Reattachment Theory

Lee Wallace

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A *Camera Obscura* book

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QUEER CINEMA OF REMARRIAGE

Lee Wallace

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For the Stanleys of this world

There is no marriage without remarriage.
—Stanley Cavell,
Cities of Words

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The world is an imperfect place.

How we meet imperfection, and what we say about it, is up to us. Imperfection, as a rule, lends itself to criticism and critique. One of the strengths of queer theory is that it tends to grasp imperfection generously. It tells many hopeful stories about damage and shame and failure, things that are elsewhere considered as stains on the way the world or people should be. Yet, despite its counterintuitive allegiance to various orders of inadequacy and deficiency, queer theory has met the imperfection of marriage with radical skepticism. Whether it regards the phenomenon of marriage, including same-sex marriage, as an institutional failure (a mechanism for reproducing social inequality) or an ethical failure (an interpersonal contract that promotes sexual standards no one keeps), queer critique renders marriage a contemptible, not a redemptive, object.

Yet for all its imperfections, the world—including the world of marriage—is also an enchanted place. But, as anyone who has ever fallen in or out of love will know, enchantment is even harder to grasp than imperfection and still harder to trade in the languages in which we have learned to speak to each other, both personally and professionally. This book is an attempt to change the story we tell ourselves about marriage and to reenchant us to its queer possibilities as they appear in what Stanley Cavell refers to as the ordinary language of film. Cavell, who died in June 2018, around the same time that I completed the manuscript of this book, is not usually counted among queer theory's fellow travelers but, as I hope *Reattachment Theory* demonstrates, his account of film's capacity to capture the extraordinary in the ordinary, including the ordinary of married life, is an extraordinary resource for anyone wanting to think queerly about imperfection.

Like Cavell, I am drawn to the popular vehicle of narrative film as a medium in which the marriage plot is sustained and transformed through the generic means of comedy, tragedy, and romance. Whereas Cavell fixates on the transformation of the marriage plot that occurs in the classical Hollywood

comedies of remarriage, which were made in the wake of the contemporary popular acceptance of divorce, I see a similar transformation occurring in recent films that speak either directly or indirectly to the contemporary popular acceptance of same-sex marriage. I approach the gay remarriage plot—which also turns on the possibility of remarriage—not in sociological terms but through the lens of close reading. As practiced by Cavell, close reading is less a methodology than an orientation to the entrancement of cinema and an attempt to capture the formal intuition of a particular film sentence by sentence. Prose imperfectly captures the register of film but, as both the classical and queer comedies of remarriage happily teach, the pursuit of perfection relies on getting things wrong as a way toward getting them right.

Although any mistakes ahead are all mine, for the chance to make them I am indebted to the University of Sydney and to the Australian Research Council for the award of a Future Fellowship, which allowed time for error as well as its scholarly recovery. I thank the staff at the Center for the Promotion of Gender and Women's Studies, Freie Universität Berlin, for the Visiting Fellowship across which a series of unrelated essays found their rationale in remarriage. A small grant from the Sydney Social Science and Humanities Advanced Research Centre (SSSHARC) allowed me to invite Robyn Wiegman to the University of Sydney in early 2018 to put the draft manuscript of this book through an ultimate peer review. Robyn's input into this book was both intimidating and transformative. She challenged me to draw out the field implications of my argument and make more of my methodological refusal to concede homosexuality's relation to marriage as signified by its legal state. Similarly transformative was the role played by the three readers commissioned by Duke University Press, who, like the triplicate figures of folklore, each brought different expertise to the task of turning a fledgling manuscript into a fully formed book. Their intellectually imaginative response to the first draft of this book gave me confidence that my way of reading and writing could draw others into an open-ended conversation about film and made final revisions much easier than I had any right to expect. Ken Wissoker has been a steady guide and supporter throughout. I am also grateful to Joshua Tranen for helping me navigate the process by which a manuscript becomes a book. Final acknowledgment is due to Annalise Pippard for the deft research assistance that held the various parts of this project together from beginning to end.

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1 Queer Skepticism and Gay Marriage

Contrary to the widely accepted idea that the rise of the same-sex marriage is coterminous with the rise of neoliberalism, I argue that the history of homosexuality—and in particular the history of lesbianism—has always been entangled with the history of marriage and therefore integral to the reimagining of affective and erotic horizons within the couple form and the wider sociality it indexes. Although I make this case primarily through an engagement with film, in this introductory chapter I briefly review influential queer critiques of the marriage equality movement in order to unsettle them via a wider argument about homosexuality and its relation to continually evolving discourses of sexual and social intimacy. I begin with a selective overview of established and trending perspectives on same-sex marriage within social theory and legal theory before arguing for the ongoing salience of narrative as a framework for thinking differently about marriage post–marriage equality. This will ultimately allow me to replot contemporary gay marriage along the coordinates of remarriage first described by Stanley Cavell in his discussion of Hollywood comedies of the 1930s and 1940s and displace queer skepticism around marriage with a form of wry utopianism that builds on the experience of coupled love as much as its theorization. The seven films on which Cavell builds his argument about remarriage are, in the order he discusses them, *The Lady Eve* (Preston Sturges, 1941), *It Happened One Night* (Frank Capra, 1934), *Bringing Up Baby* (Howard Hawks, 1938), *The Philadelphia Story* (George Cukor, 1940), *His Girl Friday* (Howard Hawks, 1940), *Adam's Rib* (George Cukor, 1949), and *The Awful Truth* (Leo McCarey, 1937). As I will later demonstrate in relation to the films of Lisa Cholodenko and Andrew Haigh in particular, the possibility of reattachment that is central to remarriage comedy is closely tied to the question of whether one finds oneself in a tragedy, comedy, or romance. However appealing the idea, the pages ahead do not offer a theory of gay marriage as remarriage so much as insist on the importance of narrative and nonrealist reading practices in making sense of the contemporary dilemmas of long-term intimacy, for queers as for everyone.

This is to tell a different story about marriage than the one that queers have been telling for the last twenty years. Cast your mind back to 1999, a moment whose numerological cast seemed to call for apocalyptic diatribes. This was the year Michael Warner published *The Trouble with Normal: Sex, Politics, and the Ethics of Queer Life*, an energetic critique of various normativing tendencies within American neoliberalism that included a chapter-length polemic against gay marriage, which it correctly foresaw as the future of lesbian and gay mainstream activism.[1] One of the most influential aspects of Warner's argument was its insistence that the extension of the right to marry to same-sex couples is less a political achievement than a measure of the broadening reach of normativity, a benign system of social docility that readily encompasses those sexual constituencies who have traditionally been considered—and considered themselves—beyond its ken. Whereas Warner makes a strident argument for the ethical value of engaging "the perspective of those at the bottom of the scale of respectability: queers, sluts, prostitutes, trannies, club crawlers, and other lowlifes," the decades since the publication of his book have seen the global uptake and unanticipated popularization of the marriage equality movement.[2] Operating from an ever-broader social base, the respectable tenor of the marriage equality movement can be seen in the Ring Your Granny campaign that contributed to Ireland becoming the first country in the world to adopt same-sex marriage by popular referendum in 2015 and, two years later, the #RingYourRellos initiative launched in the context of the Australian Marriage Law Postal Survey, which also saw a generation of media-savvy activists reintroduced to the quaint affordances of stick-down envelopes and pillar boxes. The naffness of the mainstream embrace of the idea of gay marriage continues to bolster the outlaw appeal of Warner's argument for the value of queer counterpublics, those informal networks of friends and strangers linked together by relations of care that have no recognition in law but effectively comprise an alternative public sphere in which sexuality is valued for its social stickiness beyond the lines mandated by heterosexual kinship and family.[3]

