all, might as well have pronounced, with the same absolute and invisible authority that testifies to the successfully accomplished work of ideological naturalization, the divine injunction: "Be fruitful and multiply."[22]

This striking scene of interpellation, in which a white gay man feels himself addressed, in a way, as a "bad mother," has much in common with "Animation, Apostrophe, Abortion," the text Edelman cites. His essay echoes Johnson's not only in its subject matter—both essays address anti-abortion rhetoric—but also explicitly: in the footnote to this paragraph, Edelman writes that "many critics, Barbara Johnson among them, have detailed with powerful insight how such anti-abortion polemics simultaneously rely on and generate tropes that animate, by personifying, the fetus."[23]

And yet, something else is going on here as well, and the connections and connotations grow still more complicated through what is left uncited. Miller's assessment that Johnson was "midwife to a multitude" may be drawing a simple distinction between mothers who give birth and midwives who assist them. But midwives not only deliver babies at the time of birth—they might teach expectant mothers or be called on to perform abortions as well. Muses have been figured as midwives in romantic and lyric poetry, Johnson's early specialty. The "midwife" in the U.S. is also associated with non-whiteness: before the systematic dismantling and discrediting of midwifery as a practice starting in the 1920s, most midwives working in the U.S. were either "granny midwives," Black women who served as community matriarchs, or recent European immigrants. One can also earn a certification as a "death midwife," and many hospice nurses take on this extra degree to aid those who are about to die. The figure of the midwife, then, serves as a dense and often contradictory consort of meanings, forging links between birth, the legacy of slavery, abortion, poetic production, and death.

The figure of the midwife, then, serves as a dense and often contradictory consort of meanings, forging links between birth, the legacy of slavery, abortion, poetic production, and death.

Indeed, in her own work, Johnson draws on all these histories, repeatedly citing Hortense Spillers, Toni Morrison, and other Black feminist critics. Miller largely ignores this fact in his piece. The elision raises questions. Is it because Johnson's work with Black feminist theorists and Black-authored texts somehow disqualifies her as a queer theorist? In noting Johnson's contributions to queer theory and deconstruction, Miller fails to mention Johnson's contributions to Black feminist criticism, and thus misses an opportunity to interrogate its

relationship to the history of both feminist deconstruction and queer criticism. Since Roderick Ferguson first defined the term nearly fifteen years ago, "queer of color critique" has used Black feminist theory as a forbearer of, foil against, and corrective to queer theory. Miller makes a similar attempt to think feminist deconstruction alongside queer criticism, turning back towards early writing by Johnson and others in order to understand the debts queer theory owes to feminist deconstruction. But this is not the whole story of Johnson's intellectual influences. A close look at the specific metaphor Miller deploys and its citational reverberations—mentioned and unmentioned—tell us that this similarity is not coincidental. In fact, it reveals a more intimate, ambiguous relationship between three fields that are often kept separate.

## >> Conclusion: A More Intimate Relation

In offering up the critical pairs of "Critical Bonds," Weiner and Young push us to think of citation as a type of social practice not unlike an academic conference: that is, one that negotiates the tricky chiasmus of the personal and the critical. As it happens, the "Queer Bonds" special issue was the result of a conference, put on by graduate students at UC Berkeley in February 2009. In her reflection on the conference (also published in the volume), Judith Butler remarks, with both gratitude and humor, that

> what strikes me as quite beautiful about the event is that the graduate students who created it did not always know that they were bringing together a group of people who, left to their own, would not have been able to come together in this way. There are not only differences of opinion, but perhaps as well visceral objections, personal injuries, rivalries in the field of symbolic capital, fears of effacement, and psychic dangers of all kinds.[24]

The conference, because of the bonds of academic alliance, was an emotional minefield. Citation constitutes a similar academic social sphere, with a similar affective potency, and for similar reasons. Consider the "[critic x] on [critic y]" formula. The titillating prospect of "critic on critic" action gestures toward the erotics of friendship and familiarity that permeate U.S. queer criticism, made all the sexier by the valences of bondage play undergirding the title "Queer Bonds."

In "Call for Papers," Miller runs the dangerous risk of having his call for papers misheard as a call to "out," rather than "bring out" Johnson. This risk is partially due to the biographical "fact" of Johnson's own lesbianism—we can imagine, that, were Johnson straight, readers might interpret Miller's call more or less unproblematically as a call to analyze Johnson's style, rather than as a call to drag the "truth" of her sexuality into the open. Miller is aware of this potential misreading. "Barbara wanted [to be brought out], I think, not because she believed that her lesbianism was the key to her writing (she didn't) or because she was personally or politically in the closet (she wasn't)," he writes. "She wanted it because she felt that 'bringing out' might elicit, along with her already overt sexual orientation, an additional, more genuinely secret intimacy."[25] Intimacy can all at once denote insider knowledge, sexual activity, erotic desire, close friendship, or

an ease of association formed by habit. Intimacy is also extreme familiarity; this familiarity can produce critical ease, capability, or expertise born of an intimate knowledge of one's subject.

