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***Unhinged, an alliance: Creativecritical writing and ecstatic citations***

Abstract:

This contribution will focus on creativecritical citational devices. We will position creativecritical writing in relation to scholarly research and the academic writing it typically results in, as well as performative writing and autotheory (a performative form in itself). Following Katherine McKittrick's provocation "What if the practice of referencing, sourcing, and crediting ... takes us outside ourselves?" (2021, p. 16), we understand creativecritical citational works as ecstatic: they stand outside themselves.

At the same time, performative writing's citationality creates an "affective alliance with writing itself" (Pollock, 1998, p. 94) – "affective alliance" being key in autotheory too. Ecstatic citations, then, allow text and voice to transcend themselves while opening up to these alliances, becoming other-like in the process. McKittrick names this as an unknowing and unhinging of the self (2021, p. 16). Similarly, Amy Hollywood describes "the self-shattering that occurs through identification with the lacerated textual other" (2002, p. 59). These creativecritical citational gestures imply an ecstatic merging with textualities and subjectivities that are radically different: historically (the anachronistic), existentially (the non-human) and even ontologically (the fictional).

Putting all of this together, in this creativecritical contribution we will examine writing that becomes ecstatic, both in form and content, more self-expanding than self-reflective – luminous, slippery, weird.

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Keywords:

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## 1. Transfiguring the auto-: intro

Autotheoretical practices bring together the more abstract learning of theory and art, and the bodily, intimate knowledge of biographical experience. Writerly in one way or another, autotheories are performative, creativecritical works. Literary autotheories, which can partially share references and intentions with academic work, recurrently use referential apparatuses typical of scholarly writing. This may result in similar aesthetics, too. These apparent affinities lead to certain expectations in the text, which are immediately perverted, revealing familiar tactics repurposed for more revolutionary purposes. This is one of the features that positions autotheoretical practices firmly in the creativecritical territory. The resulting hybridity allows these to simultaneously critically review the dominant, normative modes of subjectivation, while experimenting with other modes of existence and relationality (to oneself, to others).

Intertextuality is a particularly key strategy here. “Intertextual praxis transfigures the ‘auto’ in autotheory”, writes Alex Brostoff in “An autotheory of intertextual kinship: Ambivalent bodies in the work of Maggie Nelson and Paul B. Preciado” (2021, p. 92). They very much hit the nail on the head. While much has been written about autotheory’s feminist accolades (see Lauren Fournier’s work), and Brostoff’s emphasis on intertextuality certainly does not contradict those writings, it seems the truly radical potential of autotheoretical practices is this expansion of what the self can get to be. Brostoff is right, again, when they go from intertextuality to, more specifically, citationality, and make explicit the latter’s “double gesture” (p. 96) – “typographic” and “bodily” (p. 96). Autotheory’s peculiar obsession with citationality is precisely what allows it to not just communicate, but perform the kinships in Brostoff’s title: it enacts a polyphonic textual landscape; a rich, varied (even rugged!) plurality made of resonating expressions of subjectivity – an affective alliance, as Brostoff names it. This performed citationality has all sorts of implications and ramifications – affective, political, ethical, epistemological, ontological, aesthetic. The way the auto- narrator carefully constructs a multiple voice entails a double challenge to embodiment: both that of the auto- (a narrator with flesh in the game), and that of the (body of) text. In other words, the *incorporation* of citationality generates and alters textual materiality –

– and the quivering subjectivity reflecting off it.

In the meanwhile, referring to Black scholarship, Katherine McKittrick seeks to embrace and crack open “the shared and collective intellectual praxis” (2021, p. 15). In “Footnotes (books and papers scattered about the floor)”, she suggests that the emphasis of academic citational practices is methodological (“how”), but the methodological effects go well beyond the scholarly (a widened approach that has some resonances with autotheoretical intentions):

Perhaps the function of communication, referencing, citation, is not to master knowing ... but to share how we know, and share how we came to know imperfect and sometimes unintelligible but always hopeful and practical ways to live this world as black. (p. 17)

Intertextual practices, then, “transfigure”, reflect and stretch the self. They are a tool of awe, point grateful fingers – *they taught me this!* (Or allow us to use them as bouncing walls – rebounding new arguments against theirs.) If intertextual practices expand the self and the text, inevitably they must also, as McKittrick states, expand the life we lead (even for those of use whose privileges makes it something quite different to what the scholar is referring to). The process generates energy, a burst, light – citations become doors, open spaces: “What if citations are suggestions for living differently?” (p. 19).

Taking McKittrick’s complex, stunning work and holding the citation on living differently can feel reductive. Let this be clear, then: any potential for living differently offered by these practices is not naïve. These are not tips for optimisation or self-improvement. Read her closer: “referencing is hard” (p. 17), McKittrick repeats often. “What if the practice of referencing, sourcing, and crediting ... takes us outside ourselves?” (p. 16), she asks. Reading (and writing) others is a way “to actively unknow ourselves, to unhinge, and thus come to know each other, intellectually, inside and outside the academy, as collaborators of collective and generous and capacious stories” (p. 16). This is a practice of breakage. It splinters both texts and subjectivities.