Although she acknowledges that "the topic of gay marriage is not the same as that of gay kinship," Judith Butler has pointed out that "the two become confounded in U.S. popular opinion when we hear not only that marriage is and ought to remain a heterosexual institution and bond, but also that kinship does not work, or does not qualify as kinship, unless it assumes a recognizable family form."[4] Like Warner, Butler is interested in severing the link between reproductive heterosexuality and the kinship system over which it is presumed to exercise exclusive rights. Kinship, Butler argues, does not only radiate out from birth and child-rearing practices but includes all social

practices "that emerge to address fundamental forms of human dependency" such as "relations of emotional dependency and support, generational ties, illness, dying, and death (to name a few)." She points to the long ethnographic tradition of mapping both African American and gay and lesbian kinship patterns that may or may not "approximate the family form" in order to argue that, both theoretically and in practice, "conceptions of kinship have become disjoined from the marriage assumption."[5] This conceptual separation of marriage and kinship is, as Butler notes, also furthered by those legal responses to calls for marriage equality that separate recognition of civil partnerships from the right to coparent, adopt, or access fertility services. Yet, far from weakening the heterosexual grip on kinship, this legal differentiation produces a situation in which family law is enshrined beyond marriage rights in a legally quarantined sphere that is less susceptible to the inclusion of nonnormative practice.

Variously applied in different legal jurisdictions, this apparent devaluation of marriage in association with same-sex claims to marriage-like relationships and its legal separation from other kinship practices considered integral to social reproduction is, in many senses, what queer critics of marriage have often predicted would happen when marriage by definition included same-sex relationships. Far from spreading social equity, they argued, the advent of same-sex marriage would only deepen and displace the inequities at the heart of a patriarchal institution that remains central to the governing heterosexual social order. In addition, they warned, by extending social legitimacy to those gays and lesbians who assimilate the heteronorms of marriage, same-sex marriage would further marginalize and disadvantage those who didn't. But, as Louise Richardson-Self has recently noted, these well-rehearsed "assimilative" arguments about whether to accept or reject same-sex marriage on the grounds of its reification of heteronormative privilege are most useful in clarifying that at base the same-sex marriage debate is concerned with the "*equal regard* of LGBT people" rather than marriage per se.[6]

As an objection to discrimination rather than a claim to marriage, Richardson-Self goes on to argue, the argument for marriage equality is thus based on the recognition of difference rather than the ascription of sameness. Starting from this premise, Richardson-Self argues for the need to understand marriage not as an institutional form that delivers legal privilege to some and denies it to others but as a full-scale social imaginary that facilitates structures of identity and belonging in association with certain notions of intimacy and kinship but not others. From this perspective the goal of the marriage equality movement is not winning political rights but reimagining the terrain of marriage as composed of "traditional and nontraditional" practices of affiliation and care

that are "horizontally" aligned rather than ranked in a moral hierarchy. Like Butler, Richardson-Self argues for the need to bring into social circulation "a new meaning-generating story" that challenges marriage's stranglehold on notions of affective kinship. In place of current ideals of marriage, she proposes an expanded "narrative of caring-love" that "acknowledges that all persons at all stages of their life require, desire, and/or deliver care, and that care is fundamental to our flourishing as intersubjective individuals."[7] The point is not to change the institution of marriage but to change the story of marriage, an outcome that can seem wooly and imprecise in activist frameworks that agitate for legal rights and recognitions but is, I would argue, business as usual for novel and film genres that survive only to the degree that they can innovate and renew received narrative patterns for historically evolving audiences. Of course, changing the story of marriage is also business as usual for those who are married or in marriage-like relationships, including the relationships of care that Richardson-Self points to that evolve across time in relation to different expectations and abilities, not all of which are rationally geared or knowable in advance. As we will see in the chapters ahead, it is the made-to-be-broken quality of all attachment that increasingly imprints itself in stories about commitment in the era of marriage equality.

Wanting to shift the normative ideal of marriage until it becomes radically inclusive of all relations of "caring-love" leads Richardson-Self to take a stance against politically expedient arguments for the strategic adoption of current marriage norms. She points out that those countries that moved early to legalize same-sex marriage, such as the Netherlands, by and large have not seen the advent of new norms and collective behaviors that demonstrate the social acceptance of LGBT populations or their families of choice but continue to report instances of intolerance. Richardson-Self takes the persistence of homophobia in these liberal jurisdictions, like violent protest in opposition to the proposed introduction of same-sex marriage elsewhere, as evidence that marriage reform has "little real social effect" beyond the endorsement and strengthening of the narrative of traditional marriage, which men and women have always had different stakes in, and the racially and ethnically unmarked nuclear family with which it remains cognate in "the dominant shared Western social imaginary."[8] Whether gays and lesbians are allowed to marry, or not allowed to marry, its seems the story of marriage remains the story of a bleached-out familialism that knows no difference from itself. Whether exclusively heterosexual or inclusive of homosexuals, marriage is considered to be in the service of normativity or, more specifically, what Lee Edelman has called "reproductive futurism," the popularly mandated system

of symbolic generationalism that defuses and redirects present-tense calls for social justice into an anodyne emotional mode that refuses to acknowledge structural injustices and their long-term racial legacies.[9] In this sense, the story of marriage is a closed book.

The drive to normalization that queer theory finds within the marriage imaginary has meant that marriage, and the affective participation in sociality it supports, has been dismissed out of hand as a research object that might warrant sustained inquiry through a range of perspectives or methodological instruments. Social scientists, who tend to be more at home with the idea of the normative and its role in generating social change, are by and large better at investigating what it is that folk achieve when they marry beyond the rights and privileges that marriage equality activists argue for and queer theorists argue against.[10] Kimberley Richman's book-length account of her quantitative and qualitative survey of same-sex-marrying couples from California and Massachusetts begins with the revelation that of the nearly fifteen hundred couples she surveyed, 70 percent were already registered domestic partners and 55 percent had already been through nonlegal commitment ceremonies. That is, the majority of lesbians and gays seeking marriage, often at great personal cost, "already had access to the *rights* associated with marriage (at least at the state level), and many had already experienced the *ceremonial* aspect of marriage."[11] In her follow-up interviews with one hundred couples, Richman draws out the diverse reasons why gays and lesbians get legally married so as to tease out "the complexity of both the meaning of marriage and the legal consciousness of those seeking it."[12] Drawing on the tripartite model of legal consciousness established by Patricia Ewick and Susan Silbey's landmark study of the role of law in everyday attitudes and actions, Richman initially confirms that the same-sex couples surveyed and interviewed identify a variety of instrumental, validating, and oppositional motivations for seeking legal marriage, often in combination with each other.[13] In addition to this expected result, however, Richman discovered that some of the couples voiced none of these motivations and that, further, many of them expressed "an unmistakable voice of romance, which did not quite fit with the tripartite model of legality, but rather expressed motives that were seemingly external to the law and legality—they were neither strategic, nor reverent, nor resistant. They were instead aimed at purely emotional, personal, or romantic drives."[14] Richman points out that while it is no surprise that marriage is considered a "mechanism for attaining these things, it is not entirely intuitive why *legal* marriage," as opposed to a wedding ceremony or equivalent ritual, "was a necessary component to satisfying these drives." As she goes on

to argue, this can be accounted for only by acknowledging "the hegemonic power of law, and the way that it infuses human relations, even in barely perceptible ways."[15] Sensitive to the many motivations for marriage and orientations to law expressed across and within the couples she interviewed, Richman emphasizes the critical significance of the emotional schema engaged by her interview subjects, many of whom initially sought out marriage on completely different grounds. Not only does Richman's study reveal that "the newly emerging right to marriage for same-sex couples is one that is not confined to the instrumental, political, or even symbolic realm," but it reveals law to be "a conduit or cultivator of emotion" insofar as "the data shows us that the personal or affective impact of law is often unsought or unexpected, but nevertheless profoundly felt."[16] Arising at the point where marriage law intersects with the marriage imaginary, the bewildering experience of conjugal affect is a normative phenomenon that cannot be fully explained within either legal or sociological frameworks.

