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Sounding Expanded Affinities

A Polytemporal Approach to Reconceptualizing Egalitarian Social Relations

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Sounding Expanded Affinities

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**A POLYTEMPORAL APPROACH TO RECONCEPTUALIZING
EGALITARIAN SOCIAL RELATIONS**

Andrea Ray



**LUND
UNIVERSITY**

DOCTORAL DISSERTATION

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Faculty opponent

Professor Katy Deepwell, Middlesex University, London



Andrea Ray

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EGALITARIAN SOCIAL RELATIONS**

Andrea Ray



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ABSTRACT

My doctoral submission, *Sounding Expanded Affinities*, examines how strides toward gender equality might be made, but it postulates that this is too difficult while marriage remains at the core of our patriarchal value system. This patriarchal system is one which oppresses women by manipulating subjects into its preferred roles often in subtle, chronic ways, using repetition and pairing as its tools. The doctoral submission then formulates a synchronous model of time to critique and disturb the operation of convention, to evaluate alternative forms of relationships, and finally, to propose a new relationship form with egalitarianism as its aim.

I approach the doctoral project as an artistic practitioner first. Therefore, I have extracted a methodology from my sound installation work that I refer to as “polytemporality”. I borrow this musical term to bring together thinking from different historical moments about how women might achieve greater equality. The project focuses on the United States context, specifically the period between the nineteenth century and now. I ultimately build on this research into earlier utopian proposals for gender equality to develop an idea that I call “expanded affinities”: this is a proposal for a more egalitarian form of relationship. The two terms are both method and subject of the artworks, dissertation, and writing that comprise my doctoral submission, *Sounding Expanded Affinities*. I see the two as linked since I believe that gender inequality is reinforced by notions of linear time. “Polytemporality”, which I define as a synchronous sense of the past, present, and future, is therefore meant to disrupt the normative ideas about gender within relationships. The word “polytemporal” further serves as a conscious nod to the politics of polyamory, or, non-monogamy, taken up in this text. The notion of expanded affinities builds on my research into earlier historical attempts to form more egalitarian types of relationships in intentional communities or through experimenting with different modes of relating. It is a concept that contributes to feminist and queer critiques of heteronormative constructs insofar as it decenters marriage and biological kinship, and redistributes the state’s economic investments in those forms of belonging to the individual instead of the couple. Expanded affinities

is ultimately a way of relating that exceeds present-day restrictions and hierarchies within love relations.

The first two installations that are part of *Sounding Expanded Affinities* are *Utopians Dance* and *A Reeducation*. Together, these two installations take up the initial terms of gender identity, feminism, sexuality, utopian communities, and alternative economics. The third installation includes the radio play *ReCast: LIVE ON-AIR* in which feminist voices from across 200 years are brought together in an omnipresent radio station to discuss relationship forms. Polytemporality is not only the method of writing, but the form too, as *ReCast: LIVE ON-AIR* aims to create a hybrid sense of time in the physical and aural space of installation. The dissertation appendix includes reprints of my script and book from the abovementioned installations.

I use the polytemporal method in my dissertation as well. Chapter one introduces the concept, and chapter two offers an historical analysis of the patriarchal nature of marriage that also identifies the residual asymmetrical power structures from the past that still exist today. The third chapter evaluates the egalitarian potential of ethical non-monogamies for women, in part by examining earlier historical communities where non-monogamy was practiced in order to create more egalitarian modes of relating. The fourth chapter introduces the concept of expanded affinities as my alternative to ethical non-monogamy that is intended to be a more inclusive and more equal relationship form.

Together, the concept of expanded affinities and polytemporality allow the personal register to speak across time to create bonds beyond the constraints of the present, of the couple, and of gender roles. The installations provide an element of embodiment and performativity; the dissertation offers analysis and scholarship; and the artistic writings contain fractured narratives. It is my hope that such an interdisciplinary approach to form and expression will work to forward the frames within which feminist art and discourse can take place today.

A NOTE ON THE TITLE

“Sounding” holds multiple meanings relative to this project. First, the word invokes both voice and listening as it refers to my artistic practice in sound installation. This mode of thinking is formalized into an analytical tool for which “sounding” refers to a form of writing that incorporates both personal and analytical registers of voice as the dissertation’s dual languages. Thus through sounding, the personal and analytical locate and relocate one another in a continuous loop not reliant on the academic tradition alone. The term also contributes an approach, as in to “sound out an idea”, to express it to others for discussion and to reflect on it. In this regard, it implies an audience or community, therefore, “sounding” promises a generative airing of issues from multiple points of view. “Sounding” too, evokes my form of thinking in which views and practices from across different time periods are aired as a way of testing the depth of the ideas. Hence, like an echo-sounding instrument that calls out, then waits for a response to sense the depths of the waters, I visualize the process of mining or echo-locating on a vertical axis to contrast the horizontal linear model of time that works for the status-quo and maintenance of inequality.

The term “expanded affinities” correlates to the language found in select references. Johan Wolfgang von Goethe uses the scientific term “elective affinities” as the title of his 1809 novella in which attraction beyond the confines of marriage is explored as a non-monogamy experiment. In 1976 Michel Foucault writes of a “deployment of alliance” in *The History of Sexuality: An Introduction* to describe a social order enforced through the state’s link of property, economy, and citizenship to sexual relations through marriage. Elizabeth Freeman responds to this term in 2002 in *The Wedding Complex* with a “deployment of affinity” to decouple marriage as the route from which such rights and privileges travel.

Sounding Expanded Affinities then, mines layers of voices past, present, as well as future to formulate a new concept, “expanded affinities”, a term I develop to encompass an extended network of relations that does not delimit itself to the romantic couple or

biological kin. I develop the term to broaden and diversify legitimate forms of relating to include the many, changing, long, and short term forms of care we might and already share and experience, and to outline a system for economic redistribution to support a more egalitarian society. Applying a non-linear methodology of time, *Sounding Expanded Affinities* “sounds off” proposals from other writers both past and present and in the process imagines a new type of relationship form, expanded affinities.

PROLOGUE

2016

From one perspective, the legal acceptance of same-sex couples in marriage represents great strides made in issues of equality. Has a growing social acceptance of same-sex relationships helped to decenter patriarchal rule and heteronormative relations? Does the growing popularity of non-monogamous relationships, the acceptance of various forms of sexual orientation, and the growing visibility of transgendered people mean that third terms are becoming increasingly legitimated? Are they evidence that more fluid relations to both gender and sexuality will come? And has a gender spectrum begun to replace the binary order that the patriarchy uses to recirculate hierarchies of gender, sexuality, race, and class?

My questions are more vision than reality, more projection than progress.

The systemic course of oppression against women originates somewhere. Although, some will tell us we evolved away from this system of subjugation long ago, and that we have laws that have done away with gendered inequality. Some deny that women continue to be systematically oppressed or downplay the severity of the violence women experience. Some dismiss sexist talk as meaningless locker room banter or even flirtation. Some dismiss feminists as essentialists or fundamentalists. All are forms of shutting women down and allowing oppression and inequality to continue. All are forms that leave the door open to sexism made unbearably plain when a woman with a lifetime of experience and service lost the bid for the United States presidency to a misogynist man with no experience for the position at all. The bills signed by the now President have returned us to a dark age of oppression and vulnerability. From here this project takes added urgency and expresses the need for voices to join in expanding resistance to such patriarchal forces that continue to oppress women.

2017

In January 2017, the Women’s March took place in over 600 cities worldwide. These embodiments of political activism demonstrated broad global recognition of the many and diverse issues facing women today. They called attention to the great amount of urgent work yet to be done for women. The protests addressed many issues (sexual assault and harassment, protecting abortion rights, protecting women’s health, and generally opposing patriarchal ideologies) and the feminist intervention I am proposing in this project has a place there. The marches echoed those of previous times in their general refusal to accept the status of women. Some visual and aural messages present in the 2017 marches appear to have traveled from previous times, linking previous and present moments together in folds. For example, the slogan “I AM A MAN” originally from the 1960s Civil Rights Era was recast as “I AM HUMAN” in 2017. In New York City, signs with the heads of our foremothers such as Audre Lorde, Ella Baker, and Margaret Sanger waved above, while we continued the march behind them, their presence felt beyond image, but incanted in our collective voice. From my experience that day, the diversity represented through gender, age, and race was incredible, as well was the diversity of issues exemplifying the notion that women’s issues are everyone’s issues. This project, *Sounding Expanded Affinities*, is set in the U.S.—a country with a predisposition to dream, yet caught in a present that began some time ago.

CHAPTER ONE

SOUNDING A MODEL OF TIME

BREAKING FROM THE INEQUALITY WITHIN CHRONOPOLITICS

2010 / 2016

“Patriarchy has no gender”¹ bell hooks states again and again, referring to a system that oppresses women by insidiously infiltrating and manipulating subjects into its preferred roles often in subtle, chronic ways, using “reproduction and conjoinment”² as its tools.³ Specifically, interpersonal relationships—romantic and sexual—have within them certain embedded codes of behavior and privilege that inform how one is to think, feel, and relate. Time works to reinforce the codes until such behavior is construed as natural. However, history also presents us with a variety of utopian experiments in loving and caring, and relationship structures that are devised with egalitarian aims at their center. I am interested in collecting the voices of those from the past who felt they had devised “something better”. What might these specters say to us? To one another? How might these past voices recast relations in the future if considered outside of linear time? Could a model that transcends the divisions and orderings of the past, present, then future create a productive space for envisioning better conditions? In other words, how might a cross-temporal conversation among utopian radicals help create more egalitarian relationship forms? This doctoral project aims to define and test out a feminist strategy to propose a freer future subject using historical spectral voices as co-authors and focusing on the feminist issue of egalitarianism, and specifically equality within interpersonal relationships.

¹ For one such instance, see: bell hooks, “Transgressions (in conversation with Gloria Steinem)” (talk,

² Elizabeth Freeman in a talk given at the symposium *The Ontology of the Couple* (ICI, Institute for Cultural Inquiry, Berlin, June 9-10, 2016, <https://www.ici-berlin.org/events/the-ontology-of-the-couple/>).

³ Historically, feminists have seen the patriarchal system as their center of contestation. Yet, definitions of the patriarchy itself are contested, thereby splintering the aims of feminism. This bell hooks quote acknowledges patriarchy as a system of social organization that both men and women participate in or respond to which this project follows. Patriarchy as a system that assigns power asymmetrically to privilege men, serves as the backdrop to this project.

The theory of time that I develop here, as the “polytemporal”, originates from my artistic practice in material and sonic form, thus I borrow from musicological terminology. The polytemporal is an alternate sense of time which envisions access to the voices of feminist figures past, present, and future simultaneously. The polytemporal is developed as a rejection of linear thinking that supports patriarchal forces by reinscribing gendered roles. As a strategy of temporary release from such constraints, the polytemporal amplifies voices to assess alternative forms of interpersonal and social relations, touching on the economic as well, to test out questions around the egalitarian nature of existing relationship forms. Ultimately, this doctoral project builds on my research to propose an alternative form of interpersonal relationship called, “expanded affinities”⁴—a term that aims to legitimate what could more accurately describe the various and multiple relationships of care we have and could have, form, experience, and encounter. The ideas within the doctoral submission, *Sounding Expanded Affinities*, are expressed differently across three installations, a body of creative writing, and this theoretical text.

LINEAR TIME AND SUBJECTIVITY

1967

*Those who possessed history gave it an orientation—a direction, and also a meaning.*⁵

1968

*The concept of the progress of the human race in history is not to be separated from the concept of its progression through a homogenous and empty time. The critique of the concept of this progress must ground the basis of its critique on the concept of progress itself.*⁶

2014

The order of time not only regulates individual lives, but takes measures to police the asymmetrical rhythms of entire populations and thus organizes the seemingly “timeless” value and meaning of time. [...] It even still contributes to upholding

⁴ The term “expanded affinities” is inspired by Elizabeth Freeman’s book, *The Wedding Complex*, in her discussion of Michel Foucault’s “deployment of alliance” and her call for a “deployment of affinity”, see: Elizabeth Freeman, *The Wedding Complex: Forms of Belonging in Modern American Culture* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2002), ix.

⁵ Guy Debord, *The Society of the Spectacle* (New York: Zone Books, 1994), 41.

⁶ Walter Benjamin, “Theses on the Philosophy of History”, in *Illuminations* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, Inc., 1968), 261.

*colonial concepts by which some groups see themselves as ahead of others who supposedly still live in the past.*⁷

1974

*The first thing to do is to consider time as official ended. We work on the other side of time. We'll bring them here through either isotope-teleportation, transport-lequisition or better still, teleport the whole planet here through music.*⁸

1994 / 2010 / 2009

Through linearity and repetition, time creates a sense of normalcy, predictability, and a sense of progression. Here the problems and limits of linear time as related to rhythms of domination and subjugation are rooted—of negative notions of progress that assure injustices, and inequality. Historically, in the realm of female subjects, the theoretical construct of linear time and the chronic condition provide the architecture through which domination and subjugation circulate as the status quo. Linearity and sequential time provide a sense of “the way it is”, allowing repetition to continually reinscribe subject positions and corresponding roles, within, for instance, the “traditional” family.⁹ Many theoretical fields have taken up the notion that historical progress enforces a violent normalization. Homi K. Bhabha’s “DissemiNation: Time Narrative, and the Margins of the Modern Nation” is one such seminal text. Elizabeth Freeman’s *Time Binds: Queer Temporalities, Queer Histories*, and José Muñoz’s *Cruising Utopia: The Then and There of Queer Futurity* are more recent texts situated in queer theory that are of central importance to the methodology of non-linear time and the polytemporal that I develop here.

⁷ Renate Lorenz, *Not Now! Now! Chronopolitics, Art & Research* (Berlin: Sternberg Press, 2014), 15.

⁸ From Sun Ra’s sci-fi-blaxpotation film, *Space is the Place*, directed by John Coney (Los Angeles: Jim Newman, 1974).

⁹ I refer to the “traditional” family as that which constitutes a nuclear configuration in which the wife/mother maintains the domestic duties and provides the reproductive labor, while the husband/father works outside of the home to economically provide for the family.

CHRONONORMATIVITY

2011

*Feminist [...] movements have drawn attention to the normalcy of everyday sexist and racist violence; queer politics have pointed out the violence of normalcy; and postcolonial histories try to understand intergenerational reenactments of historical violence. In these contexts, narratives of progress have been widely discredited.*¹⁰

2010

*Chrononormativity is a mode of implementation, a technique by which institutional forces come to seem like somatic facts. [...] Manipulations of time convert historically specific regimes of power into seemingly ordinary bodily tempos and routines [...]. Judith Butler has shown how the rhythms of gendered performance—specifically, repetitions—accrete to “freeze” masculinity and femininity into timeless truths of being.*¹¹

2010

The inscription of gender roles as timeless truths defines the notion of the “chrononormative” that Freeman develops and this is what I aim to disturb with my non-linear temporal model by voicing examples of historical groups who lived and believed differently, more freely, and who were less complicit in their acceptance of the *feminine* directive that insists that women fulfill domestic, reproductive, and *wifely* duties. I direct my attention to chronopolitics, then, as a “productive [site] to challenge orderly and rigid temporal concepts and their effects on bodies and the social”.¹² A chronopolitical perspective that reorders time is a modality in which the grand narrative of patriarchy is disrupted and inhibited from holding onto repetition as its spine. As this doctoral project attempts to break free of certain patriarchal ghosts, it also requires a break with the order of things.

¹⁰ Antke Engel, “Queer Temporalities and the Chronopolitics of Transtemporal Drag”, *e-flux journal* 28 (October 2011): 4, <http://www.e-flux.com/journal/28/68031/queer-temporalities-and-the-chronopolitics-of-transtemporal-drag/>.

¹¹ Elizabeth Freeman, *Time Binds: Queer Temporalities, Queer Histories* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2010), 3-4.

¹² Lorenz, *Not Now! Now! Chronopolitics, Art & Research*, 15.

2010

*The order of time is an unweary worker [for] normalcy. Appearing under a range of names such as “chrononormativity,” “reproductive temporality” or “straight time” it organizes our biographies and intimate relations.*¹³

2014

In “The Chronic: A Conversation between Renate Lorenz, Elizabeth Freeman, and Mathias Danbolt”¹⁴ the term “chronic” is defined as a state of being in time (the chronic condition) that is so slow to build or so non-life threatening that one melancholically absorbs it and in so doing, becomes apathetic, lacking the drive to resist. I interpret this as describing the work of patriarchal forces on women, highlighting the ways in which the patriarchy operates so insidiously as to not be noticed.

2000

Freeman, in “Packing History, Count(er)ing Generations”, introduces the concept of “temporal drag” to refer to a disruption of the generational model of thinking that fixes, for instance, reduced goals and meanings of feminism into historical waves located on a linear timeline.¹⁵ Freeman’s temporal drag then, describes a type of pull of the past on the present, of “deferred” or “melancholic identifications”. It muddles the image of history as linear and it refers to the anachronistic resurfacing of unfinished projects from the past in the present. It asks us to “imagine a future in terms of experience that discourse has yet to catch up to”.¹⁶ Temporal drag is relevant to this project in regard to my mining histories of social experiments in living and loving that are on the outside of the normative. It refers to my own longing for a logic of belonging that does not fit with my present, and that has thus far only belonged to a utopian past—a *what will have been*.

¹³ Lorenz, *Not Now! Now! Chronopolitics, Art & Research*, 15.

¹⁴ Renate Lorenz, Elizabeth Freeman, and Mathias Danbolt, “The Chronic: A Conversation between Renate Lorenz, Elizabeth Freeman, and Mathias Danbolt”, *FRANK Conversations*, May 2015, http://www.f-r-a-n-k.org/conversations/01/pdfs/150608_FRANK_conversations_Chronic.pdf.

¹⁵ Meaning those issues feminists took up in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century are no longer relevant in the twenty-first, thereby casting all feminist issues of those eras as resolved.

¹⁶ Elizabeth Freeman, “Packing History, Count(er)ing Generations”, *New Literary History* 31, no. 4 (Autumn 2000): 742.

A NON-LINEAR LIFE

2013 / 2017

She was making an effort to create a flexible method of time enabling alternative imaginings of egalitarian relations.

2007

I was struck by the strangeness of witnessing that dreamed-of collectivity realized long after the fact, in the archive: a history of mutually isolated individuals, dreaming similar dreams, arrayed before me in the aftermath of collective struggles and new identities.¹⁷

2000

[I'm talking about] a crossing of time, less in the mode of postmodern pastiche than in the mode of stubborn identification with a set of social coordinates that exceed their own historical moment.¹⁸

1973 / 2010

In my life, my inner life, I have had a sense of being out of synch with the dominant gender narratives; rather, I have felt linked to past (or perhaps future) voices, people, and moments of difference. I willfully lose myself in research—research into historical moments when individuals shouted their dreams and demands for something better—moments when individuals felt a strong sense of collectivity. At times, my present mingles with that of the twentieth century as my grandmother's interests and stories are resurrected when, for instance, my research into nineteenth century intentional communities resurfaces the Oneida Community of Central New York State (based on free love and egalitarianism) and my memory of her telling me about it when I was a child. Voices swirl in my head, not in a confusing disorienting way, but as a way of communing and moving forward. In particular, in the moments when I feel most constrained, I sense a comradeship with those around me, with those no longer present, and even with those whom I have never known. Voices from other times often support my critique, always provide me with a sense of belonging, and even encourage me to find relief in the possibility of different circumstances. I am driven by my longing and desire

¹⁷ This passage is based on a quote from Christopher Nealon in: Carolyn Dinshaw, "Theorizing Queer Temporalities: A Roundtable Discussion", *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies* 13, no. 2-3 (2007): 179.

¹⁸ Freeman, "Packing History, Count(er)ing Generations", 728.

to make affective contact with past social radicals, present comrades, and future freer subjects. Therefore I develop a polytemporal model of time in order to test the desires and experiences with critical distance in an analytical manner. My key terms are concepts like sociality, kinship, and feminism, and I explore them not only through research, but through reflection on my personal experiences with, and artistic practice concerning, time and belonging.

1968

*Are we not touched by the same breath of air which was among that which came before? Is there not an echo of those who have been silenced in the voices to which we lend our ears today?*¹⁹

TIME PAST / TIME PRESENT IN AN ARTISTIC PRACTICE

2002

*Going back to move forward.*²⁰

2006

*Specters [...] can only dwell at the periphery of the sensible, in glimmers, shimmers, suggestions.*²¹

1983

*I believe that ghosts are part of the future and that the modern technology of images [and sounds] [...] like cinema [and radio] [...] enhances the power of ghosts and their ability to haunt us.*²²

2000 – 2013

My artistic practice often involves the playback of recorded voices in installations that produce a non-linear sense of time, or a sense of parallel existences contained within one space. I often do this for the sake of seeking attachments. The plays with time create

¹⁹ Attributed to Walter Benjamin, "On the Concept of History", in *Gesammelte Schriften*, vol. 1, trans. Dennis Redmond (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1974), <http://members.efn.org/~dredmond/ThesesonHistory.html>.

²⁰ From my sound and photographic installation *Filter* (2002).

²¹ Mark Fisher quoted in: Claire M. Holdsworth, "Hauntologies: The Ghost, Voice and The Gallery", *Close Up*, April 2013, <http://www.carrollfletcher.com/usr/library/documents/john-akomfrah-press/claire-m.-holdsworth-hauntologies-the-ghost-voice-and-the-gallery-close-up-april-2013.pdf>.

²² Quoted from Jacques Derrida speaking in the film *Derrida and the Science of Ghosts*, directed and produced by Ken McMullen (West Germany/UK, 1983).

imagined relations and affinities between people present and past, real and imagined. Conceptually, the installations highlight a struggle to repair a subject's sense of alienation as the works attempt to make affective connections, in some instances with those from the historical past and at other times with those from an imagined future. Consequently, the voices perform a type of haunting and embody a presence of absence during which descriptions of unseen people and objects of unknown time periods mingle with the present moment's offerings, such as the space's elements of architecture and lighting, the sound of a ventilation system, or the closing of a door.²³ In some works, viewers are drawn back to what might be termed a sense of a "present past"—a sensation which can be described as a needle skipping to various spots on a vinyl LP, or the way listening to an album backwards is thought to reveal embedded voices communicating secret messages. The narratives not only drag one back in time, but sometimes project one toward an uncanny future, though only for moments as viewers are inevitably hastened to the present again. The voices may thus create dislocations, disruptions, or temporal suspensions of the real that foster an alternate awareness and thereby make way for imagined (one hopes, freer) subjectivities. Temporality, therefore, is one of the central modes of my oeuvre that takes the form of the anachronistic, futuristic, synchronous, or discontinuous.

1968 / 2008

In my photo-documentation series *Occupied*, for example, the twenty-five intersections where students blockaded themselves around the Sorbonne in May of 1968 are photographed in 2008 but the images are blurry, as if the sense of the past cannot sit still to be captured or refuses to be possessed in the present. The vital energy, resistance, and revolution that was likely felt by those then as all encompassing, time has made ephemeral, long past, and further distanced through the failed effort to be "captured" photographically during more apathetic times in the aughts.

²³ See, for example, my works: *Rest Cure* (2000), *Filter* (2002), *Cope* (2002), *Solarium* (2006), *Inhalatorium* (2004), *Numb* (2005), *Désire* (2008), or *Waiting* (2013), on my personal website, <http://www.andrearay.net/>.

2008 / 1959 / 1968

In my audio installation *Rehearse*, a series of benches face two large speaker-sculptures from which the sound of a play projects. A narrator describes a scene in which a woman and a man, their bodies entwined on a bed, speak of love, protest, and war, as well as the impossibility of really knowing the other. The *Rehearse* script resonates an echo of Marguerite Duras' screenplay *Hiroshima Mon Amour* in which war is discussed through the discourse of love. Duras' original is itself non-linear since it takes place in a 1959 Hiroshima but we see images of the lovers' minds through the time-related tropes of reenactment, museological display, and archival footage. Time is further confused in *Hiroshima Mon Amour* when the female character, a French actress, conflates her present in the arms of her temporary lover, a Japanese architect, with that of a past love lost during the war with the Germans. In *Rehearse*, this reference is replaced with an Iraqi man who has traveled to Paris with a Lebanese *laissez-passer* and an American woman. They are in a studio at the Cité Internationale des Arts behind a door that reads "Haut-Commissariat des Nations Unies Pour les Réfugiés". More recent events are mixed into the narrative, specifically those of the Sorbonne Occupation Movement of 1968 and the U.S. war with Iraq in the aughts. The woman describes her effort to understand or "feel" war through a type of meditation on journalistic imagery somewhat equivalent to an hysterical guided meditation and most likely driven by guilt. Further manipulations of time and space are evoked in *Rehearse* through the man's evocation of visual descriptions from the U.S.-Iraqi war layered with his participation in the student uprisings of 1968 in Paris (though the timeline makes this improbable). Cyclical models of historical time are relayed as time seems to skip around evoking the existential impossibility of really knowing an other or really understanding a war. The title of the piece, *Rehearse*, describes a deferral, and a sense of being stalled in a state of incompleteness, and as a result, time is put on a loop such that completion and linear resolution, can never be reached.

2008

In my audio sculpture *The Gift*, viewer/participants can sit at a sculptural dining table to hear voices speaking over dinner about: the student uprisings of May of 1968 in Paris; whether '68 is a useful model of resistance and revolution today; and about whether the mode of protest stills holds potency in a contemporary era dominated by fear and apathy.

In the audio of *The Gift*, the dinner guests are artists whose practices, one can say, manipulate linear time as a central modality of mourning, reparation, or desire. They conversed about revolutionary moments and debated their present allure which enacted the intersecting problem of history and its impact on the present moment.²⁴ The audio embodies the desire for community and friendship while the installation presents a distance to the event—of disembodied voices playing back, having the conversation again and again, with viewers who project themselves into the exchange as they come to the table. In its use of non-linear time, social justice content, and affective attachments through multiple voices, this project was an object of early research for *Sounding Expanded Affinities*.

2013 / 1869

A Reeducation is one of the three installations that constitute the artistic component of this doctoral submission. It features a hand-made book titled *A Cure for the Marriage Spirit*. This book's main character, a scholar, imagines herself in the room of a nineteenth century utopian community member and she listens to the communitarian read her journal about free love relationship practices. The scholar is in the process of divorce and has confused, perhaps willfully, her present with that of another time—a time she regards as having greater emancipatory possibilities outside of marriage and the couple form.

1997 – 2018

The artworks I have been creating since the late 1990s have a common thread of attempting to repair a missing sociality or to provide a release from existing societal constraints and they often deal with past histories—personal or social. Some of the sound installations playback voices that stand in as my imaginary comrades—allies chosen from across time who are invited to commune and advise. One can say they are muffled voices in that they come from the periphery of the grand historical narrative. Others come from my present (artist friends for instance) whose words of exchange and support I carry with me. A hybrid sense of the present exists in the space of installation where viewers experience the disembodied voices and might engage in imaginary conversations with them, or in real ones with fellow spectators. In such examples, time and belonging work

²⁴ The dinner guests were Michael Blum, Andrea Geyer, Sharon Hayes, Carlos Motta, and Gregory Sholette.

together to create the ground from which I form connections and community in an effort to envision alternatives to the various forms of constraint I have felt as a citizen, woman, and mother. I develop the polytemporal from an examination of the workings of time existent in my artistic practice, aiming to formulate a specific model of thinking that might be a productive space for reconfiguring social relations.

THE POLYTEMPORAL MODEL

2007

*I focused on the possibility of touching across time, collapsing time through affective contact between marginalized people now and then, and I suggested that with such queer historical touches we could form communities across time.*²⁵

Linear historical narratives inevitably write out certain groups in favor of the powerful and this historiographic process reveals the production of certain constituencies as dominant and the rest as “other”, or certain relationships as “normal” and others as improper or illegitimate. In the example of the patriarchy, linear historical narratives work to maintain normative gender role constructions and to subjugate women. “Women are made for the realm of the domestic because they bear the children.” “It has always been the job of men to secure financial security for the sake of supporting a wife, children, and home.” These narratives rely on repetition to maintain domination through the reinscription of gender roles. I therefore ask, might an alternate structure that disrupts and rejects the linear unfolding of time interrupt, intervene, and rework linear narratives of power? Might forgotten and *written out* specters of the past and those of an imagined future be used to create a generative conversation that examines gender issues on an interpersonal and social level? Could such an engagement with voices across time suggest new ways of thinking the social today—ways that are more egalitarian in nature and work to better conditions in the future?

²⁵ Carolyn Dinshaw speaking about her book *Getting Medieval: Sexualities and Communities, Pre- and Postmodern* (1999) in: “Theorizing Queer Temporalities: A Roundtable Discussion”, 178.

2007

An important influence closer to the domain of sexuality on thinking temporality alternatively was (as with so many things) Michel Foucault for the ways he argued that historical time was multiple and that multiple temporalities could be seen to coexist synchronically in any given historical formation.²⁶

2017

In order to counter linear temporality and developmental thinking, I borrow the musical term “polytemporal” to characterize the particular sense of time I wish to articulate. “Polytemporal” refers to instances in a musical composition when two or more different tempos are being played at the same time. I use the polytemporal to refer to an aesthetic model in which sounds from different times are played synchronously, thus polytemporality allows different time periods to be seen or heard at the same time. This term, unlike many philosophies of time, does not function in a unidirectional way: it does not pivot from the present in order to gaze forward, nor turn its back on the future in order to gaze back to the past. It does not refer to cyclical time in which things eventually repeat in a similar manner. The polytemporal is all together different. The polytemporal is a dimension of simultaneity in which one may consult with those from the past, future, and present while not aligning one mode in a privileged position to another, but again, of the simultaneous. What I mean to stress is polytemporality as a framework within which radicals from across time may speak together, commune, and potentially work together to restructure the factors that confine subjectivities. The polytemporal creates a space in which visionary ideas are not hindered by practicalities or fears. In *Sounding Expanded Affinities* polytemporality is my methodology with which to study marginal relationship forms and seek more balanced power relations.

HAUNTINGS AND PREMONITIONS AS REORDERINGS OF TIME

1936 – 1942

*Time present and time past
Are both perhaps present in time future
And time future contained in time past.
[...]*

²⁶ Carla Freccero, “Queer Times”, *South Atlantic Quarterly* 106, no. 3 (Summer 2007): 486.

*Time past and time future
Allow but a little consciousness.
To be conscious is not to be in time*²⁷

O

The idea of reordering time is certainly not new. In the nineteenth century, people commonly dabbled in spiritualism believing that mediums held special abilities that enabled them to communicate with the dead. In such an example, specters not only haunt the present from the past, but were often called forth for their wisdom that exceeded the present moment. Many prominent nineteenth century feminists, such as the outspoken free lover Victoria Woodhull, and the activist Harriet Beecher-Stowe, practiced spiritualism to consult with omniscient spirits. The connection between feminists and spiritualism may be more than coincidence—perhaps these women sought council and advice from the spirit world because it gave them a way of resisting oppression in their lives and offered them visions of an alternative and freer way of being. Members of the aforementioned free love Oneida Community wrote about their own experiments with “spirit rappings”.²⁸ This practice was likely introduced to them through the influence of the infamous Fox sisters of Western New York who were noted for their experience in communicating with the dead. As “Perfectionists” the Oneida Community members believed they would become free of sin through their religious practices. They sought a “heaven on earth” and believed Christ’s second coming was imminent. Thus they believed they held a privileged proximity to other worlds and to those from the other side. The correlation of feminists who believed in spiritualism in the nineteenth century is an historical precedent to the polytemporal model.

1927

It occurred in 1898, when I was staying at an hotel in Sussex. I dreamed, one night, that I was having an argument with one of the waiters as to what was the correct time. I asserted that it was half-past four in the afternoon: he maintained that it was half-past four in the middle of the night.

²⁷ Excerpt of T. S. Eliot’s poem “Four Quartets”, published in parts from 1936-1942. T. S. Eliot, *Four Quartets* (New York: Harcourt, 1943), 13.

²⁸ Lawrence Foster ed., and George Wallingford Noyes comp., *Free Love in Utopia: John Humphrey Noyes and the Origin of the Oneida Community* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2001), 119-129.

With the apparent illogicality peculiar to all dreams, I concluded that my watch must have stopped; and, on extracting that instrument from my waistcoat pocket, I saw, looking down on it, that this was precisely the case. It had stopped—with the hands at half-past four. With that I awoke.

[...] I lit a match to see whether the watch had really stopped. [...] I got out of bed, hunted round, and found it lying on the chest of drawers. Sure enough, it had stopped, and the hands stood at half-past four.

[...] I rewound the instrument, but, not knowing the real time, I left the hands as they were. [...]

On coming downstairs next morning, I made straight for the nearest clock, with the object of setting the watch right. [...]

To my absolute amazement I found that the hands had only lost some two or three minutes—about the amount of time which had elapsed between my waking from the dream and rewinding the watch.

This meant, of course, that the watch had stopped at the actual moment of the dream [...] how did I come to see, in that dream, that the hands stood, as they did, at half-past four?²⁹

This passage by J. W. Dunne is an example of the premonitions that occur in the dream state that he discusses in his book, *An Experiment With Time*. Dunne makes the additional claim that such displays of the future unfolding in the present are always happening, even in our daily wakeful states, but we simply don't pay attention to these previsions. *An Experiment With Time* attempts to present a persuasive argument about the non-linearity of time by citing anecdotal examples and tying them to theories in physics.³⁰ It is thus generative for my concept of polytemporality since Dunne roots the appearance of the future in the past by common example and as such, offers a theory of time more accessible than abstract philosophy, and more quotidian than esoteric mediumship.

²⁹ J. W. Dunne, *An Experiment with Time* (1927; repr., Charlottesville, VA: Hampton Roads Publishing, 2001), 30.

³⁰ Dunne's ideas were influential especially to authors who took up the concept of non-sequential time to write plays, most directly was J. B. Priestley, most well-known is J. R. Tolkien and C. S. Lewis.