To *unhinge*. *Capacious* stories. McKittrick makes space – “cites and sites” (p. 27). This is, again, not a gentle gesture. The site-specificity in McKittrick’s text goes back to the history and experience of being Black. She develops a scholarship that faces and counters a violent reality. Her brightness does not mean it feels good: “displacing the self, unknowing who we are, is awful” (p. 16). What is more, the

displacement involved in the outreach, this transportation “outside” oneself, hints at an *ecstatic* potential, too – something, like Brostoff’s transfiguration, uncomfortably heightened and old-fashioned.

Transfiguration is no easy feat. The discourse of mysticism rears its mighty, beaming head, not quite ugly, but disproportionate, and out of place, out of time. A heavy thing, capable of taking all the structure down, even if the structure is a text rather than a temple.

Transfiguration involves light and the kind of violence that shakes (explodes!) what is held as dear and true.

“[T]he appearance of his face changed, and his clothes became as bright as a flash of lightning. ... in glorious splendor, ... [t]hey spoke about his departure.” (Luke 9:29–31)

By borrowing from all sorts of literature, from cultural theory to mystical writing and even a smidge of eco-phenomenology, this text seeks to unhinge the self and transfigure the auto- of autotheory and other performative and creativecritical practices. One foot in academia (“cite”) one foot elsewhere (“site”), this text is constructed by unhinging stanzas. Citations reverberate and echo into associative thinking, widening the net cast by the research, akin to what Chase Gregory deems “a grid of associations”, (2020, p. 64) instead of a “network of citations” (p. 64). A textual object conceived in three dimensions, it wants to both perform and investigate what the creativecritical, citational movement that *takes us outside ourselves* (typographic and bodily, as Brostoff puts it) can do.

A lot of this text *hinges* on the idea of this joint-like movement. It is unhinged as in mad, to be sure (“What is madness, if not an excess of connections ...? The citation becomes a site of ex-citation, of displacement, of the feeling of getting outside oneself”, writes Gregory (p. 66)); but mad only as in following one’s own inner logic (a door outside its frame maybe, but still open to its own possibilities). Unhinged as in pivoting or swinging away from a specific, basic shape. Unhinged as in creative and critical at the same time. Unhinged as in not really fully removed but moving differently.

Think 17th century Dutch doors, like the ones in the backgrounds of Pieter de Hooch's interiors, leading out, towards the landscape and the light. Verticality, split.

Or the very specific, physical thrill (a tingle in your scalp, a jolt in your chest) of a detailed exploded view accounting not only for all components of a complicated object, but for the way they fit with each other, a relational diagram.

Unhinged as in projected to a two-dimensional space from a three-dimensional reality, fine lines dissecting and associating individually all pieces, no matter how small.

This is how I arrive here. Half a door stays put. The other opens to something out there, outside the domesticated room of thought.

Technical illustrations demonstrate how explosion is an ecstatic potentiality contained in unity. All that is held can be blown up and suspended mid-air in a perfect composition. An (impossible) perspective to see how things work, all insides exposed. A form of violence assumed by wholeness. No place to hide, the mechanics of revelation.

Behold, the luminosity of such a release.

This projected, exploded door-text has three main moving parts. Which is to say, it produces three types of light: a light that comes from *somewhen* else, unhinging history, anachronistic. A light that wants to explore the frames of subjectivity and existential reason, *someone and somewhere* else, by opening towards landscape and the more-than-human. And finally, a light that may glitter *somehow* else, an honest trickster prone to fiction, making up realities that do not exist, but are still true.

## **2. Anachronism: *somewhen* else**

Let's begin in a light that unhinges history, a fossil ray. Fruit of the Big Bang's primordial blast, the ray is

extremely weak but constant ..., unlike all other known rays, does not seem to come from any identifiable source: it is identical in all directions, unchangeable ... from everywhere, without identifiable nor privileged emissary ... its material radiation

reaches us, the archeological vestige of its initial blast ... a rumble of a background language. (Sarduy, 1999, p. 1246, authors' own translation)

The fossil ray is one of Severo Sarduy's concepts. The queer Cuban poet, mentee of Roland Barthes, used the cosmological imagery of the Big Bang to both write poetry and think historically, finding new ways to understand the Baroque (and the consequent Neo-Baroque). Despite the historical enterprise, the fossil ray offers a multidirectional, or rather non-directional, temporal movement. An ancestral beam, still, orphaned from its origins, and with no final destination. Nothing but constant presence, forever arriving: "Work without 'reason': in expansion, stretchable to infinity, a series of pure gesture in its repetition" (p. 1246).

Sarduy's fossil ray is a quoted light from the origin of the universe, performing itself anew, reiterating the expansion and reproducing itself in all directions, forever. It is both situated in time (being an afterglow: cosmic electromagnetic microwaves as leftover radiation of the Big Bang) but also anachronistic (a fossilised motion still expanding to this day, self-repeating to the point of losing its origin).