This evidence for the emotional impact of marriage law, even on those who initially bring nothing but political pragmatism to it, is extremely suggestive. It is not that people are dumb or wrong to have a feeling for marriage, or to think that they don't have any such feeling, but rather that this phenomenon, whether anticipated or unanticipated, speaks to the affective as an important and motivating reality in people's everyday public lives. Lauren Berlant has identified our collective yet highly individualized attachment to the story of emotional attachment as one of the abiding vectors of contemporary life in which multiple "pedagogies" instruct us in the wisdom of identifying "having a life with having an intimate life."[17] Berlant traces the origins of this intimate regime back to a liberal society founded less on separate public and private spheres than on the constant and complex "migration of intimacy expectations between the public and the domestic."[18] While the drive toward intimacy might take many forms, only some of those forms harden off into social conventions. The longest standing and most adaptable of these intimate conventions is the story of marriage since, as Berlant points out, it exactly satisfies the enigmatic requirement that "the inwardness of the intimate is met by a corresponding publicness."[19] That is, of all the things marriage does, it is the way in which it trains us to experience our "internal lives theatrically, as though oriented to an audience" that is key to its social canonicity.[20] While the first to acknowledge that attachments themselves have no preordained utility and are typically marked by contradictory energies and ambivalence, Berlant argues that the story of marriage generates an "aesthetic of attachment" that is normatively promoted "across private and public domains" in a way that stabilizes, clarifies,

and cultivates "the couple or the life narrative it generates." Against this "normative" aesthetic of the married couple, she contends, alternative intimacy plots—such as those based in the appetites rather than love, community, and patriotism, the trifecta of emotions uniquely tied up in American notions of marriage—struggle to find a "designated place" in culture and must "develop aesthetics of the extreme" in order to be publicly heard.[21]

Contra Berlant, I will go on to suggest that almost since its eighteenth-century inception the story of marriage has proven capacious enough to harbor nonnormative plotlines and the social publicity they require to thrive. First, however, I would like to return to the presumption that marriage never has, never will provide hospitable ground for the advancement of alternative intimacies. Many have observed that the right to marry may, when awarded, offer no more legal protection or access than gays or lesbians currently enjoy under common-law provisions and in some instances may actually introduce legal vulnerabilities.[22] Coming at this double bind from the perspective of critical legal studies, Katherine Franke has recently pointed out that the extension of rights such as the freedom to marry does not in itself constitute freedom or resolve "complex questions of justice and equality, but rather inaugurates a new set of hard questions about what it means to be liberated into a social institution that has its own complicated and durable values and preferences."[23] Among the durable aspects of marriage that survives its expansion to include same-sex subjects, Franke argues, is its insistently gendered profile: "Paradoxically, gaining rights can have the unintended effect of conscripting the beneficiaries [of marriage reform] into gendered roles they have little interest in inhabiting."[24] I will return to Franke's point about the gendered aspect of marriage below, but I focus first on her decision to approach the legal downsides of same-sex marriage via the historic example of the granting of marriage rights to blacks in the raft of reforms that followed the abolition of slavery in North America. As Franke points out, for many freed blacks this unsolicited equality immediately complicated their capacity to negotiate the ongoing racist strictures of nineteenth-century American life. She documents the many violent injustices visited on black men and women whose sexual alliances did not fit sanctioned models of marriage but approximated forms that were considered criminal, such as bigamy. Rights-bearing citizens, Franke reminds us, are often restrained by the rights they bear and may even become subject to laws from which they previously had dispensation, as when these newly emancipated slaves found their domestic lives subject to state licensure and themselves imprisoned for retrospectively infringing marriage laws that never originally applied.

By framing same-sex marriage through the historic lens of race, Franke cautions those who think of marriage equality as an unmitigated legal advance to be mindful of the unfreedoms and legal liabilities that may follow upon having previously outlawed relationships incorporated in law. But this is not the end of her lesson. As she is fully aware, Franke's critical invocation of the racialization of nineteenth-century marriage law in the context of gay marriage debates runs counter to the more routine political likening of twenty-first-century extensions of marriage law to the overturning of antimiscegenation statutes in the civil rights era. As many have pointed out, this analogy is flawed on multiple counts. Chandan Reddy, for instance, has argued that the frequently drawn connection between same-sex marriage equality and the overturning of US antimiscegenation laws in the late sixties blurs the racially whitening effect of rights discourse itself, a liberal ideology indentured to Enlightenment abstractions notoriously indifferent to structural mechanisms of inclusion and exclusion and their remedy. Reddy argues that the 1967 Supreme Court decision in *Loving v. Virginia*, which specified marriage as a fundamental human right, "does not so much mark the end of antimiscegenation or the racial organization of US kinship or the rise of ideologies of color-blind intimacy and love" but rather "indexes and mediates the shifts in racial meanings conducted through a juridical discourse on interracial intimacy" that is consistent with the wider postwar shift that saw the United States move "from being officially white supremacist to a racial liberal state."[25] Reddy first made this argument in 2008, when the federal recognition of gay marriage was regarded as constitutionally inevitable if still a ways off; then, in 2016, he revisited it in the context of a roundtable on the role of queer theory "after" marriage equality.[26] As part of his update, Reddy points to June 2013 and the proximity of Supreme Court judgments that recognized marriage equality with those that struck down "voting protections for African Americans and other disenfranchised poor communities of color."[27] Reddy insists that, if there is a line of continuity between the *Loving* moment and the recognition of marriage as a fundamental right for homosexuals, too, it is a line that traces their mutual imbrication in a system of biopolitical governance that overlooks structural inequities in favor of categories—such as the rights-bearing citizen, an entity that already presumes layers of state recognition denied to many racialized demographics, such as undocumented migrants, or marriage conceived as a fundamental right or human dignity—that erase the social and racial differences through which injustice operates.

Reddy's argument is representative of a wider field of queer of color critique that targets the racism endemic to neoliberalism and its precursor

forms. In general, this strand of social theory has little positive to say about gay marriage, which it tends to sweep aside as the normative proposition par excellence in favor of queer kinship bonds that keep their distance from racially privileged, heterosexist, and gender-normative models of state-sanctioned relationality.[28] Many of these arguments can be traced back to Roderick Ferguson's influential account of the coarticulated "normative ideologies of civil rights, canonical sociology, and national liberation" that serve to pathologize African American culture whenever it departs from the heteronormative models so easily detected in white middle-class family life.[29] In her well-tempered discussion of Ferguson's *Aberrations in Black*, the various chapters of which bind together American schools of sociological thought with exemplary African American literary texts, Amy Villarejo draws out the implications of his methodology and the equivalency it supposes between sociology and literature.[30] Specifically, Villarejo wants to "cleave apart the two senses of *nonheteronormative* Ferguson proposes," on the one hand, nonheteronormativity as a social symptom or pathology understood to be the result of the damage wrought upon African American families by slavery and industrialization that needs be corrected through benevolent social policy, and on the other, nonheteronormativity as a perversion of the American family ideal through which African Americans express social agency outside the normative regime of the expanding black middle class, whose thriving is registered in its capacity to reproduce heteropatriarchal marriage norms. As Villarejo argues, the blurring of these two diagnostics determines that "the politics of African American life and struggle" are "forced to yield their lessons in the same terms in which [they] have been pathologized." As diagnosed by the sociology of race, the nonheteronormative is a sign of ongoing social damage or dysfunction; as diagnosed by the literature of race, the nonheteronormative is an ongoing social resource. Villarejo suggests looking at cinema in order to find a richer "vocabulary for parsing the distinction" between symptom and agency otherwise "collapsed" in the term "nonheteronormative," a strategy that I suggest also yields results in thinking about gay marriage outside the dualism of political poison or political cure.[31]