VISUALIZING TIME

1988

As Leibniz stated, there can never be “a straight line without curves intermingled”.³¹

1995

If you take a handkerchief and spread it out in order to iron it, you can see in it certain fixed distances and proximities. If you sketch a circle in one area, you can mark out nearby points and measure far-off distances. Then take the same handkerchief and crumple it, by putting it in your pocket. Two distant points suddenly are close, even superimposed.³²

2017

A map that charts the time between places could be called a chronotopography. In a chronotopography, visibility is almost equal to encounter and collapses the distance between nodes.³³

These imaginary models that collapse three-dimensional space into two-dimensional form, and in so doing create unexpected contacts, provide a visual referent for the way I am thinking about communing with people across time using polytemporality. The fold as a chronopolitical concept is one which visualizes the ways in which some art practices resuscitate overlooked past histories or biographies, bringing them to the present and giving them their due. Such folds in time are also used to momentarily reconfigure and critique the present day.

2017

It was thickly dark so many miles from the concentration of places that turn night into day. Sitting in a pool, our heads supported by a padded edge, we were looking up at the sky, gazing in awe to discover a depth of stars seen behind the stars we knew—a depth of minerals, fire, and gasses lit by their core, their surface, their masses. Shooting stars streaked across our vision’s path, each of us witnessing them independently—only for me, or only for them. In my line of sight, I was a witness to what had already happened, perhaps, hundreds of years

³¹ Gilles Deleuze, *The Fold: Leibniz and the Baroque*, trans. Tom Conley (Minneapolis: Minnesota Books, 1993), 14.

³² Michel Serres in: Michel Serres and Bruno Latour, *Conversations on Science, Culture, and Time / Michel Serres with Bruno Latour*, trans. Roxanne Lapidus (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1995), 60-61.

³³ From Sreshta Rit Premnath, “The Chronotopography of Mountains” (talk, The New School, New York, November 17, 2016).

before. I watched the past streak across my present—the distant past as it appeared to me in the present moment, in a depth of space that I understand I'm only seeing the tiniest fraction of, evidence of a depth of time always present that I'm not privy to.

But the polytemporal also contains a future tense that the fold may not refer to. A visual metaphor that might more closely resemble the polytemporal is contained in the way I think about the night sky above—of shooting stars and the stars in relation to one another. When gazing at shooting stars, what is visible to the human eye is the past as a displaced or deferred moment here in the present. I am referring to the difference of their distance from us combined with the speed of light that results in what we see today as a shooting star is an action that happened hundreds, or even millions of years previously. Therefore, depending on the distance from our position on earth, the stellar constellations themselves might be described as the visualization of different time periods that come together in our field of sight simultaneously; they provide evidence of past events that are synchronously contained here in the present moment, and they also contain a vision of the future. The way I understand the notion of the future rests in Jacques Lacan's description of the sardine can floating in the ocean that, because of a glint caused by the sun on its metal surface, gazes back at him. While Lacan uses this as an example in his discussions of the "gaze" and the "screen" in his 1964 seminar IX, it encourages me to consider the position of the star itself and its ability to "see" our future through a return gaze.

1927 – 1940

It's not that what is past casts its light on what is present, or what is present its light on the past; rather, image is that wherein what has been comes together in a flash with the now to form a constellation. In other words, image is dialectics at a standstill. For while the relation of the present to the past is a purely temporal, continuous one, the relation of what-has-been to the now is dialectical: is not progression but image, suddenly emergent.—Only dialectical images are genuine images (that is, not archaic); and the place where one encounters them is language.³⁴

If we take Benjamin's description of a dialectical image as a flash in which there is a relational configuration of past and present as a constellation (rather than a fixed line)

³⁴ Walter Benjamin, "Awakening", in *Arcades Project* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2002), 462.

then would the future encounter be available in the same image, too? Returning to the line, the horizon is yet another metaphor often used for that which is in the far-off distance, yet-to-be-reached, yet-to-be-experienced, and existing at the outermost reaches of our vision, and imagination. In José Muñoz's example in *Cruising Utopia: the Then and There of Queer Futurity*, the horizon is the visualization of queerness as a thing that has yet to have become.

2009

*We may never touch queerness, but we can feel it as the warm illumination of a horizon imbued with potentiality.*³⁵

QUEERING PROGRESSION, SEEKING UTOPIA

2009

*Queerness is essentially about the rejection of a here and now and an insistence on potentiality or concrete possibility for another world.*³⁶

2010

*I find myself emotionally compelled by the not-quite-queer-enough longing for form that turns us backward to prior moments, forward to embarrassing utopias, sideways to forms of being and belonging that seem, on the face of it, completely banal.*³⁷

2010 / 2007 / 2009 / 2004

Queer theory, in particular, has taken up non-linear or non-developmental models of time to stake out or define the domain of queer potentiality. The non-linear is used to counter living in a state of being denied a history. Many of these writers reconfigure linear time in order to gain recognition and agency, or to complexify and reorient relations that enforce a sense of heteronormativity. In the above passage, Freeman's "not-queer-enough" references the feeling of being misaligned with the area of queer theory that embraces the avant-garde—that of being ahead of its time. In *Time Binds: Queer Temporalities, Queer Histories*, Freeman creates temporal and sexual dissonance through a

³⁵ José Esteban Muñoz, *Cruising Utopia: The Then and There of Queer Futurity* (New York: NYU Press, 2009), 1.

³⁶ Muñoz, *Cruising Utopia*, 1.

³⁷ Freeman, *Time Binds*, xiii.

particular theory of queer time that she links to the temporalities articulated in works such as Heather Love's past in *Feeling Backward: Loss and the Politics of Queer History*, José Muñoz's futurity in *Cruising Utopia*, Kathryn Stockton's alternate present in *The Queer Child, or Growing Sideways in the Twentieth Century*, and Lee Edelman's present in *No Future: Queer Theory and the Death Drive*.³⁸ Most of these theoretical examples describe the pain, loss, and violence involved in living in a society which rejects homosexuals as deviant, sinful, and immoral, and they address perspectives of time that disrupt the linear in order to mourn or resist. However, Freeman develops what she terms "erotohistoriography" where "against pain and loss, erotohistoriography posits the value of surprise, of pleasurable interruptions and momentary fulfillments from elsewhere, other times".³⁹ Another reference that relates to the polytemporal is found in Muñoz's *Cruising Utopia*, where he uses Ernst Bloch's "no-longer-conscious" to describe a performative impact of the past on the present in order to critique the totalizing and naturalizing energy of hegemonic forces.⁴⁰ Muñoz uses Bloch's focus on hope as a drive toward futurity, and toward the not-yet-here. As he puts it, "I see the past and the potentiality imbued within an object, the ways it might represent a mode of being and feeling that was then not quite there but nonetheless an opening. Bloch would posit that such utopian feelings can and regularly will be disappointed. They are nonetheless indispensable to the act of imagining transformation".⁴¹

2009

Queerness is not yet here. Queerness is an ideality. Put another way, we are not yet queer. We may never touch queerness, but we can feel it as the warm illumination of a horizon imbued with potentiality. We have never been queer, yet queerness exists for us as an ideality that can be distilled from the past and used to imagine a future. The future is queerness's domain. Queerness is a structuring and educated mode of desiring that allows us to see and feel beyond the quagmire of the present. The here and now is a prison house. We must strive,

³⁸ Also see Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick's concept of "reparative criticism" in *Touching Feeling; Affect, Pedagogy, Performativity* (2003), Carla Freccero's "Queer Time", and Elspeth Probyn's *Outside Belongings* (1996) for further reference.

³⁹ Elizabeth Freeman, "Time Binds, or, Erotohistoriography", *Social Text* 23, no. 3-4 (84-85) (Fall-Winter 2005): 59. This is an earlier version of the same title that appears in her book *Time Binds*.

⁴⁰ Muñoz writes of the dual action of domination relying on repetition in concert with the concept of the present moment that works to naturalize the cultural logics of, for example, heteronormativity or patriarchy.

⁴¹ Muñoz, *Cruising Utopia*, 9.

in the face of the here and now's totalizing rendering of reality, to think and feel a then and there. Some will say that all we have are the pleasures of this moment, but we must never settle for that minimal transport; we must dream and enact new and better pleasures, other ways of being in the world, and ultimately new worlds. Queerness is a longing that propels us onward, beyond romances of the negative and toiling in the present. Queerness is that thing that lets us feel that this world is not enough, that indeed something is missing.⁴²

Muñoz orients queerness away from the present and the knowable and instead configures it as a future sense of what can be. In other words, it is about potentiality, futurity, and a utopian drive of possibility. Rather than world building beyond our own time and place (here I am reminded of Afro-futuristic configurations of those like Sun Ra who in his 1974 film *Space is the Place* envisions resettling on a different planet that he hopes to create as a utopian society of African American recruits), my polytemporal sense of time is diachronous and allows for the yet to come, and that which has been, to all be present with the here and now. Freeman's emphasis on the presence of the past in the now, while it means to resist generational models of development, does not explicitly include the utopian drive important to Muñoz's queer futurity as well as to my idea of the polytemporal. The polytemporal is thus employed to engage queer and feminist radicals who have opposed mainstream patriarchal and heteronormative thought. They come together in the polytemporal dimension to question modes of relating with a focus on egalitarianism. Muñoz's not-yet-here and Freeman's erotohistoriography and temporal drag refer to an impact of the past on the present that disrupt the linearity of the hegemonic and offer the possibility of transformation. As an example of the yet-to-have-become, Shulamith Firestone's *The Dialectic of Sex* (1970) contains, one can say, radical feminist ideas that were ahead of her time. Indeed, they still have not yet come. Firestone's book represents an unfinished past that will have become. The future perfect tense correlates to my body of research into the radical feminist ideas of the nineteenth century, as well: the central "Declaration of Sentiments" (1848) point that reads, "Resolved, That woman is man's equal" is a position whose time will have been.⁴³ In my conception of polytemporality, marginalized voices of the past are heard as an alternate

⁴² Muñoz, *Cruising Utopia*, 1.

⁴³ Elizabeth Cady Stanton gave the speech, "Declaration of Sentiments" (Seneca Falls Convention, New York, July 19-20, 1848), on *The Elizabeth Cady Stanton & Susan B. Anthony Papers Project*, Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey, last modified August 2010, <http://ecssba.rutgers.edu/docs/seneca.html>.

past, but also, in a more utopian sense as a yet-to-be future that is always already present. The ecstatic possibilities found in Muñoz's *Cruising Utopia* and Freeman's concept of erotohistoriography both promise a type of *jouissance* that I correlate with the polytemporal. Such pleurably (or queerly) optimistic reconfigurations of the present found in the past in Freeman and the future in Muñoz have similar qualities to what I am proposing with my concept of the polytemporal. Together these examples support the potential of the polytemporal imaginative construct of time as a release and counter to the linear and sequential forms of temporality that undergird our understandings of ourselves and our culture.

POLYTEMPORAL PRAXIS

1936 – 1942

*You say I am repeating
Something I have said before. I shall say it again.
Shall I say it again?
[...]
Here the impossible union
Of spheres of evidence is actual,
Here the past and future
Are conquered, and reconciled.*⁴⁴

2013 / 2013 / 2018

The installations that feature in my doctoral submission include, *A Reeducation*, *Utopians Dance*, and *ReCast: LIVE ON-AIR*. The first two were created using the early stages of doctoral research, and the third, *ReCast: LIVE ON-AIR* is the capstone for which a script for a radio play was written that employs the polytemporal in praxis for the first time. The radio play creates a polytemporal conversation among utopian radicals in order to imagine more egalitarian relationship forms.

I conjure images of radio waves in space—of open channels that mediate ghosts of the past and excite ideas and ways of being beyond the here and now.⁴⁵ I imagine a fictive

⁴⁴ Excerpt of T. S. Eliot's poem "Four Quartets" in: Eliot, *Four Quartets*, 44.

radio station as having the electromagnetic potential to disrupt space/time relations, one that is able to summon past, present, and future radicals to exchange ideas and as such, to create an alternate reality that does work on pressing gender and sexuality issues.

The play is inspired by the setting of the famous recording studios like Muscle Shoals, Abby Road, or Sun Studio. I imagine that musicians must hear echoes of the music previously recorded and sense (in a ghostly manner) the presence of the great musicians who created it, of, for instance, Elvis Presley, Johnny Cash, the Beatles, or Aretha Franklin.⁴⁶ I imagine the specters inspire and guide the musicians. One could describe this as an effect of past hauntings on the present, but in my imagination, it is both those past and those living who are heard—those living somehow lingering in spaces they've left.

In the recording studio, audio tracks are *laid down* as frozen and transmutable passages of voice and sound; time is *marked* and preserved for future use. Tracks are *split* and *repeated*. They're *played back*—referring to the fact that the sound is coming from the past. And once layered, the product is a record of *compressed time*. These terms signal that the sound is being reordered. But, what of the polytemporal?

2004 / 2045

STATION IDENTIFICATION: *This is Radio Utopia, simulcast today, yesterday, and tomorrow. Bringing you voices from across time, all the time, everywhere present. A space where utopian dreams are real.*

NARRATIVE EXPOSITION BY RADIO HOST: *[OVERLAYED WITH FIELD RECORDINGS OF PARIS STREETS] I'd gone to Paris. I was searching for Duras' presence. Walking in their footsteps, I walk alongside them. I meet them in the cafes of the Left Bank to debate politics and communism. I wave to them from the street as they sit by their window and I meet with them in their apartment along Rue Saint-Benoît. I see them in the streets surrounding the Sorbonne standing next to*

⁴⁵ *ReCast: LIVE ON AIR* finds points of reference in films like Sun Ra's *Space is the Place* where, from his planet, Sun Ra recruits colonizers using radio waves. And in Lizzie Borden's *Born in Flames* (1984), we see a future New York, as the city is celebrating its tenth anniversary of the Women's Army having won the fight for a socialist democracy. In it, two radio stations are featured as tools for provocation and speech acts of feminist thought in the hopes of gathering constituents toward their unfinished project called equality.

⁴⁶ Brian Southhall, Peter Vince, and Allan Rouse, *Abbey Road: The Story of the World's Most Famous Recording Studio* (London: Omnibus Press, 2011), 10.

their comrades. I march with them down the boulevards, and I sit with them in the cemetery of Montparnasse. [SILENT PAUSE] But, they'd been dead for years. What if within the present there always exists the past and future; what if we just ignore the occurrences and signs, in favor of sequence?

The passage above is from the introductory section of *ReCast: LIVE ON-AIR*. The script takes the shape of a live studio discussion that is broadcast from a fictive radio station in which people from across more than 200 years have come together to share their intimate experiences and perspectives on gender and non-monogamy. This group of specters and futuristics hash out the separation of love from pleasure, and debate the liberatory possibilities of various forms of caring such as free love, polyamory, and relationship anarchy.⁴⁷ They also express future forms such as the notion of “expanded affinities” and another I term “compassioned expression”.⁴⁸ One radio guest is a nineteenth century free love commune member who appears in the studio to share the continued relevance of their community’s free love practices; another is a twentieth century essentialist feminist who is unable to let go of the gender binary; others speak from a future where neither gendered subjectivities nor singular forms of relationships exist. The voices are inspired by people like Paul B. Preciado, Anaïs Nin, and Victoria Woodhull. The audio is installed in such a way that the voice of each “radio guest” plays back through an individual speaker surrounding a circle of seating. Spectators are able to commune with the disembodied voices in a listening space that evokes both a nineteenth century séance parlor and a futuristic radio station.

ReCast: LIVE ON AIR is produced from a sense of longing to be free from the here and now. The voices confer in an ever-present loop on WPPF Radio. The specters from the past, present, and future are summoned to release us from the immediate constraints of society, law, and culture in order to make way for a type of utopian futurity. Sounding like voices from an outer ring of space, the relationship radicals reject the charmed circle

⁴⁷ Relationship anarchy, or RA, is a form of belonging where people reject hierarchies among relationships—sexual, platonic, or otherwise—something developed in Sweden, but becoming popular elsewhere, especially among polyamory circles in the U.S.

⁴⁸ Very briefly, expanded affinities is a relationship form I develop to refer to a broad network of relations that, in part, legitimates the kinds of care we have for one another and that does not restrict itself to privileging sexually-based relationships and biological kin. Compassioned expression, another term I coin and which appears in the script, speaks more to a manner of relating and less to a form of relationship.

and the linearity of the *relationship escalator* that ascends from dating, to love, to marriage, and then children. The installation works to resist all forms of “straight time”.

One of the other installations in the doctoral project is *A Reeducation*. It evokes a turn-of-the-century reading room that, on closer inspection, also includes contemporary objects that perform a kind of anachronistic assemblage. The installation features a lamp lit table and a chair which offer the spectator a place to sit and read the hand-bound book titled *A Cure for the Marriage Spirit*. As stated earlier, the main character of this book is a female scholar who finds a sense of freedom from the confines of her soon to be dissolved marriage through her research into nineteenth century free lovers. She even imagines herself in conversation with one in a type of time travel that may be hallucinatory or phantasmatic, or both. The book is written in the third person and as such, allows the reader to project their own visualization of who the character is. The scholarly research into free love echoes her new sexual experiences that lead her toward polyamory. Photographs that reference free love and those inspired by Charlotte Perkins Gilman’s utopian novel *Herland* (1915) hang on the surrounding walls. A dreamy landscape painting of a utopian project’s land hangs over the reading table. Objects placed around the room, like stones, a celestial painted mushroom, and a pinecone, ground relations of nature and spirituality. Also in the room is an early twentieth century wooden bookshelf holding books about utopias, feminism, and economics. The use of the third-person narrative and theater-like space encourage viewers to imagine themselves as protagonists in the scene.

Still another installation that is part of the dissertation project is *Utopians Dance*. In it, Americana folk music and light create a sense of levity in the space while a video of feet dancing a series of looped steps is overlaid with subtitles that intertwine multi-partnered contra dancing calls with ideas about caring economics. Dual modes of time are represented since the video of the dancing feet is transmitted over and over from a recurring past, yet its presence in the installation implies a real-time dance partner. Spectators may occupy the part of observer, the protagonist, or perhaps both as they discern themselves to be caught in a scene they both see and are seen in.

2011

Feminist film theorist Teresa de Lauretis suggests that we understand the act of viewing as a shared fantasy in which relations of power and desire are played out. If we take her suggestion, then the question of the structural position of the audience, and the identifications and disidentifications this position enables, are just as important as the visible bodies, movements, figurations, and constellations that take place on stage. A fantasy scenario, as Lauretis explains—taking up the psychoanalysis of Jean Laplanche and Jean Pontalis—is characterized by the fact that each participant is simultaneously subject, object, and observer of the scene. Thus, the traditional division of labor between subject and object of desire is undermined. Furthermore, as spectator—in a reflexive position of “seeing oneself seeing” and “seeing oneself being seen”—one is seduced into becoming the “subject of feminism” (Lauretis) or, perhaps, the subject of politics, the politicized desiring subject, process and product of queering the audience.⁴⁹

My installation spaces themselves do not exert control, but instead open up a scenario for the spectator to enter, create a visual space of collectivity, and commune if they choose. It is my hope that while the viewers might look on indifferently as the space unfolds and/or the sounds are deciphered, they might also become active spectators, sharing the uncanny sense of finding themselves enjoying the pleasurable awkwardness and awkward pleasure of sociality beyond linear time. It is my hope that the various overlaps of the real (space) and the fictional (narrative) might situate spectators-come-participants in a temporary community in active engagement with the installation’s content.⁵⁰ In *Outside Belongings*, Elspeth Probyn describes the concept of a particular dual position as “who am I, who is she”. The three installations that are part of the doctoral submission are meant to upend the art and viewer split as spectators may recognize themselves to be occupying positions of both audience/viewer and actor/participant.

The following chapters build a critique and analysis of existing relationship forms in the U.S. to build my proposed future form, expanded affinities, that I believe would be more egalitarian for women. Chapter two, “Marriage’s Present Past”, begins with the relation between an individual’s subjectivity and institutions to ask, “how can the aim of gender equality advance if marriage remains at the core of our value system?” The polytemporal method is enacted to cite feminist critiques of marriage in the U.S. dating from the

⁴⁹ Engel, “Queer Temporalities and the Chronopolitics of Transtemporal Drag”, 7.

⁵⁰ This passage builds on Antke Engel’s discussion of the video installation practice of Pauline Boudry and Renate Lorenz, in the text: “Queer Temporalities and the Chronopolitics of Transtemporal Drag”.

nineteenth century until today. The chapter presents a history of marriage as a contract that saw women as property and it explores the ways in which feminists critiqued the bonds of marriage that underserved women. The chapter also reveals the ways in which the patriarchal ghosts of marriage's history still circulate today, and in looking at queer critiques of marriage, it concludes with the ways in which same-sex marriage might paradoxically shore up the patriarchal core of marriage as well as the centrality of the couple.

The third chapter, "The Egalitarian Potential of Loving More", argues for a decentering of the couple through exploring non-monogamies. While various individual voices are represented in the chapter, the Oneida Community, a nineteenth century U.S. free love commune, is featured as the central instance of an attempt to reorganize interpersonal relations and create greater gender equality. The relationship of nineteenth century free love to contemporary consensual non-monogamies like polyamory is considered. The comparison utilizes the concepts of relational autonomy and jealousy to evaluate the relationship forms for their egalitarian potential.

Chapter four, "Expanded Affinities; A Feminist Proposal for the Twenty-first Century", proposes a new relationship form, "expanded affinities", in an attempt to legitimate a mode of relating that exceeds sexually-defined relationships like marriage and non-monogamy and it includes a limb in economics to support individuals in an effort to diminish the severity of gendered economic stratification in a U.S. context. The chapter gives voice to historical and contemporary correlations such as nineteenth century free love kinship, queer family non-biological kin, and relationship anarchy's expanded attachments that reject the hierarchies that monogamy and non-monogamies maintain. Ultimately, expanded affinities decenters the privilege that couplehood and biological kinship hold in American society. The chapter considers how this new relationship form might offer the potential to forward gender equality significantly.

The coda brings the polytemporal concept and the expanded affinities model together as a mode of seeking attachments across time—time and belonging that exceed the present. The coda also addresses the aspect of expanded affinities that ushers in the desire for

something better—it addresses utopian thinking using Ernst Bloch’s distinctions between concrete and abstract utopias.

The dissertation chapters utilize a polytemporal style to mark the ever-shifting years of reference, taking the reader in and through modulations of time.⁵¹ In each chapter, voices from different time periods are brought together to help *sound* ideas about possible egalitarian forms of belonging. One might say that the text is co-authored as a feminist strategy in that the style decentralizes the authorial writer-subject. As a whole, the dissertation examines the immanent possibilities of intersubjective and social relations. In other words, the dissertation enacts a *sounding of expanded affinities*.

As an appendix, I include documentation of the three installations and reprint the artistic writing. The writing includes the script for the radio play that is a foundational part of the installation *ReCast: LIVE ON-AIR*, as well as the text from the book *A Cure for the Marriage Spirit* that is part of the installation *A Reeducation*. Additional materials include a reprinting of the interview Matthew Buckingham conducted with me for BOMB magazine (2013) about *Utopians Dance*; and an article titled “A Reeducation” in *Not Now! Now! Chronopolitics, Art and Research* published by Sternberg Press (2014).

Ultimately, *Sounding Expanded Affinities* is about harnessing hope and a utopian drive to reconfigure interpersonal and social relations in a way that benefits women, and in the process to decenter the couple and expand the legitimacy of a range of affective relations. *Sounding Expanded Affinities* utilizes the polytemporal method to speculate on the potential that non-monogamous relationships and expanded affinities might have to critique and decentralize the stratification and asymmetrical power relations that couplehood and kinship currently circulate. The polytemporal is developed as a queerly feminist strategy to counter linearity.⁵² The doctoral submission formulates proposals “in

⁵¹ I diverge from customary quoting formats in the indented passages of the dissertation as a way to emphasize the notion of voice that derives from my artistic practice. Likewise, I have moved years of publication to the start of each passage and in bold format from the customary place after a title and in parentheses in an effort to further the polytemporal dimension of the writing.

⁵² I am using “queerly feminist” to distinguish a form of feminism that extends beyond binary aims of equality to reimagine or reconfigure relations in a rejection of the reproduction of the heteronormative.

and through modulations of time⁵³ to repair a “split consciousness [...] where the reinvention of the self and the remaking of the social are strictly out of joint”.⁵⁴ The installations provide embodiment and performativity to the research, while the dissertation provides analysis and scholarship, and the artistic writing offers personal reflection and intimate language unlike the other two.

1974

We bring to you the mathematics of an altered destiny.

Look up!

Everything is in place—every star, every planet.

Everything is in place but you, planet earth.

[...]

Time passes away, but the unknown is immeasurable and never passes away.

The unknown is eternal because you will never know what it is all about.

The wisdom will be when you say, I do not know.

[...]

I can make it in seconds to another galaxy.

I will take you to new worlds.

I will take you to outer unseen worlds.

[...]

I hate you absolute positive reality.

*We refuse to be a part of it.*⁵⁵

⁵³ Elizabeth Freeman speaking at *The Ontology of the Couple*.

⁵⁴ Homi K. Bhabha, “Race, Time, and the Revision of Modernity”, in *The Post-Colonial Reader*, ed. Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths, and Helen Tiffin (New York: Routledge, 2006), 219.

⁵⁵ From Sun Ra’s film, *Space is the Place*.

CHAPTER TWO

MARRIAGE'S PRESENT PAST

2007

Romance. Marriage. Family.
Against romance or against couplehood?
Against marriage or against capitalism?
Against monogamy or against patriarchy?
Should they be framed as either/or propositions?

1970

Before we can act to change a situation, however, we must know how it has arisen and evolved, and through what institutions it now operates.⁵⁶

2016

I'm interested in the subtle ways sex discrimination circulates; in the chronic conditions of women's oppression, and how our social and economic systems circulate inconsistencies and bias in a U.S. context. Feminist voices and radical experiments in living allow a waking dream of liberation to be present—of an expansion of the self in relation to others, and of an immanent future.

2016

Patriarchy is a social system that ensures the male as the dominant figure holding power, authority, and privilege over women and children. People participate in it consciously or not. Some resist. Some search for ways to disrupt or more radically, to destroy the dominant social system entirely. My experience with marriage produced a drive to understand the operations of the patriarchal system, to explore the relation between subjectivity and the marriage institution itself. I found voices of resistance to the inequalities marriage constructed and some who sought more egalitarian ways of reconfiguring interpersonal relations. This chapter of *Sounding Expanded Affinities* uses marriage in the United States as a lens to examine women's oppression and to locate the presence of the patrilineal past circulating today. Historical critiques of marriage assist in sounding out ideas about how the apparatus of marriage might be out of step with

⁵⁶ Shulamith Firestone, *The Dialectic of Sex* (New York: William Morrow and Co, Inc., 1970), 2.

people's lives and needs. It asserts a feminist critique of marriage in the moment following the Supreme Court of the United States decision on same-sex marriage.

2015

*No union is more profound than marriage, for it embodies the highest ideals of love, fidelity, devotion, sacrifice, and family. [...] [By entering into marriage] their hope is not to be condemned to live in loneliness, excluded from one of civilization's oldest institutions.*⁵⁷

2016 / 1884

Marriage is generally accepted as being synonymous with love and commitment and is understood as a romantic bond or love-based union. It is the most celebrated of life achievements. As the most socially sanctioned and personally cherished form of interpersonal relationship, it has been revered as the cornerstone of society since the founding of the U.S. While marriage is understood as a companionate union based on love, as Frederick Engels in *The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State* states, the family made of marriage was originally designed to reify a system of male supremacy created with the sole purpose of securing patrilineal lines of inheritance, property, and ownership.⁵⁸ And while the most egregious of laws regarding marriage have been reformed over the years and cultural values have evolved away from patriarchal marriage to romantic marriage, the ghosts of marriage's beginnings are still circulating in different ways and are difficult to shake off. My interest is to identify remnants of the patriarchy that repeat because those remnants help constitute a chronic condition⁵⁹—one of a stubborn apathy toward change and an equally stubborn maintenance of patriarchal power. Through the study of historical critiques of marriage, voices of resistance come to the surface again. I conjure them in hopes that they might provide messages to help generate ideas for a different future.

⁵⁷ From the Supreme Court of the United States (SCOTUS) decision in the *Obergefell v. Hodges* case on same-sex marriage, June 26, 2015: 28, https://www.supremecourt.gov/opinions/14pdf/14-556_3204.pdf.

⁵⁸ Frederick Engels, *The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State* (Chippendale, AU: Resistance Books, 2004).

⁵⁹ For a discussion of the chronic, see: Renate Lorenz, Elizabeth Freeman, and Mathias Danbolt, "The Chronic: A Conversation between Renate Lorenz, Elizabeth Freeman, and Mathias Danbolt", *FRANK Conversations*, May 2015, http://www.f-r-a-n-k.org/conversations/01/pdfs/150608_FRANK_conversations_Chronic.pdf.

2013

If an individual's subjectivity is formed in part by institutions, how can the feminist aim of equality advance when marriage is still at the core of our value system?

1776 / 1975 / 1949

While it would be impossible to trace the original moment of women's oppression, one can be certain that marriage was a building block to institutionalize patrilineal power and forms of subjugating women. In the essay "The Traffic in Women: Notes on the 'Political Economy' of Sex" Gayle Rubin introduces the notion of woman-as-exchange-good using Claude Lévi-Strauss' work, *The Elementary Structures of Kinship* and "The Family" to argue that marriage historically functioned as an exchange of women between men.⁶⁰ Together, Rubin reveals the "sense of a systematic social apparatus which takes up females as raw materials and fashions domesticated women as products".⁶¹ Rubin notes that in the case of arranged marriages, women were sold or traded between two patriarchs for economic, social, and political reasons such as forging alliances and or creating economic gains. Moreover, once married, the wife's pregnant body offered a means of producing a male heir for the sake of continuing patrilineal blood lines and maintaining the family's power and wealth through patrilineal inheritance. The workings of time via custom assisted in assuring the repetition of this gendered kinship system.

2015

*The ancient origins of marriage confirm its centrality, but it has not stood in isolation from developments in law and society. The history of marriage is one of both continuity and change. That institution [...] has evolved over time.*⁶²

⁶⁰ Rubin uses the phrase "economy of sex" to cite the feminists' use of Marxist work on class oppression, for women's oppression and references some of the work done on asserting gender into the composition and workings of capital. Incorporating Freud, too, Rubin examines women in marriage and kinship systems where Freudian gender norms worked in concert with economic stratification to solidify a fixed set of gender roles. See: Gayle Rubin, "The Traffic in Women: Notes on the 'Political Economy' of Sex", in *Toward an Anthropology of Women*, ed. Rayna [Rapp] Reiter (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1975), 157-210.

⁶¹ Rubin, "The Traffic in Women", 158.

⁶² *Obergefell v. Hodges* (SCOTUS), 11.

2016

Evidence of the patrilineal origin of marriage continues to circulate symbolically in various customs today. It appears in the vision of the bride wearing the white dress—historically worn as proof of the bride’s virginity, symbolizing the investment that the coming offspring will assuredly be the husband’s and that his bloodline will remain *pure*.⁶³ The bride is still *given away* by a paternal figure at the start of a wedding, performing the exchange of the woman by men, of ownership of the bride from father to husband. The paternal surname is still the most commonly assigned to children, reinscribing the privilege of patrilineal lines. Do they reveal a subtle form of oppression implicit in these symbolic customs? What are the effects of these lingering symbolic gestures?

1910

*It is this slavish acquiescence to a man’s superiority that has kept the marriage institution seemingly intact for so long a period.*⁶⁴

1700

*If all Men are born free, how is it that all Women are born Slaves?*⁶⁵

1700 – 2016

Feminists have long argued that marriage is unjust to women. Tracing a history of feminist critiques of marriage back to the eighteenth century, the primary refusals of different moments are illuminated—some overlap, some repeat, some contrast, all ask for equality. Some of the feminist political agenda has shifted following the moves of the patriarchal, from circulating within the institution of marriage to being distributed among individual laws.⁶⁶

⁶³ This practice can involve a physical examination. The presence of an intact hymen was believed to be proof of not having been previously penetrated, making the bride exchanged from father to husband more valuable.

⁶⁴ Emma Goldman, *Anarchism and Other Essays*, rev. ed. (New York: Mother Earth, 1911), 236.

⁶⁵ Mary Astell, “Some Reflections Upon Marriage”, in *Astell: Political Writings*, ed. Patricia Springborg (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 18.

⁶⁶ Abortion laws in the U.S. remained tied to marriage until 1992 when the law requiring the husband’s awareness was overturned. Prior to 1976 abortion law required the written consent of the husband. The links and lineage remarked on here are, I would argue, remnants to coverture. By 1965 birth control pills were available to married women, but it was not until 1972 when they were available to unmarried women. I propose that the state became the patriarchal figure for women. The contested terms of a state’s right over a woman’s right to her own body continue. Reproductive rights remain an active site of contestation.

EQUALITY IN MARRIAGE

1995

*Women's rights are human rights, and human rights are women's rights.*⁶⁷

1848

*Right is of no sex.*⁶⁸

1792

Mary Astell, Mary Wollstonecraft, Elizabeth Cady Stanton, and Harriet Beecher Stowe are early pioneering feminists whose voices called for the equality of wives to their husbands. In the seminal text, *Vindication of the Rights of Women*, Mary Wollstonecraft writes on the subordination of women, speaking boldly to her readers who, she believes, perpetuate the inequality of the sexes. Wollstonecraft charges women to reject emotion and sentimentality assigned their sex, and demands that women utilize reason and common sense, instead, in an attempt to break free from their malaise and complacency. Wollstonecraft writes that the patriarchal system is one that both men and women need to confront and dismantle, and that for a woman to be man's equal in marriage, she must be rational in her engagement with him and reject the weak and irrational gendered behavior assigned to her.⁶⁹

1848

*Resolved, That the women of this country ought to be enlightened in regard to the laws under which they live, that they may no longer publish their degradation by declaring themselves satisfied with their present position, nor their ignorance, by asserting that they have all the rights they want.*⁷⁰

1848

Fifty-six years after Wollstonecraft published *Vindication of the Rights of Woman*,

⁶⁷ This is the title of a speech given by Hillary Clinton (Fourth World Conference on Women: Action for Equality, Development and Peace, United Nations, Beijing, September 5, 1995). It originates from a phrase used previously in the feminist movement.