The fossil ray is somewhen else, moving to now, ecstatic in its leftover energy, unhinging itself from cosmological genesis, cited by old television sets as white noise and static.

The fossil ray forces you to jolt away from your human time frame, too.  
It unhinges your understanding of time, refuses to make sense.

Intertextuality and citationality also work in confused linearity. Adolphe Haberer, in "Intertextuality in Theory and Practice", describes the intertextual network as rhizomatic, using a description that brings us right into the fossil ray, for it "spreads and sprawls, has no origin, no end, no hierarchical organisation" (2007, p. 57), which he later calls "the synchronicity of the intertext" (p. 60).

Despite the academic apparatuses that ensure crediting, the expansion of intertextuality is multidirectional, in-process and simultaneous, linguistic waves (sound, and light, and force) –

"there is no new thing under the sun," Haberer writes, citing King Salomon (p. 59),

mise-en-abîme.

Both Brostoff and Gregory hint towards a queered temporality performed by citations: they “[make] the norm strange in its displacement of time and place” (Brostoff, p. 96); they

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) ... [t]he linear time structure of reproductive, progressive history. (Gregory, p. 23)

Sarduy’s cosmological theories have to do with repetitions, too. Some are, like these confounding temporal jumps, anachronistic (his best-known idea is probably that of the *retombée*, a resonance of an event that has not happened yet, a doppelgänger of something or someone in an unrelated temporal plane, “consequence of something that is yet to take place, / akin to something that does not yet exist” (Sarduy, p. 1196, authors’ own translation)). Similarly, a citation, writes Constantine V. Nakassis, “is always already in the host. It is anticipated by the cited event that precedes it” (2013, p. 4).

Moving beyond themselves, citations’ anticipation is as ecstatic as anachronistic, its effect spreading through intertextual networks like Sarduy’s vestigial ray, no beginning or end. “Whenever a new text joins the network of texts”, Mevlüde Zengin notes, “the meanings of both the new text and the old ones change” (2016, 304).

“Oh, how desirable is this union!” (St Teresa of Ávila, n.d., p. 81)

Intertextuality challenges the linearity of discourse, the straight line of the “I”: it o-pens the self up, widens it, makes it not content but container, a magic trick, something flashing, an expression of wonder –

“Oh, how many of us affirm that we do this, and believe we seek nothing else – indeed we would die for the truth of what we say!” (St Teresa of Ávila, p. 81)

If you turn the I into an O



– “this is not me-search, we are thinking in the world with others”,  
reminds Lauren Berlant (Berlant and Bojarska, 2019, p. 291) –

you find a widened subject occupying space and time, the vowel of the  
opening, the interjection, sometimes involuntary, blissful, surprised,  
saddened, of a body.

The body, of the subject, of the text, as an initial layer that does grow into many  
others.

“Circle-primary structure. Hunting boundary. *Querencia*” (Sarduy, 1999, p. 1215,  
authors’ own translation).

*Querencia* is an untranslatable word. Wanting and desiring (*querer*)  
made noun. “The action of loving [*amar*] and loving [*querer*] well”  
(R.A.E., n.d., authors’ own translation). “An inclination or tendency of  
people and certain animals to return to the place where they grew up or  
are used to going to” (R.A.E.).

Oh!

And to the 13th century Spanish-Jewish mystic Abraham Abulafia:

With each of the twenty-five letter pairs, you must move your head  
properly. When you pronounce the holem [long “o” sound], begin  
facing directly east. Purify your thoughts, and as you exhale, raise your  
head, little by little, until when you finish, your head is facing upward.  
After you finish, prostrate yourself on the ground. (as cited in Horwitz,  
2016, p. 175)

Through citation,

aspire to a language that reiterates and performs itself  
through your body,

make your body language,

return to yourself

and the yourself that is others.

Emit a howl like the Big Bang,

end face-down on the floor, intimate with the space/text  
that holds you.

Querer, queering – from Spanish to English, the strangeness of  
resonances, associations, affects: fossil ray, white noise pixels  
vibrating, a cluster of many. Not a sun, but a spot of light on a skin.  
Multidirectional time repeating itself here,

and now,

and now.

Oh!

The 13th century Brabantine-Christian mystic Hadewijch: “This is an  
inconceivable wonder,/Which has thus filled my heart/And makes me  
stray in a wild desert” (1980, p. 187).

### **3. Existentialism and landscape: someone/where else**

Wild desert, infinite vastness, fossil light: an inner landscape beyond  
the self.

Borrowing the term from Plato, Kristeva conceives the *chora*, a  
pulsional body which is the primordial space from which the speaking  
subject emerges, linked to matter and the mother, of drives and affects.  
Long after the Big Bang that separated the I from this (m)other-body,  
this chora remains hidden in speech. The body gets subjected to  
language, allows voices to become vowels, rhythm to become rules,  
sensations to become meanings. The continuous afterglow of this chora  
in the symbolic order of language is what Kristeva calls the “semiotic”:  
the non-meaningful patterns and features of texts expressing bodily  
affects, desires and drives, a hidden landscape that keeps us alive,  
dynamic and resists stasis.

