

On the Politics and Practice of Citation: A Conversation, Part 1*

nicholae cline, in conversation with jaime ding and Jorge López-McKnight
(and Jose Guerrero)

ABSTRACT: (Academic) citation is a representational practice of hollow, ruined potential professional accumulation of intellectual capital. This conversation documents, contextualizes, and extends the special issue's genesis and intervention as an experiment in refusing "better citation" reforms and instead questioning the very category, legitimacy, and institutional function of citation itself. Emerging from years of working together and learning from one another across space and time, the conversation lays out the origins of the project, sketches and explores the stakes and problems of academic citation, and frames the issue itself—much like this conversation—as a performance aimed at unsettling academic libraries' citational common sense. Across the exchange, citation is theorized not as neutral representation of intellectual genealogy but rather as a mechanism of surveillance, extraction, and professional accumulation, tethered to intellectual property regimes, publishing economies, and the (re)production of scholarly and institutional value. The form was also key, beyond the initial conversation itself; after this dialogue wrapped up, the issue's peer reviewer entered as another interlocutor, adding comments that were then taken up and responded to in-text by the original participants. The final piece stages dialogue at multiple levels (transcript, review conversation, and comment-thread exchange) rather than presenting peer review as a one-directional verdict or a single interaction as the end of the conversation.

**also known as "Genesis, Speculations, Refusal: Shit-Talking Citation in Academic Libraries"*

KEYWORDS: citation politics; academic capitalism; citation as enclosure/accumulation; abolish intellectual property; fake ass shit; acab = all citations are bastards: dialogue (or critical dialogue, or dialogue as method); (collective) knowledge production



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OPENING/FRAMES

When I first encountered the call and manifesto shared by Jaime and Jorge, I felt summoned.

The manifesto's opening declaration that citation functions as "a representational practice of hollow, ruined potential professional accumulation of intellectual capital" articulates well what I have felt and thought across the years: that our citational practices are not neutral documentations of intellectual genealogy but rather mechanisms through which we reproduce systems of surveillance, extraction, accumulation, and domestication. This critique resonates particularly deeply because it refuses the liberal fantasy that we can reform our way out of these dynamics—that citing "better" or "more diversely" will somehow transmute the fundamentally extractive logics that undergird academic knowledge production, let alone push us towards some kind of justice, citational or otherwise. Instead, Jaime and Jorge invite us into a more unsettling terrain, one that questions the category and legitimacy of citation itself, that insists on uncovering the dishonesty embedded in how we claim to "think with" others or share "how we know what we know" while primarily performing our own expertise and building intellectual property regimes, and that rejects practices of so-called justice that merely reify the systems that they might like to think they can critique, resist, or change.

And so I knew I wanted to participate in some way, but how? It would have been relatively easy—or at least, familiar—to write another thing. And I almost did! But ultimately I chose to contribute to this issue through conversation rather than a traditional article precisely because writing another peer-reviewed piece fit to burst with citations felt like a betrayal of the manifesto's provocation (and my own desire to challenge myself). I didn't need to accumulate more professional capital through the very mechanisms being critiqued, and to do so would have been to remain complicit in the systems this project seeks to unsettle.

Understanding how this special issue emerged—through years of argument captured in a 62-page Google Doc, through "rude emails" to journal editors that functioned as performance and provocation, through conversations with contributors that pushed beyond the transactional toward genuine engagement—is essential for grasping why this special issue has a shot at actually being meaningful. This is not simply another scholarly intervention into citation practices; it is an experiment (and performance) in whether and how we might create otherwise within the institutional

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forms that constrain us. As Jaime states, "we are all in theory on the same side but we want people to be clear about what they are thinking about," and so this issue demands more than performative radicalism or a citational justice that leaves intact the fundamental structures of academic capitalism—even if performances are welcome and encouraged. It asks us to tarry with the tensions, to hold simultaneously the impossibility of being "radical librarians" (state agents who cannot escape complicity) and the urgency of refusing the usual ways of being and acting.

As the editors make clear throughout our dialogue, they are "not solutions-oriented"—they are not offering a new and improved citational practice or framework for us to adopt and standardize. Rather, they are gesturing towards something more fundamental: that we engage in genuine conversation, that we "talk to each other more," that we prioritize the relational work of thinking together over the production of discrete, ownable, citable objects. And so this dialogic format itself performs a different politics of knowledge—one rooted in what they describe as "relationality and collectivity and study" rather than in professional accumulation. It refuses the fantasy that individual scholarly production in isolation can constitute radical praxis, insisting instead on the messy, iterative, confrontational work of building relationships and thinking in common.

My hope is that this conversation can illuminate not only their beginnings, process, and critique but also the generative possibilities that emerge when we insist that knowledge is made in relationship rather than accumulated in isolation.

We hope you enjoy the conversation below. And if you don't, feel free to send any critiques, complaints, or hate mail our way at someb0llshit@gmail.com

GENESIS / PERFORMANCE

jaime

This is Jorge's fault.

He started it – he wanted to talk about this project that I did many moons ago, called the [LORDS project](#), which was this thing from when I was at a **Cal State** (CSU) campus where I was trying to get people to not be shitty LibGuide writers. But it was also about bringing people together to talk about LibGuides, and there was structure and prompts, and everyone would get together to talk about what this LibGuide was actually doing and also the references they were providing, who the audience was, blah blah. My hill at the moment was trying to put not just books or database articles, but something else - the experimental forms of scholarship. Anyways, so this one [gesturing towards Jorge] wanted to talk about that and think about citation through that project, and it kind of got away from LORDS specifically and became about just citation generally.

Jose: which one?

jaime: its a secret

Jose: -10 points for not citing an institution

nicholae: you're getting a citation for not citing an institution 🚗 📄

Jorge

There's some truth to that, and I'll back up a bit and say that I'm wary of origin stories. Sometimes there can be a sort of fixed attachment to them that sort of obscures or misleads. But thinking with jaime's comments directs to thinking about how we kind of know each other, and how we came to make this particular bullshit project regardless of citation.

I've known jaime for I don't know how long... five or six years? I have met them in real life, like in the flesh, and have been involved in different makings together, whether that's Community Study (along with nicholae) or different writing or publishing and editing projects, and things like that. But getting back to the LORDS project, I think is really important because that's central to this project. I was part of an editorial team

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that was looking for models or frameworks that had a critical lens or position around citation practices. We were using that as a citational practice tool to sort of assist and challenge, really along the lines of Sara Ahmed's work, Eve Tuck and K. Wayne Yang's Critical Ethnic Studies work on citing people of color specifically. It was 2020 or 2021 maybe. We were all really excited about that LibGuide and that work, and we cited jaime.

Then jaime gave a eulogy, and I encourage everyone to take a look at that presentation or performance... That, as jaime said, prompted me to reach out to them. I didn't see the performance or the presentation at JCLC, but I had been thinking about citational politics and citation justice (or different projects that allegedly take up a political or critical or citational practice) and so I reached out to hear more about the LORDS project. I really approached it from a citational position, and I think jaime approached it from a sort of a knowledge construction or knowledge production position. And we all suffer the consequences from that misalignment, you know.

nicholae

You've really helped sketch out some of the early conversations and the background of this drama. But how did you go from having a conversation about jaime's LORDS work to saying something like, we want to talk about and really engage with citation and then, further, produce a publication around citational practice, politics, and ethics (to put it simply).

jaime

Well, it took like three years and there was no plan at first. At first it was just little convos, LORDS was just the jumping off point. Then it kind of went on to other things. It was also a little bit after 2020, so I think everyone—well not everyone—but many of us were disenchanted with the idea of representation in these really “important terrains.” And so that is where the *some bullshit: citation*, “special issue of *Journal of Radical Librarianship*,” Vol. 12, 2026.

conversation went, like what is a citation... we had this something-like-62 page Google Doc of notes from our conversations, and it's just responses between us (Jorge saying something and then me saying, that's stupid, or vice versa). It was a process of, well, let's read this and then come back together or let's think about this a little bit because maybe our processing times are different. Let's argue a little bit and then come back together, and then maybe about a year ago we started making things or writing things to each other, for each other, and those are some of the vignettes that are on the website. Eventually we were thinking, how do we get other people involved in this conversation?

So we wrote a really rude email, and we sent the rude email to a couple of journal editors and that's how this publication started. But it's just one projection or one little leg of what these conversations were.

Jorge

We didn't set out to curate a special issue, and we didn't set out to try and position ourselves as people of interest or experts, or to carve out a scholarly territory in this terrible celebrity academic library economy. This was happening with and across the pandemic, and we were sort of entering this allegedly new moment, you know, of criticality. But also more foolish accumulation and commodification, right?

jaime did the work putting all the materials on the website and really getting that going, and the time of this – one of the elements of deception in disguise is that certain formalized academic knowledge productions play with our time, right? And labor and non-relation, and it tries to naturalize them. I think it's important for us to share these things with you—about the background and process.