⁶⁸ Frederick Douglass, ex-slave, abolitionist, and editor of the anti-slavery newspaper *North Star*. The newspaper's motto was "Right is of no sex, Truth is of no color, God is the Father of us all, and we are all Brethren". His Seneca Falls Convention speech is reprinted in: *Lift Every Voice: African American Oratory, 1787-1900*. ed. Philip Sheldon Foner and Robert J. Branham (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1998), 687-692.

⁶⁹ Mary Wollstonecraft, *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman, With Strictures on Political and Moral Subjects* (1792; repr., Oxford, MS: Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation, 2002).

⁷⁰ Elizabeth Cady Stanton, "Declaration of Sentiments".

Elizabeth Cady Stanton read “The Declaration of Sentiments” at the Seneca Falls Convention, known to be the first Women’s convention held in the U.S.⁷¹ Principally authored by Stanton, “The Declaration of Sentiments” became the blueprint for Women’s Rights activism in the U.S. for years afterwards. The document lists a series of facts about men’s injustices and their tyranny over women and it calls for a series of reforms including those to marriage. The central point is that women should be seen as equal to men and that marriage should reflect this equality. They did not reject the basic form of marriage outright, but sought to have women recognized as equal partners. Unlike in Wollstonecraft’s text, much of the blame for the patriarchal nature of marital relationships is attributed directly to men’s behavior in the Declaration, for example: “He has endeavored, in every way that he could, to destroy her confidence in her own powers, to lessen her self-respect and to make her willing to lead a dependent and abject life”. Man’s responsibility to change her state is implicated in phrases like, “it is pre-eminently his duty to encourage her” to take all of the advantages born her (education, ownership, confidence). Once published, “The Declaration of Sentiments” fell under such strong criticism that many people who had signed it called to have their names removed.

1848

*Resolved, That woman is man’s equal – was intended to be so by the Creator, and the highest good of the race demands that she should be recognized as such.*⁷²

1848

One particular nineteenth century intentional community, the Oneida Community, practiced complex marriage which preserved individual equality within group marriage.⁷³ The organization of this group of Bible Communists can be read in one sense, as an overturning of marriage’s system of oppression of women. The group believed the second coming of Christ had already happened and they were living heaven on earth. With that perspective, complex marriage was developed from the bible passage; “In the Kingdom of Heaven, the institution of marriage which assigns the exclusive possession of one woman

⁷¹ The majority of the attendees were women of privilege, and with the exception of Frederick Douglass, all were white.

⁷² Stanton, “Declaration of Sentiments”.

⁷³ One of many utopian communities of the time, the Oneida Community is of special interest to this project because of its feminist gestures and organization, and for personal reasons that extend back to when I first learned about the nearby property through my grandmother when I was a child.

to one man does not exist”.⁷⁴ They had affiliations with the feminists of the day such as Elizabeth Cady Stanton, but unfortunately, as emancipated as the women of the Oneida Community seemed to be, the community members believed men were inherently superior to women and closer to God—an unfortunate belief exemplary of the divisions among feminists at the time.

THE SHACKLES OF MARRIAGE

1983 / circa 1949 / circa 1975 / circa 1792

*We are born in flames. We are born in flames. We are born in flames.*⁷⁵

*Woman is not born, but rather becomes, a slave.*⁷⁶

*If she becomes a slave, it is because it had been naturalized for her.*⁷⁷

*Yes, such “natural proclivities” demand a revolution in female manners!*⁷⁸

1884 / 1700 / 1792

According to Frederick Engels, in *The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State*, the etymology of the word “family” is the greek word *familia*, meaning domestic slave. Engles states that this term referred to female sexual servitude in Ancient Greece and that this was the first move toward the institutionalization of family. Connections drawn between the position of wife and of slave exist in the earliest feminist critiques of marriage, such as the one from Mary Astell in 1700, “How is it that all Women are born Slaves?”⁷⁹ Wollstonecraft, in her book *Vindication of the Rights of Women*, also uses slavery terms to describe women’s general position and that in marriage throughout the declaration written in 1792. “Let them not be treated like slaves”⁸⁰ is one of over sixty instances that “slave” and “slavery” appear in her text. Both aim to assert that like slaves, women need to be equal members of society and wives need to be free and equal in marriage.

⁷⁴ Matt. 22:23-30.

⁷⁵ Title song chorus of *Born in Flames*, directed by Lizzie Borden (New York: First Run Features, 1983).

⁷⁶ I imagine this to be Simone de Beauvoir’s response in circa 1949, if they were able to converse.

⁷⁷ I imagine Gayle Rubin might direct the conversation in this manner, circa 1975.

⁷⁸ I imagine this to be Mary Wollstonecraft’s response, circa 1792.

⁷⁹ Astell, “Some Reflections Upon Marriage”, 18.

⁸⁰ Wollstonecraft, *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*, 197.

1839 / 1848

In the nineteenth century, the concept of emancipation and equal rights of individuals was given prominent focus. Indeed, feminists arguing for the reform of marriage often made references to wives as slaves in order to suggest they be freed from their subordination under their husbands. Mary Sargent Gove Nichols, a nineteenth century feminist also likened wives to slaves, but she argued that the monogamous restrictions of marriage and the assumption that wives need to satisfy their husbands desires, essentially made wives into (sexual) slaves. By contrast Gove Nichols, promoted the sexual autonomy and independence of wives. She believed that they had the right to refuse sex with their husbands and to take other lovers, as well. Stanton drew a different parallel when she referred to marriage for economic need to be like “legalized prostitution” in 1848. The parallel meant to, like Engels’ wife/sex slave example, refer to women coerced into marriage for economic survival. In this manner, she viewed these women as legally bound in service to their husbands—of an exchange of economic support for sex, of a type of dependent enslavement.⁸¹

1850

The Oneida Community recognized that marriage set up inequalities between groups of people and that within it, women were not treated as equal; therefore they abolished conventional marriage in favor of group marriage—not a legal form of marriage, but an organization of men and women living equal with, and independent of, one another. John Humphrey Noyes, a lawyer-turned-theologian, was the founder and leader of the Oneida Community. Noyes developed the concept of wives as slaves in order to argue for the abolition of marriage itself. Noyes articulates these ideas about marriage in *Slavery and Marriage: A Dialogue*. Written in 1850, the text maps out the complex and diverse ways he was thinking about the problem of marriage. It is written in the form of a play and includes three characters: Judge North, Major South, and Mr. Free Church. In it, women’s emancipation from marriage is compared to a slave’s natural right to freedom and equality. Predictably, Major South argues servitude to be a *natural* occurrence, and that women and slaves are content in their subordination. Mr. Free Church, the

⁸¹ For a related discussion, see: Victoria Woodhull, “And the Truth Shall Make You Free” (speech, New York City’s Steinway Hall, November 20, 1871), in *Selected Writings of Victoria Woodhull: Suffrage, Free Love, and Eugenics*, ed. Cari M. Carpenter (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2010), 51-65.

character that speaks to Noyes' position and beliefs, rebuts the sentiment as barbaric. Mr. Free Church argues that ownership is at the core of both slavery and marriage; thus, both the system of slavery and the system of marriage must be abolished in order to achieve a more civil society.

1850

Judge North: But the abolition of Marriage would lead to unbridled licentiousness and social ruin.

Mr. Free Church: I reply in your own words, that "Liberty breeds virtue;" and I maintain that free-love, or complex marriage, combined with community property, would annihilate the very sources of adultery, whoredom, and all sexual abuse. It is the poverty and compulsory abstinence of the Marriage system that genders these crimes in society. The feeling of plenty would directly stimulate to chastity and self-control.

Judge North: What would become of women and children, if it was not for the system of maintenance and care that Marriage provides? They cannot take care of themselves, and they would fare hard if there were no responsible husbands.

Mr. Free Church: They would certainly fare better under a system of free-labor and free-love in Association, than they do under the Marriage system, where each family is at the mercy of one man.

Judge North: Look at the forlorn condition of old maids and old bachelors, and especially the class of abandon women. What a contrast with the happy family relations of married life.

Mr. Free Church: These outsiders, my friend, are the "free negroes" of the marriage system—that is, their position and degradation result from the existence of Marriage, just as the degradation of the free blacks results from the existence of Slavery. You can see for yourself that the abolition of Marriage would have the same effect upon their condition that the abolition of Slavery would have upon the negroes of the north. Their reproach would be taken away, and the genial influence of equality for their improvement.⁸²

Noyes raises many points pertinent to various areas of this section, here the description of unmarried women as the "free slaves" of the marriage system implicates the institution itself in creating subjugation. Marriage makes unmarried people lesser than in the same way that free slaves were perceived as lesser—if marriage were abolished, then there

⁸² John Humphrey Noyes, *Slavery and Marriage: A Dialogue* (Oneida, NY: s.n., 1850), 12-14.

would be equality. This dramaturgy enlists developmental time to posit the evolution of civilized ideas over the barbaric, of unjust sanctioned behaviors being rejected. The problems Noyes lays bare in this text were the ones that led the Oneida Community to reimagine interpersonal relations through community building and to attempt to create greater equality of the sexes.

In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, feminists used slavery rhetoric to emphasize the urgency of resisting their subjugation in marriage. Their critiques harnessed slavery abolitionist discourse to argue for the abolition of the marriage institution altogether. But, these parallels of women in marriage to slavery are problematic.⁸³ The use of slavery language to describe (white) women's experience in marriage can be critiqued as doing great violence to the experience of slaves. One can argue that these parallels ignore and even erase the issue of race altogether or that they subsume and belittle the horrors of slavery. At the same time, as Gayle Rubin argues in "The Traffic in Women", women were goods and property traded among men, given away by a father to another man for payment. In that sense there is a relation to ownership and slavery, but still, a difficult parallel indeed.⁸⁴ What the correlation does make plain, is the intersection between the feminist and abolitionist discourses.⁸⁵

2016

The oppression is found in the shadows of subtleties, born from moments of stark obviousness.

⁸³ Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Harriet Beecher Stowe's resolute titles as *the* American pioneering feminists has washed away other voices of the time, of those not from the white privileged class. Some of the work done to add the other voices of the time can be found in Beverly Guy-Sheftall's *Words of Fire: An Anthology of African-American Feminist Thought* (1995)—of indigenous, Latina and African-American feminists—and in Nancy F. Cott's *The Grounding of Modern Feminism* (1987). For the role whiteness played in shaping American feminism, see Louise Newman's *White Women's Rights: The Racial Origins of Feminism in the U.S.* (1999). For work done on racism and women's suffrage, see Barbara H. Andolsen's *Daughters of Jefferson, Daughters of Bootbacks: Racism and American Feminism* (1986).

⁸⁴ See: Kathryn Burns-Howard, "Slaves of the Marriage Union", *New York Times*, June 19, 2013, <https://opinionator.blogs.nytimes.com/2013/06/19/slaves-of-the-marriage-union/>.

⁸⁵ The connection is too generalized here. Racial and feminist politics intersect quite distinctly today in the single African-American mother-subject today. For an editorial that outlines the cuts in women's education, healthcare, and welfare and how they are creating a class of poor African-American single mothers, see: "Republicans Take Aim at Poor Black Women" (editorial), *New York Times*, June 22, 2015, <https://www.nytimes.com/2015/06/22/opinion/republicans-take-aim-at-poor-women.html>.

COVERTURE CONTINUED

2015

Marriage was once viewed as an arrangement by the couple's parents based on political, religious, and financial concerns; but by the time of the Nation's founding it was understood to be a voluntary contract between a man and a woman. [...] As the role and status of women changed, the institution further evolved. Under the centuries-old doctrine of coverture [originating in medieval England], a married man and woman were treated by the State as a single, male-dominated legal entity. [...] As women gained legal, political, and property rights, and as society began to understand that women have their own equal dignity, the law of coverture was abandoned.⁸⁶

Circa 1776

Marriage was seen as necessary for a successful civil society and was very important as a tool for citizenship in the North American Colonies. However, describing it as “a voluntary contract between a man and a woman”, is to help perpetuate a fictional narrative of equality that simply does not represent reality. Within marriage, the subordination of women was legalized through the laws of coverture, or laws of *feme covert*, that the colonists had brought with them from England. According to the law, the married couple was understood to be one person, the husband, and therefore wives were under the economic and legal control of their husbands. Any property that the woman brought into a marriage legally became her husband's possession, his to dispose of or keep. Likewise, gifts given to her during the marriage fell under the same absorption into his pocket. Extending the implications of coverture, it prevented married women from signing contracts, holding property, keeping earnings, and of course, from voting to change these laws.⁸⁷ In the quote above, Justice Kennedy portrays the practice of coverture as a blip of inequity that does not square with marriage being an equal contract between a man and a woman. It remained that because women had so few rights, their best bet was to marry to gain them through proxy. Rather than a *voluntary* contract

⁸⁶ *Obergefell v. Hodges* (SCOTUS), 6. Referenced in the document is Brief for Historians of Marriage et al. as *Amici Curiae*, 16-19.

⁸⁷ Unmarried women could hold property and earnings, but of course, this was rarely economically viable since all inheritance went through male lines. Additionally, women who held property under the period of coverture were also taxed. Ironically, taxation without representation is precisely what precipitated the Boston Tea Party and the colonists' fight for independence from Great Britain.

between a man and a woman, *coerced* would be more apt. Some called it prostitution. All would agree it was not equal.

1792

*The only way women can rise in the world—by marriage.*⁸⁸

1848

*He has made her, if married, in the eyes of the court, civilly dead.*⁸⁹

1848

Enacted in 1848, the Married Women's Property Act of New York State was the culmination of years of effort to dismantle the system of coverture. The law grew out of the writings of feminists like Ernestine Rose, Pauline Wright Davis, and Elizabeth Cady Stanton. Other states had or eventually passed similar laws. These laws made it possible for women to have their own property outside of their husband's control in marriage.⁹⁰

1848 – 1880

Founded the same year as the passing of the Married Women's Property Act, the Oneida Community's communistic design meant that coverture didn't exist. Instead, members held property in common and anything they came into the community with, they were entitled to take out of the community if they left. While members of the group seemed to have believed men were inherently more important than women given their choice of a male as leader and conduit to God, women were nonetheless men's equal in partnership, ownership, and social recognition within the community.

2012

Elements of the property act remain today in the manner with which property is distributed in divorce. But elements of coverture still exist, too. For example, a common

⁸⁸ Wollstonecraft, *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*, 86.

⁸⁹ Stanton, "Declaration of Sentiments".

⁹⁰ The law made it that wives were entitled to separate use of property acquired before marriage or through inheritance during marriage. Under the stewardship of Elizabeth Cady Stanton, the statement outlined personal and property ownership as well as gifts received during the marriage, protecting the wife's personal possessions from being subsumed by the husband, nor for her to be responsible for her husband's debts. See: John Stuart Mill, *The Subjection of Women* (London: Longmans, Green, Reader, and Dyer, 1869).

and unchallenged stipulation in the case of divorce is that if the less-monied spouse marries or even cohabitates (defined as living together for more than four months combined over a year) with a new romantic partner, the monetary support provided by the ex-spouse can legally stop. The cohabitation restriction does not apply to the monied spouse. This reflects a carryover of coverture through the assumption that the new partner of the less-monied spouse (most commonly, the wife) will be financially responsible for them upon cohabitation. If we had truly abandoned coverture, then individuals in divorce proceedings would be recognized as individuals always, and monies would be paid out regardless of relationship status, not binding the romantic with economic bonds as this example shows.⁹¹ Another area where one could argue that elements of coverture still exist is within the ongoing abortion rights debate. In it, the central point of contestation is whether women have a right to their own bodies and the right to make their own decisions regarding abortion. In this example, the state becomes the controlling husband, an analogy that extends to the *Roe v. Wade* opposing legislators.⁹²

CONSENT THEN, CONSENT NOW

1850

*Their position and degradation results from the existence of Marriage.*⁹³

1839

Consent recognizes the inherent right the individual has to what happens to their body, it involves granting permission to engage in sexual practices; however, women did not have sexual consent rights within marriage. Marriage was long organized in such a way as to enable a practice of husbands having sexual access to the wife without restriction and without consent. More severely put, marriage was a shield enabling men who raped their

⁹¹ Moreover, this common policy in divorce cases contradicts the exclusivity of the marriage form as containing the laws governing the merger of the economic and the romantic or sexual, and it extends them into the everyday live-in partner.

⁹² *Roe v. Wade* is the SCOTUS decision that protects a woman's right to an abortion that was passed in 1973 and is still contested today as seen, for example, in the current tax reform proposal that states that an unborn fetus is a human, thereby attempting to lay the groundwork to undo abortion rights.

⁹³ Noyes, *Slavery and Marriage: A Dialogue*, 13-14.

wives to be protected from legal convictions. Women quite literally did not have rights to their own bodies according to the law. How common the practice of marital rape was, we cannot know; however, as early as 1839, Mary Sargent Gove Nichols raised this issue when she stated that women had the right to refuse their husbands sexually. Her announcement provoked a series of shamings and criticisms, but the incident drew attention to the intersections of consent with common practice and the law. Gove Nichols' writing and personal life highlight her determination to claim her agency and right to sexual self-determination. Regarding the institution of marriage, she wrote, "no man on the broad earth could more fully sympathize with me in the holy fear I felt of bonds than Vincent".⁹⁴ In her veiled autobiography, she goes on to recount her conversation with her betrothed about marriage. It is easy to see that their beliefs ran counter to the marriage customs of the time as the do too, even today.

1848

I said, "In a marriage with you, I resign no right of my soul. I enter into no compact to be faithful to you. I only promise to be faithful to the deepest love of my heart. If that love is yours, it will bear fruit for you, and enrich your life—our life. If my love leads me from you, I must go."

He said, "You are free. I ask only what is mine, through your love, and I ask that you give to all what is sacredly theirs. I am content to trust. I shall have my own—I ask only that."

I said, "I must keep my name—the name I have made for myself, through labor and suffering."

He said, "I do not ask that you take mine."

I said, "I must have my own room into which none can come but because I wish it."

He said, "A woman's right to her room is as imperative as her right to her garments. [...] I shall only be too happy to come into your room when you desire it."⁹⁵

⁹⁴ Mary Sargent Gove Nichols, *Mary Lyndon: Or, Revelations of a Life. An Autobiography* (Stringer and Townsend: New York. 1855), 385.

⁹⁵ Gove Nichols, *Mary Lydon*, 385. Also found in: Patricia Cline Cohen, "The 'Anti-Marriage Theory' of Thomas and Mary Gove Nichols: A Radical Critique of Monogamy in the 1850's", *Journal of the Early Republic* 34, no. 1 (Spring 2014): 3-5. As Cohen states, Vincent, as written in *Mary Lyndon*, is actually Thomas Nichols whom she had married seven years before publishing *Mary Lydon*.

1848

Sexual consent is addressed in the exchange above, voiced as a right to one's own room (read body) unless invited. Their exchange symbolized independence *within* marriage and served as a way for Gove Nichols to preserve control of her body and her sexuality. More simply put, in addition to issues of sexual consent, it represents a separation of sex from marriage. Responding in turn, he claims, "I shall only be too happy to come [...] when you desire it", thereby linking consent with happiness.

This separation of sex from marriage was a pivotal move that directly related not only to the right to refuse sex within marriage, but the freedom to seek pleasure outside of marriage, as well. The right to have sex with someone other than the spouse for the sake of personal happiness is made explicit in their exchange, "I enter into no compact to be faithful to you". Mary Sargent Gove and Thomas Nichols practiced free love, the movement predicated on a new separation of sex and love from marriage, one that encouraged them to enjoy sexual pleasure with others outside of their coupling. In a related form, the Oneida Community members practiced complex marriage where each person had their own room and were not visited except with pre-planned consent.

1999

Said to the marriage counselor: We're married, we're supposed to be having sex. She says I pushed myself on her, and I probably did, but she never wants to have sex.

Her: I don't want it.

Him: You're my wife, I should just take it!

1970 – 1993

The sexually emancipatory examples set by those who practiced free love or complex marriage were but a small percentage that did not represent the majority of relationships. What eventually facilitated the overthrow of marriage's inviolable relation to unwanted sexual behavior and of the inherent violence it set up began during the Women's Liberation movement of the 1970s. Aided by the development of the birth control pill, free love in the 1960s and 1970s further separated sex from marriage as it sought to legitimize sex for enjoyment. It produced a climate of deeply divided beliefs, many of which were very threatening to the historical meaning of marriage. While women made it

a priority to talk about marital rape and sought to criminalize rape in marriage during this time, it was not until 1993 when the final of the fifty states passed laws to allow for criminal rape charges to be brought against a spouse. Despite the law and the stated frequency of the occurrence of rape in marriage, it is rarely reported and less rarely convicted.

1975

*Cultural evolution provides us with the opportunity to seize control of the means of sexuality, reproduction, and socialization, and to make conscious decisions to liberate human sexual life from the archaic relationships which deform it.*⁹⁶

1852

The Oneida Community organized their sexual relations to incorporate consent through what John Humphrey Noyes termed “love interviews” as printed in the pamphlet “Practical Suggestions For Regulating Intercourse of the Sexes”, one in a series of published community talks. Contemporaneous with life outside of the Oneida Community, male members were expected to take the lead in making overtures toward women. Then, it was suggested, “love interviews” should be arranged and conducted by a third party for the confirming of meetings intended for sexual intercourse. The third party assured her the equal right to decline more freely and to avoid coercion. In turn, the interviews helped ease his feeling of rejection, making it less severe. The Oneida Community’s inclusion of consent for sexual engagement was preached as part of their beliefs. Their form of complex marriage was tied to their moral beliefs of fairness and gender equality.

MARRIAGE BEFORE DIVORCE

1858

Look at your divorce laws. [...] In one of the States, if a divorce be granted for the fault of the woman, she shall leave her husband without her dower, without any thing; but if it be for the fault of the man, she shall have the widow’s dower, and he shall have the other two-thirds. That is, if he commits the crime, he is to have two-thirds of the property; if she commits the crime, she is to have—

⁹⁶ Rubin, “The Traffic in Women”, 200.

*nothing! That is man's justice to woman. Who is to blame for it? Is it you or I, or generations long gone by?*⁹⁷

1848

Feminists began to advocate for broadening divorce laws that at first were only granted in cases of bigamy, adultery, and impotence. Reasons of battery, drunkenness, and general poor treatment may have granted a separation, but not the dissolution of marriage in the nineteenth century, generally. At the Seneca Falls Convention, participants and attendees identified divorce as one of the important areas of activism.

1848

*He has so framed the laws of divorce, as to what shall be the proper causes, and in case of separation, to who, the guardianship of the children shall be given, as to be wholly regardless of the happiness of women – the law, in all cases, going upon false supposition of the supremacy of man, giving all power into his hands.*⁹⁸

Circa 1950 – 2012 / 2016

Though reforming divorce laws was an important step, the practice of divorce continued to promote inequality. Each divorce has a different outcome depending on the state, economics, and a host of uncertainties and specifics, but studies are clear that women, on the whole, are more disadvantaged economically than men in these outcomes. While the quote above emphasizes the practice of children being awarded custody to the father, the balance swung to that of the mother in the twentieth century. It is important to note that women often received life-long alimony payments from the ex-husband, a practice that acknowledged the improbability of a woman's ability to support herself and her children, acknowledging the pay gap, and one might say, the time gap of reproductive care. Today, the scales are different again. The courts now favor an equal division of time awarded to parents in divorce, but in most cases the woman still takes up the majority of the child-rearing responsibilities and caretaking time. And while the child custody is divided evenly among parents, life-long alimony payments are generally a thing of the past, and child support payments are far less than what alimony was. It is difficult to generalize except to say that the discourse of equality from the Civil Rights Era made room for a type of

⁹⁷ Frances Dana Gage speaking at the Free Convention that took place in Rutland, Vermont in 1858. See: *Proceedings of the Free Convention* (Boston: J.B. Yerrington & Son 1858), 76.

⁹⁸ From: Stanton, "Declaration of Sentiments".

assessment in divorce that leaves women as primary caretakers, yet significantly uncompensated. I mean to draw attention to both the failings of the divorce system and a culture in which domestic care, or “reproductive labor”, as Nancy Fraser terms it, goes unpaid, both of which most often disadvantage women.⁹⁹ We live in a fictive culture of equality where the discourse can work in reverse and against the mother.

1870s / 2010s

The nineteenth century pursuit of rights and freedoms extended to a reflection on marriage, sometimes encouraging people to practice free love, but more generally it began a shift from the perpetual elevation of the sanctity of marriage to the inalienable right to pursue happiness, even if it included divorce. In Indiana, the New Harmony utopian community sanctioned divorce and allowed for remarriage after a sixty-day waiting period. It is thought that the influence the New Harmony group had on the rest of the state made for some of the most relaxed divorce laws of the time.¹⁰⁰ While free love practitioners were not against marriage per se, as its opponents often assumed, it was born from a critique of marriage and meant that one should not be required to stay with someone they did not love. Therefore, we can trace today’s most popular motivation for divorce, that of unhappiness, back to the nineteenth century free love practice. The interrelation of happiness with divorce and free love may be why Victoria Woodhull, the spiritualist, stockbroker, and first woman to run for U.S. president, proclaimed herself a free lover with such passion in the 1870s—she was married four times and to three men.

1872

*Yes, I am a Free Lover. I have an inalienable, constitutional and natural right to love whom I may, to love as long or as short a period as I can; to change that love everyday if I please, and with that right neither you nor any law you can frame have any right to interfere.*¹⁰¹

⁹⁹ Nancy Fraser, “Contradictions of Capital and Care”, *New Left Review* 100 (July-August 2016), <https://newleftreview.org/11/100/nancy-fraser-contradictions-of-capital-and-care>.

¹⁰⁰ For a discussion of the relation between New Harmony and divorce law, see: Donald Carmony, “New Harmony, Indiana; Robert Owens’ Seedbed for Utopia”, *Indiana Magazine of History* 76, no. 3 (September 1980): 161-261.

¹⁰¹ From Victoria Woodhull’s speech, “And the Truth Shall Make You Free” in: Carpenter, *Selected Writings of Victoria Woodhull*, 51-52.

1848 – 1881

While the Oneida Community practiced complex marriage, their form of free love meant there were no married couples; hence the necessity for divorce did not exist. Instead, one could say a member who left the community divorced the group, but divorce would be a mere metaphor in that instance.

QUEER TIMES FOR MARRIAGE

2015

*[Exclusions] from the marriage right impose stigma and injury of the kind prohibited by our basic charter.*¹⁰²

*Well, might the abolition of marriage be one other path to full equality of gay and non-gay people?*¹⁰³

2016

Feminist critiques intersect with queer critiques most directly in their focus on discrimination. Equality and normativity are their most central shared terms, terms that register the social scale of how one fits, rejects, or is rejected by cultural roles and mores. In recent years, the aim of the LGBTQ (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer) community has been dominantly focused on the same-sex marriage issue. Those in favor of same-sex marriage fought for the romantic dream, acceptance, and for the rights and benefits afforded a married person. Those against it criticized the perpetuation of the bourgeois couple and monogamy as the *normal* and *natural* choice, they felt the focus on marriage discriminated against those who are single, those who choose non-monogamy, and those who reject bourgeois family values.

2016

Since the marriage system has remained intact through the debates surrounding LGBTQ rights, are the patriarchal holdovers found within marriage made stronger for it?

¹⁰² *Obergefell v. Hodges* (SCOTUS), 18.

¹⁰³ Lisa Duggan, "Beyond Marriage: Democracy, Equality, and Kinship for a New Century", *A New Queer Agenda, The Scholar & Feminist Online* (Fall 2011/Spring 2012), <http://sfoonline.barnard.edu/a-new-queer-agenda/beyond-marriage-democracy-equality-and-kinship-for-a-new-century/>.

2016

One of my concerns lies with the way in which the same-sex marriage advocacy may have rendered the feminist project in relation to marriage complete. Same-sex marriage proponents chose to overlook the oppressive history of the institution and critiques of the institution itself were not present. The related critiques of same-sex marriage that Dean Spade and Craig Willse offer are references that support my feminist concerns. In this regard, the queer critiques of marriage are important cross-conversation sites to further feminist debates about the marriage institution.

2013

*Same-sex marriage advocacy has accomplished an amazing feat [...] it has drowned out centuries of critical thinking and activism against the racialized, colonial, and patriarchal processes of state regulation of family and gender through marriage.*¹⁰⁴

2014 / 1991 / 1980 / 1984

Against Equality is an online archive that includes such leftist queer voices as that of Dean Spade and Craig Willse. The related publication *Against Equality: Queer Revolution, Not Mere Inclusion* includes some of the strongest opposition to same-sex marriage.¹⁰⁵ The series of essays exclaim the stakes involved in perpetuating a state of unequal distribution of necessary benefits. While these critiques were silenced in the media, concepts of family, specifically the nuclear family, were strengthened through the same-sex marriage advocacy and act. This kind of normativity lies at the center of my concern—of the ways in which same-sex marriage and homonormativity reify heteropatriarchal marriage. A lineage from Michael Warner, Adrienne Rich, and Gayle Rubin traces heteronormativity as a system of institutional, cultural, and social meanings and practices that systematically privilege, through material resources, status, and authority, the heterosexual as fulfilling the “good life”. Adrienne Rich speaks of compulsory heterosexuality when referring to the ways in which social and institutional organizations reinforce the presumption of

¹⁰⁴ Dean Spade and Craig Willse, “Marriage Will Never Set Us Free”, *Organizing Upgrade*, September 6, 2013, <http://archive.organizingupgrade.com/index.php/modules-menu/beyond-capitalism/item/1002-marriage-will-never-set-us-free>.

¹⁰⁵ *Against Equality: Queer Revolution, Not Mere Inclusion* (2014) is a collection of essays edited by Conrad Ryan that features radical leftist critiques of marriage equality. They are so left, in fact, that their radical politics brought them death threats, and they have been accused often, of aligning with the right-wing conservatives who oppose same-sex marriage.

heterosexual relations. Heteronormativity can include marriage, certainly monogamy, a family of dependent children, and employment. Homonormativity, similarly, is most easily recognized in the same-sex nuclear family. Some in the queer community are wary of the loss involved in such conformity, of the washing away of difference, and of an allegiance with sameness that homonormativity embodies. My concern is that homonormativity echoes heteronormativity so closely that it is reinscribing heteronormativity with added strength and centrality of importance. Referring to heteropatriarchal marriage, therefore, centralizes the gendered system of sexism that patriarchy carries and acknowledges its implicit heterosexism as well.

2016

Some believe same-sex marriage opens new avenues for a solid shift in the makeup of family that can trouble the register of normativity. I'm not convinced. While marriage may loosen its hold on the man/woman combination as the only sanctioned one, the fact that it still asserts a married couple in the center of the "charmed circle"¹⁰⁶ means same-sex couples simultaneously work to hold up marriage as sacred, normal, and the accepted form that is given the highest social status. In this regard, same-sex marriage is not reforming marriage as much as it is perpetuating and strengthening it through a reinscription of the state-sanctioned form.¹⁰⁷ Because it has the effect of strengthening conservative ideas of family, for women specifically, the retention of social and economic patriarchal impositions that marriage recirculates contributes to the chronic condition of women's subjugation. In this regard, same-sex marriage has a direct negative effect on women.

Normativity of queer relations mix with a failure to recognize the historical position and present condition of women within marriage. One need only to look at the ontology of the married couple, the pervasive chosen form of relating, to understand how feminist rejections of marriage and views against commitment are easily dismissed. My concern

¹⁰⁶ Gayle Rubin develops the concept of the "charmed circle" in: "Thinking Sex: Notes for a Radical Theory of the Politics of Sexuality", in *Pleasure and Danger*, ed. Carole Vance (New York: Routledge, 1984).

¹⁰⁷ Speaking to how same-sex marriage gives preference to the white male, a study done in California reveals, somewhat predictably, that the highest earners are gay married couples, followed by heterosexual couples, and then lesbian couples. Lisa Duggan referenced this during the *After Marriage Conference CFP: The Future of LGBTQ Politics & Scholarship* (CLAGS, Center for LGBTQ studies, John Jay College, New York, October 1-2, 2016).

about inclusion and normativity is the way in which it further reifies the patriarchal lineage and potentially silences feminist critiques. Why is marriage a right to be protected? Why isn't it a personal choice without economic and social gain?

MARRIAGE REMAINS

1911

*Now that woman is coming into her own, now that she is actually growing aware of herself as being outside of the master's grace, the sacred institution of marriage is gradually being undermined, and no amount of sentimental lamentation can stay it.*¹⁰⁸

1911 – 2016

Emma Goldman, herself a practicing free lover, saw a movement she thought would continue until completion, until marriage fell out of use. What she did not see, however, was the depth of the sentimentality that the majority of people feel for it. As evidenced in the recent same-sex marriage act, well beyond inherent discrimination and rational thought rests a common belief in love that is tightly coupled with marriage—so tightly, that marriage more than symbolizes love, it *is* love.

2016

*Never speak of marriage as an achievement.*¹⁰⁹

2013

*Feminist, anti-racist, and anti-colonial social movements have [...] identifi[ed] marriage as a system that violently enforces sexual and familial norms. From these social movements, we understand marriage as a technology of social control, exploitation, and dispossession wrapped in a satin ribbon of sexist and heteropatriarchal romance mythology.*¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁸ Goldman, "Marriage and Love", in *Anarchism and Other Stories*, 236.

¹⁰⁹ Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, in her Facebook post "Dear Ijeawele, or A Feminist Manifesto in Fifteen Suggestions" as suggestion number seven, posted October 12, 2016. For further reference, see the book of the same name: *Dear Ijeawele, or A Feminist Manifesto in Fifteen Suggestions* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2017).

¹¹⁰ Spade and Wills, "Marriage Will Never Set Us Free".

2016

Throughout this chapter I have used passages from the *Obergefell v. Hodges* (SCOTUS) decision to speak to the prominence of marriage as a core value in U.S. culture and history. I have used portions of the document penned by Justice Kennedy to explain marriage's history alongside the reforms and critiques related to women in marriage.¹¹¹ The content itself does numerous things: it creates a false linear narrative of marriage being profoundly desired for a complete heart and absolutely necessary for civil society; it details the precedent reforms to the institution to build a narrative of linear development and advancement; yet it inadvertently exposes the stratification it creates—unjust to many along not only gender lines, but racial and economic ones as well.