Poetic language is what tries to integrate this semiotic into the symbolic,  
to find a form for this discharge of affects, of destructive impulses, the  
ellipse and the elusive, the rhythm and the repetition, the transgression  
of codes and expectations. And as subjectivity for Kristeva is a  
discursive construction,

(if only this could be aided by an exploded view of subjectivity)

constituted by the symbolic order, everything that changes and unhinges the discourse also changes and unhinges the subject, brings it, as Kristeva calls it, in process: it forces the speaking subject out of the temporary stasis of a fixed identity, making it ex-static, outside itself. (See Kristeva, 1987.)

(boom !)

Oh!

Citations can have a similar semiotic effect, precisely because they escape a fixed position in a specific text, and what they bring to the new text in which they are quoted are precisely a set of sensations and affects: an affective alliance occurs between my body and the text I read: something catches me, a rhythm, an image, a way of formulating, a tune that is both strange to us, and strangely familiar; a displacement, and transfiguration: this process is violent, “awful”, as McKittrick calls it. Inserting a quotation into a text does not only mean that the original text is destroyed, gets dispersed, loses its former meanings, but so is, in the performance of writing, the identity of the subject who writes. It incorporates, undergoes the same operations as the text: cutting, pasting, deleting, reordering, this whole “self-shattering that occurs through identification with the lacerated textual other” as Amy Hollywood writes (2002, p. 59). Rather than petrify you deeper and deeper in a specific network of scholarly knowledge, quotes turn into an ecstatic tool, transforming the discursive landscape from which I assemble my identity: however slightly, I begin to speak differently, and thus, to paraphrase McKittrick, start to live differently.

The inner desert starts to bloom, the scholarly text turns it into an old Flemish field, gives it an ever wet, fertile land from where textual bodies can fight for space, recede and come forth, blend and clash, rise. Clouds! Clouds! Clouds! The sun is no longer a solid oversized dot. Its origin-less light is now soaked and heavy, mottled through the thickest foliage, and valleys wind in and out of shadows, telling us stories where cows ruminate next to each other. A multidimensional space where writing makes, like Brostoff established, kin.

Quotes growing from the background text, the background body of Sarduy’s ray. Quotes relating to each other, like Donna Haraway’s kin,

in “an enduring mutual, obligatory, non-optional, you-can’t-just-cast-that-away-when-it-gets-inconvenient, enduring relatedness that carries consequences” (as cited in Paulson, 2019).

Della Pollock already told us to write performatively, to blend the creative and the critical, to write in a way that “shifts” (1998, p. 75).

(Clouds! Clouds! Clouds!)

To bear in mind how performative writing is “consequential”, a “force” (Tania Modleski, as cited in Pollock, pp. 94–95).

Querencia, mentioned earlier, speaks of love for a land, its landscape. It is an involved, embodied love, a thing/thinking with roots and time and specific sensorial details and memories. Something between attachment and keenness, as much an affect as a habit.

The way the dog knows to lead to the park on his walk, and then, knows to go back home – the comfort of belonging, in the specificity of this here, and the specificity of that there, without necessarily owning any of it.

(mutual, obligatory, non-optional)

Querencia is the soft spot where the inner and the outer landscape, the body and the land, overlap, and it is hard to say what is what (or who is who). The complex, layered, knotted *where* of us, what Barry Holstun Lopez, cited in turn in Charles Ault’s “Achieving Querencia: Integrating a Sense of Place With Disciplined Thinking,” defines as “a place in which we know exactly who we are” (2008, p. 606–7).

With great querencia, naturally, comes great responsibility.

Querencia is kinship with a place, and all that makes up a place, even if you could leave whenever “it gets inconvenient”, even if you must leave, or if you are not allowed back – the word contains a compulsion to return, something deeply ingrained. You may remove yourself from the place, but you cannot remove the place from yourself. And eventually, you find yourself coming back, as many times as you can, or need to.

If we are to agree that intertextuality is a vast landscape all writers belong to, then it follows that there must be some form of *querencia* at play. The way I always find myself in the same corners of this land, going back and borrowing from the same sources over and over, weaving my discourse into them, and vice versa. There is a *querencia* to the situating of citational practices, there is a *querencia* to the citing of situational practices.

A tendency to return, leash or no leash.

A familiarity and identification, an ease: “whenever you return to it, your soul releases an inner sigh of recognition”, as Kirkpatrick Sale writes, cited in Kristina Gray Fisher’s *Reclaiming Querencia* (2008, p. 484–5). *Querencia* is, of course, a loving of something more-than-human in a more-than-human way. Citational *querencia* takes a very human phenomenon, intertextuality, and makes it into something capable of being more-than.