The first person we sent the email to was like, "Oh, you

Jose: not sure what this refers to, but I'm very interested in knowing more about the disenchantment

jaime: everyone made themselves ILL with "dei"/ george floyd blood money and nothing changed and arguably conditions worsened

Jose: Okay I think I mostly get it. I guess don't really know why "important terrains" is in quotes like that, makes it feel like it's something I should know but I don't... if it's not a really common phrase that is totally going over my head (very possible!) I might consider rephrasing this or qualifying it somehow "because of these really 'important terrains' of [DEI, of 'doing The Work(TM)]."

jaime: the top of the page is just "fuck you and your citations"

nicholae: who's getting/ got fucked?

Jorge: it's something jme spoke in the earliest encounters of this project - a sound and force, both a reminder and confrontation

nicholae: in relation to what you were saying, jorge, i'm thinking about the disappearance of the temporal (how the actual duration of thinking gets collapsed into a publication date), relational (how the connections and relationships within and between knowledge, the care and curiosity of considering and

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should do a special issue”... And then they ghosted us. They actually did a sort of anti-performance to our performance, which I thought was really cool. We did eventually get to a point where we wanted to make something. And, loving writing, I’d like to make a journal article, but jaime really pushed us to perform and if we’re going to perform, let us perform in how we want to perform, right? We wanted something with visuals and text, and texture, and we wanted to be silly and fun as well as serious and direct and confrontational.

We had stuff in the document about reading. We both really were fond, and still are fond, of Katherine McKittrick’s Dear Science, and their footnotes chapter in particular really struck us. We were struggling with some of the citational projects that we saw around representation, around discourses, including Cite Black Women or citation justice or the [Black Excellence Syllabus](#). Did I leave anything out jaime?

jaime

No; I would pull out a few things: there were questions like what’s the difference between citation and reference? What is the idea of performance of citation? What’s the importance of format for citation? What does refusal look like? What does visibility mean for all of this? And growth—our own paths of growth. I was trying to think through a lot of this when I was at that job that brought out LORDS, but no one else was kind of thinking with me, it was just very like: well, I don’t know, maybe we need to cite more Black people. That was a plateau, and there’s no growth with that, and so I think our conversations were helpful to be like, okay, but what actually is this thing and where do we come in. Because Jorge is a whole-ass librarian, and so he does a lot of reference and plays with this practice a lot more than my situation currently where I’m more of a student. There’s a performance part of being a

exploring ideas with others across time and space, the contextual and embodied acts, performances, and interrelational tendencies required of learning, understanding, and meaning-making get obscured or forgotten or condensed into a citation or footnote), and affective (how the excitement, joy, confusion, frustration, and other feelings and experiences get lost unless they are intentionally surfaced by the writer... and often they aren’t deemed appropriate or professional to include at all, in many disciplines and fields) dimensions of inquiry and study. when we see a published article or listen to a talk, we mostly see the product but not so much the process; all that labor—the showing up, the attention, the care, the relationality, the challenges and doubts, the energy expended in staying curious—vanishes.

what remains, i suppose, is what can be formalized, standardized, claimed: the citation, the publication, the cv line. and this formalization naturalizes non-relation, making it seem normal, inevitable, even proper that knowledge appears to be individual property rather than, as mckittrick says, the result of “myriad infrastructures, feelings, texts, stories, exchanges.” but that is ultimately a “process of forgetting.”

from mckittrick: “This leads me to work through the ways black studies and academic research and writing—when we are doing our very best work—acknowledges the shared and collaborative intellectual praxis that makes our research what it is. This is, for me, especially

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student, too. But at this point, I'm too old to care.

nicholae

There are a couple pieces that stood out to me: one, you mentioned these rude emails to journal editors. What were you kind of hoping to provoke or get out of those messages to them? Did you want to do a journal issue? Did you want to write something for their journals? Was it a question and attempt to answer: how does it fit into the larger performance? You put this out into the world in some way, where you brought someone else into this conversation or used it to provoke another person rather than just the typical infighting between the two of you. What were you hoping to actualize or manifest or summon in that action?

jaime

Yeah, I think we were trying to fight. There were all of these things in this Google Doc and we both wanted to make them visible in some way, and being in different places geographically (because we talked a lot about analog ways to share this idea and perform IRL, but we're not in the same area of this land). But we were also thinking about the stagnation of where we see the conversation in LIS, especially in these "radical" or "critical" journals. And so that was just another performance, like teehee you're a journal of critical librarianship...

This was one way of doing that. I don't know. I mean, Jorge likes journals more than I do. Famously, he likes articles. I'm really just here for the ride

Jorge

I think you're absolutely right, jaime.

jaime

Put that in the transcript.

important because our ideas, on the page or in the presentation, might suggest otherwise; sometimes our ideas imply that we arrived there, in that page or presentation, on our own, as the sole owners of our own ideas. A property interest." (dear science and other stories)

Jose: This section felt a little fuzzy to me: what does it mean to plateau or to grow? I'd be interested to hear more about this limit that you hit. Also, what do you mean by "this thing"? LORDS or performance of citation or something else? What do you mean by "where do we come in"?

I guess what I'm trying to get at is, what does it mean to live in a world that is against non-white people, and that is against them even while idealizing their citations

jaime: probably fundamentally the difference between representation and redistribution

yelling at white ppl to be less racist really just get the yellor in trouble

nicholae: @jaime's last message: a la sara ahmed? "When you expose a problem you pose a problem. It might then be assumed that the problem would go away if you would just stop talking about or if you went away." i would also

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Jorge

We got to a point where, okay, we want to make something. We want to put it out there. And yeah, we could've circulated it, as Jaime's saying, analog or even through private channels. But we didn't, we went to these journals as both I think a type of performance and a questioning—we're questioning the profession and the discipline this way, through this communication, and we're very serious but at the same time were goofy as fuck. And so it's going to tell us a lot about you [the journal editors] how you respond, right? And if we can be in a type of relationship with you for this particular project, whatever that looks like.

nicholae

I can, I think, put myself in your all's position a bit because I've worked with both of you. And I feel my response would be both, okay, cool now we get to do something with this, on the one hand, but on the other (at the same time), I would simultaneously be aware of a sense and an incipient critique or concern that this editor just wants to, perhaps, co-opt or commodify this movement, this performance, this provocation. I'm also trying to recognize the reality that, well, what else could they do?—given their subject position, their role in this particular institutional and scholarly ecosystem—when confronted with something they are neither anticipating nor ready to recognize, accept, and integrate. Because this is an intervention that is a critique, actually, of what they are doing and invested in, which is a particular knowledge economy, politics, and ethics (if you will). Someone in that position only has a few options: one is to reject it, one is to accept, but another is actually to envelop it, to coat it with psychic material and transmute it through an institutional apparatus in order to be more palatable—to neutralize it, to render it less threatening.

love to hear a bit more about the metaphors used here (plateau, growth). and/or about, as Jose gestured towards, the limits you hit or discovered or see.

Jose: can you have growth without acceding to the logic of accumulation and acquisition? does growth always imply expanded/deepened property relations?

Jaime: @nicholae a la my life experience alas

@Jose if a baby grows into an adult do they have to accede to the logic of accumulation and acquisition.... yikes if so

Now, that's not to say that what you will end up producing with the special issue is going to be fundamentally or only institutionalized or neutralized; maybe it will! Maybe it's actually more legitimate and legitimated, and thus less potent, because it's in a professional scholarly journal; perhaps that does end up neutralizing the threat of this performance, the risk and urgency of it. I'm not making that claim here and now, I'm not throwing that out as a critique. But these are some of the things I would be thinking about in your position, in taking an idea, a conversation, a provocation—and that's actually in some ways my reading, in part, of your manifesto (the website, your original call, your project); which is to say, it's a pretty radical critique of what we are doing in our profession and in the scholarly discourse that is part of the foundation of our field and discipline—and bringing it to life in an institutional form through a journal.

So, what **else could an editor of a journal** do but try to make something of or with it? To try to incorporate or integrate it into this system in some way, whatever the cost and however poorly it fits (in)? I'm wondering what and how you both think about that, and if any of this was on your mind as well.

jaime

I think that's why I wasn't super shocked. Because there was nothing malicious about the email. We always joke that it's a really rude email. But it was fine. I've seen ruder. I think we have been really careful about the contributions being co-opted in a way with **weird liberal means**. That's more important to me. The format is one thing, but the more important thing is the connections with the people that we have created. In the publishing process, we are pushing a little more for conversations. So for each person who submitted, we had a virtual conversation to hear them and a little bit on what their politics were and be clear about the language that they're using.

jaime: a very fun catch-22

nicholae: of course we know that these institutional forms and forces try to domesticate and contain, but reading is unruly. and scholarly publishing (like any system) is leakier and less stable than it might like to pretend. it's fun to see what we can slip in... and what might emerge from that 🌱

Jose: not sure what to make of these three words. Just don't follow what is meant by "weird liberal means"

jaime: like basically elite capture, or, white middle-class-manager -distortion of 'radicalness' for further job progression

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Part of the idea also of sending shit to a journal of critical or radical librarianship is, well, what do you [the journal] mean? Because to me, there's no radical librarianship, you can't be a radical librarian period. There's no, oh I'm going to be this radical actor of the state... you can't, it's an oxymoron. And anyone who insists that... I think that's where the joke/play part comes in, because you can't be serious in a thing like this.