Although queer marriage critique has rejected the drawing of simplistic parallels between gay marriage and antimiscegnation law, the *Loving* analogy continues to dominate in both popular and legal spheres, where it has become a legal convention in its own right. In an article in 2007 marking the fortieth anniversary of *Loving v. Virginia*, legal scholar Adele Morrison takes up the issue of the case's applicability in the context of same-sex marriage.[32] Morrison points out that, although pro–same-sex arguments freely avail

themselves of the *Loving* analogy and the "decision's freedom of choice and anti-discrimination elements," they "rarely incorporate the Supreme Court's antisubordination message, as articulated through its anti–white supremacy stance."[33] So far so good, but in a move that goes against much subsequent queer of color theorizing, Morrison goes on to argue that same-sex marriage subverts white supremacy by undermining heterosupremacy: "The contention is that while heterosexual marriages, as exemplars of heteronormativity, may reinforce the status quo of white supremacy, same-sex intimate relationships challenge white supremacy by being non-normative."[34] Although it is hard to imagine an argument for gay marriage subverting white supremacy getting much traction considering the ongoing persistence of racialized inequality in the era of marriage equality, the symbolic pull of the *Loving* analogy continues unabated in the contemporary moment.[35]

Despite its constitutional specificity, the well-worn *Loving* analogy is not restricted to US contexts but is often invoked whenever advocates wish to lend political gravitas to bids for marriage equality in other legal jursidictions. The international take-up of the *Loving* analogy has been boosted by the release of Jeff Nichols's *Loving* (2016), an earnest melodrama based on the marriage story behind *Loving v. Virginia*. Featuring the Australian actor Joel Edgerton as Richard Loving, the film has been taken as an opportunity for a new suite of well-intentioned but historically wobbly comparisons between US and Australian antimiscegenation law and governance practices. These arguments by analogy get additional celebrity traction from the revelation that Edgerton—near catatonic in the role of Loving but in real life an outspoken supporter of the Australian campaign for marriage equality—has been in a relationship with Cathy Freeman, a Kuku Yalanji and Birri-Gubba woman and Olympic superstar.[36] To be sure, it is not that these transnational analogies are out-and-out wrong or not worth making but that, in striving to establish political parallels, they can obscure the different and contradictory ways in which racialized intimacies have been disciplined and normativized across the postcolonial world.

In the Australian case, for instance, the policing of miscegenation was for much of the twentieth century in line with an assimilationist policy explicitly designed to breed out Aboriginal bloodlines in pursuit of a white Australia. Under this eugenicist order, which ran in one form or another from the 1890s to the 1970s and was stretched particularly thin in sparsely populated northern Australia, where the discouragement of sexual commingling had little effect, the establishment of white paternity could result in mixed-race children being forcibly taken from their indigenous mothers by federal or state agencies and church missions, an occurrence so frequent and extensive that those children

are now known as the Stolen Generations. As evidenced in indigenous autobiographies and scholarship, while some white fathers had ongoing relationships with the Aboriginal mothers of their children and sought permission to marry them, others were incorporated into Aboriginal kinship systems as a means of acknowledging these relationships and the children born into them without risking their removal.[37] The complexity of these intimate genealogies, and their departure from state-sanctioned conjugal norms, is often lost within an overall cultural landscape that continues to observe white codes of reticence around the sexual exploitation of Aboriginal women and girls and other generational effects of racism, dispossession, and exclusion.

Manifestations of interracial intimacy that conflict with imperial drives to racial hygiene are part and parcel of the colonial project as it has unfolded in various locations. Their affective byways are always highly specific, however, involving as they do the intermeshing of indigenous and introduced expectations around sexuality, marriage, and kinship.[38] It is well known that different imperial administrations applied different dispensations in relation to interracial marriage or its many corollaries. Ann Laura Stoler's archivally driven work on the Dutch East Indies is the most thorough account of how semisanctioned systems of concubinage, in which colonial administrators and military personnel were permitted to keep indigenous sexual partners in marriage-like relations that bore children, lead to creolized affiliations that ran athwart colonial aims and ultimately assisted the rise of independence movements.[39] In the American context, the social history of Louisiana likewise abounds with instances in which the customary practices of different colonial regimes intersected with the institution of slavery to produce extraordinarily complex systems of sexualized intimacy that continue to unsettle notions of a color-blind polity in present-day America.

Certainly Franke's account of the complications and vulnerabilities that followed the nineteenth-century extension of marriage law to cover emancipated slaves demonstrates not only how much gays and lesbians might learn from historic black experience but also, and more alarmingly, how much the contemporary marriage equality movement has benefitted from the presentation of its cause as an implicitly white concern. Before ending her book with an eight-point manifesto that holds married queers accountable "to the ways in which the same-sex marriage movement has been the beneficiary of a racial endowment, and how some arguments made in furtherance of marriage equality may have amplified the ways in which marriage has not been a liberating experience for many people of color," Franke makes the unsentimental and seemingly contradictory observation that marriage law

exists for the requirements of divorce.[40] This legal preoccupation with divorce is a legacy of coverture, or the doctrine by which a woman's rights and obligations were upon marriage subsumed by those of her husband. Yet, long after wives have ceased to be considered their husband's chattels, the state's interest in marriage continues to be most acute at the point of its dissolution, where it exercises control over the distribution of accumulated wealth and the future obligations of alimony and child support. Unsurprisingly, at least in the terms of Franke's argument, it is therefore same-sex divorce that most thoroughly reveals the coercive persistence of gendered expectations in the now expanded domain of marriage law as many gay and lesbian couples discover that laws of divorce devised in support of the financial dependency presumed to be at the heart of heterosexual marriage do not reflect the reality of their same-sex unions, which, whatever inequalities they may harbor, are not founded on sex-based differentiations.

In the final chapter of her book, Franke provides a lengthy example of same-sex divorce that falls somewhere between legal case study and ethnographic anecdote or narrative. Across several pages she outlines the situation of a married lesbian couple who, in the process of legally dissolving their relationship, are differentially positioned as lesbian husband and lesbian wife via a judge's ruling that appears to apply gendered notions of financial dependency that derive from heterosexual templates. Franke's exemplary case has the dramatic richness of a lesbian soap: a history of passionate discord between two women exacerbated by class and economic differences; multiple breakups across a ten-year period and relationships with others established in the periods of estrangement; recourse to counseling and the verbal agreement of ground rules around separate and joint finances prior to reconciliation; marrying out of state on impulse; then a final bust-up followed by one woman filing for divorce and the other demanding her right under the law of the state they resided in to half her spouse's assets and ongoing financial support. In the family court hearing that decided the legal outcome, the judge discounted the verbal premarital agreement as "irrelevant and unenforceable," since state law required prenuptials to be agreed in writing. The coolheadedness of her legal scholarship shot through with a dramatic verve more often associated with scriptwriting, Franke describes how the justifiable distribution of assets that followed "required that the judge determine when the marital clock started ticking." In an unexpected plot twist, the judge "backdated" the marriage to when the two women started dating, even though at that point one was still legally married to her male spouse. The retroactive application of marriage law was justified by the judge's argument that across

their lengthy relationship the two women had "functioned as a couple" (a fact narratively evidenced by Franke's account of their ongoing dysfunction) and the presumption that, had they been able to marry, they would have.[41] "In this sense," Franke summarizes, "the shadow of the law of marriage is cast backward as a kind of restitution for a status of injury suffered by same-sex couples," a legal remedy that doubles down on the requirement that same-sex couples resemble their heterosexual counterparts in the making and breaking of marital arrangements.[42]