In the meanwhile, Gregory’s work already delves into the loving, desiring aspect of intertextual relationships. They start their article by declaring that “citation can be sexy” (2020, p. 61). They allege it has to do with a certain excitement felt in seeing one’s own name printed; but citation can be sexy beyond the self.

I do not need to see my own name anywhere to lust after the way better writers make texts “connect, contest, perhaps penetrate, briefly couple or coincide” (Gregory, 2020, p. 61). My love for the intertextual landscape may express itself in my soul’s sigh, but the recognition and affect goes well beyond me and what is particularly mine.

“I’m not interested in my emotions insomuch as their being mine, belonging only, uniquely, to me. I’m not interested in their individual aspects, only in how they are traversed by what isn’t mine”, writes Paul Preciado in *Testo Junkie* (2012, p. 11), communing with Lauren Berlant’s position. He continues

I present these pages as an account of theoretical junctions, molecules, affects, in order to leave a trace ... If the reader sees this text as an uninterrupted series of philosophical reflections ... without the solutions provided by continuity, it is simply because

this is the mode on which subjectivity is constructed and deconstructed. (p. 12)

The page as a junction, but also the constructed subject. Being a/s place, so that encountering what isn't one's own is what animates us.

(This mention of animation is an anachronistic, internal citation, added later on, referring to a part of the text that is still to come, but already written. Bear with me.)

Elliott West, also cited in Ault, hints at a similar principle in saying that “a place is what it is, partly, because of the deep strata of stories that are still being laid down, and will continue to be, presumably forever” (2008, p. 611).

Secondary citations sprouting all over, like weeds, an environmentally-friendly form of citation. Recycling of texts and ideas, reforesting intertextual lands one line at a time.

Going back to Brostoff, this brings us firmly into relational territory, again: “when citationality performs relationality, not only does relationality lay bare its movements and displacements, but a corpus also lays bare its kin in its very composition” (2021, p. 98). Baring one's kin instead of one's skin.

(a strata of stories)

A movement and a revelation of many – an ecstatic plurality.

Lauren Berlant and Kathleen Stewart make kinship work in *The Hundreds*, a collaborative collection of “theoretical poems” (Berlant and Bojarska, 2019, p. 291) written under the constraint of a 100-word count. The citational apparatus is present, but minimal: a miscellaneous list of references at the end of each piece, featuring writers (like Foucault or Koestenbaum (Berlant and Stewart, 2019, p. 37)), the same way it may reference a place (Jackalope Coffee & Tea House (p. 36)), daily moments or habits (dog walking (p. 34)), art (Hopper (p. 64)), or others of all sorts (“A few pansies stuck in a window box”, “townies” (p. 64)). The “complex relations”, as Elizabeth Anker calls these (2020, n.p.), or “citational net”, as Berlant refers to them, are a “worlding” (Berlant and Bojarska, 2019, p. 291) effort by the authors. Their

language is not only spatial, but environmental, it tells a story of relations, dynamics, situations:

Our citations are dilations, not just memories we have fidelity to. We meant for this text to appear like *A Lover's Discourse*, its stories couched in cascading cites. But Barthes could animate whole worlds with the word "Goethe", whereas our referential matter is too singular, various, and plenty. So the performance called format takes another route here, windup parentheses holding the things we think with: encounters, a word, a world, a wrinkle in the neighborhood of what happened, and reading we wouldn't shake if we could. ... It's ordinary writing.

Not just sources: all things are indirect. ... There is location, skin, convergence, and the fallout of failing numbness. The form knowledge takes involves limited reception. There is spareness and filling in. (Berlant and Stewart, 2019, p. 20)

In an interview, Berlant calls this approach to language a composition –

(Composing is one of those verbs that knows bodies are language, and so are pictures, "typographic" and "bodily", to return to Brostoff (p. 96), but also, it seems, a form of kin-making. The ecstatic movement of citation, being pared down and further digested, decenters here not so much the self, but the theory. It experiences and performs beyond itself, in an expansion of meaning and possibility that makes the visualisation of the polyphony impossible, denying a 3D view because the multidimensionality of life is already in the text.)

"we mean for [the theoretical poems] actively to produce ideas about the ordinary of composition not just on the page, but also in the encounter with words, worlds, people, animals, and a variety of things. So it makes sense that we were interested in a wilder citational environment for the book." (Berlant and Bojarska, 2019, p. 291)

Light flooding this "citational environment" –

One of those "mutual, obligatory, non-optional, you-can't-just-cast-that-away-when-it-gets-inconvenient, enduring relatedness that carries consequences" (Haraway as cited in Paulson, 2019), maybe.

a whole ecosystem, waking up, stirring life into a textual landscape, like Foucault described:

I can't help but dream about a kind of criticism that would try not to judge but to bring an oeuvre, a book, a sentence, an idea to life; it would light fires, watch the grass grow, listen to the wind, and catch the sea foam in the breeze and scatter it. It would multiply not judgments but signs of existence; it would summon them, drag them from their sleep. Perhaps it would invent them sometimes – all the better. (1997, p. 323)

And dream and invent I will, later on. But now, let's multiply existence.

