



## Adhesive Alchemy

Excerpt from David London's *Borderland State*  
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I've always had a love affair with Adhesives— *substances* that cause *something* to adhere.

At its core, in both the functional as well as the creative use of Adhesives, we find ourselves presented with a magical substance that suddenly instills each of us with the ability take two or more *different things* and make one *new thing*.

After the different things cease to exist as separate entities (as they are absorbed into the one new thing), if we were then to adhere something else to the one new thing, the one new thing expands, as the now *former* new thing as well as the something else, cease to exist as separate entities.

Like never before, the varieties of Adhesives currently available now offers humankind the ability to form connections between any possible combination of things through seemingly infinite means.

Free from the limitations of the significantly small pool of adhesive varieties that existed in our not too distant past, we find ourselves face to face with the fairly recent knowledge that any combination of things, and therefore *every* combination of things, can become one almost instantly. And all this, thanks to the Adhesive.

As a child, it was Tape that seemed to be my Adhesive of choice, and my main source of the inspiration to adhere two things together. Tape is an Adhesive attached to a strip of something.

Though my initial love was Scotch Tape, it wasn't long before I had moved to Duct Tape. The vinyl and fabric strip that is the underlying structure of Duct Tape (compared to the plastic strip of Scotch Tape), combined with the strength of the Adhesive adhered to that fabric strip, allows for a bond that is designed to withstand time, based on the integrity of its underlying structure.

Most interesting about Duct Tape is its propensity to be used in a time of duress, in order to quickly fix an unexpected problem. In these situations, Duct Tape is used along with improvisation— when we create a situation or solution, in the *same moment* we are experiencing it.

Though most of us are familiar with grey Duct Tape—a color it received along with its name when introduced to the public for use on heating and air conditioning ducts—some may be surprised that Duct Tape now comes in at least 23 colors *other* than grey. The inherent decorative nature of such a wide palette makes Duct Tape not only an ideal Adhesive, but also, especially in its creative use, a potential decorative component to a new thing.

In my late teens, the Hot Glue Gun was added as a permanent weapon in my Adhesive arsenal.

Like all Glues, Hot Glue retains a mercurial, liquid-like form able to morph its shape to fit the different things. Once it hardens, the liquid form solidifies, and becomes part of the new thing. The rapid-hardening nature of Hot Glue allows for a quick creative fix, and the instant gratification that comes with the ability to make a new thing at any moments notice (once the Hot Glue Gun is warmed up).

An often perceived disadvantage of Hot Glue is that the bond it creates is always durational—only providing for a temporary bond. For me, this is also one of its greatest qualities. Sometimes the quick fix that Hot Glue offers is enough to focus on the larger picture at hand, while knowing that your momentary bond exists *for now*. With Hot Glue, the connection that is formed between two or more things in order to make one new thing could last days, weeks, or even years. It could also last hours, minutes, or even just seconds.

It could be argued that Super Glue would be a good alternative for a quick-bonding Adhesive that maintains an almost-permanent bond. Though this substitution could work in many situations, I believe that most of these would be functional rather than creative. This is due to the fact that Super Glue has **no play**. In other words, once the two different things come together with Super Glue, wherever those two things first touch, is where they will be almost-permanently bonded. With proper chemicals, it is, however, possible to dissolve the bond. With enough force, it is also possible to break the bond, though in many cases where this is attempted, the bond remains, but a piece breaks off one of the two different things, thereby not returning either to their original state.

Hot Glue takes several moments for the bond to cool down and take hold. This **play** allows you time to set the different things in exactly the right place before the bond sets. Further, both Hot Glue and Duct Tape can be easily removed with almost no residue to any of the different things. Hot Glue especially can be peeled off of most surfaces, but I recommend being careful with fabrics. Removing Duct Tape can sometimes be as simple as peeling it off, whereas other times you may need to utilize scissors or a sharp blade. With industrial-strength or “super-sticky” Duct Tape, sometimes you may have to use a solvent to remove the remainder of the Adhesive left behind on any of the different things. Even if any remaining residue is not removed, this is only a remnant of the Adhesive and not of any of the other different things.

The different things would now be able to re-bond in a new way with the same different thing to make a new thing, or, each different thing could be bonded to other different things, creating an infinite number of potential new things.

Though I will not delve deeply into them here, I would not feel comfortable if I did not at least mention the other Adhesives I often utilize. Electrical Tape always remains flexible. Double-Sided Tape is convenient, fast and comes in both temporary and permanent varieties. The Glue Stick can be easily carried in your pocket and is especially great with paper. Rubber Cement is a fast drying semi-permanent Adhesive, which must be applied to both surfaces and allowed to dry before they can be adhered to one another. Plumbers Epoxy is an industrial two part-epoxy strong enough to hold pipes, rocks and other hard and heavy materials. Most epoxies are incredibly toxic, so safety measures should be undertaken. I have only mentioned here my most used Adhesives. For every one I mentioned, many more exist.

Following suit with a modern day trend, the Adhesive has become specialized in its transformative abilities. Shoes, Books, Wall Paper, Scrapbooks, and a variety of other materials and activities each now have a special form of Adhesive. Though this is certainly convenient when looking for an Adhesive for functional use, don't be fooled into letting go of your multi-use Adhesive.

There are those occasions, when working with Adhesives, that the desire to rapidly form a bond between two or more different things, that we choose our Adhesive in haste, resolving for a quick fix, but a temporary connection. Other times, we use a permanent Adhesive for two things which were only meant to be momentarily connected. And then, there are those unfortunate moments where there are no Adhesives to be found. In these situations, if a connection cannot be formed in a specific moment, we can always learn from the inability to connect, or, we can run to the hardware store.

I suppose that if all things were bonded together with one Adhesive or another, there would cease to be both different things and new things, for in this case, there would only be One really big Thing.