Whereas Franke uses the case example to caution gays and lesbians against "surrendering the breakup of your relationship to governance by rules set by the state"—either rules of marriage that may reflect long-standing disparities of gender or, as in the example above, rules of divorce responsive to feminist demands that those disparities be addressed at the point they have most consequence, namely the dissolution of marriage—I am interested in the critical leverage that divorce provides in allowing us to rethink the idea of marriage more generally.[43] As evidence of the increasingly complex socio-legal landscape in which marriage exists, Franke cites the now routine adoption of prenuptial legal agreements that were once considered the reserve of the wealthy. These "front end of marriage arrangements," as she calls them, reflect a "new sense of entitlement, or as some call it legal consciousness," that allows soon-to-be married gays and lesbians, like their straight counterparts, to safeguard themselves financially against the failure of a relationship, or in some instances "to treat the rights and wrongs of a relationship," say infidelity or other breaches of marital conduct, "as monetizable claims against one another."[44] In this preemptive imagining, the horizon of divorce repositions matrimony not as a sentimental partnership but as a contractual arrangement similar to any other and thus to be entered into with an equal degree of legal caution. By instrumentally anticipating a retraction of the mutuality considered to be at the heart of companionate marriage for almost two centuries, prenuptial arrangements are considered by some queer critics of marriage to expose endemic skepticism about the longevity and sustainability of marriage as it is nowadays practiced. Amy Brandzel, for instance, insists that one of the "positive effects" of the same-sex marriage movement has been the exposure of "a crack in the facade of heteronormativity," which is no longer a rock-solid social form but a flailing and increasingly irrelevant institution the hegemony of which must be "buttressed" in laws that specify that heterosexuality and heterosexuality alone can be considered "synonymous with marriage."[45] By these lights, queer disparagers of marriage can legitimately support the legal argument for marriage equality since the success

of the movement further undermines the institution's increasingly shaky social base.

Other critical attacks on the foundations of marriage, including same-sex marriage, equally involve the dual tendencies to personalized narration and impersonalized abstraction that can be seen in Franke's book. Consider the work of Laura Kipnis, who idiosyncratically adopts the second-person voice to characterize the married couple as the deadening form through which people—straight or gay—bind themselves to the social. Waged initially as an essay-length polemic and subsequently expanded into a trade book titled *Against Love*, Kipnis's project is a kind of thought experiment that presents the widespread practice of adultery as a series of narrative vignettes and conjugal clichés that collectively demonstrate the personal and sexual exhaustion that attaches to the monogamous couple, whether legally married or bound together by common law.[46] Tracing the contours of "the adultery melodrama" with its equal-opportunity cast of cheating wives, philandering husbands, straying domestic partners, suspicious spouses, cuckolds, and bedroom dicks, Kipnis argues that the erotic and affective labor required by the longue durée of coupledom is alienated in the Marxist sense: it binds partners to an object or idea (their coupled happiness) that is irretrievably lost to them.[47] Against this state of bondage, Kipnis poses adulterous disruption as a yearning toward unsanctioned utopias of good feeling, a kind of emotional avant-gardism that carries the force of radical progressiveness.

Although there is much that is beguiling about Kipnis's association of the sexual euphoria and social disturbance of adultery with other sexual subcultures that are not wedded to the couple form as a sexually exclusive unit, David Shumway provides the sobering reminder that adultery can be considered rebellious only within the discourse of romantic love; under the discourse of intimacy that historically superseded romance as the primary framework for marriage, adultery can be considered only pathological.[48] Where Kipnis deploys the insider account of adultery via dramatic vignettes and parenthetical asides that would be funnier if only they didn't ring so true, Shumway engages the omniscient chronological overview of marriage as a historically changing form. To begin, he usefully maps out the three historical phases through which love has been conceived: first, as a social obligation or duty; second, as romance; and finally and most recently, as intimacy. Unlike the discourse of romance in which love is conceived as an involuntary "passion that befalls one," within the discourse of intimacy love is "a condition of a relationship," not of an individual. Further, within the modern discourse of intimacy the love relationship is considered "something that a couple can

control."[49] This shift from understanding love as an irrational passion that takes hold of one to understanding it as a shared something that must be collectively cultivated, improved, or healed animates a corresponding shift in the aesthetic forms devoted to love's explication. Although Shumway argues that the rise of capitalism promoted marriage as "a matter of individual choice, rather than social arrangement," he goes on to parse this distinction more finely.[50] In association with the rise of the novel, "nineteenth century marriage became understood as best based on romantic love," whereas "marriage itself continued to be understood as an essential social structure."[51] As a corollary of this implicit tension between the origin of love in romantic passion and the dry social form taken by the institution of marriage, "marriage can be either an oppressive obstacle to true love or its ultimate fulfillment," with both options popularly promulgated through novelistic discourse across the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.[52]

Like Kipnis, Shumway identifies adultery as key to the romantic mechanism of marriage and its narratology. Not only are romantic narratives "triadic in structure, involving at any given moment three desiring subjects," but, Shumway insists, "romance is exclusively concerned with love outside of marriage, either in adultery or courtship." That is, although marriage can prompt stories of adultery or provide closure for stories of courtship, as far as the novel is concerned it cannot tell its own story, or, as he puts it, "marriage itself cannot be represented." Jumping forward from the discourse of romance to the discourse of intimacy, the evidence Shumway gives in proof of the novel's marital nondisclosure clause is the fact that "the marriage manuals of the 1920s advise husbands and wives to maintain separate bedrooms so as not to become too familiar with each other. The model for marriage here is the adulterous affair."[53] Shumway's example anticipates Kipnis's counterlogical argument that to avoid the state of "*surplus monogamy*," in which "monogamy becomes work" and "desire is organized contractually, with accounts kept and fidelity extracted like labor from employees, with marriage a domestic factory policed by means of rigid shop-floor discipline designed to keep the wives and husbands of the world choke-chained to the reproduction machinery," married relationships should be pursued as playfully and purposelessly as if they were affairs, only now the advice given to Edwardian couples on how to avoid exhausting marriage's erotic potential is repurposed in favor of a sexual avant-gardism that would not recognize its place in this lineage.[54]

Not only does the discourse of romance render marriage unrepresentable except as postscript to the story of courtship or prelude to the story of adultery, but the discourse of intimacy seems to model marriage on its erotic

surrogates. In Shumway's account the demystified discourse of intimacy does not abandon romance, or the passion and obsession with which romance is associated, but rather relegates these things to an early "stage of love's process." Instead of focusing on "falling in love"—a prospect to be guarded against from the perspective of the established couple since this state can be secured only by what we might call "falling in adultery"—the discourse of intimacy concerns itself with the effort needed to "stay in love." Unlike the romantic narrative that ends or starts in marriage but ignores the marital relationship altogether, the narrative of intimacy that takes its place is concerned exclusively with the relationship, which it comes at from every available temporal position—before, during, and after—in any order that suits. As a prime fictional example of intimate discourse at work, Shumway gives not a novel but Woody Allen's *Annie Hall* (1977), a film that retrospectively explains from the perspective of one half of a failed couple "why the relationship ended, rather than lamenting its end" in the way a romance version of the same story might do. Allen's film, indeed his entire oeuvre, strongly supports Shumway's contention that "as a literary form, intimacy tends toward the case history."[55] The discourse of intimacy produces a new narratological form in which the story of an established relationship, which we may as well call a marriage, can be revisited and revised at the same time in a way that approximates a therapeutic conversation.