We can say that marriage has always been at the core of the American culture whether we refer to patriarchal marriage or romantic marriage. However, given that 50 percent of marriages end in divorce, it is fair to ask, why is there such dedication to this institutionalized bond of romantic love? There is a great discrepancy between those who believe that marriage is the bedrock of our society and those who understand it to perpetuate discrimination. Looking at the LGBTQ motives and arguments provide insight into marriage's continued draw. While the *Obergefell v. Hodges* case marks a heartening step away from discrimination as now all couples have the constitutional right to enter into marriage, I question whether this is an institution that should be held up. Popular culture tries to tell us that the subjugation of women no longer operates within the institution of marriage, that marriage is a mutual choice for love and the composing of family units. But the male-centered lineage still exists in obfuscated ways amid the shadows of spoken freedoms, love, and equality. We have seen, for example: how a linear history of American marriage as always having been an equal contract is false; that wedding traditions derive from a harsh history of women being an exchanged good between men; that coercion into the institution persists in laws and benefits that privilege married couples; that gendered roles in marriage impose more unpaid domestic work and reproductive care hours on women than men; that experiments in free love and non-

¹¹¹ The full opinion of the Supreme Court contains a detailed account of change by outlining the related and central precedents of state and federal rulings on marriage. Through protests and court cases, what began as a contract between a white man and woman expanded to include African-Americans after the Civil War, inter-racial couples in 1967, and now same-sex couples in 2015.

monogamy weren't simple radical calls, but responses to the lack of freedoms within marriage and derived from critique; and that same-sex marriage ignores feminist critiques of marriage and further buries marriage's sexist history.

2013

*Feminists have long understood marriage as a tool of social control and labor exploitation. This is why feminists have worked to dismantle the mystique around romance, marriage, child-rearing and care—exposing these as cultural fantasies that coerce women into unpaid labor and cultivate sexual violence. They have also worked to change laws to make it easier to get out of marriages [...] because those links trap women and children into violent family relationships.*¹¹²

2016

Marriage as a time managed, time endured, eternally respected, and chronologically perpetuated assumes the desire for attachment is innate. Tracing the lineage of marriage as inherently tied to patriarchal systems make the uneven power clear. Marriage makes use of and exploits desires for bonds of attachment and companionship by stretching them too far through life-long monogamy, beyond our natural capacities for the sake of ownership, property, inheritance, and family values. While the belief in marriage has been challenged from the corners of prejudice and discrimination it creates toward women and those not conforming, it remains a central institution. The privileging of the married couple found in the more than 1,000 U.S. laws of benefit goes unchallenged. The limited mobility for women is ongoing and while marriage may seem a minor to some, the institution's patriarchal and sexist beginnings gave way for the social and economic pathways that continue to infiltrate and effect a lower standard of living for too many women in the U.S. Because marriage can never shake its patriarchal beginnings, then it stands to follow that women will never be equal within that form of interpersonal relation.

1949

*Marriage is obscene in principle insofar as it transforms into rights and duties those mutual relations which should be founded on a spontaneous urge.*¹¹³

¹¹² Spade and Willse, "Marriage Will Never Set Us Free", 3.

¹¹³ Simone de Beauvoir, *The Second Sex*, trans. H.M. Parshley (1949; rep., New York: Vintage, 1989), 444.

2016

Today surprisingly, there is a sense that most people believe in marriage, even if they don't adhere to faithfulness, even if half of marriages end in divorce, even if more and more choose to be single, even though some choose to have multiple partners. I argued that ghosts of the patriarchy are still present and while queer critiques offer support for feminist causes, I believe same-sex marriage works to reinforce the inequality effects of heteronormativity. It is the heterosexual imperative that Gayle Rubin, in "Traffic in Women", encourages feminist analysis to take on as the centerpiece of study as it is the cause and effect of the "sex/gender" system.¹¹⁴

There have been minor changes and marginalized experiments in kinship throughout history. The nineteenth century critiques that spawned experiments in free love living appear most promising in terms of reimagining more egalitarian romantic relations. There are countries with forms of government that do a much better job at writing policy that creates greater gender equality and centralizes marriage less. The Oneida Community is but one U.S. example of interpersonal relations designed in critique of marriage that have occurred in different moments throughout time, but popular acceptance of alternatives to marriage have not stuck, have not yet become accepted enough to either be admitted into the central core of marriage, or to debunk the centrality of it all together. The institution of marriage would need to be critiqued for more than moments.

1910

*Marriage and love have nothing in common; they are as far apart as the poles; are, in fact, antagonistic to each other. No doubt some marriages have been the result of love. Not, however, because love could assert itself only in marriage.*¹¹⁵

1970

*Marriage in its very definition will never be able to fulfill the needs of its participants. [...] We need to start talking about new alternatives that will satisfy the emotional and psychological [material and economic] needs that marriage, archaic as it is, still satisfies, but that will satisfy them better.*¹¹⁶

¹¹⁴ Jane Ward and Beth Schneider, "The Reaches of Heteronormativity", *Gender and Sociology* 23, no. 4 (August 2009): 433.

¹¹⁵ Goldman, "Marriage and Love", 233.

¹¹⁶ Firestone, *The Dialectic of Sex*, 226.

1994

I Do. Not Take.

CHAPTER THREE

THE EGALITARIAN POTENTIAL OF LOVING MORE

1897

*Viewed by any scientific, reasonable mind the whole phenomena of monogamic love is pathological.*¹¹⁷

1967

*We believe it's okay to have sex with anybody you love, and we believe in loving everybody.*¹¹⁸

1874

*You have been invited to hear the social problem discussed; to see it placed in the crucible of analysis to be tried by the hot flames of truth, the fire meanwhile fed by stern facts, and stirred to intensest heat, until the dross shall rise to the surface and gradually disappear in fumes which may be unpleasant to the senses, but leaving behind the purified residuum gathered, indicating clearly what is true and what is false in the tested subject—the sexual relations.*¹¹⁹

2017

Is the concept of sexual emancipation practiced through non-monogamy capable of spawning gender equality? Might sexual emancipation germinate a peaceful society? In the United States, the latter question drove the sexual practice of free love in the hippie era of the 1960s and 1970s. But the concept of free love originates in an earlier era when in the nineteenth century free love first emerged as an ideology related to the concept of freedom in general and as a critique of, and form of resistance to, women's servitude within marriage more specifically. The contemporary practice of consensual non-monogamy can be seen as a resurgence of the question that fueled the former free love movement that links sex with the rhetoric of liberation. As such, I am interested in examining the ways in which certain non-monogamous relationship forms expand women's *normal* social roles and in identifying what liberatory potential lays untapped in

¹¹⁷ J. Wm. Lloyd, "A New Love Ideal", *Lucifer: The Light-Bearer* 1, no. 10 (March 10, 1897): 74.

¹¹⁸ Dossie Easton and Janet W. Hardy, *The Ethical Slut* (New York: Celestial Arts, 2009), 24.

¹¹⁹ Victoria Woodhull is thought to have stated this in public speeches at least 150 times. This date represents its publication in *Woodhull and Claflin's Weekly*. See: Victoria Woodhull, "Tried as by Fire; or the True and the False, Socially", in *Selected Writings of Victoria Woodhull*, ed. Cari M. Carpenter (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2010), 212.

regard to the question of relationship types and gender. By folding together moments across time this section asks, what perspectives does a conversation between nineteenth century free lovers and twenty-first century consensual non-monogamists offer toward reconfiguring the gender roles that have been perpetuated by compulsory monogamy?

THE GRAND NARRATIVE AND COMPULSORY MONOGAMY

1910

*Some day, some day men and women will rise, they will reach the mountain peak, they will meet big and strong and free, ready to receive, to partake, and to bask in the golden rays of love. What fancy, what imagination, what poetic genius can foresee even approximately the potentialities of such a force in the life of men and women. If the world is ever to give birth to true companionship and oneness, not marriage, but love will be the parent.*¹²⁰

1970s / 2006

*It was a relief to me to find out in my teens that there were feminists waging a critique of romance [in the 1970's]. I saw how the myth of hetero monogamous romance lined up to fuck women over—to create a cultural incentive to enter the property arrangements of marriage, to place women in a subordinated position in the romantic dyad, to define women's worth solely in terms of success at finding and keeping a romance, to brainwash women into spending all their time measuring themselves against this norm and working to change their bodies, behaviors, and activities to meet the requirements of being attractive to men and suitable for romance.*¹²¹

Monogamy:

- 1 *archaic: the practice of marrying only once during a lifetime*
- 2 *a: the state or custom of being married to only one person at a time*
b: the state or practice of having only one sexual partner at a time

2017

Throughout most of the world, we have what amounts to a system of compulsory monogamy¹²²—the monogamous couple is privileged in both social and economic terms, meaning we are impacted if we do not conform. In the U.S., people are predominantly

¹²⁰ Emma Goldman, "Marriage and Love", in *Anarchism and Other Essays* (New York: Mother Earth, 1910), 245.

¹²¹ Dean Spade, "For Lovers and Fighters", in *We Don't Need Another Wave: Dispatches from the Next Generation of Feminists*, ed. Melody Berger (Emeryville, CA: Seal Press, 2006), 28-29.

¹²² Mimi Schippers, *Beyond Monogamy; Polyamory and the Future of Polyqueer Sexualities* (New York: NYU Press, 2016), 2.

evaluated according to our successful assimilation to the grand narrative, long-term paradigm most easily expressed through the children's adage; "first comes love, then comes marriage, then comes baby in the baby carriage". People are categorized according to their coupled status on financial, educational, and health forms using the designation of single or married, separated or divorced. Any deviation from heteronormative (monogamous) coupling is largely seen as other—alternative, queer, or transgressive.

2015 / 1975 / 1980

In what ways do feminist aims to eradicate inequality intersect with romantic relationship forms? While monogamy is asserted as the *natural* inclination and is held up as necessary for continuity, stability, and the maintenance of a right society, as preached by the religious right for example, it has gone predominantly unquestioned except in minor moments in history and corners of academia. The continued naturalization of monogamy is most recently evidenced in the same-sex marriage act and the SCOTUS *Obergefell v. Hodges* case written by Justice Kennedy in June of 2015. His comments state, "marriage [...] embodies the highest ideals of love, fidelity, devotion, sacrifice, and family"¹²³ which one can say, works to reify the concept of relationship normativity. But normative heterosexual relationships have historically been oppressive for women.¹²⁴ Scholars who have studied the nature of monogamy among men and women find an asymmetrical gendered system. Critiques of heteromasculture lay claim to the centrality of the monogamous couple being driven by the gender hierarchy—that monogamy, the privileged and most virtuous relationship form, contributes to the maintenance of men's domination over women. The seminal texts "The Traffic in Women: Notes on the 'Political Economy' of Sex" by Gayle Rubin and "Compulsory Heterosexuality and Lesbian Existence" by Adrienne Rich, for example, are central to the genealogy of my inquiry.

¹²³ The Supreme Court of the United States (SCOTUS) decision in the *Obergefell v. Hodges* case on same-sex marriage, June 26, 2015: 28, https://www.supremecourt.gov/opinions/14pdf/14-556_3204.pdf.

¹²⁴ The stratification of normative relationships is also biased against women and people of color, immigrants, and of the economically disenfranchised, too; however, this project centers on women specifically.

1980 / 1971

Adrienne Rich's term "compulsory heterosexuality" relays the ways in which our social and cultural systems coerce people into a heterosexual orientation as the only possibility for women. To approach lesbianism as a source of knowledge, Rich first critiques heterosexuality as a source of male dominance. In it she states, "the enforcement of heterosexuality for women, is a means of assuring a male right of physical, economical, and emotional access".¹²⁵ Rich uses Kathleen Gough's essay "The Origin of the Family" to introduce man's domination over women in archaic and contemporary societies. Rich further uses Gough's points to expand on "men's ability to deny women's sexuality or to force it upon them"¹²⁶ and evaluates how these points produce gender inequality. Rich quotes Gough, then extends the quotes in her own words using brackets, as seen in the following edited example of the "methods by which male-power is manifested and maintained".¹²⁷

1980

Characteristics of male power include the power of men to force it [male sexuality] upon them—[by means of rape (including marital rape) and wife beating; the socialization of women to feel that male sexual 'drive' amounts to a right; idealization of heterosexual romance in art, literature, the media, advertising, etc.; psychoanalytic doctrines of frigidity and vaginal orgasm].¹²⁸

The example maps the ground from which the essay argues the ways that women are coerced into heterosexual relationships and the ways heterosexuality allows men's control of women's sexuality. The uneven power relations within heterosexual couples that Rich evaluates builds her argument that heterosexuality is naturalized in culture whereby making invisible, other ways of loving, in her case lesbianism. The early arguments of the essay that establish the ways in which heterosexual relationships carry a heteromasculine architecture with them are the starting point for this section.

¹²⁵ Adrienne Rich, "Compulsory Heterosexuality and Lesbian Existence", in *Feminism and Sexuality*, ed. Stevi Jackson and Sue Scott (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996), 135.

¹²⁶ Rich, "Compulsory Heterosexuality and Lesbian Existence", 131.

¹²⁷ Rich, "Compulsory Heterosexuality and Lesbian Existence", 132.

¹²⁸ Rich, "Compulsory Heterosexuality and Lesbian Existence", 131-132.

1980

As we address the institution itself, moreover, we begin to perceive a history of female resistance which has never fully understood itself because it has been so fragmented, miscalled, erased. It will require a courageous grasp of the politics and economics, as well as the cultural propaganda, of heterosexuality to carry us beyond individual cases or diversified group situations into the complex kind of overview needed to undo the power men everywhere wield over women, power which has become a model for every other form of exploitation and illegitimate control.¹²⁹

2017

While Rich claimed lesbian existence as a resistance to and defiance of heteromascuine power, my focus is relationship forms, in a turn away from monogamy to non-monogamous practices.

2014

Feminists have coined the term “compulsory monogamy” to describe the deeply normalized status of coupling, especially for women. To say that monogamy is compulsory is to call attention to constraints on our ability to imagine alternatives. The visibility of alternative relationship models can challenge monogamy’s grip on our imaginations, but it can also reinforce its status.¹³⁰

2004 / 2016

The term “compulsory monogamy” is a gesture toward Rich’s “compulsory heterosexuality” and is used to describe the social relations and gendered inscriptions that normalize monogamy and render it the only option. The term exposes the insistence on the myth of the monogamous couple form and critiques the systemic coercive idea that monogamy is the certain, right, and natural choice of relating. It also refers to the ways in which women are stigmatized when not in one. Within compulsory monogamy I include the compulsions toward fidelity, sexuality, and coupledness. Compulsory monogamy extends Rich’s compulsory heterosexuality to make space for the work not yet done and to shift the emphasis from sexual orientation to relationship form. Compulsory monogamy, then, identifies the invisibility of non-monogamy following Rich’s claim of the lesbian experience in compulsory heterosexuality. Elizabeth Emens’ essay “Monogamy’s Law: Compulsory Monogamy and the Polyamorous Existence” is the

¹²⁹ Rich, “Compulsory Heterosexuality and Lesbian Existence”, 141.

¹³⁰ Angela Willey, “Constituting compulsory monogamy: normative femininity at the limits of imagination”, *Journal of Gender Studies* 24, no. 6 (February 25, 2014): 621-633.

earliest instance I note the term. In the text, Emens grapples with the ways in which laws make monogamy certain. It asks why multi-party marriage is so undesirable. And echoing Rich's question about lesbian existence, it asks why is it so *invisible*? The introduction of Angela Willey's recent book, *Undoing Monogamy: The Politics of Science and the Possibilities of Biology*, culls some of the existing analysis on the subject of women in monogamy. Willey specifically uses the term compulsory monogamy there to describe the status of the couple, its deeply normalized pattern in culture, and the related processes of women's socialization. For author Laurie Penny, compulsory monogamy includes a system of unequal emotional effort—of what she describes as the “love labor” assigned to women involved in relationships. She argues that women's agency has been rendered invisible by the grand narrative of romantic love that creates compulsory monogamy.¹³¹

2016

Women, by contrast, learn from an early age that love is work. That in order to be loved, we will need to work hard, and if we want to stay loved we will need to work harder. We take care of people, soothe hurt feelings, organize chaotic lives and care for men who never learned to care for themselves, regardless of whether or not we're constitutionally suited for such work. We do this because we are told that if we don't, we will die alone and nobody will find us until an army of cats has eaten all the skin off our faces.

Little boys are told they should “get” girlfriends, but they are not encouraged to seriously consider their future roles as boyfriends and husbands. Coupledness, for men, is not supposed to involve a surrendering of the self, as it is for women. Young men do not worry about how they will achieve a “work-life” balance, nor does the “life” aspect of that equation translate to “partnership and childcare”. When commentators speak of women's “work-life balance”, they're not talking about how much time a woman will have, at the end of the day, to work on her memoirs, or travel the world, or spend time with her friends. “Life”, for women, is envisioned as a long trajectory towards marriage. “Life”, for men, is meant to be bigger than that.¹³²

The grand narrative signifying that legitimate adult existence is traced through what is referred to as the relationship escalator—of couplehood, to marriage, and then family,

¹³¹ Laurie Penny, “Maybe you should just be single”, *New Statesman*, February 14, 2016, <https://www.newstatesman.com/politics/feminism/2016/02/maybe-you-should-just-be-single>.

¹³² Penny, “Maybe you should just be single”.

carries with it deeply engrained gender roles that have historically put women at a disadvantage. Scholarly feminist work on this subject illustrates the need for critique, reconceptualization and/or alternatives to monogamy's grand narrative. Non-monogamy is one such site of possibility that has been present all along, but sidelined to alternative living and promiscuity for the sake of the compulsion to see only monogamous relationships as the one true and legitimate relationship form.

2009 / 2010

*But even our very liberal pocket of our relatively liberal society is massively—and, to us, surprisingly—mononormative. Acquaintances, friends, and colleagues are constantly assuming that our relationship, and indeed every relationship that they think of as “serious”, is a sexually monogamous one.*¹³³

NON-MONOGRAMY AS LIBERTY AND CRITIQUE

Circa 1940

*I reserve the right to love many different people at once, and to change my prince often.*¹³⁴

1854 – 1910 / 1990 – 2017

Given the historical asymmetrical power dynamics between men and women found in marriage and heterosexual monogamy, this chapter addresses reconceptualizations of monogamous relationships found in non-monogamy. With a focus on the nineteenth and twenty-first centuries in the U.S., I ask, how do the feminist politics of egalitarianism take form in non-monogamous relationships? I locate my evaluation in the ways in which consensual non-monogamies deal with the concepts of jealousy and relational autonomy. I take this up at a moment when compulsory monogamy is seen most recently in the same-sex marriage act and before, I anticipate, consensual non-monogamy advocacy takes root—before it opts to fall in line along the same normative track.

¹³³ C.S.I. Jenkins and Jonathan Jenkins Ichikawa, “On Being The Only Ones”, *Off Topic*, 2010, on C.S.I. Jenkins' personal website, accessed April 22, 2017, <https://www.carriejenkins.net/writing/>.

¹³⁴ Attributed to Anaïs Nin. See: Dr. Purushothaman. *Quotes for Change* (Kollam, IN: Center for Human Perfection, 2015), 104.

1854

*The ground to be taken by every man and every woman is this: "I claim freedom for myself; I desire freedom for all. I will neither be a slave, nor an enslaver. Sovereign of my own heart and life, I respect the same sovereignty in others." This assertion of the broad principle of freedom does away with all cause for jealousy, and all excuse for the outrages it inflicts.*¹³⁵

Free love was a movement that emerged as an expression of the poetic notion that love cannot be bound, and as a critique of monogamy and marriage. Free love or "variety" first appears most visibly in the U.S. in the nineteenth century and is most generally described as simultaneous and sequential sexual relationships.¹³⁶ "Consensual non-monogamy" (CNM)¹³⁷ is a twenty-first century umbrella term that refers to multiple partner relationships conducted with transparency and honesty where all partners agree and consent to the non-monogamous relationship.

2014

I like the idea behind your project . . . For us, polyamory is political and feminist. I recently wrote a simple definition of my view of poly that might speak to you - Polyamory might mean a lot of different things for different people - for me, it means that romantic love is infinite. From this simple premise, a whole host of wonderful conclusions can be drawn. And the denial and suppression of this simple idea is the root cause of the subjugation of feminine power and the repression of female sexuality. After the sexual revolution, the invention of birth control and in vitro fertilization, and the women's movement - the illusion of monogamy and its view that love is a rare commodity and must be jealously guarded, is the last stand of the patriarchy. Once we understand that romantic love is not a scarce commodity to be owned and controlled, but, rather, an abundant gift to be freely shared, the oppressive and repressive patriarchy will disappear.

Let me know what you think . . .

-S¹³⁸

¹³⁵ Thomas and Mary Sargent Gove Nichols, *Marriage: Its History, Character, and Results* (New York: L.T. Nichols, 1854), 394.

¹³⁶ As noted in: Joanne Passet, *Sex Radicals and the Quest for Women's Equality* (Champaign: The University of Illinois Press, 2003), 163.

¹³⁷ The terms "consensual non-monogamy" and "ethical non-monogamy" are used interchangeably to reference relationship forms where all sexual and/or romantic partners agree that having multiple and simultaneous sexual and/or romantic partners is acceptable. The practice of polyamory falls under both categories.

¹³⁸ From an email correspondence with a married polyamorist from Milwaukee on the *OkCupid* social networking website, April 2014.

I begin with the hope that there might be great potential in non-monogamies since they are not part of the grand narrative surrounding heterosexual normativity. Instead, they are derived from the concepts of liberation and equality (not heteromascuine culture, patriarchal lineage, or purity of familial lines) and as a result they have a different history and offer a different script.

1855

When will man recognize woman as her own, and accept her love as a free and vivifying gift, instead of claiming it as a property in an arbitrary fidelity, which may be false and full of death!

Ah, when will woman stand before the universe an individual being, faithful to her own life-law, fully sensible of her God-given dower of love, and her right to bestow it according to the divine law of attraction?¹³⁹

Jealousy, sexual servitude, isolationism, and restricted agency are objectionable concepts, yet they are commonly used to describe the effects of monogamous relationships. They even stand in as proof of one's true commitment to a relationship—of the sacrifice made by the virtuous. It's not difficult to imagine how these issues present more often at a woman's expense in society. In the nineteenth century it was difficult for feminist women to separate their desire for rights to independence while living in a society that, in effect, forced them into marriage bonds for stability and protection. Their critiques show that monogamy is a source of women's oppression as a site of gendered restriction and conditioning that tells a woman that her worth is found in the unit of the couple and at the service of a man.

Whether non-monogamies are more egalitarian forms of relating certainly depends on the particular form since it would be difficult to argue that all non-monogamies privilege equality. Polygamy, for instance, is an indisputably deeply patriarchal form. Consensual non-monogamy stresses equality among the people involved; therefore, practices such as polygamy or polyandry do not qualify as consensual non-monogamies. This chapter addresses consensual non-monogamy to see how it might disrupt, dismantle, or reconfigure the possessive and restrictive concepts attached to monogamy.

¹³⁹ Mary Sargent Gove Nichols, *Mary Lydon: Or Revelations of a Life. An Autobiography* (New York: Stringer and Townsend, 1855), 386.

1897

*I demand the independence of woman, her right to support herself; to live for herself; to love whomever she pleases, or as many as she pleases. I demand freedom for both sexes, freedom in love and freedom in motherhood.*¹⁴⁰

INDIVIDUAL FREEDOM ASSERTED THROUGH FREE LOVE

1858

*I believe in the absolute freedom of the affections and that it is woman's privilege – ay her right – to accept or refuse any love that comes to her. [...] When the love has died out for the man who has taken her heart, she is living a lie to herself; her own nature, and to him, if she continues to hold an intimate relation to him.*¹⁴¹

The language used to speak about free love of the nineteenth century varies in historical documents, and while some free lovers claimed the philosophical right to change sex partners with frequency, it didn't necessarily mean they practiced it that way. Some claimed free love as an assertion of the right to choice and variety. In some circles, free love introduced the poetic imperative of true love being a free love, as in Henry David Thoreau's poem from 1849; "My love must be as free, As is the eagle's wing, Hovering o'er land and sea, And everything".¹⁴² Free love also held political promise in that it included an insistence of a woman's sovereign right to her own body through the concept of consent, freedom to love whom she chooses and against arranged marriage, the right to change that love through divorce and remarriage, and the right to partake in sexual relations for pleasure outside of procreation with birth control methods, as well as the right to have sexual relations outside of marital bonds. Tied to liberation at its center, free love offered women the possibility to express their affinities openly and provided a language to critique the system of their subjugation—it proffered a way to surpass the tight constraints of their time.

¹⁴⁰ Emma Goldman quoted in: John Chalberg, *Emma Goldman: American Individualist* (New York: Harper Collins, 1991), 97.

¹⁴¹ Julia Barnes, speaking at the Free Convention that took place in Rutland, Vermont in 1858. See: *Proceedings of the Free Convention* (Boston: J.B. Yerrington & Son, 1858), 54.

¹⁴² Henry David Thoreau, "Free Love", in *Poems of Nature* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1895), 37-38.

The historical moment of free love is embedded in and a reaction to the larger situation of politics, concept of emancipation, and individual rights predominant in the mid-nineteenth century. The challenges to traditional morality and religion brought on by the Enlightenment and the emancipatory politics of the French Revolution had created an environment where alternatives such as free love could flourish. Free love in the nineteenth century U.S. emerges alongside feminist critiques of women's servitude to men. It is found to be coexisting with various critiques of marriage that reject the gender roles that disadvantage women. In an age when most of the sex laws of the time discriminated against women (such as marriage and divorce laws, and birth-control restrictions), free love particularly stressed women's rights. Free love proposed a use of the body in love and a form in which women could assert their agency and feel a sense of liberation. But only in some cases was free love a philosophical belief about taking many lovers. It gave women the right to say no to sex as much as it stated the right to have sexual relations with others. It encouraged letting love lead over the practical, social, and economic architecture that coerced people into marriage bonds.

Nineteenth century feminists voicing critiques of monogamy include those cited in the previous section; Victoria Woodhull, Emma Goldman, and Mary Sargent Gove Nichols, to which I also include John Humphrey Noyes, as they recognized the unfair bias of women in coupled relationships (most commonly then was marriage, of course). Historically, women were not allowed the social or legal right to have sexual relations with anyone but their husbands. The concept of free love, then, was a release from what one can today recognize as compulsory monogamy and a release from the bind that women were to have but one lover in their life, their husband—a release from institution and custom in favor of the individual heart.

ONEIDA COMMUNITY:

LIBERATION THROUGH COMMUNAL LOVING AND LIVING

Circa 80

*In the resurrection they neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are like the angels in heaven.*¹⁴³

1848 – 1881

Honesty, equality, and relational autonomy are a few of the central terms of non-monogamous practices.¹⁴⁴ One could say that these qualities were a part of the Oneida Community, the Bible Communist group located in upstate New York and existing from 1848-1881. They practiced free love and such traits as honesty and equality were part of the design and organization of the community itself. The region was referred to as the “burned over district” to describe the great religious fervor that was shared with similar groups like the Shakers and Quakers. John Humphrey Noyes founded the Oneida Community and one of his main goals was to reorganize the gender roles dividing men and women.¹⁴⁵ Noyes designed what he called, “complex marriage” to replace the institution of marriage (even though it carried the term), because he believed marriage was slavery for women and described this idea in his pamphlet *Slavery and Marriage: A Dialogue*.

1850

*[Marriage] dictates sexual union, I will allow; but this marriage in pairs is only one form or method of bringing about sexual union, and I believe that this union is as arbitrary as the slaveholder’s method of securing natural service; and it is very extensively, if not universally, a cruel and oppressive method of uniting the sexes, especially to woman, the weaker party. The catalogue of woman’s abuses under the tyranny of matrimony, compare very well with the cruel lot of the slaves.*¹⁴⁶

¹⁴³ From Matt. 22:30, dated between the years 80-90s. John Humphrey Noyes referred to this passage in his description of complex marriage.

¹⁴⁴ Jin Haritaworn, Chin-ju Lin and Christian Klesse, “Poly/logue: A Critical Introduction to Polyamory”, *Sexualities* 9, no. 5 (December 2006): 518.

¹⁴⁵ Because there were many points of reconfiguration of the relation between the sexes intertwined in the community, it does the history of this community’s radical feminist ideals a disservice to parse out the free love aspects as distinct, therefore, some overlaps to broader feminist aims will be relayed here.

¹⁴⁶ John Humphrey Noyes, *Slavery and Marriage: A Dialogue* (Oneida, NY: s.n., 1850), 7-8.

Noyes believed sex to be a spiritual union, a form of worship, and an art form. He argued that the competition and jealousy exhibited in traditional marriage, prevented devout worship and true religious faith. In his terms, to be truly devout meant to reject the singularity of the couple, instead to live with love for all brothers and sisters, and to engage in sexual love with all communards of the opposite sex. To that end, complex marriage meant an alliance to the group, and rejecting attachment to any one special person. Moreover, the Oneida Community included several features designed to release women from their subordination including shared property, equal labor division and earnings, and reproductive care—all concepts that were far ahead of their time. Most lived independently in a private room furnished with a single bed, an aspect to the organization that allowed women three guineas and a room of one's own—literally and before Virginia Woolf's time. Women of the community cut their hair short, cut their skirts at mid-calf exposing pants worn beneath (a precursor to the revolutionary bloomers), and rid themselves of the contemporaneous corset, thereby liberating them of conventional and laborious tropes of beauty. The free love concept of individual liberty can be found in the Oneida Community's practices and organization—of their sexual relations and living arrangements, on both individual and communal levels.

ONEIDA COMMUNITY VERSUS FREE LOVE

1849

The Oneida Community was formed at a time when free love ideals were hailed by few and demonized by most. There were, however, important distinctions between Noyes' idea of complex marriage and the contemporaneous notion of free love. In a text from 1849, Noyes states “we love one another, and that not by pairs, as in this world, but *en masse*”—language not meant to suggest group sex but non-monogamy as in the Oneida Community, “sexual exclusiveness was abolished in favor of the freedom to have sexual intercourse with any partner who so desired.”¹⁴⁷ It was similar to free love in that it recognized that people often have attractions to more than a singular spouse in their lives and it gave them freedom to follow that attraction. However, Noyes' notion of complex marriage was not based on following sexual instincts as contemporaneous free lovers

¹⁴⁷ Robert Fogarty, ed., *Special Love/Special Sex: An Oneida Community Diary* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 1994), 7.

wrote, instead it focused on nurturing a “magnetic spirit”¹⁴⁸ that was to be exhibited to all in the community. The magnetic spirit was connected to members’ religious devotional practice and encouraged nurturing an attraction for and attractiveness to all. As did other free lovers, Noyes critiqued the isolationism built into monogamous marriage in his writings. He believed isolationism produced a limited spirit and restriction from following one’s own path. By contrast, he advocated engagement and exposure to many and different minds and hearts. So while Noyes believed sex had an important social and non-isolationist function, he believed too, that it had a spiritual function. Members were expected to improve themselves via sexual relations and that this would bring them closer to God. It was a process that Noyes termed “ascension”. In practice, the system of ascension had a feminist component in that older women introduced young men to the art of sex and thus women were the tutors and in control of the sexual experience. Another feminist aspect of complex marriage was that sexual encounters were encouraged to be arranged ahead of time in what were called, love interviews, when a third party acted as a mediator thereby empowering women’s right to consent and also easing feelings of obligation or rejection.

ONEIDA COMMUNITY & WOMEN’S PLEASURE

1884

*Here were tried elaborate experiments in sexualism, and an act that is done crudely, passionately, or by reason of blind instinct elsewhere, was reduced to an art.*¹⁴⁹

1869

*Last night J.H.N. talked with me about having sexual intercourse performed on the stage. “We shall never have heaven till we can conquer shame, and make a beautiful exhibition on stage.”*¹⁵⁰

¹⁴⁸ Here, a magnetic spirit refers to their practice of mesmerism and a belief in mystical laws of attraction that powerfully connect everything in the universe. See: Robert Fogarty, ed., *Desire and Duty at Oneida: Tirzah Miller’s Intimate Memoir* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 2000), 25.

¹⁴⁹ Ely Van De Warker, “A Gynecological Study of the Oneida Community”, *The American Journal of Obstetrics and Diseases of Women and Children* 17, no. 8 (August 1884): 50.

¹⁵⁰ From the diary of Tirzah Miller reprinted in: Fogarty, *Desire and Duty at Oneida*, 60.

1872 / 1891

The ways in which Oneida Community members were counseled to engage in intercourse under complex marriage implemented feminist aims toward sexual equality and female pleasure. Their sexual art form was formalized in the text *Male Continence*, written by Noyes in 1872. The technique, as it is outlined in the booklet, describes sexual intercourse with the deferment of orgasm or “crisis” until a planned day when conception was decided upon—when children were desired and planned for. More specifically, the practice of intercourse was confined to slow motions in avoidance of engaging the “muscular exercise” that hastens ejaculation. While the title implies the practice centers on the male experience, Noyes mentions that in practicing sex in this way, his partner experienced pleasure for a duration and depth to which she never had before. People in the social and medical sciences sought to study the community because of their unusual practice and their experiments in selective reproduction called “stirpiculture”.¹⁵¹ One in particular was anthropologist and physician, Anita Newcomb McGee (1865-1940) who studied the Shakers and Bethel communities, as well as Oneida. She too found that women’s pleasure was heightened using the male continence method as female orgasms were reported with frequency practicing this method.¹⁵² Male continence was a form of birth control (something that was highly uncommon at the time) that separated the amative from the propagative and freed women from the threat of reproductive labor, thereby enhancing relaxation and sexual pleasure. It carried a religious dimension and technical mandate for the partners—to not simply take part in carnal passions, but to engage in intercourse as a way to commune with God, to protect women from pregnancy, accommodate women’s pleasure, and to give women power of consent.