In order to recognize the multiple spoken and unspoken citations in a piece like Edelman's or Miller's, one must already, in some ways, have an intimate relation to the text (to get it, you have to already be in the know). Rather than trace a linear progression of thought, influence, and debt, this kind of citation weaves a dense network of circulating reference informed by intellectual history and fraternity. It becomes difficult, as it were, to keep each of these players straight. More alarmingly, an all-too-familiar edifice begins to form, one constructed of various ivory towers. Edelman, Miller, and Johnson all went to Yale together, they are second generation to de Man and Derrida, they all have ties to Cambridge, many of them also, importantly, have ties to UC Berkeley. These feedback loops of citation and affiliation pose a problem because they limit the capacity of the field to include perspectives, ideas, or people that aren't a part of its star system. As this special issue makes abundantly clear—and as many feminist scholars point out—such a system more often than not results in exclusion.[26] Critical conversation determines who gets credit for ideas, whose ideas are valid, and whose ideas circulate. It also determines who gets tenure.

Citation takes place within academia, a space framed and defined by its own particular logics, bureaucracies, and pathways of legitimization and authority. One might imagine an alternative investigation into the academy's obsession with and insistence on citation—at least, in the American academy—that would account for its erotics. Because citation is tied, in academia, to a certain type of authority, it is important to ask with Nikolas Rose: "Through which apparatuses are such authorities authorized?"[27] In other words, through what legal codes, markets, protocols of bureaucracy, codes of professional ethics, or other vectors of power is citation invested with the power to legitimize our work? A macro-analysis of why the ability to cite sources is crucial to success within the academy would thus be a possible way of rethinking citation—a practice so often described in words that bear traces of the Freudian Oedipal scene (for example, the "father" of a particular theory)—as produced by a myriad of coercive and productive forces.

Instead of shying away from these forces, "Seeing Things" and "Call for Papers" perform this very problem, both substantively and stylistically. Perhaps because vectors of power and desire are so often veiled in the academy, I am drawn to this strategy because it at least owns its obsessions. Maybe I am also drawn to it because the academy so often feels already a little campy: what is imposter syndrome but a symptom of performing academic drag? It is not surprising to me at all that this hyperbolic display of academic bonds comes out of queer theory, nor is it surprising that the conclusions we draw from it are indeterminate. After all, this is the question of camp: it was, in early queer theoretical and feminist debates, an issue of drag.

Does these critics' performative self-awareness of their own critical bonds save them from reproducing the very structures "Critical Bonds" mocks, however? Not entirely, but

maybe a little. At its worst, citation amounts to little more than name-dropping, something that seems a little gauche in a field often accused of both navel-gazing and celebrity worship. But by rehearsing their own erotic, critical intimacy with their objects and their audience, Edelman and Miller refuse to hide what might be embarrassing, politically undesirable, or deeply unsettling. In so doing, they force their readers to confront the vectors of desire and power that constitute the academic social sphere. In short, what I like about these two pieces is that they lay bare the structuring desires that already lurk behind academic citational practice, precisely because they hyperbolically flaunt and interrogate the logic behind their own construction. Like a lot of self-conscious performance, an expansive, playful definition of citation both reinforces norms and undermines them: not quite an "otherwise" of citation, but rather a kind of estrangement theater of citation. Campily acknowledging our affiliations and inheritances—making what is ordinary practice hyper-obvious, even silly—might offer a refreshingly strange alternative to taking citation completely straight.

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# Notes

**1** Huffer, *Mad for Foucault*, 273.

**2** Cited in Huffer, 273 (translation is Huffer's).

**3** Fuss, "Decking Out: Performing Identities," 7.

**4** Edelman, "Seeing Things," 111.

**5** Edelman, 103.

**6** Edelman, 119.

**7** Edelman, 111.

**8** Derrida, *The Post Card*, 18.

**9** Derrida, 19.

**10** Derrida, 21.

**11** Edelman, "Seeing Things," 112.

**12** Edelman, 112.

**13** Derrida, "To Do Justice to Freud," 239.

**14** Johnson, *The Wake of Deconstruction*, 21.

**15** See Edmund, "Points of Reference."

**16** See Nash, "Citational Desires."

**17** Weiner and Young, "Queer Bonds," 230.

**18** Miller, "Call for Papers," 365.

**19** Miller, 189.

**20** Johnson, *A World of Difference*, 198.

**21** Johnson, 5.

**22** Edelman, "The Future is Kid Stuff," 22–3.

**23** Edelman, 22.

**24** Butler, "Remarks on 'Queer Bonds,'" 381.

**25** Miller, "Call for Papers," 368.

**26** For more, see Edmund, "Points of Reference"; Nash, "Citational Desires"; Huang, "Whither Asian American Lesbian Feminist Thought?" as well as Ahmed, "Making Feminist Points" and Hemmings, "Telling Feminist Stories."

**27** Rose, *Inventing Our Selves*, 27.

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**IMAGE:**
Beverly Acha
ARCHWAY I (SKOWHEGAN), 2018
oil and egg tempera on panel, 10 x 8 inches