According to Shumway, the distinctive feature of the novel of intimacy is not only that it takes as its subject the "troubles" internal to marriage—as can be seen in the novels of John Updike and Alison Lurie—but that this fictional form can be likened to nonfictional forms of marital advice literature that similarly offer instructional vignettes of failing relationships with which readers can identify.[56] This convergence of genres leads Shumway to conclude, "It is in the form of advice that intimacy has achieved it most influential and characteristic expression."[57] This point about the increasing ubiquity of expert and amateur advice directed at ostensibly private relationships has also been made by Candace Vogler in her discussion of the anomalous relations assumed of men and women in relation to intimacy in post-1970s popular psychology and relationship manuals that address those caught in "morbid companionate marriage."[58] Assisted by the deployment of gender-typical case studies that are often rendered in novelistic detail, a form of "case-study heterosexuality" emerges through this discourse that supports the idea that marital discontent can be sourced to the gap between male and female expectations around intimacy: where men regard sex as a means to interpersonal intimacy, women require talk.[59] Rather than accept this Venus/

Mars diagnostic—as complacently heterosexual as it is defeatist—Vogler turns it inside out by engaging a Kantian philosophical critique, although it is the homosexual cast of her philosophy that concerns me here.

Vogler begins by questioning the commonsense understanding of sexual intimacy as "reciprocal self-expression and self-scrutiny" that subtends couple counseling across its various modes of address. Speculating "first, that not all intimacies are affairs of the self and that, second, the fact that some intimacies are *not* affairs of the self is what makes people want them," she argues that while husbands and wives might take different gendered pathways within their interpersonal relationships, they both seek the same outcome, namely "depersonalizing" intimacy or a sense of being made sexually strange to themselves within the familiar orbit of the habitual.[60] To make this argument Vogler has recourse to specifically gay and lesbian representations of the sexual, which respectively address male sex and female talk and can therefore be conscripted to her counterintuitive reframing of heterosexual coupled love. Calling upon Leo Bersani's psychoanalytic account of the profound abdication of the self involved in sexual jouissance conceived as a sublime detachment from both the object-world and its psychic domestications and, less predictably, Adrienne Rich's poetic evocation and complicated disavowal of women's kitchen sink "troubles talk" as the verbal means to attaining a not dissimilar suspension of sexual rationalism and the female-enforced requirement that sexual feeling always be socially accounted for, Vogler outlines the differently gendered but equivalently advantageous pathways men and women take to achieve depersonalizing intimacy: "Now, I want to suggest that what our husbands want from sex is timely self-forgetfulness, rather than an occasion for self-expression, just as I think that what our wives want from talk is likewise self-forgetfulness, rather than an opportunity to express and defend their considered views. Bersani's writings on sex capture something of the spirit of the thing for case-study U.S. *husbands*, not just male homosexuals, just as (I think) a lesbian poet's representation of talk captures something of the spirit of that activity for case-study U.S. *wives*."[61] I am interested in particular in the homosexual source of Vogler's argument about the differently geared but similar sexual needs men and women bring to marriage, since it suggests the necessity to think these forms—not just homosexuality and heterosexuality, but homosexuality, heterosexuality, and marriage—together.

In this context it is worth returning to Shumway, since, in his deliberations on the increasing social acceptability of same-sex marriage, he insists that the contemporary link between marriage and homosexuality is not a novel or unexpected occurrence but merely the crystallization of the longer

historical trajectory through which changes in the conception of marriage socially validate homosexual relationships as yet another—perhaps even an idealized form of—companionate coupledom. Drawing on Anthony Giddens's influential account of transformations of intimacy in modern life, Shumway points out that the "shrinking social and economic role of marriage that fostered the emergence of the discourse of intimacy is also one of the preconditions for the social legitimation of homosexuality." But whereas Giddens stresses the sexual innovations that gays and lesbians pioneered outside marriage in the form of open or negotiated relationships that ultimately provide the model of the "pure" relationship based on the assumption of sexual and emotional equality, Shumway places stress on the way that the increasing social visibility of gay and lesbian relationships, however "grudgingly or disapprovingly" acknowledged, began to "relativize marriage" insofar as they were seen to resemble it.[62]

Contra Giddens, whom he thinks overstates the case for the downgrading of marriage to one lifestyle choice among many, Shumway points out that the historical advent of "increasingly acceptable" alternatives to marriage across the twentieth century, including gay and lesbian alternatives, did not produce a "widespread rejection of monogamy" but ensured its continuation as an ideal both inside and outside marriage. While the emerging discourse of intimacy may have "acknowledged that marriage was but one kind of relationship," in practice "the term relationship" meant "the couple." As a corollary of this, practices such as multiple partners, or other arrangements such as those considered "typical of gay men," are regarded "as evidence of the failure of intimacy in the 'primary' relationship." The conclusion Shumway draws from this is worth quoting in full for the clarity with which he identifies how intimacy both softens or weakens the social discourse of marriage and extends its hold over sexual subcultures previously considered outside its purview: "Where under romance adultery was rebellion against marriage, under intimacy it is understood as a pathology of marriage. It is the bias of intimacy discourse toward marriage that leads to the conclusion that marriage is good for everyone, not just heterosexuals. Intimacy allows that a different dyad might be the solution to relationship woes, but it can't conceive, even covertly, that some people might not find happiness in monogamy rightly practiced."[63] The point I draw from this is that, although the social hegemony of the monogamous couple beyond the parameters of heterosexual marriage is now a commonplace point of queer critique, few acknowledge or stay attuned to the historically productive dialogue that has existed between marriage and its homosexual alternates across the twentieth century, or conceptually entertain the idea that marriage (and the couple form with which

it remains synonymous) might have been homosexualized long before same-sex marriage captured the public imagination. Rather than consider homosexual engagements with couplehood as contributing to the shifting contours of marriage across the twentieth century, what dominates contemporary critical discussion is the idea that homosexuality has only recently become enamored of marriage as a way of turning its back on its own sexual and social history in favor of the blandishments of married love. This presumption upholds a false distinction between heterosexuality and homosexuality in relation to discourses of marriage that should not be countenanced in a field that is founded on the Foucauldian idea that categories of sexual knowledge tend to interpenetrate rather than stand alone. Alongside the homosexual, the hysteric, and the masturbating child, Foucault explicitly identifies the Malthusian couple as one of the four fulcrum points central to the functioning of *scientia sexualis*, yet many queer theorists continue to quarantine these categories from each other as if they were always, and should continue to be, kept distinct. The interpenetration of homosexuality and heterosexuality is thus another of those key points in queer theory that is upheld in theory but abrogated in practice to powerfully moralistic ends, as Eve Sedgwick first pointed out in relation to the tendency of the field to reproduce the repressive hypothesis in particular ways.[64]

Instead of considering that the evolution of homosexuality and marriage might have mutually entangled histories, much recent queer critique seems designed to get shot of both marriage and the monogamous couple as quickly as possible. For example, while both Warner and Kipnis invoke the queer talent for promiscuous stranger intimacy against the social dominance of the couple within and outside marriage, Michael Cobb has recently targeted the couple from the perspective of the uncoupled. In the "process of theorizing singleness," Cobb takes apart the notion of the lonely crowd, a mid-twentieth-century sociological concept that continues to hold sway in accounts of the bleakness of the social landscape after the eviscerating effects of technological modernization.[65] Cobb points out the surprising longevity of the lonely crowd diagnostic, whose second wind gets a third wind with the advent of each new form of technology that ostensibly brings others closer but only via a network of estrangement that promotes shallow over deep relationalities, novelty over reflection, distraction over commitment. In this account the contemporary embrace of social media is merely the most recent example of a technological modernity that diminishes our capacity for meaningful solitude and underscores the fundamental loneliness of a social sphere that can be alleviated only through the enduring intimacy known as couple love.[66]