#### **4. Something like fiction (ontology): somehow else**

Citations move ecstatically, forcefully inviting one, and one's discourse, to unhinge from known subjectivity, overcome the body (of flesh, of text) and become someone or somewhere else. Barthes was already clear: "We know now that a text is not a line of words releasing a single 'theological meaning' (the 'message' of the Author-God) but a multidimensional space in which a variety of writings, none of them original, blend and clash" (1977, p. 146). When seen at an angle, Gregory's "grid of associations" turns out to be not still, nor flat. Citational intertextuality is, as well as spatial, animated.

As in, it moves.

As in, it has a soul.

The Author-God, like the God-God, is dead. Kristeva, in describing Christian ecstasy, places her emphasis on how it undoes the difference between self and other: "Otherness disappears when we merge with the One" (1987, 120). In citational practices, the voice of the cited other merges with one's voice, one's body even. A religious affair:

So can the Beloved, with the loved one, each wholly receive the other in full satisfaction of the sight, the hearing, and the passing away of the one in the other. After that I remained in a passing way in my Beloved, so that I wholly melted away in him and nothing any longer remained to me of myself. (Hadewijch, 1980, p. 281–2)

And yet, it is, at the same time, a perfectly secular one, too, as Lisa Robertson writes in *The Baudelaire Fractal*: "The feeling of having an



inner life, animated by a cold-hot point of identification called ‘I’, is a linguistic collaboration. We speak only through others’ mouths” (2020, p. 159). Robertson’s imagery is sensual but somewhat abject, too. Like in ecstasy, pleasure is tainted with agony, a touch of the awful:

It’s a fractured citation. Everything that’s ever passed through it has left behind traces of fragrance: coconut, musk, and fear. We speak the words others have spoken, in new settings, and so transform them a little, while the trace of the old speakers also remains active, moving into the potent future. The pronoun is just the most intense point of this timely reinvention.

This was frightening, to embrace the unacknowledged intimacy of linguistics, and so I continued the thought. ...

I would have liked my sentences to devour time. They’d be fat with it. ...

The sexuality of sentences: Reader, I weep in it. (2020, p. 159)

This intersubjective effect, like citational, ecstatic time is synchronic and goes in all directions, one’s mouth/pronoun becoming the other’s. A panicked closeness, as anachronistic as alluring.

This is the ontology not of the selves, but of the textual borrowing, some of what the citational, creativecritical de-centering of the self reveals as possibilities for alternative forms of being.

And reading. And writing. A bibliography, as McKittrick puts it, “written or sung or whispered or remembered or dreamed or forgotten” (2021, p. 27).

#### ***4.1 Dreaming citations (body-mind fabulations)***

Perchance: to dream.

To listen to this appeal to create, to change, catching foam. To become a kind of light I dreamt about, recently, one night, in a particularly bleak, grey, rainy Spring. The sun was setting over some Mediterranean town, giving everything a blinding, intense, warm glow, the walls, the street, the sky itself. An anonymous companion quoted the Japanese author Junichiro Tanizaki, saying “you should always want to write as if your text was bathing in this warm light of a setting sun, with the longest of shadows, and the orange-gold light almost liquid”.

Not unlike an AI hallucination: a dreamt citation, a fabulation dressed with factuality. I knew I would not find it in Tanizaki's *In Praise of Shadows*, as he despised, precisely, the western preference for brightness. The sun in his idealised Japanese interior shines only dimly, always as a mere reflection. He would never have advised to write so brightly as a Mediterranean setting sun –

the reflection of light on cobblestones of Urbino,

the asphalt of one long summer evening in my home street,

the myriad of tiny light reflections caused by a breeze over a pond, a mixture of joy and melancholy.

Or, as the dream itself suggested, a composition of borrowed experiences –

the glowing sunlight on an Aztek pyramid in the intro of an eighties tv-series I was hooked on as a child,

the warm light in some painting by de Hooch,

the colour scheme of Giorgio de Chirico's *Mystery and Melancholy of a Street*.

When the body dreams a citation, from which light is it borrowing? What electrical circuits spark it into being? Like in *The Hundreds* – a composition, an environment-like reference, site-and-body specific citation, making worlds.

#### ***4.2 Stewart's rogue intensities (sensorial iterationality)***

After the dream, I was chasing not a specific formulation, but rather an affect, an atmosphere; a sense of recognition, a kinship: the quote did not exist, but its landscape did, somewhere, resonating with, merging into an inner dreamscape. The dreamt-quote acted as a citational device, not revealing an intertextuality, but rather an intersensuality; I was not looking for a reference, as scholars do, but for what Kathleen Stewart called "rogue intensities" (2007, p. 44): "all the lived, yet unassimilated, impacts of things, all the fragments of experience left hanging", "what makes a life pulses at the edges of things" (p. 44). A rogue intensity is an intimate experience, but not linked to a specific, biographic identity. It escapes narration and intention, and yet, it generates an affectivity –

a performative trick, surely. A reiteration, an enactment –

(no new thing under the sun and all that).