¹⁵¹ “Stirpiculture” is the term used to describe the Oneida Community’s experiment in eugenics. In the Oneida Community, a group of leaders chose who was allowed to procreate through an evaluative process that measured their spiritual, physical, and emotional health.

¹⁵² This information came to me from a conversation with Chris Jennings in Chicago, July 2016. He is the author of *Paradise Now: The Story of American Utopianism* (2016) which devotes a large section to the Oneida Community. The papers of Anita Newcomb McGee are held at the Library of Congress Washington.

ONEIDA COMMUNITY:

ELIMINATING JEALOUSY & IMPERFECT PERFECTIONISM

1874

I feel no jealousy about M.W., but an unaccountable disgust came over me at the idea of his lying in her embrace, kissing her, and so on. I never had this feeling about anyone before. I am grieved, too, that he does not look higher. It is none of my business, I know, and perhaps my feelings are altogether wrong; but though I have nothing in the world against her, her life seems so coarse to me, that the idea of very close contact is repugnant. I never thought I could kiss her. Men probably think differently, though I remember that used to be J.H.N.'s opinion about her.¹⁵³

1891

Love in the exclusive form has jealousy as its compliment, and jealousy brings on strife and division.¹⁵⁴

2016

Noyes' design of complex marriage ultimately meant to discourage special relationships of any kind, but it specifically disturbed male fantasies of ownership of women. The "possessive spirit", according to Noyes, was a threat to the group and a threat to their full worship of God. Within many of Noyes' writings, the expression of the possessive spirit, jealousy, is characterized as a negative affect that must be overcome. Even today jealousy is a topic that turns in on itself in regard to relationships. As a painful affect that represents an assumption that one's love belongs only to them, jealousy in turn, is used to mark an intensity of love, represent verification of care, and attestation of commitment. The community writings and talks offered the non-monogamous community members guidance in how to avoid falling into "selfish love" and jealousy.

1891

He told me that he might sleep with me every night, if I wanted him to, and that if he got into special love, he would get him out.¹⁵⁵

1876

The process was perfectly natural. Love for the truth and love for one another had

¹⁵³ From the diary entry dated March 29, 1874 by Tirzah Miller reprinted in: Fogarty, *Desire and Duty at Oneida*, 81-82.

¹⁵⁴ John Humphrey Noyes quoted in: Anita Newcomb McGee, "An Experiment in Human Stirpiculture", *The American Anthropologist* 4, no. 4 (October 1891): 320.

¹⁵⁵ From the diary of Tirzah Miller in: Fogarty, *Desire and Duty at Oneida*, 75.

*been nurtured and strengthened till it could bear any strain. We could receive criticism kindly, and give it without fear of offending, in the element of tried affection.*¹⁵⁶

Mutual criticism was an important feature of the community that allowed for public airings of issues such as jealousy in an environment that used admonishment for social control. Mutual criticism was meant to be objective in that it was to be given without bias or emotion. Examples of records kept from mutual criticism meetings shed light on the ways in which the community sought to balance an individual's masculine and feminine sides, and to foster the inner and outer character traits that create generosity and harmony among the egalitarian group. The following are three examples that touch on these issues. "He is an unselfish man; free from envy and jealousy. He needs outward refinement. The inward beauty of his character is working out, and will eventually overcome all external defects."¹⁵⁷ "The generic fault with A. is that he is too masculine."¹⁵⁸ "There is not woman enough about him."¹⁵⁹ The attention paid to balancing one's feminine with masculine sides of character was imbedded in the community's beliefs and is another feminist feature.

Most who arrived to join the community came for its religious doctrines. Some new commune members were not aware of the sexual practice of complex marriage before arriving. It is written that members came down with nervous disorders and suffered great anxiety that for some, were attributed to the form of complex marriage and its enforcement through mutual criticism.¹⁶⁰ Despite Noyes' many "Home Talks" and published writings, all serving as ideology and practical guide supporting his belief in free love as the healthy, spiritual, and just practice, two published diaries of community

¹⁵⁶ Murray Levine and Barbara Bunker eds., *Mutual Criticism* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 1975), 14. This is a quote from John Humphrey Noyes describing the Putney Community, a community similar to the Oneida. From *Mutual Criticism*, which was originally published by the Office of the American Socialist in Oneida in 1876 and thought to be authored by Noyes.

¹⁵⁷ Levine and Bunker, *Mutual Criticism*, 44.

¹⁵⁸ Levine and Bunker, *Mutual Criticism*, 49.

¹⁵⁹ Levine and Bunker, *Mutual Criticism*, 62.

¹⁶⁰ Such policing of people's emotions for one another and such control of the heart that was required of each member but was impossible for some; those were counseled out of the community. Others who took on free love with too much enthusiasm, having the "rooster spirit" as Noyes called it, would too, be counseled out of the community if mutual criticism failed them. Still, at its height, the community had 300 members.

members reveal and exclaim their struggle with jealousy and desire for one special love above all others.¹⁶¹ So while the structure of the community hoped to eradicate all forms of ownership and possession, including jealousy, at least in these two examples, it came as an inner struggle that was hard won.

1874

When I went into J.H.N's room this noon he showed me a note he had had this morning from Harriet Worden, telling of good experience she had last night sleeping with Edward. It went through my heart like a knife, and it was two hours before I could breathe naturally, there was such pain at the center of my life. Yet I told no one and she and all supposed that I felt perfectly well about it. I did, really. It did not seem as though I was jealous, because I had no bad feelings toward her, but had a pleasant talk with her about it. It was like death. Terrible! What does it mean?¹⁶²

1877

Oh how my heart aches for the separation. I only saw her a few minutes after meeting but not speak to her. Mr. Towner was talking with Ann then with Emma. He said Mary was excited.

Mr. Towner told me that Mary wanted to see me at 1 P.M. she said she was going to Auburn with Emma tomorrow. Oh that I was going instead of Emma. I could not keep from crying. Roswell got my bag for Emma. I went most to the Castle during meeting on the R. Road. After getting back about 9:45 I dropped on to the bed & a feeling came over me that she would go with me. I could not eat any thing after break fast the rest of the day.¹⁶³

ONEIDA COMMUNITY: THE COERSION OF CHOICE

1877

I have thrown away with indifference so much love that has been offered me, and lavished so much on my one attraction to Edward, that I now feel quite poor in lovers, though my first love—Frank told me yesterday that he felt more of this magnetic, electrical attraction toward me than toward any one.¹⁶⁴

¹⁶¹ It is rumored that there is an unpublished third diary belonging to a private family, but it's not certain.

¹⁶² From Tirzah Miller's diary in: Fogarty, *Desire and Duty at Oneida*, 75.

¹⁶³ From the diary of Victor Hawley in: Fogarty, *Special Love/Special Sex*, 186-187.

¹⁶⁴ This group of utopians took the contemporaneous belief in mesmerism, a practice that recognizes connective powers between us as in a hypnotic appeal, and incorporated the language of mesmerism into their relationships. From Tirzah Miller's diary in: Fogarty, *Desire and Duty at Oneida*, 140.

1884

While I have written of the community's practices of a feminist persuasion, there are undercurrents and blatant contradictions to a sense of equality among the sexes. Men were thought to be superior despite the radical attempts by the Oneida Community to create some sense of equality among the sexes. Using "Male Continence" as their guide, women were instructed to submit to men's pleasure, for men were believed to be the conduit to God. In 1884 Ely Van De Warker published a gynecological study of the Oneida Community women in the *American Journal of Obstetrics and Diseases of Women and Children*. In it, Van De Warker printed the testimony of an Oneida Community member who had consented to answering his questions. In it, she is quoted as writing; "the women were always instructed that the more unselfish [they w]ere in giving the men all the satisfaction they could in [an a]spect, the nearer they were to God". While Noyes intended sex to be equal and loving, it included an underside of coercion for some women. According to the testimony of an unnamed woman, "I have known of girls no [no more than] sixteen or seventeen years of age being called upon [to have] intercourse as often as seven times in a week and of [ten p]erhaps with a feeling of repugnance to all of those [s]he was with during the time. She would do this without complaint simply to gain the confidence of those in charge of such things so that she would be allowed to associate with some one she loved".¹⁶⁵ When age is considered, at least one woman's testimony states that with the ascension system there were girls not having yet gone through puberty who were initiated into sex with the elder men of the community—possibly too young to have had any interest or awareness of sex yet, at all. Although complex marriage ostensibly presents a surface mandate of women's power and agency to choose to accept or reject the propositions of men, these examples make clear that there was also pressure on women and girls to submit to men.¹⁶⁶

¹⁶⁵ Van De Warker, "A Gynecological Study of the Oneida Community", 789.

¹⁶⁶ While it is not possible to know for certain if Oneida Community women were better off in or outside the community, certainly the organization of the community was an improvement in comparison to the restrictive laws and practices around women's rights and issues outside the property lines.

ONEIDA COMMUNITY ENDING

1891

But now one-fourth of the adult communists had been living in pairs for weeks or months, and these pairs had children; and there arose the unexpected issue—the Spirit of Monogamy—which now grew and spread until the whole body was infected with it. Success and leisure gave time for expressions of dissatisfaction; a discordant element found its way into the community; the old solidarity was gone, and each desired a mate.¹⁶⁷

1870s

The passage above refers to the gradual breakup of the Oneida Community after thirty-one years when complex marriage came to an end and members either chose to get married or they moved away from the community grounds. Free love, as described by Noyes with such joy, stands in contrast to the two existing memoirs and the testimony from within Van De Warker's gynecology report.¹⁶⁸ One could argue that the *enslavement* of women by their husbands was replaced by the sexual domination of Noyes himself—that paradoxically, free love at the Oneida Community was simultaneously feminist *and* male-dominated. Yet, while it may not have been perfectly egalitarian for women, it did still undisputedly challenge and redistribute the asymmetrical gender roles of concurrent, and one could argue, most current monogamous relationships. While many consider the community to be a failure, the length of its existence is significant in comparison to most social living experiments, and their ideas undisputedly contribute to the discourse of feminism of the nineteenth century and, I believe, today, as well.

¹⁶⁷ Anita Newcomb McGee about the gradual disbandment of the Oneida Community's complex marriage found in: Newcomb McGee, "An Experiment in Stirpiculture", 323.

¹⁶⁸ This is a problem with working with limited archives—the accuracy of analysis is not certain. There was a great amount of the Oneida Community archive that was deliberately burned by community descendants in 1947 in an attempt to erase the eugenics and complex marriage materials, specifically, out of retroactive shame. As described by Ellen Wayland-Smith, "The burning of the papers [...] included original members' diaries, letters, and the community notes and logs in terms of their sexual practices [...] The Oneida descendants knew about the burning, obviously. At the time, they had people knocking at their doors, trying to get access to these papers, and the thought, 'You know what, we're going to put an end to this for good.' In some ways, they were intensely private people", in: Lisa Hix, "The Polyamorous Christian Socialist Utopia That Made Silverware for Proper Americans", *Collectors Weekly*, June 14, 2016, <https://www.collectorsweekly.com/articles/the-polyamorous-christian-socialist-utopia-that-made-silverware-for-proper-americans/>.

1891

*In spite of the energy and magnetism of so remarkable a man as Noyes, in spite of his long-continued efforts, and just when success seems within his grasp, his one misjudgment of human nature bore fruit—the neglected instinct of monogamy arose in its might and crushed to nothing the whole structure; and he, the builder, went last of all.*¹⁶⁹

MORE FREE LOVERS

While free love emerges in a climate of nineteenth century radical individualism in the U.S., the Oneida Community's complex marriage stands as an example in opposition to such theories of independence as it was very much about the group. The opposition to radical individualism is the precise point on which Noyes' beliefs and preachings diverge from the antebellum feminists of the time—rather than free love as individual right, it was just one part of his vision of a full restructuring of society.¹⁷⁰

Victoria Woodhull is the most well-known female spokesperson for free love of the late nineteenth century whose words more directly align with the concept of radical individualism. Her life and practices were unique and fascinating on multiple fronts. She was the first female stockbroker (along with her sister, Tennessee), the first woman to run for president (she selected Frederick Douglass as her running mate), a publisher, and a spiritualist.¹⁷¹ Her popular lectures and publications were sources of great interest and great protest. She both preached and practiced free love as at one point Woodhull was living with her ex-husband, her husband, and her lover at the same time.¹⁷² In regard to free love itself Woodhull proposed this:

1874

I advocate sexual freedom for all people—freedom for the monogamist to practice monogamy, for the varietist to be a varietist still, for the promiscuous to remain

¹⁶⁹ Anita Newcomb McGee describing the gradual disbandment of the Oneida Community's complex marriage in: "An Experiment in Stirpiculture", 325.

¹⁷⁰ His vision was so extensive as to also include a eugenics program he believed would produce human's ability to achieve immortality.

¹⁷¹ Spiritualism and feminism have many a crossover at this time, a subject not to be covered here, but certainly of great interest.

¹⁷² For further information about Woodhull's personal life, see: Mary Gabriel, *Notorious Victoria: The Life of Victoria Woodhull Uncensored* (Chapel Hill, NC: Algonquin Books, 1998).

*promiscuous. [...] I might do all of this and be myself a celibate and an advocate of celibacy. [...] Advocating the right to do a thing and advocating the doing of that thing are two entirely separate and different matters.*¹⁷³

Woodhull stressed the need to redistribute the power relations between men and women in sexual relations. She believed that in sexual encounters, women must dictate with whom they bed in response to their “sexual instinct”. She strongly emphasized the responsibility of women to rise up and take hold of their sexual relations and to only reproduce with “good men” in order to produce good and healthy children. She believed this was the key to social reformation and the evolution of a better, stronger race of humans. Woodhull, like others, cited science arguments and opinions published in respected journals to support her arguments. Woodhull’s beliefs about free love improving society overall echoed the tenets of the Oneida Community and in fact, she once described the Oneida Communists as “the best order of society now on earth”.¹⁷⁴

1872

*Yes, I am a Free Lover. I have an inalienable, constitutional and natural right to love whom I may, to love as long or as short a period as I can; to change that love everyday if I please, and with that right neither you nor any law you can frame have any right to interfere.*¹⁷⁵

1871

*Free Love, then is the law by which men and women of all grades and kinds are attracted to or repelled from each other, and does not describe the resulted accomplished by either; these results depend upon the condition and development of the individual subjects. It is the natural operation of the affectional motives of the sexes, unbiased by any enacted law or standard of public opinion. It is the opportunity which gives the opposites in sex the conditions in which the law of chemical affinities raised into the domain of the affections can have unrestricted sway, as it has in all departments of nature except in enforced sexual relations among men and women.*¹⁷⁶

¹⁷³ From Victoria Woodhull’s speech: “Tried as by Fire; or the True and the False, Socially”, in *Selected Writings of Victoria Woodhull: Suffrage, Free Love, and Eugenics*, ed. Cari M. Carpenter (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2010), 228-229.

¹⁷⁴ In Woodhull’s interest in curing societal ills through selective breeding, the eugenics program of the Oneida Community was likely of great interest to her and a major part of her championing of them. See: Carpenter, *Selected Writings of Victoria Woodhull*, xxv.

¹⁷⁵ From Victoria Woodhull’s speech, “And the Truth Shall Make You Free”, in: Carpenter, *Selected Writings of Victoria Woodhull*, 51-52.

¹⁷⁶ Woodhull, “And the Truth Shall Make You Free”, 61.

Woodhull, in fact, would label those who married for love as free lovers. A study of her biography points to her views coming from an individual desire to be released from her marriage to an adulterous man. She wanted a divorce but male adultery was not at the time considered to be grounds for divorce, yet she imagined the freedom to have a new love in the future. She recognized the hypocrisy of monogamy that often included infidelity and felt the honesty of free love would eradicate such societal ills. A well-known example of this belief is found in her journal *Woodhull and Claflin's Weekly*¹⁷⁷ from November 2, 1872 where she published an article titled “The Beecher-Tilton Scandal” exposing the adulterous affair between Reverend Henry Ward Beecher and Elizabeth Tilton.¹⁷⁸ Woodhull claimed that while publicly preaching the imperative of fidelity from the pulpit, Reverend Beecher was secretly practicing free love. Woodhull found the hypocrisy of Beecher to be truly unbearable and aimed to expose it.¹⁷⁹ The article exhibits her belief in free love as a true and virtuous practice that offers a solution to the societal problem of adultery. She believed that if free love were legitimated, women would be released from the control of men to live freely and fully in love, not servitude. On the one hand, Woodhull’s position can be selectively seen as feminist since she emphasizes a woman’s right to choose love and to control sex; in another light, however, one could argue the opposite. Woodhull claimed women were responsible for producing society’s people of ill repute—she believed the course of women submitting to abusive and bad men produced children who would become the new source of society’s ills. Thus, she charged women the task of choosing good and healthy men to procreate with to create a

¹⁷⁷ This journal *Woodhull and Claflin's Weekly: Progress! Free Thought! Untrammelled Lives! Breaking the Way for Future Generations* contained many articles on free love in the course of its run from 1870-1876. They are fascinating documents, as is the journal *Lucifer: The Light-Bearer* (1887-1897) out of Chicago, that share the spirit of the times—of the various meetings, conventions and publications surrounding many a radical idea for social critique transformation. Many of these journals are digitized and available online.

¹⁷⁸ Beecher was accused of adultery several times in his life. Gossip aligned him with many women while married and some relationships were said to have carried on for years.

¹⁷⁹ However, Anthony Comstock, the head of the Society for the Suppression of Vice, had Victoria Woodhull arrested and imprisoned for distributing licentious material through the post. Soon following, the Comstock Act was passed in 1873 by the U.S. Congress for the “Suppression of Trade in, and Circulation of, Obscene Literature and Articles of Immoral Use”. The laws allowed the arrest of anyone publishing content deemed “obscene”—a term broadly interpreted. It could find illegal the subjects of free love, reproductive control, or rape within marriage, for example. Helena Blavatsky, the publisher of the important free love journal *Lucifer: The Light-Bearer*, faced 216 indictments at one moment as a result. One of Emma Goldman’s arrests (1916) was under the Comstock Law on the event of her giving a public lecture on the use of contraceptives. The free love movement was vocally opposed to the Comstock Law because of their belief that women were sexually enslaved by marriage and that they had an inalienable right to their own governance over their sexual relationships.

right and just society. In her eyes, women should be emancipated only so far as they simultaneously hold all responsibility to cure society through their choice of lovers. Within that condemnation, there is a seed of thinking women to be superior, but I cannot refer to that line of thinking as feminist for holding an underclass of society (women) responsible for its ills perpetuates her condemnation. Victoria Woodhull's belief in free love's ability to cure certain ills of society was a view shared by Noyes and others, as well.

1854

Mary Sargent Gove Nichols and her husband Thomas Nichols were well-known public figures in the mid-nineteenth century who wrote extensively about marriage and free love, much of which is concentrated in their book, *Marriage: Its History, Character, and Result*. In it, the couple map out the ways in which free love would eliminate social problems like prostitution, domestic infidelity, seduction,¹⁸⁰ and even infanticide.

The Nichols wrote and spoke out against traditional monogamy in favor of “freedom of affections in love-relations”.¹⁸¹ Together they believed in the concept of free love, as did many well-known figures at the time, but it was a practice that raised much controversy because of its threatening nature to marriage as the only legitimate space for sexual relations to exist. Some feminists embraced free love as part of the liberation effort, while others rejected it. Elizabeth Cady Stanton, for example, would agree with the free lovers about marital relations subordinating women, but she steered clear of advocating free love (or variety) in public for fear of delegitimizing the burgeoning women's movement.¹⁸² Like many of their time, the Nichols' general definition of free love

¹⁸⁰ Seduction was the term used as the basis of some divorce laws.

¹⁸¹ Patricia Cline Cohen, “The ‘Anti-Marriage Theory’ of Thomas and Mary Gove Nichols: A Radical Critique of Monogamy in the 1850's”, *Journal of the Early Republic* 34, no. 1 (Spring 2014): 1. Additionally, Gove Nichols placed free love within spiritualist terms—a transcendent union of man and woman—a kind of cosmic experience that needed to be “practiced at a minimum.” According to Gove Nichols, lust was believed to be bad (and as an extension, masturbation was lust).

¹⁸² Perhaps it is because of the sexual double standard that men like Thomas Nichols, Ezra Heywood, and John Humphrey Noyes were able to publish more extensively on the subject of free love. Two exceptions of journals published by women were *Lucifer: The Light-Bearer* and *Woodhull & Claflin's Weekly*. See: Ezra Heywood, *Cupid's Yokes: OR The Binding Forces of Conjugal Life. An Essay to Consider some Moral and Physiological Phases of LOVE AND MARRIAGE, Wherein is Asserted the Natural Right and Necessity of SEXUAL SELF GOVERNMENT; The Book which the United States and Local Presumption have repeatedly sought to suppress, but which Still Lives, Challenging Attention* (Princeton, MA: Co-Operative Publishing

emphasized equality of the sexes and independence from law and judgment. The exchange below makes clear that this couple who jointly published their common belief in free love, may have privately interpreted it differently from one another. They state:

1848

I said, "In a marriage with you, I resign no right of my soul. I enter into no compact to be faithful to you. I only promise to be faithful to the deepest love of my heart. If that love is yours, it will bear fruit for you, and enrich your life—our life. If my love leads me from you, I must go".

He said, "You are free. I ask only what is mine, through your love, and I ask that you give to all what is sacredly theirs. I am content to trust. I shall have my own—I ask only that".¹⁸³

Beyond Mary's implicit assertion of the right to divorce in a time that law would not allow it on merits of the heart's fancy, the passage exhibits the assertion of a woman's freedom and equality in her relationship. Mary's right to leave Thomas if her love for him ends could be interpreted as serial monogamy, while Thomas' response might be one of encouraging her to take multiple simultaneous lovers. Free love was practiced in diverse ways, as seen here within one couple. While the Nichols' book is written evenly with concern for both men and women, it often focuses on improving women's condition and status.¹⁸⁴ On the subject of free love eradicating the concept of women as property the Nichols wrote:

1854

When every man acknowledges the holy and inborn right of every woman to give her person to the attraction of the highest love; when he ceases to claim any woman as his property, his slave;—he will no more strangle her, or shoot a man whose only crime was in being beloved and chosen by her.¹⁸⁵

Co., 1876). Heywood was sentenced to two years hard labor in violation of the Comstock obscenity law for circulating his material through the post.

¹⁸³ Mary Sargent Gove Nichols, *Mary Lydon: Or Revelations of a Life. An Autobiography*, 385. Also found in: Cohen, "The 'Anti-Marriage Theory' of Thomas and Mary Gove Nichols", 5, and stated to be their wedding vows, although the veiled autobiography refers to the man as Vincent.

¹⁸⁴ The Nichols' write about the Oneida Community and refer to the community's practice as a doctrine of *omnigamy* which they define as marriage to all which is found in a section titled "Monogamy, Polygamy, and Omnigamy", in: *Marriage*, 301. The book dedicates a chapter on the Oneida Community, as well.

¹⁸⁵ Nichols, *Marriage*, 394.

Mary Sargent Gove Nichols made significant contributions to the subject of women's empowerment through new sexual relations with men by means of, for example, her critiques of marriage and advocacy of free love, and the sexual autonomy encouraged through the reproductive health lectures she traveled widely to give. The ways in which free lovers of the nineteenth century aimed to separate sexual relations from the law as it pertains to reproduction and marriage, something that might be important to visit again today as in the U.S. women's reproductive rights are being chipped away at.

1897

J. Wm. Lloyd wrote an article titled, "A New Love Ideal" published in an issue of *Lucifer: The Light-Bearer* dated March 10, 1897. In it he writes that the better form of free love is one practiced with having multiple and simultaneous lovers while distinguishing his version of free love from other interpretations.

1897

Free love, as heretofore taught, has been mainly unsuccessful because it had usually taken either the monogamic or the promiscuous extreme. It has either taught that lovers should be "true" to each other—this is exclusive of side loves—or else that permanent love was a delusion and a succession of episodes all that a wise lover could expect.

I am happy to be able to say positively, from my own experience, from much observation, and from the confessions of many of humanity's best, that it is possible to love several at the same time, to love one person supremely and several others at the same time truly, and for mutual harmony to prevail throughout the entire group of lovers thus related.¹⁸⁶

Lloyd goes on to share an exchange with a woman who, after doubting the possibility, claims love for the woman who had sexual relations with her husband, and that her husband felt love for the man she would bed. It describes the contemporary affect termed compersion, or taking pleasure in your partner's enjoyment of having sexual relations with another.

¹⁸⁶ Lloyd, "A New Love Ideal", 75.

1897

*“But my nature is too jealous, I could never endure it,” a lady said to me some years ago. But a few weeks ago she wrote me how much she loved the woman he loved: “I love your husband because he loves you and is good to you; anybody who truly loves you must be my friend.” This is the true spirit, which is perfectly possible to any high nature, and which will some day be as natural and commonplace among men as any other sympathy arising from common devotion and pursuit.*¹⁸⁷

Lloyd’s description of free love and this particular exchange share aspects of the contemporary practice of polyamory. It is clear that in free love of the nineteenth century, women were offered more choice in private decisions and acts than was common in monogamous relations. Free love had visions of effecting not only women’s agency in sexual relations and intersubjective relations, but had the potential to enhance women’s social standing, as well.

THE SEXUAL DOUBLE STANDARD

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The sexual double standard refers to the ways in which women and men are held to different standards in regard to sexual acts and conduct—women are stigmatized for their sexual appetites and behaviors, while men are rewarded for the same, and men are allowed to engage with multiple sexual partners while women are not. Critics of non-monogamy, conservatives, and monogamy’s protectors express the sexual double standard in their depiction of non-monogamous women as promiscuous. We know, and can trace back, an unfair bias and sexual double standard in the term whore, the identification of women as sluts, and those embodied in canonized literature like Nathaniel Hawthorne’s *The Scarlet Letter: A Romance* (1850) versus the way in which man’s sexual desire is seen as a sign of his gender, his manliness, of the virile stud. In the nineteenth century, the majority of free love proponents were men, which one could say was the work of the sexual double standard. Today however, women non-monogamists are more clearly present and vocal but may be socially received similarly as was, for instance, Victoria Woodhull when she was depicted as Satan incarnate in a cartoon cover of *Harper’s*

¹⁸⁷ Lloyd, “A New Love Ideal”, 75.

Weekly in 1872 for her beliefs that free love could cure society's ills, or Carrie Jenkins, a contemporary philosopher, polyamorist, and author of *What Love Is and What it Could Be* (2017) is trolled online in messages like this one that reads "this woman is a disgusting animal [...] a far, far left-wing freak that desires to completely overthrow Western Christian Civilization".¹⁸⁸ Re-appropriating derogatory terms, the central guidebook to polyamory first published in 1997 by Dossie Easton and Janet Hardy carries the title, *The Ethical Slut*, thereby flipping the demeaning to the celebratory. Irony aside, the practice distinguishes itself as a virtuous form of relating that is built on a righteous frame of honesty, transparency, and equality and is thus, the antithesis of promiscuity. Similar to the writings of nineteenth century free lovers, contemporary consensual non-monogamists, ethical non-monogamists, and polyamorists stress loving with a moral imperative.

CONSENSUAL AND ETHICAL NON-MONOGRAMIES

1997 / 2009

*As proud sluts, we believe that sex and sexual love are fundamental forces for good, activities with the potential to strengthen intimate bonds, enhance lives, open spiritual awareness, even change the world. Furthermore, we believe that every consensual sexual relationship has these potentials and that any erotic pathway, consciously chosen and mindfully followed, can be a positive, creative force in the lives of individuals and their communities.*¹⁸⁹

1990 – 2017

Consensual non-monogamy (CNM) and ethical non-monogamy are umbrella terms used today to describe the belief in having multiple and simultaneous sexual and/or romantic partners where all partners are aware and accept the non-monogamous situation. They are used interchangeably and they include polyamory.¹⁹⁰ Elisabeth Sheff¹⁹¹ defines

¹⁸⁸ Drake Baer, "Maybe Monogamy Isn't the Only Way to Love", *New York*, March 6, 2017, <http://nymag.com/scienceofus/2017/03/science-of-polyamory-open-relationships-and-nonmonogamy.html>. An article about C.S.I. Jenkins and her book *What is Love and What It Could Be* (2017). This quote represents an example of the controversy Jenkins' ideas and way of life provoke.

¹⁸⁹ Easton and Hardy, *The Ethical Slut*, 4.

¹⁹⁰ See: Barbara J. King, "A Cultural Moment for Polyamory", *National Public Radio, NPR*, March 23, 2017, <https://www.npr.org/sections/13.7/2017/03/23/521199308/a-cultural-moment-for-polyamory>.

polyamory this way; “polyamorous people openly engage in romantic, sexual, and/or affective relationships with multiple people simultaneously. It differs from swinging in its emphasis on long-term, emotionally intimate relationships and from adultery with its focus on honesty and full disclosure of the network of sexual relationships to all who participate in or are affected by them. Both men and women have access to additional partners in polyamorous relationships, distinguishing them from polygamy.”¹⁹² Polyamory is practiced in different constellations where there may be a primary partner and rotating others; it may represent a constellation form without a primary partner determined; it can be practiced as a throuple where three share an intimate loving relationship. It has many forms and possibilities.¹⁹³ While polyamory is defined in a variety of ways, for my purposes here I mean to stress the intention of long-term intimate commitments that emphasize honesty where all romantic partners are aware of one another and consent to the situation.

2014

So, what are we looking for? It's a lot easier to look for something than to know exactly what it is you're looking for.

One of the key questions that [she] and I have been examining as we negotiate our future together is whether we want to be strictly monogamous, or whether we want to join the growing number of (mostly younger) people who are pursuing some form of polyamory. And the answer that we think may work for us lays

¹⁹¹ Elisabeth Sheff is the author of *The Polyamorists Next Door: Inside Multiple-Partner Relationships and Families* (2014).

¹⁹² Elisabeth Sheff, “Polyamorous Women, Sexual Subjectivity and Power”, *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography* 34, no. 3 (June 2005): 252. Polyamory has been steadily rising in popularity since the term was coined in around 1990 by Morning Glory Zell-Ravenheart and it entered into the Oxford Dictionary in 2006. While theorization of the subject is mostly limited to guide books and short articles, significant academic writing on the subject can be found in a special issue dedicated to polyamory in the *Sexualities* journal published in 2006, some of which is referenced in this section. There has been no in-depth analysis to estimate how many polyamorists there are today, but Sheff’s blog post “How Many Polyamorists Are There in the U.S.?” on *Psychology Today* (May 9, 2014), relays Australian academic Kelly Cookson as stating that the number of sexually non-monogamous couples in the U.S. appears in the millions. One to two million are living some kind of sexual non-monogamy, and close to ten million allow some kind of satellite lovers. This number represents more than those who identify as polyamorous—it also includes swingers and gay male couples, for instance, yet it is interesting that there appear to be more women practicing it than men.

¹⁹³ As evidenced in popular culture and media, non-monogamies appear in mainstream culture. I am referring to television series like *Polyamory* (Showtime, 2012-13) and the popularity of *Big Love* (HBO, 2006-2011), as well as podcasts and mainstream journalism from those such as the *Guardian* who have published many articles on the subject over the last ten years or so. Yet despite the growth of non-monogamous practices, monogamy remains the most idealized and culturally valued form of romantic relations. And while cultural shifts have added some sexual and romantic variation over time, a ranking of relationships and sex practices remains.

somewhere in between. I don't think we're comfortable with polyamory if that means going out and developing intimate relationships with other people independent of the other partner. But I think we are interested in developing a limited number of intimate relationships with other people together, as a couple. That doesn't necessarily mean trying to pick up women for a casual hook up. Rather, I think (I recognize that I'm saying "think" a lot, but that's because while I think I speak for the both of us, I'd still like some wiggle room in case [she] disagrees) we're far more interested in meeting people with whom we can have a deeper connection, based on intellect and shared interests.

We do want to be friends. But we also are interested in friends who are interested in sharing a greater level of intimacy than in more traditional friendships.¹⁹⁴

The modifiers *consensual* and *ethical* explicitly stress the *goodness* of the practice, less the *freedom* found in the nineteenth century's free love practice. However, consensual and ethical non-monogamy acknowledge and reject the same violent history of the male fantasy of ownership of women that nineteenth century free love did. They reject the concept of a heteromale right of men to women's bodies for sex.¹⁹⁵ They give women equal access to multiple partners without stigma, thereby recasting the terms of the sexual double standard away from women as promiscuous, to principled and irreproachable. The terms consensual and ethical non-monogamy themselves, work on and critique the ways in which monogamy and certain non-monogamies are not honorable or virtuous, in this example, in how they align women in relationship to men.¹⁹⁶

Some practitioners of consensual and ethical non-monogamy, or polyamory believe their non-monogamy practice emerges in celebration of an individual sense of liberation. Some

¹⁹⁴ From an email correspondence with a married couple from New York on *OkCupid*, May 2014.

¹⁹⁵ I pause to reiterate that this project is one that places women at the center, to see where feminist issues of gender equality within romantic relationships are possibly turned on their head in non-monogamous forms.

¹⁹⁶ Although the history of non-monogamy exists outside the heteronormative, non-monogamy is criticized as still maintaining, or at least echoing the hierarchies and power inequalities found within patriarchal constructions. In many cases, consensual non-monogamy relationships form around a primary couple, meaning that couple is thought of as home base with that partner maintaining priority over any other relationships and often having the final say in their partners choice of lover. The rhetoric and shared language between consensual non-monogamy and monogamy's history include commitment, devotion, security, and accountability, for example. Those who see monogamy as part of the patriarchal structures that coerce women into subservient roles, are also critical of consensual non-monogamy for holding too closely, those terms derived from monogamy.

imagine their non-monogamy to be a critique of conventional monogamous relationships. Others see it as a rejection of the gender norms inscribed in monogamy like in the nineteenth century. Some align polyamory with queerness in a rejection of the heteronormative construct of the couple. For others still, it is part of an embrace of a type of communal lifestyle. The main points I am considering here are the ways in which ethical non-monogamies replicate, rework, or reject principles of monogamy, to what extent they move beyond them, and what they offer women specifically.