For all the inventiveness that Cobb brings to the project of imagining singleness uncoupled from the couple—his dismissal of the apparent paucity of narrative alternatives to the couple form, his disdain for those who celebrate singleness as a form of "antisocial sublime," and his revaluation of abstraction as a mode through which one can experience a "self-horizoned" world more encompassing than that inscribed by the self-absorbed social horizon of couples—his account of the couple is breathtaking for the social and psychic violence said to be at its core.[67] Drawing first on Hannah Arendt's account of totalitarianism and second on Bersani and Adam Phillips's psychoanalytic account of "generic interpersonal relating," Cobb argues that couple intimacy is a compact through which people "destructively overpersonalize and territorialize their relations with each other" instead of pursuing forms of "impersonal intimacy" that are indifferent to personal identity.[68] In this weighted comparison "the single is a *flâneur* figure with an impossible thought project—one who stands in a way of existence that is as unconditional as the vista she surveys, who can tolerate herself for much longer, much larger, than the couple's chopping block ordinarily permits."[69] In the wake of modernity's social insistence "that you should never be on your own, that you must always relate as two," the heroic singleton "is trying to resacrilize itself by removing the face of the other. The single goes to this 'holy' place and doesn't just see the painful, standardizing culture of couple control: instead, she or he sees something very abstract that has only an unspecific language of cliché but nevertheless opens up an extremely important panorama on the grand, distant, oceanic, deserted world."[70] Rather than giving access to a transcendental experience of this order, the mundane "logic of the couple" merely binds one to the foreshortened experience of "the social, otherwise known as the crowd."[71]

Although Cobb associates the couple with romance and the persistence of an idealized form of erotic love, this linking of the couple with the socially anonymous form of the crowd gets closer to the historical conditions through which the heterosexual couple emerges as a sexual and social problem and thus a magnet for biopolitical discourses of improvement. However romantically idealized, the couple form is discursively hemmed in through the constant exposure of its incapacities and limitations relative to the newly transparent standards of modernity, which include not only expectations of romance and intimacy but also new stretch targets of sexual equality as measured by increasingly varied and highly specific metrics. Applying a Foucauldian schema beyond queer theory's usual bandwidth of perversion, hysteria, and onanism, Annamarie Jagose has shown how the well-regulated heterosexual couple is repeatedly required to figure as the solution to the apparent incom-

mensurateness of male and female sexuality through early-twentieth-century marriage manuals that promote simultaneous orgasm as the measure of erotic reciprocity: "Although the two events synchronously brought together in simultaneous orgasm, the husband's orgasms and the wife's, depend on an intimately realized regime of bodily discipline and self-surveillance, this simultaneity is associated with the emergence of a heteroeroticism as a single erotic orientation occupied equally by men and women, the assumed mutuality and coherence of which normalizes, without superseding, older models of gender hierarchy."[72] Jagose goes on to add that "we should not therefore imagine that the efforts of such marital experiments with simultaneity—or even marital ambitions for simultaneity—were limited to the domesticated and private pleasures or frustrations of individual husbands and wives."[73]

Where Cobb points to the idealization of the couple, Jagose points to its normativization, a phenomenon that is concentrated around discourses of marriage but not confined to them, nor, I would suggest, limited to the heterosexual. Rather, operating in concert with other modern impulses to equality, the discourse of sexual reciprocity that begins to penetrate marriage at the beginning of the twentieth century ultimately brings heterosexual and nonheterosexual practices into alignment. Building across the twentieth century, an erotic parallelism is established between heterosexual and homosexual relationships (and their alternates) that might (or might not) take marriage-like form. The perspective afforded by the historical success of the marriage equality movement can only reinforce the idea that this biopolitical expansion does not end here but will continue to extend across the spectrum of the erotosphere pulling others (most obviously the transgendered) into its normativizing orbit.

Massing a huge number of primary sources in evidence, Jagose demonstrates how, across the twentieth century, various biomedical epistemologies increasingly index sex (whether premarital, marital, extramarital, or postmarital) and, in particular, orgasm (which is harder to conceive in marital terms) to "the normative values of personhood" at the same time as they strip personhood from sex.[74] As a result of this contradictory drive to sexual personalization and depersonalization, the "double bind of modern sex" emerges in which "no matter how much sex is imagined as a privileged practice for the alleviation of the anomie that characterizes modern social relations by dint of its being apprehended as an intimate act, both particularizing and privatizing, it is equally available for the experience, whether depressive or euphoric, of the same impersonal intimacies it is normatively understood to counter."[75] Newly available for scientific codification and increasingly severed from reproduction, sexual satisfaction becomes both a personal and impersonal

measure of the achievement of interpersonal intimacy, and—as evidenced by the late twentieth-century marital advice literature discussed by Vogler—certainly remains so in the context of heterosexual relationships that are less tightly twined with the institutions of kinship and family than ever before. This "imbrication of personal and impersonal intimacies" in sexual relations that are "more heavily weighted with interpersonal expectation"—including expectation around sexual satisfaction—but increasingly cut free of traditionally mandated social institutions also provides the historical context through which the relation between marriage and homosexuality must be rethought.[76]

In sum, I contend that the relation between homosexuality and marriage is historically richer and more complicated than currently acknowledged in either the specialist domain of queer theory or mainstream same-sex marriage debates. It is the normative detachment of heterosexuality from marriage as a compulsory social form and its complex repositioning as an electively sexual form that permits marriage to attach to homosexuality, a possibility that is further enhanced by the detachment of marriage from marriage, a contradictory state of affairs effected by the rise of divorce, reproductive freedom, gay liberation, and even couples counseling. Responsive to these social changes and all the other things that comprise sexual modernity, marriage continually relaunches itself as sexual, social, and domestic ideal and builds anew appropriate internal and external support mechanisms. In this upside-down world—which has been in place for over a century—gay and lesbian experiments in domestic partnership that both resemble and depart from the conventional couple form have fundamentally reshaped generic understandings of marriage and the principles by which it is defined—namely fidelity, exclusivity, and endurance.

While others have zeroed in on adultery and divorce in order to theoretically dismantle the foundations of marriage, I contend that these challenges are no greater than those posed by the serial media panics generated around marriage across the twentieth century. The idea of a marriage crisis first went into general circulation in the opening decades of the twentieth century in association with an extensive specialist and popular literature dedicated to explicating the difficulty husbands and wives face achieving mutual sexual happiness.[77] A second-wave crisis occurred in the 1960s linked to the convenient provision of reliable birth control, and a third wave followed in the 1990s with the advent of widescale calls for legislative reforms that would see marriage extended to same-sex partnerships. Each of these highly mediatized moments saw marriage reconfigured outside the sacral, contractual, and reproductive obligations with which it was previously associated. It is this constant historical reimagining of marriage that provides the evolving context

in which gay and lesbian relationships can begin to appear as leading-edge exemplars of what long-term relationships might look like.

In addition to the specialist analysis and concern generated about the future of marriage across the twentieth century, the changing form of marriage has also been subject to intense popular speculation, particularly in novels and narrative films that take divorce and other social phenomenon, such as female reproductive freedom or the prospect of gay marriage, as an opportunity to explore the stories that can be told in the vicinity of marriage. Rather than challenge the ideological foundations of marriage or lobby for or against marriage equality, my focus in the pages to come is primarily on stories of marriage, or more accurately, marriage as story, a generic form of emplotment that has heterosexual and homosexual manifestations.