We're having these review conversations with a trusted reviewer (Jose Guerrero) in another face-to-face conversation. That is the review process, rather than shitty paragraphs where you're just like, who the fuck are you? We're having this bigger conversation with you, nicholae, where everyone gets to talk to each other a little bit. I'm hoping to pull out more of what is the process that they all went through with their writing of the pieces, because we definitely pushed for some people to think with the manifesto a little bit more. Like this is not just a floofy, "here's some feelings of mine..." this is not that kind of work.

And then I guess everyone will be on their way. But I think it's pretty rare to have conversations with your contributors as much as we have. And so the more important part is the connections with the people and to make sure that they are thinking about like what they're doing—

nicholae

Maybe the real citations were the friends we made along the way...

jaime

– with the idea of citation rather than like the product of what they produce or even what the journal becomes. Because for us this was just a familiar way to find the right people. It's hard to find people you can be on the same page with. Everyone's at a

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different place but some people are where they are, some people are really comfortable even when they're not comfortable because something else is more uncomfy... which is fair.

Jorge

The only thing I'll really reiterate is these are not legitimate publications, right? Like that's our politic. That's our understanding. And so we approach it with that knowing that they're full of shit and serious as a heart attack. That's important to state, and so my surprise is when it's a critique of a critique, I'm surprised that was welcomed. And then there's being surprised at my surprise as well.

I guess if I was super invested in this scholarly conversation or if I needed things for tenure or I was interested in being on the speaking circuit... I think one would have a different position on it, right? But yeah, we don't take them seriously and they're not legitimate.

nicholae

Fleshing this out is going to be really helpful and illuminating for other people to see and understand too. And they're not legitimate publications, as you say, and yet they are in a way—they're legitimating and there's a buying into their legitimacy.

Jorge, I'd like to hear a little more from you. Why publish in an illegitimate publication? Why contribute to a system that you are critiquing? Obviously this is not meant to be such a pointed critique that I'm making of either of you or this project, but it's a real question and genuine curiosity I'd like to think through. How are you squaring that circle in your minds, and what are you hoping, by participating in the system you're critiquing, that you will be able to do, to unravel, to provoke, to summon?

Jorge

I think we got to a point where we wanted to put something out there. And that was a decision that we came to and made. We wanted to have a more public performance, where it aligned or where it fit seemed to make sense in those places. Though it would have been really funny to be on a bunch of ALA listservs and like blast it out, right? That would have been a different type of funny performance.

jaime

We were looking for specific people to join the conversation and it wasn't just a yeehaw that assumed if you identify with ALA then you identify with us. Something that Jorge did that I thought was funny was like he looked up all the people who wrote citational justice articles or LibGuides and then sent the call to them. They didn't respond, but we are all in theory on the 'same side' but we want people to be clear about what they are thinking about. If you're worshipping ALA, you're not our people. But if you're like, "Oh, maybe I want to be critical"... maybe you are our people. And there's more of a chance of finding our people in the Journal of Critical Library and Information Studies versus blasting it off on a listserv where someone will be like, "how interesting... I, too, am a radical librarian, I too will think that citation is evil" or whatever.

It was just a helpful way to gather the people who we want to have those conversations with. From very early on Jorge wanted to bring more people into this conversation... should we invite someone else or one of our friends. I don't think I said no, but I was trying to think about what we are talking about first so we can bring it to a larger conversation. A lot of the conversations that we had, we had to be very specific about what each of us were talking about. In theory we are on the same side, right, but it actually took a little bit for us to be on the same page.

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nicholae

I'm really loving that you sent it to all the folks who had those citational articles and guides. That's really sending me RN, it's very funny and playful. We love to see the tomfoolery and mischief.

I also think about it from the perspective of someone who's—like you said—on your side, from the perspective of someone who's obviously on your side and I think, largely (as far as I can tell, if I may say) on the same page. At the same time, I also have a citational justice section on one of my **LibGuides**, right? And why do I have that? Well, one of the reasons I have made the decision to highlight this concept and practice is exactly because not everyone is in the same place, not everyone has the same set of beliefs or critical approaches to citation and its politics. I think about what information can I give to them. What can I offer to help them in the work they are doing, in their scholarship, to the extent that I can? What are the interventions that I can make with the people I support in my role as a librarian who works with students and scholars?

I've made decisions to—and here I'm reflecting on those choices and how I justify and narrate them to myself, how I situate myself within this politics while also critiquing and resisting it— talk about and offer resources related to citational justice, to bring forth sources and so-called interventions such as the citational practices Tumblr from the Critical Ethnic Studies group (the Tuck and Wang contribution) or the work of Sara Ahmed, because these were entry points for me to this conversation many years ago and I think they can be for other folks as well (whether they end up in a conversation like this one someday, in their own networks, or not... if that's as far as they end up going). You know, I remember *up//root* putting out their **citation policy**, stating clearly they wouldn't

Jorge: cited here: <https://www.ala.org/sites/default/files/2025-03/MorethanStyleGuides.pdf>

nicholae: 🍌
well i'll be gooped and gagged...

jaime: this low key was the document that jorge was discussing publication wise at the beginning, i think? maybe we can link it

nicholae: i was able to find [this](#) but not the actual policy

Jose: I remember that policy. I encountered it in the pitch submission Google form (not sure if it's still used): https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSc23lvoPIUWgHOxWFu7uYHTqNJLSLCsPE5TJ_Pvd1XOuo3FcA/viewform

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cite white people for the most part, and maybe that's as far as people will go. But it's a starting point, a foundation for people to think just a little more deeply and critically about citational practices and politics and the systems they are imbricated with. I am thinking more about our complicity with and integration into these systems even when we think we are making interventions. This is part of the reason why I'm asking about your decisions to approach this and ultimately publish in a journal. That doesn't mean this is the end of the conversations, and I think we all hope it isn't. It also doesn't mean that the point is publication at all and you're both saying very clearly that the point, in fact, is not publication—it's conversation and connection. Of course, you and others are publishing and getting published, and you're creating this particular kind of opportunity for other critical scholars, but you're also helping to initiate and sustain and support a conversation with other people who want to talk about this as well. And that, to me, seems very valuable and it's also one of the reasons why I wanted to contribute in this way rather than writing something.

Jorge

Thinking back to what you just shared, nicholae, and what jaime shared, and then the previous question. I think jaime's point about being on the same page is different, right? Because that conversation about citing more people of color or Black scholars or Indigenous scholars... that isn't a conversation we're super interested in having. But there are some things in there, from what you were saying, nicholae, that we're interested in, such as taking seriously and thinking deeply and specifically about the relationship to citation— we're trying to challenge the legitimacy of citation itself, right? We're trying to challenge the definition and category of citation. And in some ways we're kind of narrowing the frame of it. I mean, definitely welcome to critiques of citational justice; I think that's probably needed or more realistically where



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folks are at or maybe trying to get to.

It's really just a desire to throw the system into disarray. Those are different questions about representation, citation metrics. I mean, they're connected, but there's nuances and differences about those conversations around who you cite in terms of identity. And that's important to know.

nicholae

Anything you want to add on that, jaime?

jaime

I think, Jorge is saying that [citational justice justice] is actually a completely different topic of convo, right?

Jorge

There's parts of that for sure in the manifesto and there's definitely space for it. I think that's a concern of ours, which is that in that conversation, new systems are sort of being developed or advanced, the category of justice or citation, it's hard to pin that down. And if that is being offered, is that thing the thing they say or think it is?

The question about what we are hoping comes from this is that we're hoping folks can join us in that conversation. Because the critical citational conversation is not approached as an undertaking of questioning the category of justice or citation, right? That's taken for granted and being offered in higher ed and the library. That's one conversation we're interested in having, because this questioning is needed. But this other citational justice conversation isn't the direction of the project.

MANIFESTO/CONNECTION

nicholae

I'm hoping now that we can dig into some of the terms,

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categories, ideas you are grappling with, intervening in, resisting, and exploring. Perhaps a couple key questions: what is a citation? What is a reference? What do they do/not do? What do they wish they could do? What do they think they're doing that they aren't, and what do they think they aren't doing but are in fact doing?

jaime

(*manifesto*) Citation is a representational practice of hollow, ruined potential professional accumulation of intellectual capital.

nicholae

Boom, going right into the manifesto.

jaime

Jorge, do you want to take this first? You do reference, I don't reference. You know, you have a sign at your desk that says "[Reference](#)."

Jorge

Maybe it might actually be helpful to call you in on this, nicholae, and see or hear your thoughts initially about the manifesto and website.

nicholae

Basically, at a certain conceptual and practical level, they're just words on pages. Little strings of characters that are meant to sort and signify what you know and where what you know has come from (where it's coming from and where it's been). In a way, I don't always differentiate citations from references (and in the question I'm not thinking about reference as a practice of doing reference, answering questions at a desk or on the phone or via email). I'm thinking about references, citations, works cited, bibliographies at the end of a publication or presentation. In thinking with your manifesto and call, I was struck by how much I immediately resonated

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and agreed with it. Not surprised, of course, and I suppose if I didn't agree with it I probably wouldn't be here now (and I'm sure I would have let you know in some way)... but I might not have decided to join in on this journey in the way that I have.