Polyamory is viewed in different ways and can have a different emphasis, intent, or structure. As a lifestyle choice it maintains an individual within a community, in a type of relation that differs from the isolation of the couple. Some desire to legitimate polyamory as a sexual orientation, mainly as a political effort to secure rights and benefits. If polyamory were accepted as a sexual orientation, it would expand the current dyadic relation of gay or straight. Each of these distinctions has different implications beyond the individual, though currently, only few see it as a social movement like more people in the nineteenth century thought of free love. Research is just beginning to give credence to the breadth of these contemporary non-monogamous practices and to describe the diverse constituents who practice it.¹⁹⁷

WORKING ON JEALOUSY

1897

I do not hesitate to say that the time is coming when mutual love for the same man or woman will be regarded as a truer and closer bond than blood relationship itself.

*And jealousy will be an unnatural and contemptible crime in the true society of the future.*¹⁹⁸

¹⁹⁷ For an overview of research and theory on consensual non-monogamy, see: Meg Barker and Darren Langdridge, "Whatever happened to non-monogamies? Critical reflections on recent theory and research", *Sexualities* 13, no. 6 (December 2010): 748-772.

¹⁹⁸ Lloyd, "A New Love Ideal", 75.

2014

*Your partner's trust in you and the freedom they give to allow you to share abundant love and sex is the source of that poly energy.*¹⁹⁹

Jealousy disproportionately effects women and is often responsible for domestic violence occurrences. At the root of understanding the ways in which jealousy operates is to return to the formation of marriage as the organization of ownership and possession of women as sex slaves and wives. To belong to another and to be faithful to another, are phrases that carry possession whereby jealousy occurs when said possession is threatened. By opening the dyad, polyamory works on destabilizing the architecture of monogamy that declares possession. Further, polyamorous relationships tend to mitigate the effects of jealousy through the concept of compersion, a term used to describe the feeling of joy and happiness for a partner in response to the partner's positive sexual experience with another lover. It is a term commonly associated with polyamory—it's the antonym of jealousy.

1855 / 2014

While polyamory does not guarantee to eliminate jealousy all together, the fact that negotiating jealousy is emphasized in the polyamorous structure reflects relational autonomy as a central value that promotes individual agency. Being that monogamy creates a culture that tolerates, and even condones jealousy as a sign of intense love,²⁰⁰ compersion provides a counter-concept with which to evaluate the egalitarian potential of polyamory. This subject is touched upon by Noyes and Gove Nichols in the nineteenth century when they state that free love and the “plenty” it produces creates virtuousness and reduces violence. In “Does Monogamy Harm Women? Deconstructing Monogamy with a Feminist Lens”, the authors state; “and because jealousy is perceived as more manageable and less essential to polyamorous relationships, the negative consequences of jealousy are likely less severe and therefore have less of a negative effect (e.g. domestic violence, sexual assault) on women”.²⁰¹

¹⁹⁹ From an email correspondence with a married polyamorist from Milwaukee on *OkCupid*, April 2014.

²⁰⁰ Jealousy is even used as a motive for violence against a lover, i.e., “a crime of passion”.

²⁰¹ Ali Ziegler et al., “Does Monogamy Harm Women? Deconstructing Monogamy with a Feminist Lens”, *Journal für Psychologie* 22, no. 1 (2014), <https://www.journal-fuer-psychologie.de/index.php/jfp/article/view/323/354>.

WORKING ON AGENCY

Another feminist aspect to polyamory includes a counter-balance to the social stereotypes attached to femininity that limit agency and autonomy. Faith Wilding's poem "Waiting" was first performed in the landmark exhibition *Womanhouse* in Los Angeles in 1974. It embodies the voice of the girl waiting to become a woman, waiting for a man, waiting for her life to unfold for her, waiting while serving others, waiting to become old and undesirable. It recounts and lists the series of activities passively, from infancy to death, to express agency as relational in the experience of a woman's life. The piece is an expression of the cultural expectations of women, of femininity.

1974

Waiting for him to notice me, to call me
Waiting for him to ask me out
Waiting for him to pay attention to me
Waiting for him to fall in love with me
Waiting for him to kiss me, touch me, touch my breasts
Waiting for him to pass my house
Waiting for him to tell me I'm beautiful
Waiting for him to ask me to go steady
Waiting to neck, to make out, waiting to go all the way
Waiting to smoke, to drink, to stay out late
Waiting to be a woman *Waiting. . .*
Waiting for my great love
Waiting for the perfect man
Waiting for Mr. Right *Waiting. . .*²⁰²

Within polyamorous relationships, by contrast, women are proposed to be equal participants, experience greater social agency, and maintain relational autonomy. The traditional construction of woman as non-sexual, passive, or frigid is counteracted in polyamory by encouraging women's rights—of agency to choose and freedom to express themselves sexually without risking stigmatization. "This is a result of basic tenets of polyamory that conflict with traditional femininity, including the prescriptive stereotypes

²⁰² Excerpt of Faith Wilding's, "Waiting", 1972, on Wilding's personal website, accessed February 2, 2015, <http://faithwilding.refugia.net/waitingpoem.pdf>. "Waiting" is a fifteen-minute monolog, scripted and first performed by Wilding in the performance program at *Womanhouse*. "Waiting" condenses a woman's entire life into a monotonous, repetitive cycle of waiting for life to begin while she is serving and maintaining the lives of others.

of women's sexual purity and inhibited sexual desire."²⁰³ Because ethical non-monogamy addresses power and sexual subjectivity issues, the potential to improve the social position of women could correspondingly increase. As quoted in the Sheff text, "sexual subjectivity is a necessary component of agency and thus self-esteem. That is, one's sexuality affects her/his ability to act in the world, and to feel like she/he can will things and make them happen".²⁰⁴

EGALITARIAN LOVE

In the twenty-first century, while laws have changed, birth control is available (although free accessibility is currently threatened in the U.S.), and sex outside of marriage is no longer forbidden, other cultural stigmas remain—the sexual double standard is still present, as are the gender roles that oppress women. The rising visibility and participation of people in consensual non-monogamous relationships, however, stand in contrast to and critique of the compulsion toward monogamy. The addition of consensual non-monogamy and polyamory to the catalogue of accepted sexual identities offer women an expanded horizon of choice.²⁰⁵

2004

*Deciding to live polyamorously was truly liberating for my sexuality. In fact, it wasn't something I was taught by men, it was something that was organic to me, that I had theorized for many years—much like I had theorized about my bisexuality but had not acted on it.*²⁰⁶

2018 / 1869 / 1990

How we love is intrinsically linked to how we have been taught to love. The new members of the Oneida Community attempted to unlearn what they had been raised to do—how they had been raised to love and relate, as it was for free lovers, and as it is for polyamorists. The historical example of nineteenth century free love is a direct

²⁰³ Sheff, "Polyamorous Women, Sexual Subjectivity and Power", 251.

²⁰⁴ Karin Martin, *Puberty, Sexuality, and the Self: Girls and Boys at Adolescence* (New York: Routledge, 1996), 10.

²⁰⁵ See: Sheff, "Polyamorous Women, Sexual Subjectivity and Power", 254.

²⁰⁶ From a letter to the editor by Kathryn Fischer titled "positives of polyamory", *Off Our Backs* 34 (July-August 2004): 59.

development from the ideology of liberation.²⁰⁷ Consensual non-monogamists participate in a conscious restructuring of what romantic love can be. I propose these forms of relationships have more emancipatory potential for women regardless of whether they choose to sustain their non-monogamy or not. It is my hope that by bringing these examples in conversation with one another, the insistence of heterosexual monogamy as the singular legitimate option is disturbed, as are the corresponding gender roles that do not serve women well.

2008

Yet, some believe non-monogamy is not far enough from monogamy to make a difference. Mark Finn and Helen Malson, in “Speaking of home truth: (Re)productions of dyadic-containment in non-monogamous relationships”, build on the work of several relationship theorists to describe the ways in which non-monogamies can hold the form of a “safe home”, of a reliable dyad that may allow for others to enter, but that the containment of the couple remains at the center. They falsely argue that this persists in all non-monogamies. But what I find of value is their argument that non-monogamies are not in opposition to monogamy, but that they are an extension of monogamy and therefore reify it. Suppose the potential of consensual non-monogamies is too tied to monogamous frameworks to be able to sufficiently decenter romantic relations from their sexist lineage after all? Then perhaps an attempt to reconfigure how we perceive relationships all together is called for.

1858

I hope every woman here within the sound of my voice has received a seed of discontent that will take root; and if the heel of oppression con[d]emns and spurns it, it will but be buried the deeper in the soil and sooner or later the sun of truth will give it life; it will live and grow, the spire will spring up of itself, and press

²⁰⁷ I have found reference to one nineteenth century community that combined the critiques of society happening at the time in an effort to solve all ills, including racial segregation. Called Noshoba, the community was founded in 1862 by Frances Wright to bring “together both free blacks and whites to work and make love”. This free love community founded by a woman was located in Tennessee and lasted just three years. Unfortunately, it is written that while harmony and freedom may have been the idea, Wright had bought the slaves who would be free only when they could afford to buy their freedom. She claimed that if the program were successful, it might be attractive to plantation owners as a system for emancipating all slaves. Additionally, slaves or former slaves were not allowed to be trustees so the utopian ideals were never fulfilled. However, there were interracial relationships in the free love community. Their miscegenation caused such great outside pressure and it was likely the cause of the community’s demise.

*onward and upward, until a great tree shall stretch out its arms, and the whole nation shall come and shelter itself beneath its shade.*²⁰⁸

1854

*In freedom, all this will be changed. When there is no arbitrary tie, and all are free to be joined by their attractions, or to be separated by their repulsions, there will be new, more powerful, and continuous motives for development.*²⁰⁹

2017

[LOUD APPLAUSE]

²⁰⁸ From the speech of Frances Dana Gage at the Free Conference that took place in Rutland, Vermont in 1858. See: *Proceedings of the Free Convention*, 78-79.

²⁰⁹ Nichols, *Marriage*, 359.

CHAPTER FOUR

EXPANDING AFFINITIES; A FEMINIST PROPOSAL FOR THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY

1983

Good evening, this is Honey coming directly to you from Phoenix Radio, a free radio station. A station not only for the liberation of women, but for the liberation of all through the freedom of life, which is found in music.

We are all here because we have fought in the wars of liberation and we all bear witness to what has happened since the war. We still see the depression from the oppression that still exists both day and night.

For we are the children of the light and we will continue to fight, not against the flesh and blood, but against the system that names itself falsely. For we have stood on the promises for far too long now, that we can be equal under the cover of a social democracy, where the rich get richer and the poor just wait on their dreams.²¹⁰

2017

It is time in the twenty-first century to call for a revival of our moral core that rejects sexism and all forms of subjugation.

1897

Let this be understood clearly, that the [below] is not an institution, to be enforced by laws and petrified customs, but an ideal to be realized so far as circumstances and the gradual expansion of human character will permit by those who freely accept it.²¹¹

2017

In the United States, the progressive present where we envision ourselves living paradoxically contains our sexist past. Systems of stratification organized around gender, citizenship, race, and class are part of the general social organization and institutional framework of the U.S. and they pervade the roots of marriage. The same-sex marriage advocates of the early twenty-first century did not critique the patriarchal institution of

²¹⁰ This text is transcribed from the film, *Born in Flames*, directed by Lizzie Borden (New York: First Run Features, 1983).

²¹¹ J. Wm. Lloyd, "A New Love Ideal", published in the anarchist newspaper *Lucifer: The Light-Bearer* 1, no. 10 (March 10, 1897): 59.

marriage itself nor did they call into question the composition of the “family” beyond a two-parent configuration. I have come to question our kinship organization and its deeply gendered functions. Reconfiguring belonging with a more radical vision than the assimilationist strategy that same-sex marriage advocates used, I ask, how might new forms of loving be vehicles for social change?

1950

The concept of belonging and kinship is expressed most commonly in the image of the American nuclear family rooted in heterosexual monogamous marriage and specifically derived from the postwar 1950s illustration of the bread-winner patriarch and the housewife or stay-at-home mother. This is a system that is based on gendered roles that historically speaking, have not served women well. *He* was identified with an occupation outside the home in the operations/realm of capitalism. *She* was identified with the invisible labor and the uncompensated reproductive care that capitalism relies on. While not rewarding her, this labor isolated her within the home. The current reduction of healthcare support and education now places maternal death rates at the level of developing countries.²¹² How can one think past the vulnerability of women’s bodies and the traps of interdependence that constrain them, in order to reveal the ecstatic frisson of new bonds, networks, and kinship that might comprise future affinities?

2045

What if our accepted ideas of kinship, loving, and belonging were extended unrecognizably beyond the couple and beyond the nuclear and consanguineous family, and in a way in which there were no hierarchies in our relationships? What if the state no longer privileged the nuclear family as the focus for distribution of benefits? In such a space, the concept of the significant other and of biological family would no longer be privileged sites for special care or time, nor would they be used to register more intense bonds of love. This chapter reimagines what belonging can be. In essence, I seek to reconceptualize interpersonal, social, and state relations in order to create a fairer and

²¹² See, for example, the article: Nina Martin, “U.S. Has the Worst Rate of Maternal Deaths in the Developed World”, *National Public Radio, NPR*, May 12, 2017, <http://www.npr.org/2017/05/12/528098789/u-s-has-the-worst-rate-of-maternal-deaths-in-the-developed-world>.

more equal society. I proceed by culling certain concepts, proposals, and histories that align with my utopian vision to give it form and language. As a concept and future model, I am naming this new way of relating, “expanded affinities”.

Expanded affinities involves reconfiguring social relations of belonging so that the hierarchies and expectations known to originate in monogamy and biological kinship are both expanded and reimaged. It is comprised of multivalent, extended, and layered relations that are inclusive of, but move beyond the couple. Expanded affinities is a model that I claim more accurately describes the various and multiple relations of care we already have, form, feel, and encounter. Affective friendships, including platonic, sexual, and familial relations are all part of a web of belonging that is expanded affinities. The social stigmas now attached to the single person or the throuple, for example, would likely be eliminated under expanded affinities. By legitimating and honoring friendships and relations of all permutations, expanded affinities encourages radical forms of loving.

I envision an expanded sense of belonging for individuals in society, and an expanded form of society itself—one that is held accountable for ensuring individual’s rights.²¹³ Expanded affinities, therefore, encourages the building of networks well beyond the limited assignments of family, spouse, and partner that are dominant in society today. These new networks would allow women to be equal in relationships and would encourage reproductive care to be shared among many, no longer predominantly relegated to women. As a practical concept, expanded affinities, therefore, includes a proposal for the redistribution of income and resources that draws on elements of socialism and includes a universal basic income.²¹⁴ Because distributions would go to individuals in this system, expanded affinities decenters the privilege of marriage that

²¹³ The U.S. constitution leaves out societal responsibilities and a fuller sense of humanity in favor of emphasizing individual rights through very general terms like the right to *happiness*. See: Katherine Cross, “Feminist Constitution”, in *The Feminist Utopia Project: Fifty-Seven Visions of a Wildly Better Future*, ed. Alexandra Brodsky and Rachel Kauder Nalebuff (New York: The Feminist Press, 2015), 62.

²¹⁴ For a discussion expanding the identity politics aim of recognition through redistribution and the concept of “reproductive care” and a “crisis of care” see Nancy Fraser’s writing, including “Nancy Fraser: Contradictions of Capital and Care”, *New Left Review* 100 (July-August 2016). While countries like Canada, Norway, and India have experimented with small programs based on a universal basic income, Iran has been doing it country-wide since 2010 by pooling income from oil revenues to provide 29 percent of the median household income to all in need. In her run for the presidency, Hillary Clinton planned to propose this, but was dissuaded by then Vice President Joe Biden who held that work must come first, before such a mandate, as reported on the CNN news network in September 2017.

coerces many to wed in order to gain access to the benefits it provides. It would also include social recognition in the areas of economics, citizenship, and healthcare. Such a utopian proposal could be characterized as an experiment in alternative living, loving, and sharing. Similar ideas have been proposed previously in the U.S.—a country where dreaming up a better society was a founding principle and remains a primary activity. Expanded affinities builds on a lineage of historical and contemporary examples—some of which precipitate it, and others that enact the ideals of my concept. None of the ideals or models, however, have been part of the central discourse. I draw on the nineteenth century idea of free love and communistic intentional communities, anarchic thought, care-based economies, and queer forms of relating. I also draw on relationships that fall under the terminology ethical non-monogamy, polyamory, and relationship anarchy as examples that echo aspects of what I imagine expanded affinities to be.

NAMING EXPANDED AFFINITIES²¹⁵

2002

*I have come to wish [...] that there were [...] no mechanism that privatizes and automatically packages together such incommensurate elements as the sharing of material goods and shelter, expectation of ongoing sexual relations, extension of institutional benefits, and social recognition of a relationship. [...] In the end I have come to desire the final disappearance of what Michel Foucault labels the 'deployment of alliance,' or the state's maintenance of a social order by fixing the routes by which names, property, and other protected forms of cultural recognition travel. [...] The task is still [...] to produce something like a deployment of affinity.*²¹⁶

²¹⁵ My term "expanded affinities" draws on a passage in Elizabeth Freeman's book, *The Wedding Complex: Forms of Belonging in Modern American Culture* (2002). For Freeman, marriage retains the shape of an affective container that might hold different people or things. Freeman writes in favor of love, of her ongoing desire for couplehood, and her belief in the couple unit and the romance between, but calls for marriage to separate from the state, eradicating the marriage license in favor of personal or spiritual unions of two.

²¹⁶ Freeman, *The Wedding Complex: Forms of Belonging in Modern American Culture* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2002), ix-x.

2002 / 1976 / 2017

Elizabeth Freeman cites Michel Foucault's "deployment of alliance" in order to highlight the narrow vision of belonging that marriage details.²¹⁷ The inhibiting connotations that are embedded in the characterization of marriage as a deployment of alliance is something that polyamorists, nineteenth century free lovers, and queer and feminist theorists have used as a basis for critique. Foucault's manner of naming the system of marriage as a deployment of "alliance" gives focus to relations correlated in opposition and against. Freeman's term "affinity", however, drops the oppositional meaning that alliance carries with it and can be interpreted as a freer manner of relating—one reconfigured as a broader, possibly changing group of relations. Freeman's "deployment of affinity" could be useful to contrast a belief in the natural occurrence of monogamy and gender-specific roles and to highlight their roots within heterosexuality and patriarchy.²¹⁸ The image that a deployment of affinity composes for me and that Freeman makes mention of is one of interrelated, changing, short and long-term assignments of the health benefits, tax beneficiary, and other of the many benefits that are currently distributed through marriage in the U.S. My concept of expanded affinities also eradicates the sex and property tie marriage ensures, and acknowledges the multiplicity of forms that belonging can take by legitimating the individual's creation of networks, affiliations, and forms of love.

DEPRIVILEGING "SEXUAL" RELATIONS

2004

In my monogamous experiences, real friendships were often "thrown away" once a sexual relationship was no longer part of the equation (i.e. we "broke up").

²¹⁷ According to Michel Foucault, a "deployment of sexuality" refers to ever-changing rules and ideologies that monitor what is deemed normal or accepted sexual behavior by a society. Foucault argues that sexuality is a socially constructed concept that is ordered, in one branch, through the institution of marriage. He distinguishes such a "deployment of alliance" from a "deployment of sexuality", which he describes as a less stable, ever changing site of power and knowledge. See: Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality: An Introduction*, vol. 1 (New York: Vintage Books, 1990), 103-114.

²¹⁸ Freeman means to open out the possibilities of legitimate forms of belonging through an examination of literary and visual culture examples where something other than heterosexual couples are featured. One example is Carson McCuller's *A Member of the Wedding* (1946) in which thirteen-year-old Frankie imagines herself joining her brother and his fiancée in matrimony—tying herself with them as one together.

*This is partly what drew me to [expanded affinities]—I saw love transcending the existence or nonexistence of sex.*²¹⁹

Free love, consensual non-monogamy, and polyamory are relationship forms that expand beyond the couple to involve multiple simultaneous sexual relationships. These forms consciously debase the couple and reject compulsory monogamy²²⁰ and as such, they can be seen as precursors to expanded affinities.²²¹ None of those forms fit expanded affinities perfectly, however. For instance, because polyamory adheres to monogamy-related terms like commitment and because practitioners often privilege their romantic relationships over others, it does not fulfill the concept of expanded affinities. Even relationships that begin as sexual but evolve to be inactive in that sense, still often hold a certain level of privilege over other relationships which goes against expanded affinities. Expanded affinities transcends the value usually placed on sexual relationships²²² by surpassing monogamy and consensual non-monogamy examples to place equal value on any and all romantic or sexual relations, platonic friendships, and kin from biology or not.

RELATIONSHIP ANARCHY

2006

Love is abundant, and every relationship is unique

Love and respect instead of entitlement

Find your core set of relationship values

Heterosexism is rampant and out there, but don't let fear lead you

Build for the lovely unexpected

Fake it til' you make it

Trust is better

Change through communication

²¹⁹ I have recontextualized this quote, inserting “expanded affinities” where it read “polyamory” because the original context does not necessarily reflect how everyone practices polyamory. It does, however, echo expanded affinities. The quote is from a letter to the editor by Kathryn Fischer titled “positives of polyamory”, *Off Our Backs* 34 (July-August 2004): 59.

²²⁰ Compulsory monogamy refers to the structures and things within society that encourage, coerce, and enforce people’s choice of one special person and forsaking all others.

²²¹ Within expanded affinities; however, the affinity is not necessarily sexual in nature.

²²² The passage from Kathryn Fischer gives credence to the multiplicitous ways that people practice polyamory. My use of it, however, correlates to the belief in having multiple special sexual relationships simultaneously.

2006

Addressing interpersonal relations, expanded affinities extends the recognition of networks beyond sexual partner privilege, and as such the relatively new model, “relationship anarchy”, offers a close approximation to it. Like in expanded affinities, within relationship anarchy there are no hierarchies—there aims to be no differences between how one treats their various romantic, platonic, or sexual relationships, which is not to say the relationships defy definition, rather that there is concentrated work done to avoid the traps of stratifying and limiting ideas of belonging. Relationship anarchy, or RA, is a term developed out of a series of intense conversations with a group of people in Stockholm in the aughts. Andie Nordgren was one of the participants who began writing and speaking about RA in around 2006.²²⁴ It has grown as a social practice²²⁵ ever since as evidenced by the numerous online groups and articles written with reference to it. While relationship anarchy echoes polyamory in many regards, some in the polyamory community have found relationship anarchy to more closely align with their thinking and desires. One difference is that relationship anarchists do not attach obligations to—or expectations of—the people in their lives as is the common practice of monogamists and most polyamorists. In polyamory, for instance, the primary partners often jointly determine what behavior is allowed with outside love interests by setting rules and agreeing on certain boundaries.²²⁶ Relationship anarchists, however, consciously mimic the state of anarchy in their rejection of any such policing of an other’s sexual behavior and all rules or conditions that would make it so. Like relationship anarchy, the concept of expanded affinities does not disavow choices of attachment expression, but rather, it seeks to eradicate the social privileges attached to such coupling and avoids the policing of an other’s body.

²²³ Andie Nordgren, “The short instructional manifesto for relationship anarchy”, on Nordgren’s personal website, June 6, 2012, <http://log.andie.se/post/26652940513/the-short-instructional-manifesto-for-relationship>. Originally published in Swedish as a relationship anarchy pamphlet titled *Relationsanarki i 8 punkter* by Interacting Arts in 2006.

²²⁴ Nordgren is often miscited as coining the term. This description of how the term came about is taken from Nordgren’s own words posted on Twitter.

²²⁵ I refer to it as a social practice, though perhaps relationship anarchists would refer to it as a relationship practice. I use the term “social practice” to emphasize what I believe to be the effects on the social fabric this form could have.

²²⁶ Examples of agreements might include STD (Sexually Transmitted Diseases) precautions taken outside the primary couple, or the allowance for sex but not love outside of the primary relationship.

POLYKINSHIP

2016

In the twenty-first century, what constitutes the family configuration has in some ways broadened beyond the married and biological forms resulting in an expanding set of examples of who and how people become a parent. But the social legitimation of such forms still lags behind lived experience. Where married couples were the mainstay, single parent situations have grown exponentially.²²⁷ Single mothers are more frequently seeking out one another to cohabitate and share domestic reproductive care duties. Advancements in science²²⁸ and a notion of parenting that replaces what was termed guardianship have broadened the possibilities of who can become a parent. Same-sex couples, adoption, and single parenting are more and more common, adding pressure for their full social acceptance. Some polyamory practitioners struggle to expand or redefine what polyamory includes beyond the interpersonal to include kinship, but expanded affinities is a form that would bypass debates around such an evolution. In Spain in 2016, people marched for legal rights for polyamorous families. There is a gaining political discussion by some polyamorists in the U.S. to demand the legalization of group marriage so that the definition, therefore rights, of parents would be expanded to more than two people. But in expanded affinities, networks of belonging are expansive and so are the rights to create kin. There are even instances of groups of non-romantically linked people (similar to the example of polyamorists, for instance) that come together to raise a child or children together. Expanded affinities provides a model of inclusion and support that broadens legitimate kinship forms to include those beyond the nuclear and biological.

²²⁷ A Pew Research Center finding from 2015, states that in the U.S. in the 1960s babies typically arrived within marriage, [yet] today fully four-in-ten births occur to women who are single or living with a non-marital partner. See: "1. The American family today", *Social & Demographic Trends*, Pew Research Center, December 17, 2005, <http://www.pewsocialtrends.org/2015/12/17/1-the-american-family-today/>.

²²⁸ Like IVF (In Vitro Fertilization) and surrogacy, for example.

LOVE IS LOVE: INTRODUCING CHOICE INTO KINSHIP

1987

*Love makes a family—nothing more, nothing less.*²²⁹

1987

*When we assume male-headed, nuclear families to be central units of kinship, and all alternative patterns to be extensions or exceptions, we accept an aspect of cultural hegemony instead of studying it. In the process, we miss the contested domain in which the symbolic innovation may occur. Even continuity may be the result of innovation.*²³⁰

1970 / 1987

In as much as expanded affinities disassociates kin from biology and replaces it with choice, queer relationships are an important example of what expanded affinities can look like. Referred to as “fictive kin” by anthropologists in the 1970s and “chosen families” today, the terminology refers to the formation of kin outside of biological relations. The political struggles of the gay and lesbian community that challenge heteronormative, biological and nuclear family privilege offer important stances of resistance and moments of critique that strengthen the desire for a new model, one like expanded affinities provides. Gay and lesbian history offers examples of affective relations organized in opposition to laws that determine kinship. It also offers examples in the ways in which people have used guardianship or adult adoption to circumvent constraints and to gain legal benefits similar to those attached to marital and blood relations. What is of particular relevance for expanded affinities, however, is the *invention* of relationships in queer kinship that do not mimic or replicate the patriarchal system. The slogan, “love makes a family—no more, no less”, while specifically referring to the fight to legitimate same-sex relationships and families, expands the definition of family beyond biology, and is useful as a way to more broadly reconsider what constitutes family in place of the patrilineal. The statement asserts that love cannot be bound. I interpret it further as a rejection of the policing of relations that coerce people into the monogamic. Such claims

²²⁹ From a sign at the 1987 Gay and Lesbian March on Washington, DC.

²³⁰ Rayna [Rapp] Reiter quoted in: Kath Weston, *Families We Choose: Lesbians, Gays, Kinship* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1991), 106.

add to a chorus of desire for a model like expanded affinities as it allows a web of relations, sometimes shifting, sometimes long or short in duration, that are not made in partnership with biology, nor sexual orientation, nor laws and governance, but outside of them and born out of choice instead.

1991

*Fluid boundaries and varied membership meant no neatly replicable units, no defined cycles of expansion and contraction, no patterns of dispersal.*²³¹

1991

Kath Weston's book, *Families We Choose: Lesbians, Gays, Kinship* describes the state of discourse surrounding chosen families that emerged in the late twentieth century. Weston describes one person's account of their kin as having an "ego-centered calculus of relations that pictured family members as a cluster surrounding a single individual, rather than taking couples or groups as units of affiliation".²³² Such a rhizomatic image of belonging that differs from the heteronormative family composition having a couple at the center, describes the interconnected networks that relationships within expanded affinities could take. Thinking through networks rather than groups is a way of embracing affinities over alliances, to return to Foucault and Freeman. The language that Weston uses to describe gay and lesbian relationships beyond borders, as in "no neatly replicable units",²³³ echoes my concept of expanded affinities as a flexible form for one's diverse, multiplicitous, sometimes changing, network of affinities. Expanded affinities goes further than Weston, though, in that it aims to provide support for such fluid relations without container through social legitimacy and economic autonomy. Could such a manner of belonging practiced and legitimated on a large scale decrease the oppositional traits that alliances carry in society?

2015

A confluence of cultural, demographic, and economic factors have turned the opening decades of the twenty-first century into a time of unprecedented

²³¹ Weston, *Families We Choose*, 109.

²³² As research for the book, Weston studied a group of gay and lesbian people living in the Bay Area of San Francisco during the years 1985-1987.

²³³ Weston, *Families We Choose*, 109.

*innovation and experimentation as Americans search for their places, their spaces, and their people.*²³⁴

2015

Examples of the ways that people live outside the nuclear family model today provide images for imagining what expanded affinities could look like. Alternatives are built on needs and desires just like marriage and the nuclear family, but they are not comprised of one form. In *How We Live Now: Redefining Home and Family in the 21st Century*, Bella DePaulo aggregates years of research and interviews into the diverse living arrangements present that include living formations built within communities and houses that represent solo, independent, familial, and roommate-based communal households, intergenerational, and non-romantic based arrangements. DePaulo determines that the most important form of relationship to twenty-first century Americans is friendship, or what I prefer to call, affinities. DePaulo's findings reveal various permutations of living arrangements that are based on a network of friends, cohabitating or not, that mark a transition from the nuclear and extended family, to precipitate the expanded affinities model. Expanded affinities holds space for all of the variations described in, for example, DePaulo's book, of a sense of belonging without stratification, a concept that legitimates the way people already live, one that describes a net of affinity over alliance. Could the ramifications of expanded affinities fulfill the nineteenth century desire for a healthier more peaceful society?

THE FURIES COLLECTIVE

1970

The first image that comes to one's mind when suggesting restructuring living arrangements away from the nuclear family, is most likely the example of the hippie-era communes of the 1970s in the U.S. Most of those historical examples do not offer the gender equality so central to my concept of expanded affinities, however. Despite that fact, the late 1960s and early 1970s were such an imaginative time for producing different models of living. The highly charged environment in the U.S. in regard to civil

²³⁴ Bella DePaulo, *How We Live Now: Redefining Home and Family in the 21st Century* (New York: Atria, 2015), 1.

rights, the women's movement, and antiwar protests that gave way to radical reconfigurations of social systems of living are important comparisons to today's heightened state of war, sexism, and racism in the U.S. I refer to one example from this period, not as an antecedent, but as representative of an important moment in time.

The Furies Collective was a lesbian separatist political and communal group who lived in a group house in Washington, DC in the early 1970s. They were twelve women and three children who slept on mattresses on a common floor. They shared domestic labor, reproductive care, clothing, and finances. Against both men and heterosexual women (as they believed both parties propagate sexism), they sought to educate women in the broader community with all skills needed to live a life without needing men, and they encouraged women to form their own similar separatist households. They had taken the sexual orientation of lesbianism and made it a doctrine. One member is quoted as stating that lesbianism is a political choice, and that to be a feminist, one must become a lesbian. Beginning as a political group before living communally, they believed social revolution could come through the formation of many small radical groups. Unlike Valerie Solanas, whose radical feminism described in the S.C.U.M. Manifesto (Society for Cutting Up Men) condoned violence against men, the Furies used teaching to spread influence and make strides toward changing the society outside of the insularity of their intentionally composed home.

AMERICANS DREAMING

1897

And here we glimpse the new family of the future. Around each pair of central lovers, by the most natural laws of affinity and magnetism, will gather a group of side lovers, loving the central lovers and each other because of that love. What a beautiful family that would form, what sympathy, what friendship, what hearty comradeship, what a wall of warm hearts and tender arms around the children. And each one free in his own sphere to live and love as he pleases. Each one with a separate life and home.

And that is not all. [...] Families in this system will become so mingled and inter-related that society will be like a woven garment, with every thread bound

*to every other by numberless ties, and the only way out of the difficulty will be for all families to join in one great family and the great Federation of Man become an accomplished fact. Just as jealousy, and the monogamic love which justifies it, splits society into fragments, the doctrine of "I love all those who love whom I love" will reunite all into a living and healthy organism, cured of its now infinite antagonism and disease.*²³⁵

1897

This passage is taken from a nineteenth century anarchists' journal, *Lucifer: The Light Bearer*. The author, J. Wm. Lloyd describes what contemporary polyamorists refer to as compersion—the feeling joy produced in response to a partner's pleasurable sexual experience with another. The larger kinship configurations of a network of love Lloyd described in 1897 expands beyond the biological nuclear family and gives voice to the imaginings of relationship forms as having the potential to improve the social fabric of care. Lloyd anchors a web of relations with the married couple in the center, but still, the expansion of "family" described forecasts the contemporary desire of some to join as a group to raise a child or children together, and it predicts the desires of polyamorous families today. It anticipates the broad sense of love relations that expanded affinities embodies for the future.

