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## Care Full Living

**Kanishka Sikri**

### **Abstract**

I am stuck with Audre Lorde's "An Open Letter to Mary Daly" in *This Bridge Called my Back* (1983), particularly the following passage: "Have you read my work, and the work of other black women, for what it could give you? Or did you hunt through only to find words that would legitimize your chapter...?" (p. 96). I will come back to this letter for as long as I continue to do the same: mine the text for connections...I am thinking about how I would answer Lorde's question, as I carry the work and words of my citations, deciding what is worthy of writing into the archive, to whom my work is answering, why and for what reasons my writing exists, and where I place my hopes and desires.

### **Keywords**

care work, citation, livingness, reading, writing

## care full reading/

I am stuck with Audre Lorde's, "An Open Letter to Mary Daly" in *This Bridge Called my Back* (1983), particularly the following passage: "Have you read my work, and the work of other black women, for what it could give you? Or did you hunt through only to find words that would legitimize your chapter...?" (p. 96). I will come back to this letter for as long as I continue to do the same: mine the text for connections. Mining is important; it lets us take the work forward so that we can continue to nourish and develop it. But mining the text—with its roots in colonial taking, the ability to extract from another—implies there are only certain figments of the text worth taking (uprooting and codifying), and it can often culminate in an echo chamber, in which we mine for the sake of having "evidence"—seeking for somebody else who agrees with what we have already said. I think of the work of mining: how we enter these writings, and then extract—maybe in context, maybe not—to make and connect certain claims. It is not that I think this mining is unimportant. In all the texts that I have read over the years, mining has always been a part of my praxis. I am curious, though, how, rather than mining for quotes or textual figments that simply support our ideas, we can move towards mining for concepts, ideas, visions, desires, questions that engage a mutuality of knowledge and a tenderness for how these writings can be enveloped in our own? How might I accrue new nodes of thinking while still recognizing the specific stories and persons from which these new nodes emerged? To do this, I need not "agree"—I think a better term is needed here—with the writer from whom I draw. Nor am I required to critique the parcels of their thinking that I may not like. I am only required to take the node of knowledge for what is and to answer the constellations of nodes that form in my work; answer the writer as I generate deeper nodes of my own. I am thinking about how I would answer Lorde's question as I carry the work and words of my citations, deciding what is worthy of writing into the archive, to whom my work is answering, why and for what reasons my writing exists, and where I place my hopes and desires.

## care full citation/

How do we trace the theoretical imprints that our ancestors, families, communities, and networks have developed across and through their generational selves? How do we care for those lineages through our work, through our citations? I believe citation to be a generative space and method through which we do the feminist work of care and tenderness, a site in which we can carry the voices of those who came before us into our theoretical inquiries. If citational practices are indeed a form of care work, how do I make my practices more tender, more loving for myself; more loving for bell hooks, for instance, whom I cannot, maybe ever, get out of my head—who has shaped so many of my citational legacies? These are questions I have not found answers to—nor am I really looking for them. But let me try to engage a few possibilities: I am asking myself, what powers lace my citation; what accountabilities does my citation hold; to whom is my citation speaking to; what relationships is my citation breaking or creating from; how am I reconciling the self of theory, both the selves of the theorist (including the selves that their citation creates) and my own?

## care full living/

I am deeply moved to change many of my seemingly apolitical practices to be more care full. Not just my reading and citational practices, but the ways that I organize my task and project lists—do I name my actions with love and care for the future kanishka, who will be receiving these notes from some prior-current-kanishka whose email inbox said that this task was important? What about my files? Are they named in ways that evoke a nostalgic familiarity so that my desire to find the things that I am looking for, when I am looking for them, is met? Are my physical spaces, such as my writing space, or eating space, or glamour spaces—though these can often feel like the same—designed in ways that envelop me in warmth and an accessibility to be able to make words, food, and glitter that can nourish me and my loved ones? I want to be culling the divide between what seems personal and what seems structural, entangling the very lines through which practices of care full living can ripple into a world full of care.

## References

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## Author Biography

Kanishka Sikri is a writer and scholar thinking about violability: the practice that marks certain lives, bodies, and lands open to the possibility of violence. They are currently a PhD candidate at York University speculating on the ways that violence becomes synonymous with and inhabits the flesh. Kanishka asks how we may speak about violence, lay it bare, grieve and mourn its many insidious faces without replicating the notion that certain lives are violable and capable of being violated. To learn more, please visit: [kanishkasikri.com](http://kanishkasikri.com).