It feels clear to me that citations are part of and tools meant to further the accumulation of intellectual and professional capital. They are mechanisms for claiming (making a claim on) knowledge within a particular scholarly, institutional, and proprietary framework, and as such are a form of an intellectual property regime and order that I think obscures actual knowledge networks and embodied, relational ways of knowing and understanding the world and (inter)subjective experience that are not (or aren't yet) part of, entangled with, beholden to, or codified through institutionalized knowledge systems and apparatuses and their processes of legitimatization, standardization, and, ultimately, neutralization (particularly of subversive, fugitive, and insurgent knowings and epistemologies).

I think citations are also acts of professionalization and control, and this aligns with what you've said in the manifesto about how they organize, order, and in a way confine and tame (enclose, if you will) the wide array of thoughts, imaginaries, relationships, affects, connections and connectivities, and conversations that we can and must (and do) have outside of these circuits of extraction and accumulation that we call scholarly publishing or research or professional development (outside of what is traditionally recognized or authorized as knowledge at all). To some degree they're also, for library workers, a kind of performance of authority and expertise, of legitimacy, within the scholarly discourse of LIS (a way of proving our place there, validating our scholarly identities), but also in the ways in which we—to go back to reference

Jose: reminds me of how there are sometimes footnotes that accompany citations that say something like "thanks to so-and-so for telling me about this thing I cited"—the people who provide the citation are both present, because they are mentioned, but also absent because they don't make it into the altmetric quantification thing (I don't think). Or like the difference between a works cited and an acknowledgement—that is a very formal distinction (one of them gets quantified and the other doesn't, I don't think?)

nicholae: yes, this! as far as i know, those kinds of "citations" (in footnotes and acknowledgements) don't get included in those kinds of metrics in most cases

—are meant to embody citations or citational practice at the reference desk and in our work more generally. We're meant to be these sort of conduits, these circuits or channels of knowledge that have been institutionalized (and thus domesticated), that have become part of library collections—and, of course, library workers are also gatekeepers of knowledge, of what is worth considering knowledge or part of the scholarly record, worth archiving and remembering. Understanding ourselves as part of a broader citational apparatus or structure helps us see beyond the citation as a particular and simple type of thing or practice and recognize instead the form or shape of the disciplinary (and disciplining) function they serve as well as how they underpin and uphold a system that isn't simple, neutral, or benign. To see the work they do, and the work we do, to maintain this system (and begin to see it more clearly).

Jose: I thought this was a really interesting way to put it--librarians as embodiments of citation--especially with the later bit about the form of discipline. I think this is what distinguishes the strands of librarianship I see emerging in this discussion: the mainstream ("happy to be the embodiment of citation/happy to be a circuit"), critical LIS ("the circuit leads to bad things but we can rewire ourselves to do good"), and the mysterious third thing ("smash the circuit")

How about that as a teaser? Maybe we can play with and meditate on this a bit? Does that give you both something to think with and respond to?

Jorge

We're really glad that you were able to kind of receive it that way.

Going back to your initial questions of what's a citation. That's something that maybe came out a little bit later for us and through talking with some of the contributors. Like you mentioned, it's text. It's words. There's a technical part to it. There's a standardization. In terms of knowledge production, let's say, it's supposed to tell someone else something about where and who you've learning and thinking with.

But I guess I don't find that to be the case.

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I mean, I haven't done a content analysis of LIS scholarship, but say this person has cited this person, and we can get granular with it: say they use a block quote or paraphrased another thinker, and you can really start to pull apart the ways you've allegedly thought with these thinkers. I think one of the performances that we're trying to get at is that this isn't actually the case. As in, a citation can't show you that and people claiming this through their references are, as Jaime reminds us, not being honest.

jaime

I would add that I was taught, personally, that citations are often for ensuring that the person who reads your work could also find the thing you were talking about, so they can go to this book etc. But I also want to pull out the actual material part of this whole Ponzi scheme, where then you also have to look at the publisher or the year or the location, and so on. It's linked to certain forms of capital and industry that maybe is not thought about often. Something that has always bothered me about library stuff specifically is how casual everyone is about how much they spend on publishers and the fact that it is very normal to spend \$5 million on a bunch of publications because our scholars need access. Meanwhile, half the staff is working off of minimum wage and no benefits. Like the actual material part of what these signposts are pointing to, they're not pointing to the knowledge. They're usually pointing to the publishing industry and how we're very much helping and holding up these singular ways of circulation.

No one's against reference because there's obviously different ways of doing it... yes, there's the lists, the bibliographies, and such, but there are other ways to understand reference. There are

Jose: Savannah Shange makes this point - <https://journal.culanth.org/index.php/ca/article/view/5367>

nicholae: not to block quote from the article, but:

"Conventional metrics of academic citation attend to frequency as an analytic and involve computational queries like: How many Black women are cited in this paper? How many times was each one cited? Parenthetically or quoted? If quoted, was it an in-line citation or a block quote? If it was a block quote, was it an epigraph or used as a segue between sections of a chapter? These questions are crucial to assaying the material valuation of Black women's intellectual labor within the academic economy and provide a starting point for a just appraisal. They emerge from a market logic in which citations are receipts for a debt owed to those whose ideas we build on; we "give credit where credit is due," because we have inherited a transactional framework for citation. In a context where power, privilege, and publishing are unevenly distributed across axes of race, gender, ability, sexuality, and nation, it is imperative for those who have accrued such resources to use the citational market to redistribute them.

By contrast, when we engage citation as a practice of relation, we shift away from market-based approaches to attend to the quotidian suite of academic, political, and spiritual "creative practices of refusal—nimble and strategic practices that undermine the categories of the dominant" (Camp 2017, 32)."

Jose: citation is like name-dropping: a performance of taste (in Bourdieuian sense: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Distinction_\(book\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Distinction_(book)))

100

nicholae: we're always trying to prove how tasty we are

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the books that George Jackson had in his cell, and that is a form of reference that perhaps you can't "cite," because you can barely get his book in an academic library. But that's a really important form of reference and something that a lot of people are studying (the things he studied). What he studied comes out in his work, but he doesn't have any kind of footnote or the actual format of a citation.

We're thinking about what the format does to ensure that, you know, Duke University Press gets their kudos. I mean, I've spent so much money at Duke University Press because they have a certain reputation or whatever, publishing good work. Citation often focuses on the publishing part rather than the actual knowledge part, right? Think about the format of citation. You have to have the page number, the year that it was published, and all the material aspects that it came from. And while that is helpful in terms of finding it, in terms of the treasure hunt of trying to source the sources, it can also obscure the knowledge you're actually trying to search for. There are definitely times where you cite something and it's actually a quote that's citing something else that's also just a quote and it's just this circular thing of a quote floating around in everyone's book that is there to just help sell books. In academia or the academy, you cite something because of the fact that it has been cited so frequently. I mean, how many times has someone cited Audre Lorde without reading Audre Lorde in LIS, specifically. And I know people comment on that and it's a very irksome practice. But it ends up just being a kind of credit so that you can claim that you have knowledge.

In a way, that's fine, but would Audre Lorde agree with how you're using her work, how you're quoting her quote? In LIS, I think it's probably mostly not,

Jose: this reminded me of the Robben Island Shakespeare: <https://www.folger.edu/podcasts/shakespeare-unlimited/robben-island-shakespeare/>

like a prison library, but it was only one book disguised as a sacred text because every other book they tried to bring in was confiscated; the folks imprisoned on Robben Island also joked that they were enrolled in "Robben Island University"

anyway, where this gets back to reference/citation is that this edition of Shakespeare's collected works was passed around and folks underlined or annotated different passages, and the assumption is that there's this conversation happening about the fight against the apartheid South African state but it's all happening through citations of Shakespeare

nicholae: really compelled by the multitudes and legacies a fugitive, shared text or reference like this can hold (a genealogy and conversation that no citation could capture, and that the prison itself couldn't contain or control)

she wouldn't.

Jorge

jaime, you just shared that study is important, right? And what it shows, in that example, is that they haven't studied it. It makes me think of this interview with Alexis Pauline Gumbs where she talks about the Audre Lorde quote, about the master's tools and how people don't read below that statement, basically, because what Lorde ends up saying is that that's only a problem if you authorize that institution, that house, or if it's a legitimate place of support for you. And so that's been missed, misunderstood, and misappropriated.

Jorge: <https://doi.org/10.5406/femteacher.22.2.0165>, by way of Shannon Mattern's Fugitive Libraries <https://placesjournal.org/article/fugitive-libraries/>

nicholae: 😊 "Librarians generally are aware of these problems (they tend to be a self-critical lot), and the field's main institutions have launched programs to promote equity, diversity, and inclusion."

I do want to touch on the reference stuff, too, because you both brought out actually being at the reference desk, and what role and performance that plays in citation and leading to references... like the works cited page or a reference material like encyclopedias. We have guidelines for reference through that awful illegitimate place called ALA, the state agency. These guidelines or standards tell us how we're supposed to do this transaction. And that doesn't mean you have to do that, right? But that's what's endorsed, that's what's expected.

nicholae

Citations as gatekeeping.

Jorge

Right. So thinking about that relationship to citation, it's that relationship to a really narrow state-sanctioned definition of citation, right?