Yours and not yours at the same time, foundationally  
citational –

(already in the host. Anticipated in precedence).

Not yours to keep.

It cannot be reduced to a simple transmission of knowledge, let alone  
one of scholarly knowledge. It is an intensity that wanders, transforms,  
adapts.

A rogue intensity is more than just a sensation, a thrill that briefly runs  
through the body, stirs affects. As Stewart makes clear, it is also about  
generating “circuits of deadness and desire” (Stewart, 2007, p. 45) –

the sensation of the setting sun was more than an evocation of warmth  
and light, joy and melancholy. Sometimes a dream does not bother  
going into elaborate rebuses, and instead simply states things as they  
are, a desire to write differently.

Inadequate and elated at the same time, the same circuit of desire, both  
frustrating and inspiring, activated when I underlined this sentence, in  
Barthes’ *Preparation of the Novel*, years ago: “for someone who has  
experienced the *jouissance*, the joy of writing ..., there can be no other  
Vita Nova (or so it seems to me) than the discovery of a new writing  
practice” (2011, p. 5).

Such rogue intensities are not just plastic, they are borderline pathetic,  
as they shatter the persona of the critic – always at a safe distance, a  
spectator of the landscape, never part of it. And if such a kinship is  
avowed in a scholarly text, it is always intellectual, never affectionate,  
sensual. These queer synchronous textual times, though, these fossil  
rays are showing that such critical distance is a fiction, gladly ignored  
by the affected body. Turns out there are other practices that can  
supplement this, confusing linearity, borrowing from anachronistic  
discourses, seemingly unfitting.

“Oh,! how desirable is this union!” (St Teresa of Ávila, n.d., p. 81)

All these different intertexts, all these different landscapes are traversed, are to find intensities that could relate to my dream, not to explain, but to expand and to see where the light in this dreamscape, to try gather any affects and intensities they may contain, the fossil rays they still reflect.

#### **4.3. Lisa Robertson’s augmentations (larger-than-life referentiality)**

Here is a craving for something not quite like fiction, but still capable of augmenting reality. Something like what Lisa Robertson’s narrator, Hazel Brown, describes in *The Baudelaire Fractal*. Choosing to believe that “author” is etymologically related to augmentation, she declares her very own new writing practice:

To augment would be my work – to add the life of a girl without subtracting anything else from the composition, and then to watch the center dissolve. It is exactly the sense of augmentation, which is to say, not necessarily an expansion or enlargement, but a timely complexification, sometimes an argumentation, at others a dissolution or the invention of a new form of refusal, that makes of the poem a possible space. The augmentser is the one who inserts extra folds into the woven substance of language. ... The augmentser includes the displaced parts, because they are pleasurable, because there are moody, lazy, slutty, mannered, frivolous, and principled, because they are necessary, because they are monstrous, because they are angry, because history needs them without knowing it yet, because without them, the world gets really grudgingly thinner and more cruel, becomes a parody of the sign. (2020, p. 141)

An implicit intertextuality, this weaving, an inclusion of unhinged particles – someone else’s too, surely. An inspiration for, if not an invitation to, a citationality that seeks not authority, but its alleged etymological ancestor, augmentation. A swelling. A *somehow else*. Something authors (can) do, not quite fiction, but a form of excessive storytelling nonetheless.

To add without removing.

To dissolve the center (an ecstatic proposition).

A dissolution that makes space for light to seep through.

Transfiguration.

A linguistic and bodily spatiality.

All for the sake of affect, as well as effect.

#### **4.4 Broken vessels (mystical meanderings)**

Expansion, like in technical drawings, like in this text, can sometimes disrupt integrity. A savage swelling that leads to disintegration, fragmentation. Such destruction, though, proves revelatory. The Author-God is dead, but the augmenting author is not.

Lurian kabbalism's origin myth tells the story of the "breaking of the vessels", a mythical, religious version of the physics of the Big Bang. There was a primordial, divine light, meant to be carried by vessels. The light turned out to be so strong that it shattered the vessels. Light spread out everywhere. It even got trapped in the vessels' shards, which would become the cosmos's material substance. (Horwitz, 2016, p. 225)

Good deeds release this trapped light and bring forth the *tikkun*, the messianic moment of full restoration,

"to actively unknow ourselves, to unhinge, and thus come to know each other, intellectually, inside and outside the academy, as collaborators of collective and generous and capacious stories" (McKittrick, 2021, p. 16).

In this process of repair, the outer and inner are strongly intertwined, translating these good deeds into care in more intimate spheres, binding private contemplation and worldly action. This leads to a potential application of *tikkun* in social change, used for practices of reformative social justice as for more revolutionary practices, like the anarchist *Tiqqun*-collective in France that anonymously published texts calling for a violent opposition to capitalism.