1830

The nineteenth century saw great creative imaginings of what an ideal, healthy (or perfect) society might look like in the future and as such many examples, like the passage from Lloyd above, hold central relevance to anticipating my expanded affinities model. Some felt most ills of society (poverty, racism, sexism, violence, and illness) could be cured through new forms of social organization that included free love, kinship planning, and economic and property sharing. Robert Owen, a Welsh social reformer; Charles Fourier, a French philosopher and socialist; and Henri de Saint-Simon, a French political and economic theorist, were three main figures whose ideas influenced the formation of the intentional communities in the U.S. in the nineteenth century. Each offered burgeoning community founders' concepts for societies that incorporated free love, and the concept of free love carried within it an explicit feminist critique since it rejected obligatory and constraining sex roles. By challenging the polarity and hierarchy between

²³⁵ Lloyd, "A New Love Ideal", 59.

the sexes and classes, these utopians tried to combine reason with a “rehabilitation of feelings and the flesh”.²³⁶

The Oneida Community, formed by John Humphrey Noyes in 1848, offers one such example of an attempt to reeducate members through body and mind. This communal free love group located in New York State formed new kinds of interpersonal and social relations that serve as a nineteenth century model and precursor for my notion of expanded affinities. Analysis of the Oneida Community offers a thirty-three year case study into gender equity—it offers knowledge into how relations between women and men are effected by the eradication of marriage and the redistribution of gender-specific roles with emphasis on an individual’s balance between their male and female sides.²³⁷ It was developed with special consideration of Robert Owen’s socialist philosophy²³⁸ and the Owenite model which refers to radical community reform under a moral economy that stresses equity and fairness. The design of the Oneida Community aimed to improve the relations between people through a set of precise structures and practices with regard to labor, sexual practice, living arrangements, and social behavior. Many of these components have a strong relation to my expanded affinities model.

This intentional community sought to eliminate the couple and the benefits that are channeled through it in favor of communal love in group marriage. What they termed “complex marriage” was a system of thought and practice in which members had sex with one another, changed partners frequently, did not allow special bonds to develop between any pairs, instead they loved one another metaphorically, “en masse”. Such a practice meant to do work around eliminating the ownership of men over women, and the jealousy and negative feelings often attributed to being a product of sex and love. It

²³⁶ A “rehabilitation of the flesh” is a reference to the Saint-Simonians (French socialist movement) doctrine. See: Frank Manuel and Fritzie Manuel, *Utopian Thought in the Western World* (Cambridge, MA.: Belknap Press, 1979), 615. Between 1829-1831 free love was a topic explored alongside economic independence among this group of Henri Saint-Simon followers. Also, see the brochure *La Femme Libre*, published from August 1832 until Spring 1834 by Saint-Simonian women. All forms of prominent dichotomies were challenged (sex, gender roles, and the mind/heart split).

²³⁷ It is important to note that the Oneida Community design had many controversial elements as well, i.e., their young members’ initiation into sex called “ascension”, their eugenics program termed “stirpiculture”, and the racial and religious uniformity of the group. However, the radically feminist aspects are what I extract to help develop my expanded affinities model.

²³⁸ Robert Owen founded his own community called New Harmony in Indiana in 1825. Its paper *The Free Enquirer* (1828-1835) became an important tool of influence.

aimed to create a large network of love and harmony among all of its approximately 300 members.²³⁹

The community offered a network of support and labor that attempted to equalize relations among all—women, men, children, young, old, and alike. Pregnancies were carefully planned for with the woman’s health, well-being, and intellectual interests taken into consideration and unplanned pregnancies were scarce in the Oneida Community.²⁴⁰ Within the property’s Children’s House, childcare duties were shared across gender distinctions, children were raised by a community of people and were knowledgeable of who their biological parents were, but similarly to adult relationships, children were discouraged to become especially attached to them.²⁴¹ The duties involved in raising the community children fell on assigned men and women—women did not carry the burden alone, instead, reproductive care was distributed across the community in an effort to equalize labor. Such that the design of the Oneida Community incorporates social responsibility shown for the health of and autonomy for women, it precipitates expanded affinities. Finally, like Lloyd’s description mentions, the Oneida Community living quarters were designed to protect a communitarian’s autonomy, as most people had their own bedroom.

The Oneida Community confronted “numerous significant issues including family planning, child care, women’s rights, adult education, job diversification, and the problem of maintaining the communal ‘family’ that had replaced the nuclear family”.²⁴² And while the community’s religious mandate, particular controversial components, and admonishment of special relationships, makes that it does not fit squarely with my

²³⁹ It is also important to note that all of this was treated as central to the community’s spiritual and religious doctrine.

²⁴⁰ Noyes was striving for what he believed he could oversee was a stronger and healthier breed of people therefore procreation was controlled through a eugenics program they called stirpiculture. In stirpiculture couples were chosen carefully according to the physical and spiritual health of the individuals. Such early Aryan race dreams seemed to pervade the nineteenth century, continuing, one could argue, beyond the Second World War.

²⁴¹ There is a story of a special doll burning ceremony happening in the community where children were asked to prove their alliance to the community and to enact the lesson of having no *special* (read, hierarchal) attachments.

²⁴² See: Robert Fogarty, ed., *Special Love/Special Sex: An Oneida Community Diary* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 1994), 4.

model, the Oneida Community does offer much in the way of formulating my contemporary vision of what shape expanded affinities might take.

HETERODOXY CLUB

Circa 1940

We were supposed to be a sort of “special” group—radical, wild. Bohemians, we have been called. But it seems to me we were a particularly simple people, who sought to arrange life for the thing we wanted to do, needing each other as protection against complexities, yet living as we did because of an instinct for the old, old things: to have a garden, and neighbors, to keep up the fire and let the cat in at night. [...] Most of us were from families who had other ideas—who wanted to make money, play bridge, voted the Republican ticket, went to church, thinking one should be like everyone else. And so, drawn together by the thing we really were, we were a new family; we lent each other money, worried through illness, ate together [...] talked about our work. Each could be [her]self; that was perhaps the real thing we did for one another.²⁴³

1912 – 1940

Expanded affinities does not require communal living, it does not promote any certain type of living. It does, however, provide interchangeable components from which people are free to formulate the type of living best suited to them without coercion into a preferred form, like that of the heteronormative nuclear family model. The passage above is from Susan Glaspell’s account of her experience in the Heterodoxy Club of Greenwich Village. It was a feminist group that rejected the way of life that allowed society to dictate customs, beliefs, and hierarchies among people. The Heterodoxy Club existed in New York from roughly 1912 until approximately 1940, and is an example of groups that formed to fill the needs and desires unattended to by their partners, families, and the state—the Heterodoxy Club empowered women outside and beyond the constraints society placed on them. Some members of the Heterodoxy Club lived in shared arrangements, some participated in the sex practice of free love, some were in committed heterosexual or homosexual relationships, conventionally married, or not, Republican or liberal, socialist or anarchistic, to name a few varieties. The variation of members’ class,

²⁴³ Susan Glaspell quoted in: Judith Schwarz, *Radical Feminists of Heterodoxy: Greenwich Village 1912-1940* (Norwich, VT: New Victoria, 1986), 84.

political, racial, sexual orientation, and living arrangements makes the group an important reference for expanded affinities—to give breadth to the imagined forms it can take. It was not a commune—they did not all live together. Living their separate lives, they came together to attend bi-weekly meetings in support of a type of living outside the constraints befallen women. This group was purposefully amorphous, and surprisingly diverse in its beliefs. It was an inventive feminist form, one whose members did not uniformly fit restrictive parameters or limited set of principles or beliefs that groups or intentional communities are generally known to organize themselves around. Such flexibility in the group’s composition makes it an important historical referent for expanded affinities.

The history of non-biological kinship rearrangements and chosen alliances date back further than the nineteenth century ones in the U.S. delimited here and there are likely other contemporary analogies that could have been referenced, as well. This particular collection of examples, however, is useful to help form my concept of expanded affinities. Together they form an alternate lineage of belonging that anticipate the expanded affinities model.

1897

*And here we glimpse the new family of the future.*²⁴⁴

2009 / 1897 / 2045

These words from Lloyd reveal a dream of an expansive sense of love that had not yet been met. It marks a moment of unrealized potential—of a “past potential futurity”.²⁴⁵ Kodwo Eshun uses this phrase to describe a sense of temporality where past voices of utopian vision are examined for their latent potential in the current moment and are presented to claim their unresolved future. I return to previous moments to assess the path society has staid—the monogamous road including biological kinship—the straight line that began with the patriarchy and that continues to stratify people in social and economic ways. With a clear recognition of that dominant path, I am able to distinguish

²⁴⁴ Lloyd, “A New Love Ideal”, 59.

²⁴⁵ As described by the Otolith Group, an artist collective comprised of writers, theorists, and filmmakers Kodwo Eshun and Anjalika Sagar, founded in London in 2002.

those trails less worn that parallel, intersect, and double back on one another. With my concept of expanded affinities, I can join and embolden individual voices from various tracks while I also contribute my own.

RECONFIGURED AND QUEERLY FEMINIST

1975

*I personally feel that the feminist movement must dream of even more than the elimination of the oppression of women. It must dream of the elimination of obligatory sexualities and sex roles. [...] In short, feminism must call for a revolution in kinship.*²⁴⁶

2015

*I had not known there was a national registry, called CoAbode, of tens of thousands of single mothers looking to live with other single mothers with their kids. Even more radical are the parenting partnership registries for single people who want to have kids without raising them singlehandedly. People who sign up are looking for a lifelong commitment to parent together; romance and marriage are not part of the package.*²⁴⁷

2006

*We seek access to a flexible set of economic benefits and options regardless of sexual orientation, race, gender/gender identity, class, or citizenship status.*²⁴⁸

2045 / 2018

The American pastime of dreaming up better ideas has fostered experiments in living and loving that have long been a consistent subfeature of the U.S. But contrasting this desire are consistent more restricted ideals of what is commonly held as legitimate—never quite rectifying the gulf between the country’s founding utopian visions and puritanical ways—not yet agreeing on what *freedom* means in relation to what *civilized* society must be. However, looking more closely at the ways in which we live and have been living, several and different forms of belonging, loving, and kinship are present—there is a

²⁴⁶ Gayle Rubin, “The Traffic in Women: Notes on the ‘Political Economy’ of Sex”, in *Toward an Anthropology of Women*, ed. Rayna [Rapp] Reiter (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1975), 199-200.

²⁴⁷ DePaulo, *How We Live Now*, xi.

²⁴⁸ Lisa Duggan, “Beyond Same-Sex Marriage: A New Strategic Vision for All Our Families & Relationships: July 1, 2006”, *Studies in Gender and Sexuality* 9, no. 2 (2008): 155-157.

network of multiple and sometimes changing people who provide our needs and share our lives. Single mothers rely on neighbors to care for their children when they have to get to work, or if the child is home sick from school. An aunt moves in with her nephew temporarily while she recovers from hip surgery. Someone takes their former lover to the doctor, acting as their healthcare proxy for consultation and decision-making. On holidays she prefers to celebrate with her chosen family with whom she feels more fully accepted than with her biological family who rejects her queerness. When they divorced and each committed to new partners, they continued to share the responsibility of raising the children across four people and two households, expanding the children's parent figures. Another moves into a cohousing situation where individual units circle around a common courtyard, a main house provides kitchen and living spaces where communal gatherings happen throughout the week. Some join communes to share intellectual, economic, emotional, and physical labor in a chosen environment that suits their natural proclivities and deep seeded beliefs.

In order to legitimate the web of kinship and affinity relations already past and present, to imagine what a reconfiguration of state support would look like with the individual at its center, and to offer a conception of what belonging may look like in the future, I have developed the concept and model, expanded affinities. Expanded affinities does work around marriage, kinship and subjectivity to circulate concepts of belonging in a new way, one that includes the continued changes in the demographic of fewer and fewer married couples (in the U.S.), elements of past experiments, and the current formations of belonging that the state has yet to catch up to. Rather than breeding conformity and limiting free will, expanding affinities is a flexible lens from which we may exchange, provide care, and live independently, autonomously, and lovingly.²⁴⁹

²⁴⁹ Elspeth Probyn mapped a sense of "outside belonging" that could be used to more accurately map an inclusive, non-assimilative perspective of how we might see society. See: *Outside Belongings* (New York: Routledge, 1996).

1792 / 2045 / 2018

In 1792, Mary Wollstonecraft acknowledged that her proclamations in *Vindication of the Rights of Women* might be “termed Utopian Dreams”.²⁵⁰ With her husband William Godwin, incidentally, Wollstonecraft lived separately. I devised the concept of expanded affinities to push forward and build on some of the work that has been done previously, yet never located in one form, time, or site. Expanded affinities is a non-fictional imaginary built on ideas with concrete histories—of events, attitudes, and precedents not part of the normative gendered relations we’re so familiar with and as such, this model might encompass the many, overlapping, and divergent paths toward an egalitarian future. Yes, it is utopian, but not a mere a dream.

²⁵⁰ Mary Wollstonecraft, *Vindication of the Rights of Women, With Strictures on Political and Moral Subjects*. (1792; repr., Oxford, MS: Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation, 2002), e-book, 199.

CODA

Perhaps it is the American in me, but when cornered, I fall back to dreaming of other states of being. Through my research into how others live(d), or desire(d) to live outside of compulsory monogamy and the nuclear family, I try to imagine social transformation and a more feminist future. “Expanded affinities” then, builds on the tradition of dreaming that the United States was founded on and as such, it draws on the histories and circumstances that shape how expanded affinities might be implemented in a U.S. context. I further delimit the historical scope of this project and begin with the nineteenth century since that period saw the concept of individual freedoms taking hold and fueled new philosophies about love and other types of relationships. And as *Sounding Expanded Affinities* focuses on the U.S. historical and social context, it also draws on a largely American academic tradition of gender studies, queer theory, and utopian studies. Yet while the U.S. context is a central frame of *Sounding Expanded Affinities*, it certainly includes influences beyond those borders, and hopefully it will spur consideration of how similar interventions might be made in much different geopolitical contexts.

1954 / 1990

Expanded affinities refers to a flexible and inclusive form of belonging that aims to be more egalitarian for women through reconfigurations of relationships that address recognition as well as redistribution. However, even though I see expanded affinities as a feminist concept, it is not an essentialist concept insofar as it is not based on a biologized or universalized sense of “woman.” This would foreclose all of “women’s” intersecting identifications. Instead, I view “women” itself as “poly”—that is to say, it is a polysemous category that evokes inclusivity and awareness of the different challenges uniquely effecting individual women of different races, classes, or sexualities.

In addition, because the concept of expanded affinities aims to imagine more egalitarian relationships for women, it could be criticized for ushering in an idealized

vision of a better society. Some might even call it utopian. While the project does aim to imagine better modes of relating that aren't fully in place today, it does so in very specific and concrete terms, and it builds on existing concepts, identities, and ways of being. Utopian thinking is understood to have its origins in a melancholic longing for seemingly better past moments, or in the ecstatic projection of a different future. Both can be criticized as being unrealistic. However, the utopian drive is valuable because it enables us to imagine things that aren't otherwise considered possible or legitimate. The pleasurable encounter one might have with polytemporality and expanded affinities precipitates utopian thinking while this project suggests that the utopian future is already here to be found in threads of the present and the past.

1996 / 1938 – 1947 / 1990

While some dismiss utopian thinking as unrealistic or idealized, I use this type of thinking to create what utopian scholars Ruth Levitas and Lucy Sargisson describe as an impulse—of “the expression of a *desire* for different (and better) ways of being”.²⁵¹ This impulse is found in Ernst Bloch's three-volume work, *The Principle of Hope*. Embraced by utopian scholars, Bloch's encyclopedic study locates the dream of a better life in many and varied forms—from daydreams to alchemists. For Bloch, this drive is rooted in the ways in which we rearrange the world through fantasy by imagining conditions beyond our experience: he terms this, “forward dawning”.²⁵² Also in *The Principle of Hope*, Bloch differentiates two different forms of utopias: those that are concrete and those that are abstract. Bloch's concrete utopia is more tangible and is grounded in a resistance to the present moment. It nonetheless also has a relation to other historically situated struggles. A concrete utopia means to refer to real collectivity or potential collectivity, and as such, it is more than a dream of social transformation. Instead, it has the potential for real social transformation. Therefore, Bloch's concrete utopia is anticipatory of the future in its drive toward change, while in an abstract utopia, the individual utopian's circumstances may change, but their present societal conditions do not. Therefore, the figure in an

²⁵¹ Lucy Sargisson, *Contemporary Feminist Utopianism* (New York: Routledge, 1996), 1.

²⁵² Ernst Bloch, *The Principle of Hope*, trans. Neville Plaice, Stephen Plaice, and Paul Knight (Oxford, UK: Blackwell, 1986), 3.

abstract utopia lacks the will to change society and change is compensatory instead.²⁵³ The research that grounds this project and my vision of expanded affinities comes from concrete histories, so the concept is more than a fantasy and hopeful dream. It draws on the histories of socialist experimentation as well as experiments in non-monogamy. It draws on real voices from the past, such as the recurrent example I use in this project of the Oneida Community.

1876 / 2017

Utopian thinkers must always face skepticism. In the early nineteenth century, Charles Fourier's system of social living was criticized for the bureaucratic demands it would have required. Moreover, others complain egalitarian social projects that require a redistribution of resources produce a government that is too large. A potential obstacle for expanded affinities is that it would overwhelm most bureaucratic systems. The idea of any one individual having many or changing beneficiaries, for instance, would be difficult to implement and would ultimately do more for the legal profession than I wish to admit. Likewise, my proposal of a universal income is something the U.S. government certainly would not support at any time in the near future. While my project touches on the economic challenges that implementing the concept of expanded affinities would face, it avoids confronting them. And expanded affinities would need to reassign those positives that marriage and family currently provide such that such legal protections afforded women and children do not disappear or that the form of belonging does not increase their vulnerability. Perhaps such confrontations with reality are enough to crumble this proposal. Perhaps expanded affinities isn't at this point more than a dream state since it relies on such a significant restructuring of current societal values. At the same time, as I have shown, while it may be far from being realized, the concept of expanded affinities is built from elements of and concrete analogies to existing and previous models. Dismissing expanded affinities based on its utopian aims would

²⁵³ Ruth Levitas uses the example of winning the lottery as an abstract utopia—the dreamer changes places in such wishful thinking without the outer circumstances or society having changed. See: Ruth Levitas, "Educated Hope: Ernst Bloch on Abstract and Concrete Utopia", *Utopian Studies* 1, no. 2 (1990): 14-15. With the concept of the concrete utopian, Bloch is argued to have been rehabilitating utopia within Marxism and as a Marxist category. Also see: Frederic Jameson, *Marxism and Form* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1971).

ultimately serve the status quo and the patriarchy. As José Esteban Muñoz states, although utopian feelings will be regularly disappointed, “they are nonetheless indispensable to the act of imagining transformation”.²⁵⁴ And before social transformation can take place, we need to imagine it.

1968 / 2017

If my dissertation echoes the sentiments of the 1960s generation in seeking emancipation through sexuality (and indeed social relations more generally), then it is worth mentioning that gender inequality can exist within alternative sexual relationships like ethical non-monogamy, too. Nonetheless, I argue that both expanded affinities and non-monogamous practices have more egalitarian potential than more traditional relationships and they also enact an important critique of heteropatriarchal monogamy. Additionally, expanded affinities legitimates relationship forms beyond the sexually determinate ones that delineate monogamy and non-monogamy.

1848 – 2017

The concept of expanded affinities is built in part from the experience of earlier groups of feminist radicals with utopian leanings. My evocation of these figures may seem like a fictive form of resistance, but these figures and the method of polytemporality itself, support expression and invention through a *refusal to follow*. Calling these past figures into the present is a way of resisting the progressive linear track of thinking in order to suspend generational ossification and to open the possibility for radical transformation.

Generational thinking compels a logic of ordering past, present, and future as distinctly separate, consecutive, and teleological. It labels those who have ideas and beliefs outside of the norm of the moment as being out of synch with the times, or labels them as a sub- or counterculture, and it thus attempts to render them invisible or silent. I develop my polytemporal method to defy such generational logic and to

²⁵⁴ José Esteban Muñoz, *Cruising Utopia: The Then and There of Queer Futurity* (New York: NYU Press, 2009), 9.

allow for permeability across, between, and beyond different time periods and beyond stagnant conceptions of normality. The notion of these ideas as *always having been present* offers a release from the constraints of the everyday through which my proposal for an alternative can thrive. I recognize, though, that one could argue the polytemporal risks leveling or erasing the specific contexts and contingencies in which earlier feminist radicals were rooted. How the polytemporal could resist this and hold the particularities of moments or eras is an area of future expansion.

Polytemporality and expanded affinities are both method and subject of the artworks and text that comprise *Sounding Expanded Affinities*. The term “polytemporality” further serves as a conscious nod to the politics of expanded affinities and polyamory taken up in this text. My approach to writing these chapters allowed me to test out a cross-temporal voicing method to engage a conversation of resistance—one that questions “common sense” forms of authoring and relating. With regard to *ReCast: LIVE ON-AIR*, the polytemporal is the setting of the script and the form of the installation in that the installation creates a hybrid sense of time in the physical and aural space of exhibition.

2017

Thinking about expanded affinities with polytemporality leads to an expansion of time and place—to a recognition of attachments beyond the here and now, and of the multiple ways and in which people touch us (from incommensurate sites that are anachronistic and simultaneous). It evokes a way of relating that exceeds present-day restrictions and hierarchies. I maintain that within such a constellation of attachment lies important tools for thinking about sociality outside the proscribed gendered positions that assign women to a subordinate position and align them with otherness. The effects the two concepts could have on one another and what their alignment could produce is an area that might eventually be developed.

As the concept of expanded affinities attempts to destabilize the hierarchies found within traditional forms of belonging like marriage, so too, the concept of the polytemporal attempts to destabilize the traditional models of time that could be

perceived as rigidly developmental and as therefore ultimately reinforcing roles that oppress women. In the end, my hope is that the polytemporal voices and expanded affinities relationship form might not only usher in more egalitarian relationships for women, but also bridge, and break boundaries between feminism and queer theory, or between art practice and theory. But this work has only just begun. The polytemporal is still developing, and like the sounding instrument that I imagine it as, not until the call and response is performed repeatedly, will the sharpness of the tool be established.

EPILOGUE

2017

The start of this dissertation was rooted in the scene of the Women's March in New York, but that took place all over the world. At the moment of writing this final passage, the people of the United States are in the midst of what journalists are calling a social reckoning in regard to sexual abuse by men against women. Men in powerful positions of influence (politicians and Hollywood figures, most prominently) are being publically accused of predation, sexual assault, and sexual misconduct. Not only does the confidence of women to speak out represent a paradigm shift, so too does the swift response by the accused men's employers that result in launching investigations and public firings. Whether this wave makes for actual change however, remains yet to be seen.

1975

*Ultimately, a thoroughgoing feminist revolution would liberate more than women. It would liberate forms of sexual expression, and it would liberate human personality from the straightjacket of gender. [...] I personally feel that the feminist movement must dream of even more than the elimination of the oppression of women. It must dream of the elimination of obligatory sexualities and sex roles.*²⁵⁵

2018

It is my position that reflection on, and critique of, systems of affinities, kinship, and economics contribute to that shared dream.

²⁵⁵ Gayle Rubin, "The Traffic in Women: Notes on the 'Political Economy' of Sex", in *Toward an Anthropology of Women*, ed. Rayna [Rapp] Reiter (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1975), 200, 204.

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APPENDIX A

ARTWORK



00 Andrea Ray

Cosmo-Political Party

Color photo on album cover. 30 x 30 centimeters. 2016.

Me as Victoria Woodhull, free lover, spiritualist, stockbroker, and first woman to run for U.S. President.

A REEDUCATION

The installation *A Reeducation* evokes a turn-of-the-century reading room that, on closer inspection, also includes contemporary objects that perform a kind of anachronistic assemblage. The installation features a lamp lit table and a chair which offer the spectator a place to sit and read the hand-bound book titled *A Cure for the Marriage Spirit*. The main character of this book is a scholar who finds a sense of freedom from the confines of her soon to be dissolved marriage through her research into nineteenth century free lovers. She even imagines herself in conversation with one in a type of time travel that may be hallucinatory or phantasmatic, or both. The book is written in the third person and as such, allows the reader to project their own visualization of who the character is. The scholarly research into free love echoes her new sexual experiences and they lead her toward polyamory. Photographs that reference free love and those inspired by Charlotte Perkins Gilman's utopian novel *Herland* (1915) hang on the surrounding walls. A dreamy landscape painting of a utopian project's land hangs over the reading table. Objects placed around the room, like stones, a celestial painted mushroom, and a pinecone, ground relations of nature and spirituality. Also in the room is an early twentieth century wooden bookshelf holding books about utopias, feminism, and economics. The use of the third-person narrative and theater-like space encourage viewers to imagine themselves as characters in the scene.



01 Andrea Ray

A Reeducation Detail.

Installation with bookshelf, books, table, lamp,
photographs, painting, rocks, and rugs.

Dimensions variable. 2013.

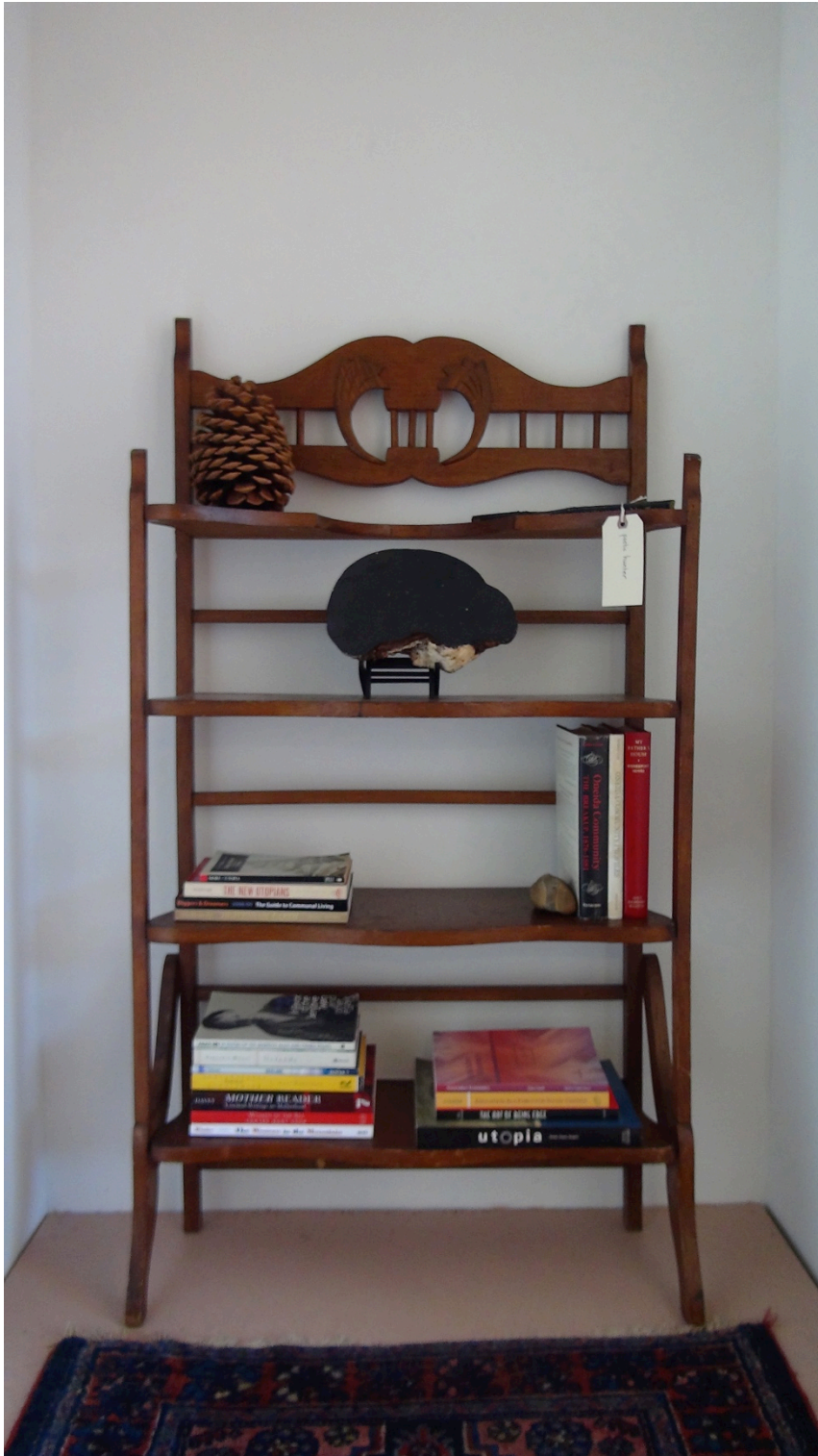


02 Andrea Ray

A Reeducation Detail.

Installation with bookshelf, books, table, lamp,
photographs, painting, rocks, and rugs.

Dimensions variable. 2013.



03 Andrea Ray
A Reeducation Detail.
Installation with bookshelf, books, table, lamp,
photographs, painting, rocks, and rugs.
Dimensions variable. 2013.



04 Andrea Ray

A Reeducation Detail.

Installation with bookshelf, books, table, lamp,
photographs, painting, rocks, and rugs.

Dimensions variable. 2013.



05 Andrea Ray

Herland

Digital c-print on aluminum. 41 x 51 centimeters. 2013.

This photo is titled after the utopian feminist novel by Charlotte Perkins Gilman (1915) about an all-women's civilization "discovered" by three male explorers. The photo presents evidence of this previous women's society persisting in the present.

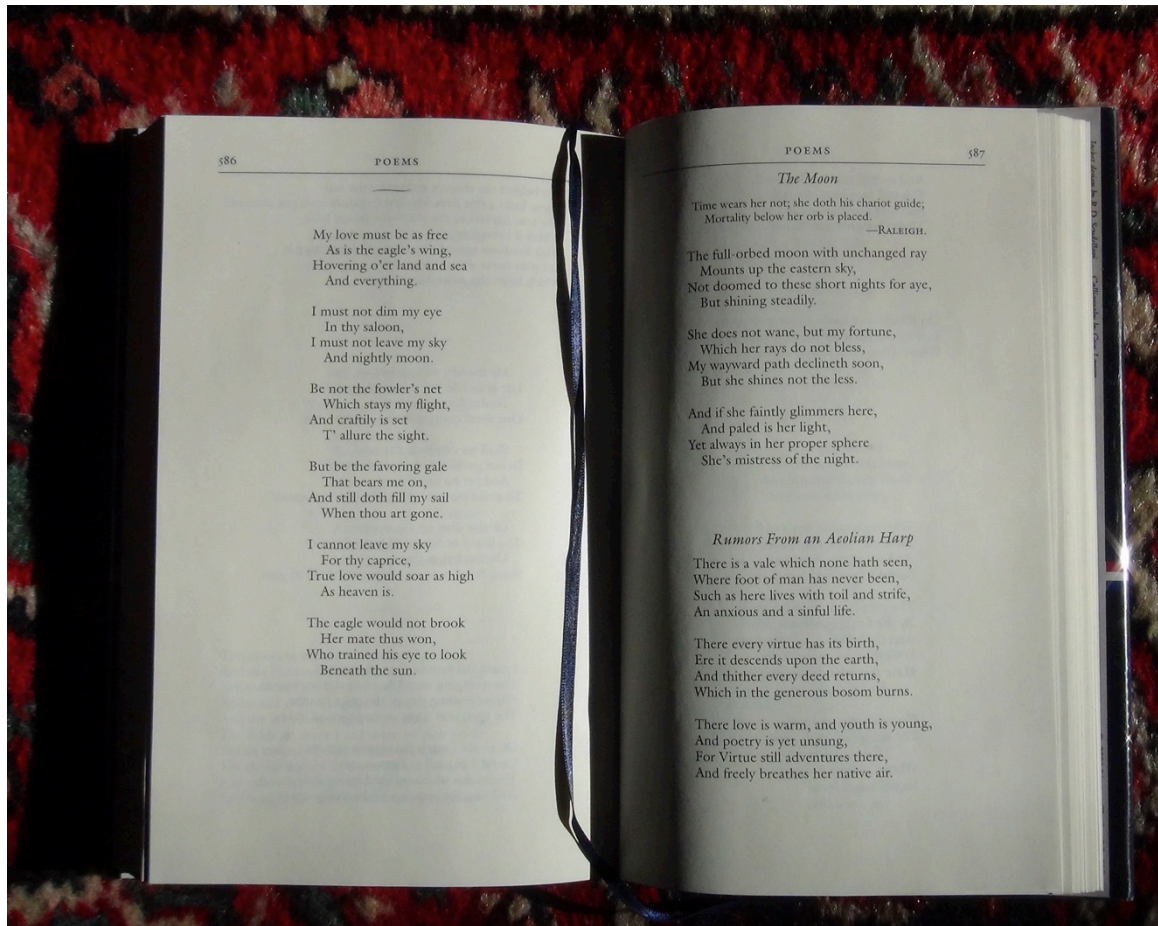


06 Andrea Ray

Herland

Digital c-print on aluminum. 41 x 51 centimeters. 2013.

This photo is titled after the utopian feminist novel by Charlotte Perkins Gilman (1915) about an all-women's civilization 'discovered' by three male explorers. The photo presents evidence of this previous women's society persisting in the present.



07 Andrea Ray

Free Love

Digital c-print on aluminum. 41 x 51 centimeters. 2013.

This photo is titled after the poem by Henry David Thoreau (1849) imaged here.



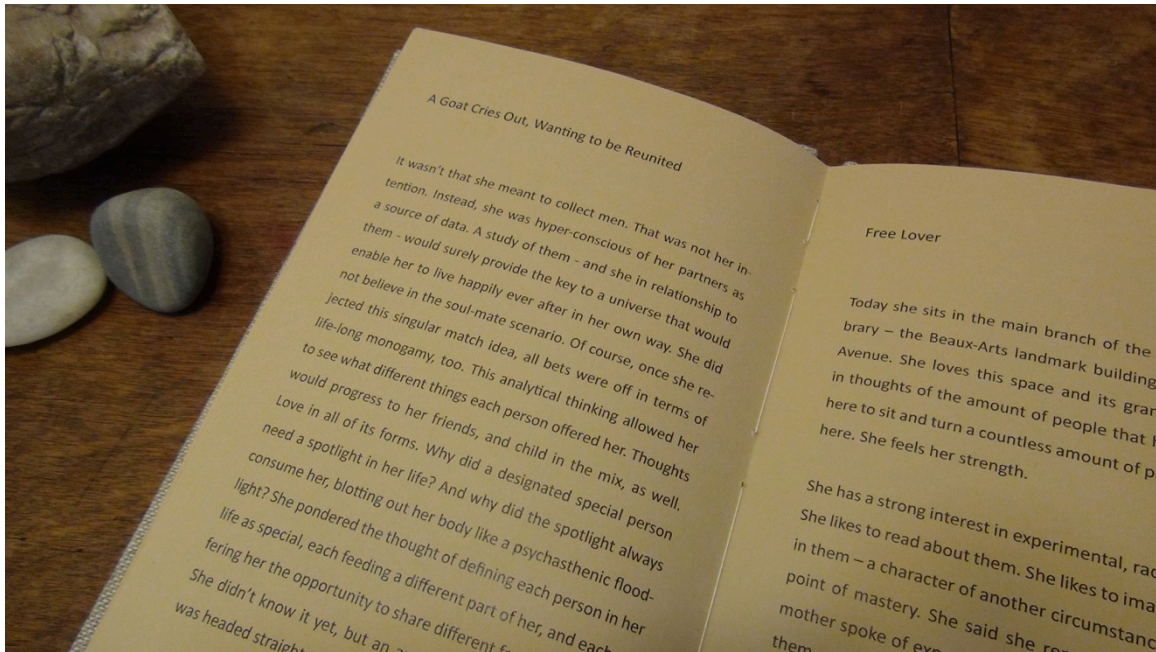
08 Andrea Ray

A Reeducation Detail.