We're talking about a different understanding of citation that can maybe be actualized in that relationship and interaction. I think that's hard when that exchange is really transactional, when it's kind

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of dependent on what jaime mentioned in terms of how one is trained in the classroom to find and get stuff and extract a fucking Audre Lorde quote.

I see librarians participating in that way. It's a helpful question to ask oneself like, are you a citation when you're at that desk? Are you a reference? And perhaps what kind of reference or citation do you want to be? Or can you be? And that's a political question, that's a practice question. And you probably can't be it all the time, but maybe some of the time or part-time you can maybe be doing something a bit differently that I think we're getting at or talking about.

jaime

The idea of how citational justice can introduce someone to an idea of critique of how fucked up everything is. But part of what we're saying is that's a farce, right? There's no benevolent citation. Even if you're performing a more helpful citation, you're still a **state agent**, right? Either way. You can't be a **radical librarian**, right? It's not something you can reform, and the little glitches are obvious. Oh, you have to cite this person, if you cite this other person you're gonna get dinged or whatever. I know Joy James has often said, one of her students was told to take you out because otherwise I wouldn't be hireable or whatever. We get dinged as PhD students in our written exams if we don't like, cite certain famous names because then you haven't "read" the literature or the canon, or you aren't the expert, and that's all about accumulation. It's not a Robin Hood kind of thing where you can accumulate and then spread the wealth.

What we are interested in is not reference at the desk, but how people refer to what they know, how they know what they know. One of the conversations

Jose: I wonder if there can be something added to explain the relationship between the library and the state (aside from the fact that most librarians are employed by a government, like a state university system or a city/county government, etc.)

jaime: librarians r the cops of knowledge
librarians are the liberal distraction for state gaps?

Jose: Liberal distraction for state gaps in other sectors like mental health services, housing. I was thinking something like "you're still a state or state-like agent, right? Policing the boundaries of what's acceptable for use in knowledge formation"?

nicholae: acab = all citations are bastards

Jose: yeah it's kinda like saying "decolonize the police" or "decolonize wealth" (which is actually the name of a newsletter I'm subscribed to lol: <https://www.decolonizingwealth.com/>)

nicholae: i wonder how many libguides there are that talk about how to "decolonize citation"? not a libguide, but a pressbook section on "decolonizing citation" (which here basically just means citing indigenous stuff i guess): <https://pressbooks.bccampus.ca/writingplace/chapter/decolonizing-citations/>

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we had with one of our contributors [KFA] that has been echoing in my little brain was about how you have to cite things visually to enhance credibility. This contributor comes from a film background, and she has to put the Harvard grant or whatever at the beginning of her video, and that gives it more credibility or more of an informed knowledge (or it becomes something that is then art)... and I think it's just pointing to the same things. Citation is about crediting these big institutions for creating certain forms of capital versus something that you can study.

nicholae

One thing I'm thinking about is how library workers become citations or references. In response to what you were saying, Jorge, I'm remembering this trend (perhaps no longer as active or prevalent) of human libraries. **This program**—particularly in public libraries—where you can check out people; like a queer person or a Black person. The idea is to address people's prejudices and challenging stereotypes, using the analogy of lending people instead of books, by having "readers" engage in one-on-one conversations with human books from marginalized or so-called "misunderstood" communities.

You can check someone out and they sit with you and answer your questions, and usually the "reader" asks questions and leads the conversation. It's about what they want to know and what they can get out of it; they use the "book" to understand them better. Or so the idea goes. It's deeply tokenizing and extractive, because the queer person or the disabled person become resources that you can use for your own development or learning; they become a kind of reference or citation, a stand-in or representative, for an entire community, subjectivity, positionality, or kind of experience.

nicholae: re-reading this
jostled free a memory
that i must have
repressed, in which i was
asked to be a "book"
for a potential human
library at my institution.
it was a hard pass for
me, and in the end i
don't think it actually
happened for a variety
of reasons (though there
was an earlier iteration
that i think was just
for students, though
the libraries supported
it in our space), but i
can recall some of the
feelings of discomfort i
experienced in response
to the idea of it (and
especially the idea of
participating)

jaime: 🍌

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It's funny in a way, because I think someone who's a bit more misguided (or just wrong) could actually see this as some kind of alternative. It's a kind of embodied knowledge, it performs a sort of relationality—but without reciprocity or mutual responsibility or care. It's a way of being in dialogue with someone, but it's ultimately entirely transactional. I think people see these human libraries as a way to cultivate understanding and connection, but in reality it's deeply exploitative and objectifying. It's a liberal, representational reading of belonging and connection that mistakes exposure for relationship; it imagines knowledge as something that can be borrowed, consumed, and returned rather than a dialectical and relational process that is contextual and connective.

I would love to draw out a little more if possible is around the problem of citation with respect to how it allows you to claim something and of course the ways in which citations actually fail to actualize this. "Claim" is itself quite proprietary, it is a way of saying I "have" something, I have access to something; and in this way it's a kind of key, a tool or practice or positioning that enables one to demand access, to claim participation or having done or accomplished something.

I'm interested in thinking with you about how do citations, as a practice, a form, a standard, a requirement, actually enable and perpetuate or exacerbate this process of claiming. What is it about the act of citation, or the politics of it, that produces the problem—the world, the perspective, the experience, the knowledge economy—that we are claiming it has materialized? What does citation obscure, how and why do they allow you to claim something that you don't actually have and perhaps haven't earned? They bring you into this particular circuit of extraction and accumulation, and how do

Jose: I'm reading Alexander Kojève's lectures on Hegel and the first chapter is all about people fighting to the death over recognition. It gets weird. I think you'd like really like it jaimé.

I mean Kojève's whole thing is about how the politics of recognition are about creating a shared reality that is actually the imposition of the "master's" reality over the "slave". And in a way citations are on a similar kick: by accreting citation counts we are imposing our reality on others (even if they acknowledge it only to disagree with it) and thus engaging in a figurative version of this fight to the death

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they do this from your perspective; what is the process?

jaime

Citations are a shorthand [to let others know what you want them to think you know so they can recognize you as someone who knows certain things]. I mean it also just becomes about numbers rather than knowledge. One of our contributors talked about why it matters how high your citation counts are, and why that enables people to move up in academia; it affects everything from career longevity and your trajectory to tenure promotion, salary, stature... and this is a reason for citation justice, right? Inequitable citational practice is associated with gender, racial or regional discrimination adversely impacts marginalized groups. So we're saying that if you cite something, you have the expertise to be seen or be visible in the academy when it is actually hiding a form of extraction.

The other thing I'll say is, as someone who reads lots of boring history of librarians (my research is a lot about boring dudes who are trying to create this economy), you can see how this shorthand takes the place of knowledge. At the beginning of graduate library school, bibliography was a really big deal (but not the way bibliography is at the end of a paper). Bibliography originally was the idea of studying books: seeing the differences between a first print edition and a second print edition. There was a title page, did some typo happen, did a page number get fucked up? It was this really careful, time-consuming study of what the actual, more material stuff inside the book was about. Because most librarians were book men, right? They were really interested in books, really interested in the book trade, like salesmen,

nicholae: so perhaps in the case of citations, this "fight to the death" might be something like whose reality becomes the world we must all inhabit? citations and the legitimated knowledges they facilitate or support maintain particular a epistemological order. this is reminding me that coulthard also discusses (and potentially critiques) the politics of recognition (and kojeve! through fanon and sartre) and the ways in which "recognition" frameworks with respect to indigenous struggles for sovereignty ultimately reinforce settler-colonial (and state) power—the power to grant or withhold legitimacy (ie. the master's position is secured through being the one who can recognize). simpson and others have done a lot of powerful work on an alternative politics of refusal, which seems like it maybe offers something helpful for this conversation now that i'm thinking with it: a refusal to seek recognition within citation systems that already presuppose and reify settler-colonial/imperial structures of knowledge, a refusal of the systems of recognition and legitimation that the citation economy/system upholds or enacts. so, not citation justice (which still seeks recognition within the system, in its attempt to bring people and ideas in) but citational refusal. would love to think more about what this might look like in practice, but maybe that's refusing to cite properly, refusing metrics, refusing to translate relational knowledge into forms that can be counted and extracted... or something else entirely (maybe even finding ways to destitute or destroy them)

jaime: ill also just wave a vague hand towards how

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selling the idea of the book as something that could help everyone. And bibliography was one of the key classes that you had to take at the beginning of the century when graduate library schools were starting.

nicholae

Oh yeah, I had to take a class in which we studied and created bibliographies (and what were called pathfinders). I don't know if they even have a class like that anymore, but we had a couple that were relevant to this, right? And there was a whole class called "Reference."

jaime

Oh, I would be interested in seeing what you read ... Fredson Bowers was the man on bibliography, and he was not really talking about the idea of citation that would come up today, but he was talking about how you study a book. That's kind of the direction of the Bibliographical Society of America, that's more their idea of what is the printed matter. But as imperialism continued and the US wanted to collect every single thing ever, obviously there's no time to look at every single thing ever. And there's no way that someone who's supposed to be an expert on a collection can look at everything. So then it just becomes a shorthand or a way of saying, I do have the right things, I am able to be part of the standing elite class, the controlling class, the state, or whatever.

