

Call for Papers and Performances:

“The Between: Couple Forms, Performing Together”

A Symposium Hosted by the Department of Performance Studies at NYU

In Association with *Women & Performance: a journal of feminist theory*

April 13 & 14, 2018

This symposium invites co-authored and/or co-performed submissions that seek to explode that stalwart object of queer and feminist analysis: “the couple form.” Typically regarded in its normative instantiation as that sexual, romantic, and social unit of relation that sits as a colonial imposition at the core of the bourgeois nuclear family, the couple form is tied to well-worn fantasies of the good life as well as to the violent suppression of other forms of kinship. In calling for a proliferation of coupled collaborations, however, this symposium—by way of a movement from “the couple form” to couple *forms* in their infinite variation—asserts that the couple form is neither a known quantity nor an exhausted entity. What modes of intellectual practice, erotic exchange, political work, and aesthetic experimentation happen uniquely within couple forms, in their most capacious and non-self-same iterations? What queer and feminist work can they do? How might they function, to use poet Catriona Strang’s (2017) term, as “structures of possibility”? But also, what might they foreclose or disallow? What, in other words, is possible in the infinity *between* one and two?

Honoring the inextricability of form(s), content(s), and method(s), “The Between: Couple Forms, Performing Together,” resists academic siloing, models of individual authorship and originality, and calcified conceptions of mastery, which lead to masculinist and colonialist fantasies of invulnerability (Singh 2018 [forthcoming]). This resistance takes its inspiration from recent interventions in critical theory—most notably Lauren Berlant and Lee Edelman’s *Sex, or the Unbearable* (2014) and Fred Moten and Stefano Harney’s *The Undercommons: Fugitive Planning & Black Study* (2013)—which are exemplary in their performative interweaving of form, content, and method. It is our hope that a sustained attention to what Moten (2015) describes as the “intense interaction that comes with playing with others”—to writing and other forms of aesthetic production “in which [...] one composes in real time with other people[,] [...] where one is discomposed in real time”—will open out onto other ways of writing, living, and working, animated by what Sara Ahmed (2004) calls “feminist wonder” (182): an openness to what might be, to our capacity to be affected, and to the dawning of new feminist futures.

We invite a variety of couples—significant others, friends, (critical) duets—to present anything from fifteen minutes of co-authored academic prose to an hour and fifteen minutes of epistolary performance art. Curatorial determinations will be made based on the submissions received. Experimentation is encouraged. The symposium anticipates an eponymous special issue of *Women & Performance* and represents an opportunity to cultivate work that could ultimately be submitted for inclusion in that issue. Topics may include but are not limited to:

- Ruminations on and performances of friendship, particularly female, femme, and/or queer friendship

- Sovereignty and nonsovereignty from perspectives as varied as affect theory, psychoanalysis, and indigenous studies
- Aesthetic Couple Forms: duets, improvisations, collaborations, etc.
- Couple forms of particular relevance for minoritarian feminisms
- Caring relations
- Sex
- Non-Normative Space-Times of Coupledness
 - Temporalities of coupledness (i.e., the one-night stand, the date)
 - Distances/Proximities of coupledness (i.e., the epistolary, the long-distance relationship, roommates)
- Pedagogical scenes and scripts: accounts of advisor/advisee and teacher/student relations
- Dissonant Duets: the break-up, the falling out, the divorce, and other antagonisms
- Discourses and practices of (non) consent
- Inhumanist and Posthumanist Pairings: dog & owner, lion & tamer, gardener & garden, host & parasite
- “Posthumous collaboration” (Gagnon 2014): ghosts, ancestors, archives, transmission

Pairings seeking to apply should, together, submit one 250-word abstract or a performance description of comparable length (with specified technical needs), as well as a brief biography and a 1-2 page CV from each participant by January 5, 2018. Please also indicate the anticipated duration of your presentation. All submissions and any inquiries can be directed to co-organizers Olivia Michiko Gagnon and James McMaster at thebetween2018@gmail.com. Please send materials by e-mail attachment (PDF or Word document). Notices of acceptance will be sent by January 15, 2018. There will be no registration fee for the symposium and all events will be open to the public.

Works Cited

- Ahmed, Sara. 2004. *The Cultural Politics of Emotion*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.
- Berlant, Lauren, and Edelman, Lee. 2014. *Sex, or the Unbearable*. Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press.
- Gagnon, Monika Kin. 2014. “Unfinished Films and Posthumous Cinema: Charles Gagnon’s *R69* and Joyce Wieland’s *Wendy and Joyce*.” In *Cinephemia: Archives, Ephemeral Cinema, and New Screen Histories in Canada*, edited by Gerda Cammaer and Zoë Druick, 137 – 158. Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen’s Press.
- Moten, Fred. 2015. “An Interview with Fred Moten.” Interview by Adam Fitzgerald. *Literary Hub*. August 5. <http://lithub.com/an-interview-with-fred-moten-pt-i/>.
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- Singh, Julietta. 2018 (forthcoming). *Unthinking Mastery: Dehumanism and Decolonial Entanglements*. Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press.
- Strang, Catriona. 2017. “‘Constellations and Contingent Networks’: Nancy Shaw’s Structures of Possibility.” Introduction to Shaw, Nancy. *The Gorge: Selected Writing*, edited by Catriona Strang. Vancouver: Talonbooks.