Instead of attacking canonic versions of marriage that first had their cultural hegemony challenged at the beginning of the twentieth century, the chapters ahead turn to the archive of popular culture in order to demonstrate that homosexuality has long been integral to the reimagining of affective and erotic horizons within marriage and the wider sociality to which it contributes. Next, chapter 2 briefly considers nineteenth-century literary renovations to the marriage plot before moving on to twentieth-century genres of popular culture that also derive their energy from marriage's susceptibility to change. Although Hollywood cinema in general has been responsive to changing expectations around romantic norms, one genre in particular stands out in relation to investigating explicitly conjugal obligations, namely the Hollywood comedies of remarriage as identified by Stanley Cavell, a clutch of effervescent films from the 1930s and 1940s that originally exercised their popular charge in an era in which middle-class marriage was shaken up by the easy availability of divorce. I revisit Cavell's philosophical discussion of remarriage in the contemporary context of gay marriage. This allows me to set up a theoretical framework through which to address across the course of this book a number of gay- and lesbian-themed melodramas that approach the sexual and social problem of marriage in increasingly explicit ways. Though very different from each other, these films collectively propel a reconceptualization of what same-sex marriage represents as a generalizable social achievement, irrespective of its legal standing.

In order to stress the historical aspect of this reimagining, chapter 3 reads and reads closely a Hollywood film that predates the same-sex marriage movement by several decades but nonetheless anticipates both gay and lesbian alternatives to marriage. The film is Dorothy Arzner's domestic melodrama *Craig's Wife* (1936), in which Rosalind Russell plays a house-obsessed woman

who drives her besotted husband away. Drawing on the queer circumstances surrounding the film's production, I begin by offering a biographically enriched account of a film that appeared in an era when divorce was losing its social stigma. Having put this worldly framework in place, I proceed to concentrate (no doubt obsessively) on the cinematic detail of the film in order to show that *Craig's Wife* is simultaneously a critique of middle-class marriage and a validation of the interclass female companionate relationship that exists in its narrative wings. Rather than elevate text over context, or context over text, I use the combination of elements evidenced in and around *Craig's Wife*—lesbian director, gay designer, heterosexual mise en scène—to give more affective texture to the many and varied relationships that lesbians and gay men have historically had to domestic conjugality as a style of life.

Where my discussion of *Craig's Wife* identifies domesticity, style, and celebrity as key rubrics connecting homosexuality and marriage decades before same-sex marriage emerges as a political aspiration, chapter 4 argues for their continued relevance in the contemporary context of the marriage equality movement. Centered on *A Single Man* (2009)—Tom Ford's adaptation of Christopher Isherwood's novel of the same name from 1964—this chapter takes the "Tom Ford" brand as evidence of a wide cultural investment in gay style and emotionality that taps homosexuality's dual personalizing and politicizing effects in order to reinvigorate social forms, including the conventional form of marriage. I show how Ford's film mines both Isherwood's source text and his long-term domestic relationship with Don Bachardy in order to relaunch homosexual style as a universal brand that bestows cultural and emotional capital on its cosmopolitan fans, who, no longer divided in terms of their sexual orientation, class, or race, can be addressed as a single diverse demographic. If Ford's film makes a sentimental case for the legitimacy of same-sex relationships that resemble marriage while at the same time contouring the upmarket consumerist ambitions of a new generation of socially aspirant gays and lesbians, I demonstrate how Isherwood's source text scopes out an alternative conjugal narrative premised on sexual substitution and equivalency.

Where my reading of *A Single Man* engages the queer critique of gay marriage as a homonormative formation, chapter 5 considers the perversity endemic to the couple form via an engagement with Lisa Cholodenko's *High Art* (1998), *Laurel Canyon* (2002), and *The Kids Are All Right* (2010), a trilogy that traces the perseverance of coupled attachments that refuse to dissolve even in the face of their public dishonoring. The persistence of attachment beyond its origins in couple love is generally considered a queer value. Yet, from the

perspective of the trilogy—which insists on both the correlation between duration and dependency and the fundamental ambivalence of attachment—things are not so simple. Acknowledging that sexual attachments and the intimate social worlds built on them might not persist, or might persist in ways that cannot be anticipated at their outset, is the condition under which marriage now betokens the uncertainty of happiness rather than its promise. Considered this way, same-sex marriage becomes a rubric for thinking through the terms on which the social and the sexual might be renegotiated in the face of everything we know about sex and its vicissitudes, including the fact that our attachments, which are often formed on impulse but also subject to rigorous social patterning, are mostly resistant to deliberation and will.

Chapter 6 is a concentrated reengagement of Cavell's argument about the Hollywood comedies of remarriage. The popular success of these films, Cavell argues, reflects a complex reattachment to marriage that, in the wake of divorce, must necessarily be approached as remarriage, as a revitalized commitment to a socially de-idealized form. In the present historical moment when the institution of marriage has been once again altered by the social acceptance of same-sex marriage, a cycle of gay and lesbian films has emerged that interrogate the terms on which marriage might be reimagined yet again as a viable social and sexual practice or, as its critics propose, abandoned outright. Where Cavell argues that postdivorce all marriage is remarriage, this chapter proposes that post–marriage equality, all marriage is gay marriage, at least for the popular purpose of renegotiating a general attachment to the form. It does so via close readings of two recent films, Stacie Passon's *Concussion* (2013) and Andrew Haigh's *Weekend* (2011), which both speak to wider conceptions of fidelity than those normally associated with conjugality but also engage notions of the domestic and the everyday, categories homosexuality now makes more public claim to than ever before.

The final chapter turns to *45 Years* (2015), another critically celebrated film written and directed by Haigh that deals with a straight marriage that is faltering under the weight of its repressed past. Haigh's film is an unsolicited endorsement of my argument that the advent or imminence of same-sex marriage has altered the emotional, sexual, social, and ethical framework through which we now encounter marriage in general. The historical arc that ends with *45 Years* corresponds to the timeframe across which marriage has in many jurisdictions been legally redrafted as an institution capable of including gays and lesbians. I argue that the films I have selected for discussion do not simply reflect the social and legal change with which they are coincident but rather run ahead of it in compelling and contradictory ways. Instead

of promoting an inclusive model of marriage that accommodates heterosexuals and homosexuals alike, the complex narratives these films inscribe fundamentally alter our sense of what sexual attachment might involve as a social as well as romantic form. Rather than regarding these films as affirmative representations of gay and lesbian couples, I argue for their significance in mediating sexual and social innovation in complex ways. With their capacity to capture the mutability of feelings as they emerge under specific historical conditions, these gay marriage films enable us to re-specify erotic, affective, and ordinary attachments to others and think about their long-term sustainability outside familial frameworks.

Against the tide of the queer critique of marriage, I make a strong argument for the ongoing pertinence of the marriage plot—and the narrative sensibility it cultivates—as generative of the conditions through which we continue to experience ourselves as subjects of feeling and agents of change. While legal histories of marriage barely capture this state of affairs, fictional representations of same-sex marriage and its historical avatars are a significant resource for thinking about the ways in which homosexuality has long been integral to the reimagining of affective and erotic horizons within the couple form. In the chapters ahead, I demonstrate how the narrativization of gay and lesbian relationships that resemble marriages in nature if not in name in a range of popular film texts operates instructionally insofar as it expands notions of attachment and fulfillment to include forms of sexual sociability that are usually thought to be incompatible with the married state. Ultimately, I will argue that the utopian patterns discernible in these fictional gay and lesbian relationships (whether or not they are denoted as marriage) are usefully conceived as perpetual reattachments, or what Cavell would call remarriages. Hence we might begin to think of same-sex marriage as remarriage, or a queer recommitment to marriage as a social and sexual form that has always been radically inclusive of difference. Originally surfacing in the era of divorce and now resurfacing in the era of marriage equality, the idea of remarriage is a resource for thinking otherwise about the impasses of the present. Or so it has proven for me. With the authority bestowed by experience, I offer remarriage as a trope through which to reflect on the full spectrum of disenchantments and deidealizations that have manifested in queer theory over the past several decades. Thus I begin not with social and sexual utopias, nor with the unexpected difficulty attendant on reattaching to marriage as a de-idealized form, but with domestic fiction, the natural home of the marriage plot and all its heterosexual trappings.