This is all coming from my own argument about how librarianship is more about trying to gain some kind of status. And a lot of the methods of how this profession is just a sort of class warfare. And how it tries to create the librarian as someone who is separate from the worker, and this adds to the obfuscation of what we can do with knowledge.

AI has immeasurably heightened this kind of bullshit, thinking of a recent publication that came out in [the Political Librarian](#) where an ALA Outreach lecture cites two articles that seemingly don't have any kind of reference point - a waste of what could be said and also what references could be there. the refusal is heading towards the wrong direction imo

Jose: ah, those were the days....

This applies mostly to hand-press era books in Europe (~1450-1830): sometimes title pages get reset. Sometimes the text is the same but the typesetting is different which means it's a different edition, even if it doesn't state so (might even state it's the first edition, maybe because it was a pirated copy). This type of bibliography emerged as a way to understand something about a book or text as an object, and that something was often something that the text itself didn't say because it thought it was unimportant or had some reason to hide.

For example, one of the major works that defined this kind of bibliography ("New Bibliography") is "An Enquiry Into the Nature of Certain Nineteenth Century Pamphlets" in which two young scholars uncover a massive forgery using the methods advanced by the New Bibliography school

jaime: shout out councilmember of the BSA (bibliographical society of amurrica) and also a lot of library schools in the earl 20th century were focused on this kind of bibliography, rather

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nicholae

The first part of what you were saying reminded me of a politics or approach of giving a seat at the table or making a bigger table, which is part of a DEI or inclusive representation model, but that isn't liberatory... and it's actually just another form of extraction and enclosure.

I was really trying to get at honing in on the critique and playing with the larger arguments you're making in your manifesto around what citations are and what they do (and how that is different from what most people think they are and do). How does that happen? What is the process by which citations become and do other than they seem to be and do?

Jorge

jaime brought a really important point that should be clear, that they're doing exactly what they're supposed to be doing within this sort of awful place. And I think jaime really got on it with the metrics and the counting the data and the attachment of value.

nicholae

Right, the quantitative component, the primacy of the quantitative, the accumulation.

Jorge

For sure, and I mean even pedagogically, in our teaching too. I'm thinking of a librarian I worked with out in CU Boulder, Caroline Sinkinson, who once remarked about how frustrated she was—and I'm doing a bad job of paraphrasing or retelling the story—how she's been reading Freire for 10-15 years, going back to revisit that text and gaining something new, but the expectation is you have a week of a class or a unit or section of a class, and you're extracting from that, and that's it. It's a requirement for the class. It's going to be measured and valued in some

than the list format that we know now. that's partly why special collections emerged, the bibliographers were expected to know what was in those collections - not just the name and numbers but the editions and materiality

Jose: other groups too: the Society for the History of Authorship, Reading and Publishing (SHARP), the Society for Textual Studies (STS), and various institutes. BSA defines bibliography broadly as the study of material texts. Books as objects

I forget who said this (maybe A.W. Pollard, I think it was some guy at Harvard in the early 20th century) but there's a line that goes something like "you know nothing about books until you've handled your first 5,000 real books." Up until maybe the 1970s, bibliography (meaning, the study of material texts and how they came to be) was all about connoisseurship.

Bibliography of this sort got its start in the early 20th century with a bunch of Anglo dudes who were trying to establish authoritative versions of Elizabethan literature. Very much tied up in the project of British, and soon US, nationalism. In fact, there was a bit of a rivalry--US capitalists kind of decided they would suck up all the English lit and history, which is how you wind up with places like the Huntington, Folger Shakespeare Library, the Clark, and, to a lesser extent, Sutro and public university collections. There's been some criticism of this. Kate Ozment's "Rational for Feminist Bibliography" is often cited, though there are

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way, and it's transactional, and then it just departs and it really begs the questions: what would it be like, and wouldn't it be great, if you could just read one book and you're really studying it across a semester. I wanted to emphasize the requiredness of and quantitateness of texts and citations. That value has material consequences, too; for tenure cases, for promotion, for celebrity status within the field, for being an expert. And it's a colonial project, right? Even as we think about scholarly territory, there's a very territorial sort of protectiveness and delusion in this place around that sort of knowledge production, for the scholar and the person.

elements of that piece that are more about accommodating the kinds of systems you critique here (in fact, at one point Ozment kind of goes on this "cite more women catalogers" thing).

nicholae

Yeah. I'm hearing a lot about citations as accumulation, but I'm also thinking about citations as a kind of gatekeeping; citations as allowing some people or ideas in and keeping others out, citations as having not only sociocultural and epistemological benefits but also material consequences as well. Especially for people in terms of what they can do, where and how they can be, and what they can claim and access, including what they can say they know. Of course, the other side of this is about what they can't have, what they can't do, and what they don't have access to. And while I don't want to get to alternatives or horizons or other imaginaries just yet—that's for later and we have to be patient (note to myself most of all)—I do feel called to talk a bit about what someone does with this critique you're both offering.

Jorge

One of the things I really wanted to emphasize is this idea of the mechanisms and logics of citations. Our frustration is that they stand in for a critical positioning or a politics or an analysis, and I can't say that's the case all the time, but often enough, in some

of our readings they follow along the frameworks of recognition or representation where we don't actually get a sense of the politics or the analysis. It's become extracted, it's become morphed into something else. We want to think about the ways where citation could do that, where it could represent or have a politics that's clear, an analysis that's attached to it that's clear.

You brought up a really good point too, nicholae, about gatekeeping, where some things aren't considered citations, and some are. jaime had written a line recently, something like "Jorge thinks citation is everything and I think everything is nothing." Which I think is not necessarily one of the things we fight about but one of the differences we bring to the project. And for me that doesn't come from trying to rescue citation or providing an alternative to it. For me it's part of that thinking, I don't know if I'll ever fully understand my relationship to citation; or to study. Which isn't an invitation to be careless or not precise, but brings that question of what we're talking about: the question of relationality. And also: what do we consider citation to be? If we're going to be in the principle of community, that demands a specific conversation, and understanding, and political commitments, and analysis about the category of citation itself, and whether we're in the same space together or not.

Whether anything can be considered a citation, there's a refusal in there to the function of coloniality, which is to make knowledge universal, ordered, and structured. There are different ways of life, different citations, that aren't recognizable to me, that aren't legible, coherent, standard, or legit to academic—academicized—forms of citation.

nicholae

Right, the colonial desire for possession, for the subsumption of difference into knowability.

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Jorge

So that's just my bullshit on keeping open that space for citations to arrive while also closing that space of universal knowledge because knowledge can't be universal. There's just some shit you can't have. Period.

TENSIONS/LINEAGES

nicholae

That's really clarifying. I really resonate with what you said, "there's just some shit you can't have." Period! It's a holding space against the extractive logics of citation-as-ownership.

I am sensing some different perspectives around what citation can be. On one hand the idea that everything can be citation—a kind of expansive, inclusive, welcoming citational practice—and thus one approach can be to allow anything to be cited (and is this a kind of justice, or fantasy thereof). I see this as a kind of movement over the last several years, wherein LibGuides and citation manual updates how to cite, for example, conversations with elders (in an Indigenous context) or traditional knowledge or cultural practices. For some that is a kind of justice, a more inclusive or liberatory direction. I don't bring that forward to suggest that's your argument, but one way this idea of "everything can be a citation" can take shape is allow knowledges and materials that were previously excluded to be legitimate and valued through inclusion in the epistemologies represented by and within citation (and the scholarly ecosystem).

Another side of this is to cite nothing, to end the practice and regime of citation, to resist or even refuse scholarly communication and publishing... to destroy citations. As you say, citation is hollow

nicholae: one thing jorge said in another conversation really stuck with me, a memory he had of something a patron at the reference desk said to him: "citation is what the police give you." and that made me wonder about the etymology of the word, how we might think with this, what doing so might allow, open, caution, warn. and in digging into that etymology, it became even clearer that citation has always been about or a manifestation of power, not knowledge. the word comes from the latin citare, meaning "to summon, urge, call; put in sudden motion, call forward," which itself derives from ciere- "to move, set in motion, stir, rouse, call." there's a lot of possibility and meaning there, but i do think it's important to note that the original meaning of "citation" was legal: "a summons or written notice to appear"; the sense of calling forth or referring to a passage of writing didn't appear until much later. so citation was juridical before it was scholarly; it was about summoning to court, compelling appearance before some kind of institutional authority, rendering judgment. this suggests that citation is and has long been about institutional power and authority

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and ruined. But what you perhaps don't necessarily or directly say, is that citation is irreparable, irrecoverable, irredeemable; that's not clear to me yet. So, two sides of this divide or tension that I'm hearing and would like to bring forth for us to think with are: 1) bring it all in, everything can be cited, everything can be a citation and 2) Nothing is or nothing should be, cite nothing, destroy citation. I'm not sure if that's right or if those are the opposing sides (or if either of them goes far enough), or if that is representative of the debate or conflict, however minor, between the two of you, but there is a tension there and I think it would be worthwhile for us to tarry with that a bit whatever your own personal investments in either side or a particular approach/way of thinking about this.