"Creation is an ongoing, creative linguistic process, whereby language and divine creativity are shared by humans and God", as Rachel Elijor summarises one of the basic tenets of the *Sefer Yetzirah* (as cited in

Horwitz, 2016, p. 67). In kabbalism, then, reading and writing have strong religious and magical connotations, as these acts were thought to have a direct relationship with the way the world itself was created. This intimate, contemplative interpretation is, as in Western mysticism, expressed sometimes in erotic terms, re-imagining the Torah as a bride.

“The sexuality of sentences”, traces of “coconut, musk, and fear”  
(Robertson, 2020, p. 159).

This process of reading, or rather, of reading as writing by inserting citations, circuits, lines of kinship into the texts we write,

(other people’s mouths)

is described in terms that closely resemble Kristeva’s notion of the semiotic:

“In this process of permutations new melodies emerge and vibrate to the ears, and then touch the heart. This is how the technique of letter combinations operates. ... And the secrets which are disclosed in the vibrations rejoice the heart, for the heart then knows its God and experiences additional delight.” (Abraham Abufalia, as cited in Horwitz, 2016, p. 168)

“a rumble of a background language” (Sarduy, 1999, p. 1246, author’s own translation).

“an inconceivable wonder” (Hadewijch, 1980, p. 187).

In the psychoanalysis of Melanie Klein, tikkun became the creative reparation that allowed a subject to cope with the fundamental ambiguity of affects, the shattering of an inner world into conflictive drives and desires, and to repair the destructive impulses towards oneself and others.

(awful)

The realisation that a binary layout of the world into “good” and “bad” objects does not hold: that relations with other subjects and what surrounds us is flawed, that what attracts us is embedded, like light in a shard, in what frustrates us (see Berke and Schneider, 2003).

In turn, via Klein's theories, tikkun indirectly permeates Sedgwick's notion of a reparative reading as an alternative to the paranoid reading as the dominant paradigm of critical writing. For Sedgwick, a paranoid reading is focused on exposure, revealing hidden structures of power, fueled by negative affects: a form of reading that is, to be sure, also very necessary to analyse and to oppose forms of repression. But this critical attitude can be supplemented (not replaced) by a more creative form of reparative reading, that does not stop with revealing the hidden oppressiveness of discourse, but wants to experiment with these discourses, see what can be done with them, queering them (see Sedgwick, 2003). What drives a reparative reading is a joyous affect, not aimed to discard a discourse, but to transform it, just like I take the kabbalistic imaginary here away from its religious context. It is not about what it can teach us about the divine, but about dealing with texts, reading and writing in an erotic, ecstatic form of scholarship – integrating it in a “reparative” circuit of desire, fragmenting it, turning what is outmoded and untimely into a chance to experiment with the self, this “auto” of autotheory, bringing it into process, see it transform into something else.

Moses of Kiev, a 16th century kabbalistic scholar and mystic, quotes from someone he only refers to as “a learned man”, who in turn claims

“that one day I was sitting and writing down a kabbalistic secret, when suddenly I saw the form of my self standing before me, and my own self disappeared from me, and I was forced and compelled to cease writing” (as cited in Horwitz, 2016, p. 164).

A kabbalistic secret, a theoretical definition, a dog walk – all potential quotes with which to feel kinship, expressing one of these rogue intensities in which the self is transfigured,

in a dream, or rather in a text where I found a strange, anachronistic echo both of my dreamt sunset light and citation:

“Likewise, while we were composing this book, and adding the vowel points to the Four-Letter Name, strange objects appeared before our eyes, like the image of red fire at sunset, until we were confused and stopped. And this happened to us several times while we were writing.” (Moses of Kiev as cited in Horwitz, 2016, p. 164)

The ecstatic, anachronistic, luminous recognition of one's experience  
in someone else's words –

happened to me several times while we were writing ...

happened to us several times while we were  
writing...

Happened, several times –

– while writing.

### **5. When God closes a door, a million reverberate open: conclusion/opening.**

I began this text by borrowing a door: “What if the practice of referencing, sourcing, and crediting ... takes us outside ourselves?” (McKittrick, 2021, p. 16). The door, rather than opening, burst, and took with itself words, body and landscape. In exchange, it offered an excess of light. In the blast, an exploded drawing composed itself, the text propelled up in the air so I could see it come apart – de-centered, unhinged (something *awful*) – which in turn, would teach me (us!) how to put it together. A transfiguration, like Brostoff's auto-, a text sprouting citations, citations permuting themselves in texts they did not initially belong to (a portable querencia, a return to meaning, further rooting itself by the return to a few words, over and over).

From this perspective, the possibilities for new ways of living (and writing, and citing) emerged – augmented, dreamt, shattered, capable of tangling myself further in linguistic landscapes and more-than-human kinships – eternal, luminous, vast, not necessarily divine but, simply, alive. And the way I knot and confuse myself in this on-goingness multiplies interpersonal and intersubjective attachments, too, pronouns and mouths, affects and thoughts. Like Dutch doors (Oh!), it can allow for several realities to co-exist (violent and reparative, interior and exterior, open and closed, secular and mystical, me and you, real life and high theory).

Unhinged,

an alliance.



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