One of the things I have been thinking about, before this project came to me, is the genealogy and lineage of certain words and ideas. When I hear a concept or term, I really like to sit with and meditate on it—which is one of the reasons why we have [a whole chapter on cultural humility](#); so when I hear a phrase like “citational justice,” I think about the justice in that. Can justice be had through citation, through citational practice? To my mind, the answer is a clear no. But I do think there's a question there, of how you bring these together.

What is the goal and how do you get there? I think we often fall into this in other so-called or actual radical formations or revolutionary movements. Some folks think that in order to propel or manifest the revolution, there is a clear or strategic process or series of steps we must take in order to achieve revolutionary ends or radical transformation. Others believe that possibilities or opportunities emerge from specific moments of a given rupture, and then you have to find ways to respond to and utilize that revolutionary or insurrectionary potential, in order to destroy the systems that dominate and immiserate us.

masquerading as the tracing of knowledge. in most cases, a citation doesn't manifest as choice; you don't get to choose whether to appear when cited or summoned, you are compelled by some kind of authority. when we cite someone in our work, we're not actually tracing genuine knowledge networks (how we really learned, who actually taught us, what are our relationships and lineages), but rather are performing an institutional ritual of summoning approved witnesses—those who can be called forth within the system.

the etymology reminds me that citation requires authority (your own, that of those you cite, and the authority of institutions), exposing how citation practices police who gets to speak with authority. it also shows us, i think, that citation has always been about who has the power to call forth witnesses, to determine whose testimony counts, to decide what can serve as evidence. and i think it's part of why we reject “citational justice” within existing systems, because the very structure of citation-as-summoning (in an authoritative sense) requires institutional authority that is itself built on colonial, imperial, capitalist foundations

but now i'm also thinking about the root ciere-, “to set in motion,” and remain curious about what gets set in motion through citation? what is summoned or called in/forth? is it genuine

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I'm trying to think with you both about is not exactly or at least not only what might should be done, but rather or also, within the context of the idea and practice of citation, what are some opportunities that arise and what are the conceptual and practical intervention you are making. That doesn't necessarily entail a "should" but rather what is possible. What could be done?

Being able to think about what citations are is, I think, quite helpful in understanding what we need to do with or about them. Some people would say, let's totally open the field, anything can be a citation, which is a way of excavating and exploding the categories of citations and the accumulative, proprietary power they hold and apparatus they represent within the circuit of knowledge capital. I wonder if we need to scramble or dismantle or destitute the knowledge economy itself; and if that's the case, this tells us something very different about what we need to do with citations from my perspective. I'm almost inclined to say that maybe there shouldn't be citations at all, perhaps nothing should be cited. I'm not sure, but I know I'm not on the page of, we should be citing more, or we should be citing anything and everything. That's still a logic of accumulation, of being with/within the very system I feel like we're trying to resist. Some things shouldn't be cited, some knowledge is sacred or secret or not for us. And for me that isn't a closure, even if it might come off that way, but rather an opening (towards something different).

I would love to hear both of you say a bit more about the differences in your thinking about citations. Jorge, you mentioned Jaime shared, "Jorge thinks citation is everything and I think everything is nothing." I'm curious about how your thinking and frameworks differ, and the extent that has come up in your conversations and how it has reverberated throughout

learning, collective study, mutuality and reciprocity, relational knowledge-making? or is it the professional accumulation of intellectual capital? given this root, citation could or should create movement, circulation, motion, flow; but the way it's currently practiced and given the systems in which it is enmeshed and that it perpetuates, it instead creates a stasis. rather than setting knowledge in motion between embodied, interconnected beings and worlds, citation sediments or freezes or transforms knowledge into property, something that can be owned by publishers, counted as metrics, accumulated as capital

Jose: now I'm just gonna drop links to stuff on communization theory I want to read and think with with y'all: <https://www.e-flux.com/notes/6783429/inquiry-on-the-future-of-revolution-part>

nicholae: let's do it! i have this open in one of my hundreds of tabs to read and i just need a bump of motivation...

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the project.

Jorge

You were saying that there are these two diametrically opposed analytical frames of citation. Citation is everything or everything is nothing. There's a lot of playfulness in that, but also seriousness too. jaime has thought about them in relationship to one another, in addition to opposing frames. I wonder if they aren't two different paths, but maybe the idea of citation is everything actually dissolves citation and kind of does a return back to citation is nothing. That is a way of losing its meaning or value within the context that I think we're talking about, which is—and I think we should be very clear and correct about—formal academic scholarship and that knowledge production. Maybe one of these is already at a spot that the other is sort of meandering, taking a roundabout way to get to.

jaime

I don't really have anything to add because I don't know if they're opposed.

nicholae

I don't necessarily think they are either. It seems like they are different in some way, maybe to some degree exist within slightly different parts of a graph rather than opposed along either end of a spectrum. But to my mind, the question is not about the opposition, but rather about what is different or divergent in your thinking about citations. Jorge shared a bit about what this means for him, and if you want to take that up I think the question is, for you specifically, how do you diverge from how Jorge thinks about these ideas or this critique (or about what to do with/about citations).

jaime

Got it, this is a different question I think. Like, what do we fight about?

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nicholae

We did promise our audience that we would get into what you fight about.

jaime

We have fought about a lot of things. But I don't think it's really about values, it's more fighting about how the language or the priorities align. So, no one's wrong.

To me, it's more about personalities. I'm really impatient, and very quick to get mad. I've been mad for six years, seven years, a decade. All this rage plus my impatience makes me think, why isn't everyone else here with me? I don't understand why no one else is at the same place, because we're all experiencing the same kind of shit. To ignore how shit all of this is is insane to me. So I think that's why I say everything is nothing, right? Because all of this is stupid, and I'm tired of trying to create all these new little artsy fartsy ways of defining archives or ways to unconference or whatever. I'm just done, I'm fed up with it. I'm also younger and didn't go through the MLS program. All of these have made me really quick to be like, this is stupid. If we really take seriously the ideas of violence and the fact that we are in this constant state of war within this empire, we're wasting our time doing shit like citational justice. So I think some of these nuances have made us fight. Because Jorge wants to dream and put things in parenthesis and use commas and shit, and I'm just like "delete delete delete"; just say what you want to say!

We actually had a fight about whether or not the email we sent out would be anonymous, and I was like, why would you want to be anonymous, because one: who cares. And then two: stand up for what you want to say.

We also fought about the differences between racial capitalism and settler colonialism. But again, it's not that we were or are on different paths, but I think we were at different places on the same path if that makes sense. Maybe we can fight about that too.

Jorge

jaime pushes me—even with the anonymous thing—to not just do it her way, but to share out more of what the politics are around these choices, which is very much rooted in a sort of refusal and non-performance and these Zapatista-like ideologies. Sharing that stuff and being more explicit and forthcoming is part of how I'm thinking about the question of growth and how this experience has been helpful. Because even with the dreaming and parenthesis stuff, I think what jaime is pushing me to do—especially in relation to citation—is to be more honest about that relationship to streams of critical and intellectual thought and thinkers. So I've really appreciated that.

And yeah, I'm not a [social] class-based guy or a class [dominant]-based thinker. That isn't the mode I operate in or move from. That's been a key question, especially with us, that jaime kind of got at, as to whether those systems are separate or if they're tightly articulated, and even if they're tightly articulated they're also conditions and logics and mechanisms and things like that. So I think that's been helpful for sure, to sort of think through and keep thinking about that.

nicholae

Similarly, jaime, how has Jorge pushed you?

jaime

Jorge has pushed me to slow down a little bit. I do think it's really rare to get someone who is willing to think with you and ask things and fight and not be

nicholae: Great place for an annotation!! Let's expand on this

Jorge: memory and temporality is unstable though having to touch on them to recall that conversation surfaces, perhaps, a correction. Was it settler colonialism? Or Coloniality? (Global) White Supremacy? as mckittrick shares above, "my dishonest memory." But more to the differences, and significations, and resulting consequences, is the question of what are the central fundamental organizing—and operational—principles of the theoretical frameworks or structure(s) of violence in one's project. And what gets carried from those, and where does it take an analysis, a politic, an argument.

Drawing away from the original question and pulling towards mckittrick again, returning more to citation and referencing, she tells a story: Citation points to method and how we come to write what we know. Citation is important because it frames and supports (legitimizes) our argument. This also shows that if we begin with Michel Foucault as our primary methodological and theoretical frame — if Foucault is our referential scaffolding — we will, most certainly, draw Foucauldian conclusions. There is nothing at all wrong with a Foucauldian project and Foucauldian conclusions, of course — to suggest so would be remiss and skirt around the work of citations I am seeking to address. This example simply centralizes the importance of how referential beginnings and referential scaffoldings shape conclusions.

nicholae: the question of racial capitalism vs. settler

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scared to come back after the fight, especially today when everyone's like "oh god, conflict." Basically every time I walk into a room I'm ready to fight. So this has been really helpful in how I can refine my analysis or the words I'm using. I like to just say, X Y or Z is just stupid, and you know Jorge will say, "well..." and I think that's what I need too. It's both ways. I will delete a lot of the parenthesis, but some of them are helpful and some of them I like to use, too.

Also, I don't like writing, and so we fought about that too. A lot of the times when I do fight with people, or say my shit, people think that's because I hate everything or I'm just pessimistic. But I think it's genuinely the opposite, like very Joy James, it's only about love actually. You know, like her term "apogee," "revolutionary love," where you're just like, this is because I care but I don't hate you - I want you to have personhood or I want you to think. Like fighting is not out of rage or hate, which is what a lot of online discourse has turned it into: it's become, we're going to fight so now actually you're a horrible person. You are just 240 characters of one view, and that's not what fighting is about. But you know all this!

nicholae

You mentioned that you're on the same path, earlier. And I guess what I'm hearing you say in that, —buried within this expression—is also difference. I've heard you share some very helpful stuff about the manner of the conflict, some of the practical aspects of what has come up. But one lingering question for me is around the underpinning. You're on the same path in terms of the critique or intervention of this project, but how do you walk it differently? What are you each carrying or bringing to this that perhaps the other doesn't? And what does that entail for the critique you're making, for the ideas you explore, for the approaches beyond the specifics or logistics of how you work together.

colonialism vs. coloniality
vs. global white supremacy
(vs. empire vs. imperial
capitalism etc. etc.) aside,
this mckittrick quote
seems so crucial. i'm glad
it's going to be quoted
here! even in a relational
framework for/of citation,
there's more to it than
just how you know what
you know or who you're
thinking with/carrying
with you. citations (or our
referential infrastructure—
the ideas, logics, and
so on that shape and
structure our analytical
projects) are generative
or productive in another
sense as well, because they
are constitutive of the very
conclusions we can reach,
the questions we can ask,
the worlds we can imagine
or foreclose. if citation
functions primarily as
accumulation rather than
genuine engagement with
a given framework and its
implications, we end up
reproducing conclusions
without actually grappling
with what those referential
beginnings demand of us
(and maybe sometimes
we end up just performing
citation rather than
allowing the ideas that
have emerged from and
animated other encounters,
movements, perspectives,
worlds to really shape and
reshape our thinking (and
ourselves))

nicholae: sometimes we
fight because we care
(about each other, about
the struggle, about the
world we inhabit togeth-
er, about what might be)

jaime

Well, I think in a way my answer is that it doesn't matter, because it's all bullshit.

Jorge

I don't know if underneath this question is like, what's there to be done or what we're supposed to. I don't know if that's part of the question. But I can say that I don't think we come to this project from a solution- or answer-based orientation or approach. We come—as jaime just said—with questions, frustration, and bullshit.

nicholae

Are there differences in how you think about what citations are or what citations do? Are there differences in what you think about the systems that they uphold—or how to dismantle it? That's more what I'm trying to get at, and how (if) those divergences have come up in your conversations. Less about an approach, and more about what underpins it: the critique, the understandings of these concepts, systems, and structures.

jaime

I think that's the whole "Jorge thinks everything is citations and I think everything is nothing" thing. So there are the differences, but they're still the same thing. And you can kind of see this in the images on the website. Some of them are Jorge's images and some are my images; some of them are just random things that have a lot of things in them (all his), and some of them are stupid little things like a faded receipt. It also comes from different personalities; some of them are really abstract and dreamy and some of them are very here in your face; different styles of performance, same genre.

CLOSING / REFUSALS

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nicholae

You both mentioned that you're not solutions-oriented about how to solve or resolve this problem of citations necessarily. But I am wondering— are there any alternative frameworks, approaches, modalities, imaginaries, or horizons of what you're talking about—we could call it citations or citational practice, or something else entirely? Have you thought about this at all or do you have anything to say on that, in any direction? Is there anything that has compelled you in this terrain of looking forward or elsewhere or otherwise, has anything come up in your conversations about what could be done or what could be done differently?

Jorge

Yeah, I mean as we mentioned we didn't really come to the project with some kind of radical citational practice that you can now sign up for for half a year or whatever, though that would be funny. So there's nothing we can really offer. We didn't talk about, oh, there should literally be less citations or maybe more footnotes. Maybe the footnotes are actually the body of the argument or the scholarship, for example. We talked about putting the bibliography or works cited first, and jaime was like, that's dumb and I said, you're right.

We would probably need someone who's really technically good to help. I don't know how one could sabotage a value or metric system, that would stop even momentarily the machine, the citation generator machine, literally, the academic machine.

jaime

We've also played with parts of citations in various ways. Some of it you can see on the website and some of it you can't: formatting and how to link one thought to another isn't just blocks and blocks of text;

you would have columns of text and then do one of those word matches but it's actually pointing to the way or direction of how you're thinking. We've done a visual bibliography. That was something I was thinking about a lot in my digital publishing days, like making some kind of linked web of how you found something and then how much it impacted you and how they led you to someone else. This was back when academic Twitter was in its heyday, and so you could find people because they were following and talking with other people publicly. And that was my main form of citation, honestly, when I was growing up.

We also talked about personal bibliographies, and you'll see some of that in the issue actually, that other people have done. But it's never anything prescriptive and it's just how we've been playing with this idea of citation and the parts that we think are important within citation, like the people and the paths and the relationships versus the publisher or the time or the format. Some of this is important but not in the prescribed manners. Does that answer your question?

nicholae

It does. That's helpful because on the website you write about desiring to "cite in the most true way possible: not with repetition of greedy publishers, but with the tracing of knowledge of each other." And you also talk about the possibilities—not the prescriptions — afforded by or that could emerge from a critique. You're gesturing towards a citational practice rooted in "relationality and collectivity and study" and are speaking to how the manifesto itself emerged from conversation, from relationship, from being and talking together. That's part of the genesis of this question, trying to imagine how this kind of relationality, collectivity, study, and collective knowledge-making could be integral to a citational practice and politics.

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jaime

Yes. We've really tried to create relationships with each of our submitters. It's come up in a lot of the conversations that we've had, how do you know what you know? That's one of the questions that we prompted with, and also: how do you show that? So the prescription, honestly, is just talk to each other more. That's the end goal always; there's endless possibility depending on who you are. We're just interested in the people who are interested in playing.

Jorge

We really want to see people thinking with and spending time with one argument in a substantial and elaborate way, as opposed to just like grab-n-go and then dropping it. I wish there was a way to do this, and there probably is someone who could build a platform that supports and facilitates what we're kind of describing in a more direct way.

nicholae

Thinking with your contributors and this process—because obviously you didn't just birth this issue into the world on your own—how have you found your thinking shifting or being in conversation with and through the contributions of the other folks involved? What have you been particularly compelled by in the contributions that have also shifted or been brought into your own thinking, or even that you disagree with?

jaime

When we talked with [contributors], it was kind of like trying to fast-track two or three years of conversations into an hour and then saying "do you understand what we're saying?" Like we're not just saying we want to free citation, we don't want to try and find a solution, and we're not trying to be better. We're just saying it's bullshit.

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We've been really specific in how we want the arguments of the issue to be— we're not saying all sides are equal. We're pointing back to the manifesto and saying, you can argue against the manifesto but there needs to be a real fight against it, and not just like, I am sad that the world has come to this—that's not an argument.

Jorge

I think we're mid-process. We left it open. We had the manifesto itself and we had the email itself, and the CFP. One of the hopes was that there would be different points of entry for contributors, and some of the stuff isn't the same and so someone can just talk shit. One of the connections to some of the earlier points is Jaime's disposition, and I appreciated that, being open to folks pushing against the manifesto. It's been helpful for us to clarify and provide direction and guidance.

There's a tension with some people trying to rescue the library or the university. That's something we're dealing with, because we have a different position than some folks about critical librarianship, for instance. And in terms of our practice, it's been helpful to see some people who are thinking this way, like they believe that their citation practice is study. But when it gets transferred to the piece, that kind of loses its way a little bit. From a practitioner's side or from a writer's or maker's side, it's been helpful to observe that as a learning experience for ourselves as well. Because I think that can be the case for all of us. Trying to remain true and honest to that is challenging and probably can't be done all the time. Maybe you can, but trying to practice that is important.

The thing that's been heartening is that there's a big visual and creative aspect to this that I don't know if I anticipated. I think we hoped for that, but

they're real artist people. And that's been cool to see. People's willingness to get challenged and pushing through that and not assuming we're all on the same page and trying to figure this shit out this one time together, with no guarantees and no promises.

jaime

We didn't know who or what to expect, and some of the randos were truly randos. Like they were saying, "I just saw this." Some people were acquaintances or friends, but a lot of people didn't submit anything. Some of the people who I wanted to hear from didn't respond at all. That's also part of the bullshit, like who are the people that you do want to talk to or write with or think with? How do you develop that relationship, whether you were friends before or you're strangers, now that you have this fake-ass editor role that people take seriously. We're taking it seriously, but obviously we aren't not taking it that seriously because we're the editors of some bullshit. Like it's crazy to be taken seriously.

Jorge

That's the point, or one of the points of it. It's like jaime's saying: you talk all this shit, but when it comes time to talk some bullshit that you've already been talking—you don't have anything to say. But if that's your mood, you have a major problem.

But yeah, I thought I was just talking online with jaime and then jaime was like, we got to make some shit. So I was like, okay let's do it anonymously, and jaime was like, no. So here we are.

jaime

Train's rolling.

nicholae

Here we go.

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