Installation with bookshelf, books, table, lamp, photographs, painting, rocks, and rugs.

Dimensions variable. 2013.

The reading room creates a space within which to read the pictured book I wrote and hand-bound titled, *A Cure for the Marriage Spirit*, a narrative tale of a woman searching for freedom through research into nineteenth century free lovers and her experimentation with polyamory.



09 Andrea Ray

A Reeducation Detail.

Installation with bookshelf, books, table, lamp, photographs, painting, rocks, and rugs.

Dimensions variable. 2013.

The reading room creates a space within which to read the pictured book I wrote and hand-bound titled, *A Cure for the Marriage Spirit*, a narrative tale of a woman searching for freedom through research into nineteenth century free lovers and her experimentation with polyamory.

A CURE FOR THE MARRIAGE SPIRIT

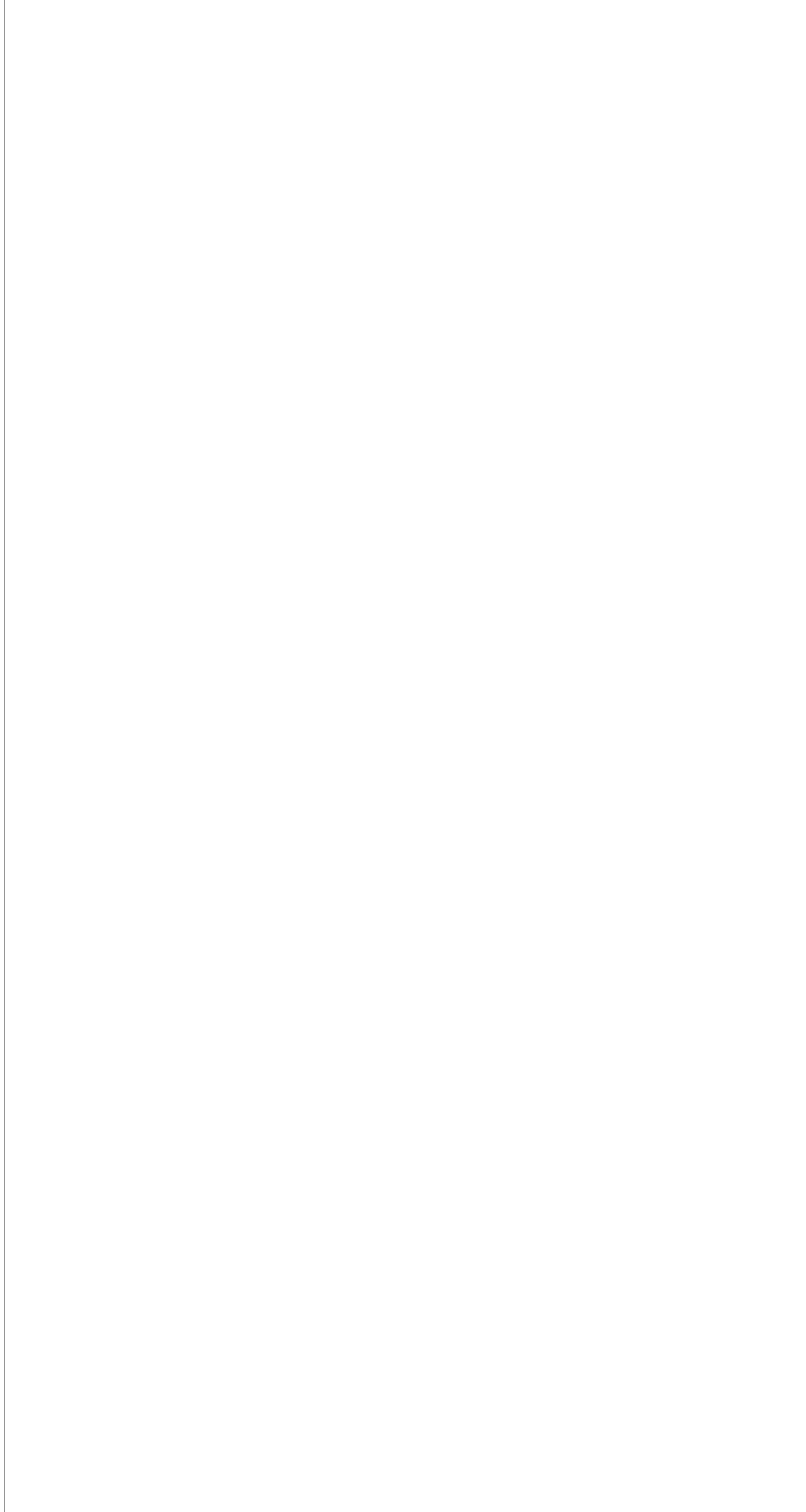
The following is a reprint of the book that is found on the table within the installation, *A
Reeducation.*

A Reeducation



Andrea Ray
A Reeducation

West Cure Press New York City, New York 2013



A Cure for the Marriage Spirit

A Prologue



Wallflower, Come Here

Tears are close these days. Her present state reminds her of a dance with a stranger; a handsome, dark, and thin man who wore a button down shirt, faded jeans belted in leather, and a great pair of black “old-man shoes,” as she called them. He was from New Orleans. The evening they had danced under the bright stars remains like a dream to her.

Heat. Music. Smile. Stars. Spin. Smile.

“Don’t look down or you’ll fall,” she warned herself as she was spun round and round to – “a Cajun band? No,” she thought, “It was faster. It must have been a Zydeco band.”

Heat. Music. Smile. Stars. Spin. Smile.

The part she remembers most was her temptation to look down. She knew it would make her fall off balance and maybe because she was so unbelievably happy in that moment, she found it necessary to break the unbearable feeling by pushing it to a critical point. For a split second she did it. She looked down, and it worked. She lost her center and fell into what looked like a lame cartwheel as she came very close to crashing into a neighboring couple. His interest in her seemed to dissipate after that.

“Happiness is measured in moments,” a Countess once wrote to her.

Heat. Music. Smile. Stars. Spin.

Her thoughts jump to a different image. She sees her head in the shape of a pressure cooker. “Keep the lid locked down.” She feels that if she lets anything leak out of her pot, it will result in a flood that would not stop until she expires. “Stregga Nona. Forget it,” she mutters. She has been staring off into space for some time now. She goes back to writing in her notebook. She composes entries often. More specifically, she writes in an effort to sort out her inter-subjective confusion and to attempt to calm herself from panic. She refers to it as a notebook because for her, to call it a journal would be too much of a commitment. She doesn’t realize it, but lately she has been composing everyday.

Herland

In an entry dated February 2008:

*Tonight Priscilla went to Anthology to watch films
by a favorite French author.*

Yes, the entry is written by her and is about her, but she has written it in the third person and changed her name; because like the term journal, the distancing effect of the third person is somewhat of a comfort to her. She doesn't need help, after all.

She sat alone in the theater even though, from a distance, she saw other artists she knew. She sat by herself because she didn't want anything to come between her and the images, sounds, and writing of the beloved films.

At least this is what she told herself. The truth was that she was shy – to her detriment, she was shy. And while she would spend her days in the library reading about community, when she later came across members of her own group it was enough just to be in the same room. She told herself the energy of possibility was enough for her.

She loves this woman's work boundlessly. She took notes copying words and phrases from the subtitles:

*Absent, nothing, everything. History was a memory.
Work, not drudgery.*

Does someone never get used to it? Almost everyone.

Much of this work was about alienation, the sister of solitude. This fact never matched up with what she had read about the author's personal life – it had been filled with people coming and going, in and out of her apartment in Paris on rue St. Benoit. Within that apartment number 4, a constant flow of conversation, debate, and dissent among friends occurred.

She continues in her notebook:

Tonight, on her way home she rode the train. A group of drummers got on and sat down on their fold-up stools. They began drumming an Afro-Caribbean beat. She recognized it from the dance class she used to take. She took this class when she was first married. Under the hypnotic beat of the five live drummers she could find a sense of spirituality within herself – a respite from the role she had found herself playing as a wife. She immersed herself in the beat. It was her Yellow Wallpaper.

Interspersed with her strange journal writing habit, she had recently met a man. Maybe character is a better word for him. He reminded her of an animal – an uncanny animal. Actually, she had initially met him many years before. Like her, he was an artist and he traveled in a similar circle around the city.

They recently began meeting over wine-lubricated dinners in the East Village. He had the same problem. He was unable to breathe any longer. Except to her it seemed like this condition was his choice – that he had control over it if he chose to, but somehow he had come to prefer this lifetime of mourning and worrying, and that his temperament privileged these excessive shifts from great vibrancy (shown toward her), only to shortly thereafter (reject her and) return to that preferred unbearable weight of being. She rode the Cyclone with him for a time during the early summer months because the highs were exhilarating if not a tiny bit intoxicating; not in a sexual way, but more of intrigue and pure fun. The ride up made her forget his recent fall, his recent rejection of her. It would go on like that – a noisy track that rattled and bruised repeating the highs and lows.

Every plan she approached with distrust and hesitation. Sure enough, each time she'd reluctantly meet him they would have great fun into the wee hours of the morning - childish, debauchurous fun.

A Night with the Artist

She had initially laughed in surprise of the Artist's fetish hobbies and friends in sub-worlds. He purposefully made at least one reference to these things in every conversation and every meeting they had together. It would come up casually. One balmy spring evening, they bumped into his friend, the Baroness – a subculture entrepreneur and self-appointed ruler of all things latex and fetish. "Will you come to the party Thursday?" she asked him while purposefully not acknowledging her (conservative?) presence. "I will try. So good to see you." Topic - the latex parties. "What happens there?" she asked after the Baroness and her entourage left the small restaurant. "Oh, a lot of posturing," he replied. "No touching?" she furthered. "Some spanking maybe." End of topic. Most of their discussions ended and changed abruptly – he flitted about like a nervous animal in both his physical and conversant bodies.

Anyway, somewhere in there she knew her gut response was that they were mismatched on every possible level. He referred to this as a "difficulty in finding a rhythm" together. Unfortunately, he had noted this after they had been fooling around for some hours. When he said this, something fell in her gut. A wave of insecurity swept through her veins. "What the hell did that mean?" "What's he referring to?" she thought defensively to herself. "The sex? My body? My technique, or... breathe." It could be the larger issue of how they had a differ

ing opinion and preference on just about everything possible. “Exhale.” She would identify it as symptomatic of their exclusive damage, hurt, and complexity. As they both noted, even the digital waves responded to their ambivalence as half their calls would inexplicably drop. A string of messages would be attempted throughout any given day only to end with a failure to actually meet.

A Goat Cries Out, Wanting to be Reunited

It wasn't that she meant to collect men. That was not her intention. Instead, she was hyper-conscious of her partners as a source of data. A study of them - and she in relationship to them - would surely provide the key to a universe that would enable her to live happily ever after in her own way. She did not believe in the soul-mate scenario. Of course, once she rejected this singular match idea, all bets were off in terms of life-long monogamy, too. This analytical thinking allowed her to see what different things each person offered her. Thoughts would progress to her friends, and child in the mix, as well. Love in all of its forms. Why did a designated special person need a spotlight in her life? And why did the spotlight always consume her, blotting out her body like a psychasthenic floodlight? She pondered the thought of defining each person in her life as special, each feeding a different part of her, and each offering her the opportunity to share different forms of her love. She didn't know it yet, but an argument was forming. And it was headed straight toward polyamory.

Free Lover

Today she sits in the main branch of the New York Public Library – the Beaux-Arts landmark building on 42nd and Fifth Avenue. She loves this space and its grandeur. She indulges in thoughts of the amount of people that have come through here to sit and turn a countless amount of pages. She feels free here. She feels her strength.

She has a strong interest in experimental, radical communities. She likes to read about them. She likes to imagine playing a role in them – a character of another circumstance - mimicry to the point of mastery. She said she remembered that her Grandmother spoke of experimental social groups, had books about them, and collected flatware from the local one, the Oneida Community. She didn't recall the specifics of what her Grandmother had told her about the Oneida Community, although the concept of detachment relative to the community's children all living together in a separate house from the adults and consequently their parents, did leave an indelible impression. She recalled, not words, but an underlying leaning of support from her Grandmother, in and about the Oneida Community's lifestyle and their belief in life-long learning. But the Oneida Community members were Free Lovers. Had her Grandmother been a closeted Free Lover?

The number 242 flashes on the digital board in the South Reading Room of the library telling her that the next three books she requested are ready for pick up at the window. She loves when this happens – she loves the anticipation of touching her next finds, eager to see what is stored inside. She collects them and returns to one of the long communal tables to add them to her stack. The sound of the round-back wooden chairs dragging their weight over the floor, the thud of the books on the table in a light echo throughout the hall – these were the sounds of the hymnals hitting the church pews from her childhood Sundays. Reverent, mythical, and heavy.

She flips through various books and takes notes.

“Historians have traditionally considered the decades following the War of 1812 a time of prosperity and optimism in the United States. The human spirit seemed free and the individual could assert her independence of choice in matters of faith and theory. As social distinctions blurred and as individuals felt themselves more alone, both boundlessness and nervousness became basic to American experience. By the nineteenth century, love came to be viewed as a force beyond the control of those experiencing it, ‘inaccessible to both reason and ritual.’”

Further notes:

“American reformers of the nineteenth century, straining their imaginations to match the sprawling destiny of a rich young nation, considered no institution immune from questioning or improvement. Conventional marriage, always a provocative subject, sustained attacks from several directions.”

From Elizabeth Von Arnim:

“Perhaps husbands have never altogether agreed with me.”

And Vera Brittain, *On Semi-Detached Marriage*, 1928:

“One of the most rigid of traditions is that which regards marriage as a day-to-day, hour-by-hour, unbroken and unbreakable association... nothing could be further from the free, generous, and intelligent comradeship which is the marriage ideal of the finest young people today.”

Reading these radicals reaffirms that her personal values do not match up with the template that culture and society had provided her upon birth. Her heartbeat increases with excitement of an imagined meeting with her comrades of the 19th century.

In Her Utopia

She reads one of the two memoirs from Oneida Community members that she has stacked on her table. She does her best to imagine she is right there – the perfect innocuous observer. She knew the property well from the many pictures she had studied and from visiting the site itself – having poured over the details, attempting to reach through time and touch them, whisper to them. She longs to be in a room with them. As she reads Tirzah’s memoir, she imagines Tirzah reciting the diary to her:

Saturday, March 6, 1869.

Last night I slept with John Humphrey Noyes, and he talked with me for more than an hour. He began like this: “I want you and Harriet Skinner to go into the study of literature. Dig into it, and show it up, as I am American Socialisms. Study the science of literature.” He said we must read magazines, and find out all we could about the leading novel literature, with analysis and criticism in view. “Criticize all the authors; contrast old English literature with the Boston. Those English authors, taking Shakespeare as an example, wrote with an honest intention to entertain people; but these Boston and German writers try to influence their

readers with their atheism and hatred of revivals. Such work is dishonest, and ought to be kicked out. I guess I can't let you have a baby for some time yet. I want to get you into this work. You must get so you can criticize Miss Peabody first. You can make a better critic than Margaret Fuller, or Miss Peabody." I told him I was in no hurry to have a child, and had had a kind of impression that I should not for two years. He said he thought that was probable. He talked a great deal more about what he wanted us to do.

Saturday, March 27.

Last night J.H.N. talked with me about having sexual intercourse performed on the stage. "We shall never have heaven till we can conquer shame, and make a beautiful exhibition on the stage."

April 6.

Slept with J.H.N. I dreaded to go, because I knew he would discover my unmagnetic condition. He did fast enough. In the night he said: "Would you like some criticism?" "Yes, I should very much." "Well there is no disguising the fact that you don't attract me. You impress me with the feeling that your sexual nature has been abused by your entering into sexual intercourse without appetite.

Spirits of men which are indigestible to you have come between you and me." "It is true, that I have slept with men without any appetite, and a great deal lately." "But why do you? I thought you promised me once you wouldn't." I told him I had not quite dared just follow my attractions in that aspect. But he said I must, or it would spoil it all for me. That is true even now, for I have been away so much this winter in a kind of duty - doing spirit with folks for whom I had no attraction - that I have lost all appetite for intercourse with men whom I love and have always had splendid times with. I have felt that it was a great expense to me and was taking all the romance out of life; but I didn't know what to do, and thought I was doing my duty. Oh! I feel so relieved! I had hardly dared to hope I need do nothing in this line but what I felt an attraction for.

April 26.

I have felt rather bad lately, fearing that if I remain so unmagnetic Mr. Noyes will not love me any more. Tonight he asked me if I would like to sleep with him. "I hope I can sometime again," I said. "Let's try it tonight." "No, I am unwell now." "Well whenever you are ready, and feel like it, we will." "Father Noyes, I think it puts a ligature on

my life to be separated from you in this way." "No, I guess not," he answered. "You are getting united to me in a different way." "I hope so." "Let's go off and take a long walk in the woods." "Oh, I should like that." "Well, some day when the weather is all right, and you feel like it, we will." During the conversation he said, "But how much have you been with these other chaps lately?" I told him I had only staid away twice since his talk with me, and meant to follow the course of attraction. He was much pleased with that. He said he thought I had done well with the paper during Aunt H's absence.

March 16, 1873

Left music for writing. Father Noyes said that I might consider that I had made a good career in music, and now call it ended, and put the energy that I had expended in music into writing. It is like the death of a cherished friend.

Dance for Social Wealth

She shuts the book and gazes up at the ceiling painting – a renaissance-like vignette incorporating the usual floating angels, blue skies, and white fluffy clouds. She thinks about the domination J.H.N. commanded over Tirzah and the rest of the members of the Community. She conflates J.H.N. with the Judge assigned to her divorce case. She’s thoughtfully pensive.

Even her research today, her escape into the Oneida Community history seems to lead her right back to the same place of constraint, control, and ultimately a great distance from the notion of Freedom. She yearns for radical social change to quell her feelings of isolation and lack of agency, lack of power. She’s a hopeless romantic and she knows it. None-the-less...

She begins a new search in the library’s catalogue. This time she looks up feminist economics. She quickly finds what she’s looking for. First, what doesn’t surprise her are the references to socialist democracies like those of the Scandinavian countries that are known to have greater equality among the sexes as a result of the governments’ structures and policies. But then, she discovers a term she wasn’t aware of – something called a Caring Economy – an economy that would incorporate domestic, volunteer and environmental labor into the GNP. The idea recognizes that our current economy is based on capital only so that money-makers like war, prisons, and oil spill disaster-

cleanups are major contributors to our measure of economic health. This Caring Economy would incorporate social wealth. So while she recognizes the challenge of such radical thinking taken into practice, she likes this idea very much. It seems a possible way out. It makes her want to dance.

Orbit, collision, flash, balance, spin, flash.

Research shows that when couples put independent rights and things like happiness into their desires from marriage, destruction of the societal bond transpires.

Does someone never get used to it? Almost everyone.

Her phone flashes with a text message. It's the Artist. Perfect timing – she's primed for an adventure outside of herself. The text is an invitation to meet out in Coney Island to experience the Mermaid Parade and a burlesque party at the Aquarium afterwards.

She wants to find the way to get lost. Rapturously lost.

Heat. Music. Smile. Stars. Spin. Smile.

xxiv

Utopians dance.

xxv



UTOPIANS DANCE

In the installation *Utopians Dance*, Americana folk music and light create a sense of levity in the space while a video of feet dancing a series of looped steps is overlaid with subtitles that intertwine multi-partnered contra dancing calls with ideas about caring economics. Dual modes of time are represented since the video of the dancing feet is transmitted over and over from a recurring past, yet its presence in the installation implies a real-time dance partner. Spectators may occupy the part of observer, the protagonist, or perhaps both as they discern themselves to be caught in a scene they both see and are seen in. A record album sleeve is casually propped up against the wall and available for the viewers' inspection. Without vinyl inside, people are able to read the liner notes and song titles to uniquely interact with it, to project what kind of sound may come from it: folk, jazz, or punk? The installation retains the feeling that the room has been transformed into a dance hall for a special occasion to come, having happened, or simply waiting for the spectators to become participants in the present. As such, the space is imbued with potential for communing and encourages a sense of joy.



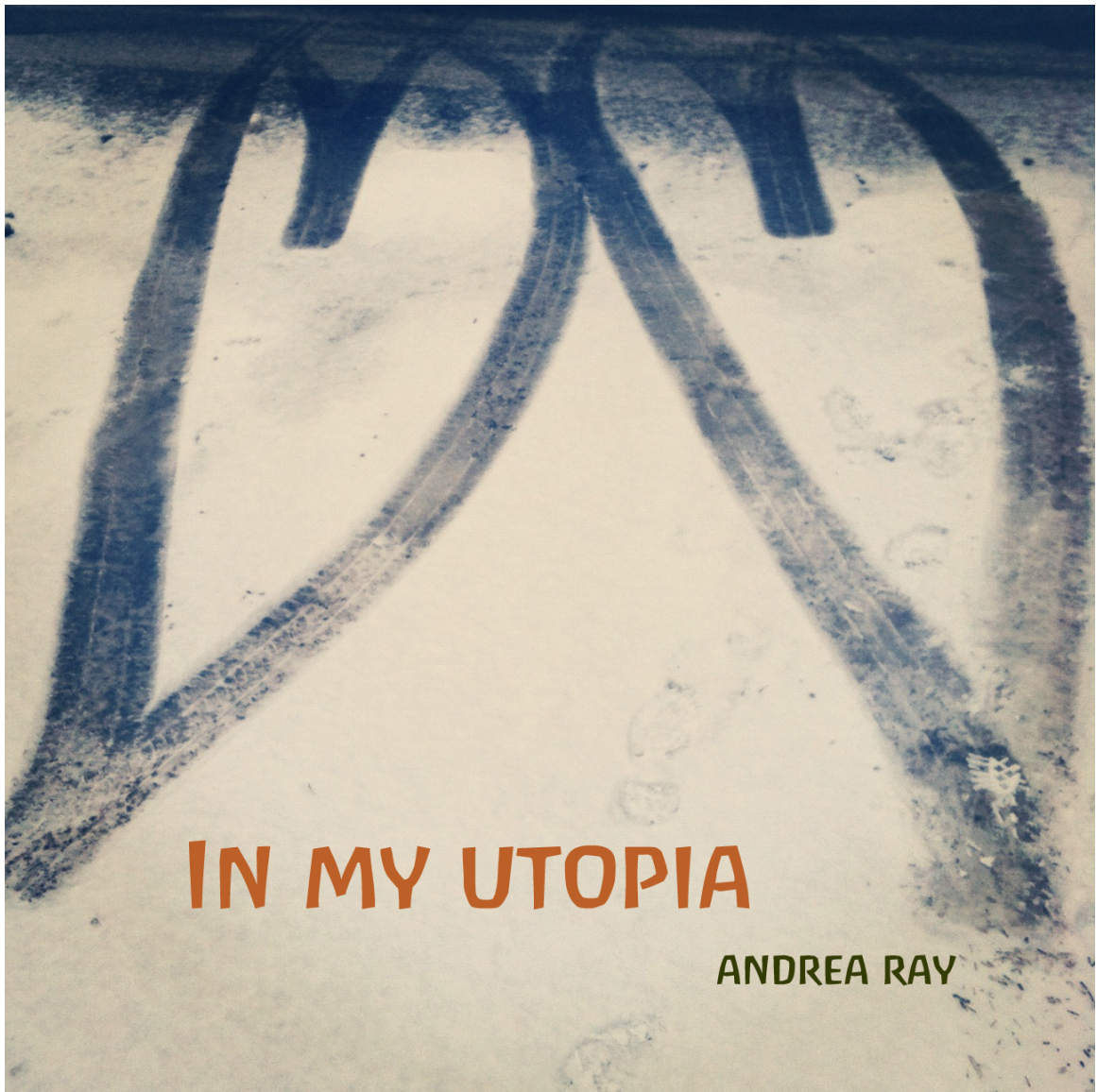
10 Andrea Ray

Utopians Dance

Installation with lights, flooring, video, audio equipment, album cover. Dimensions variable.

Exhibition view, Open Source, New York. 2013.

Utopians Dance is a sound installation that transforms the space into a dance hall and evokes a relationship between cooperative economics and dance.



11 Andrea Ray

In My Utopia

Color photo on album cover. 30 x 30 centimeters. 2013.

This is the front cover of the album I designed that sits on the dance floor of the installation *Utopians Dance*.

IN MY UTOPIA

ANDREA RAY

side a

side b

Dance for Social Wealth

Utopians Dance

In My Utopia

Wallflower Come Here

Free Lover

Victoria and Virginia

A Re-Education

Herland

Caring Economy

Human

It wasn't that she meant to collect men. That was not her intention. Instead, she was hyper-conscious of her partners as a source of data. A study of them - and she in relationship to them - would surely provide the key to a universe that would enable her to live happily ever after in her own way. She did not believe in the soul-mate scenario. Of course, once she rejected this singular match idea, all bets were off in terms of life-long monogamy, too. This analytical thinking allowed her to see what different things each person offered her. Thoughts would progress to her friends, and child in the mix, as well. Love in all of its forms. Why did a designated special person need a spotlight in her life? And why did the spotlight always consume her, blotting out her body like a psychasthenic floodlight? She pondered the thought of defining each person in her life as special, each feeding a different part of her, and each offering her the opportunity to share different forms of her love. She didn't know it yet, but an argument was forming. And it was headed straight toward polyamory.

The number 242 flashes on the digital board in the South Reading Room of the library telling her that the next three books she requested are ready for pick up at the window. She loves when this happens - she loves the anticipation of touching her next finds, eager to see what is stored inside. She collects them and returns to one of the long communal tables to add them to her stack. The sound of the round-back wooden chairs dragging their weight over the floor, the thud of the books on the table in a light echo throughout the hall - these were the sounds of the church pews and hymnals hitting them from her childhood Sundays. Reverent, mythical, and heavy.

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WEST CURE RECORDS NYC, NY 1967, 2013

12 Andrea Ray

In My Utopia

Color photo on album cover. 30 x 30 centimeters. 2013.

This is the back cover of the album I designed that sits on the dance floor of the installation *Utopians Dance*.

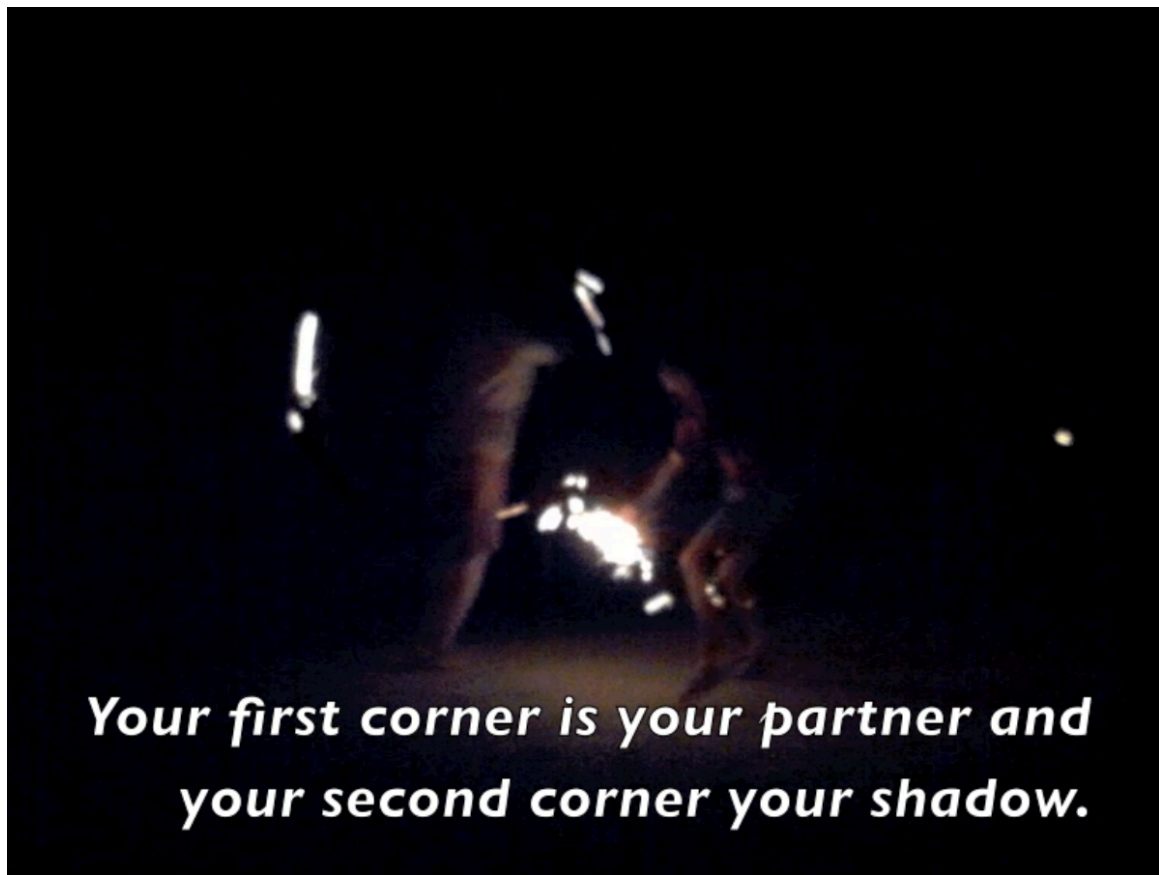


13 Andrea Ray

Utopians Dance

Digital video still. 7 minutes looped. 2013.

In the installation, *Utopians Dance*, a video plays on the floor of dancing feet and subtitles are read that intertwine dance calls with references to "caring economies". The atmosphere evokes the desire for joy and freedom.

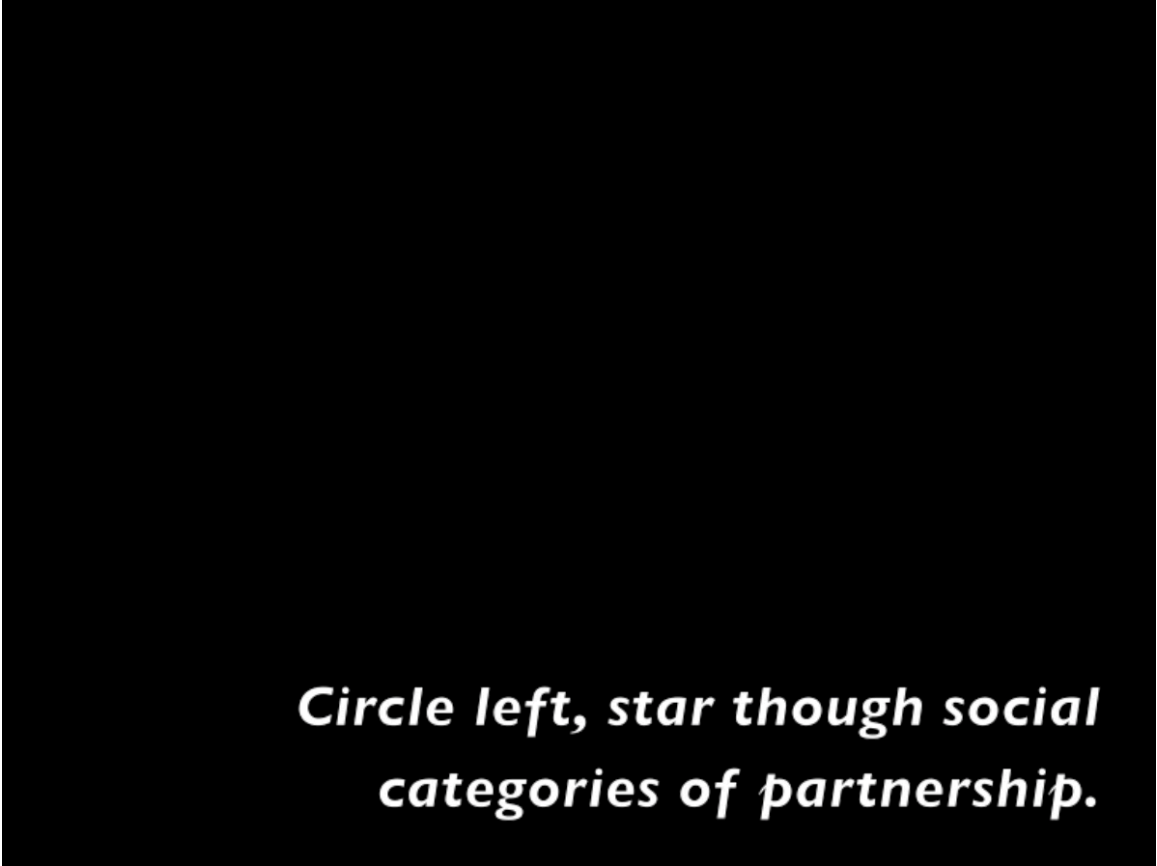


14 Andrea Ray

Utopians Dance

Digital video still. 7 minutes looped. 2013.

In the installation, *Utopians Dance*, a video plays on the floor of dancing feet and subtitles are read that intertwine dance calls with references to "caring economies". The atmosphere evokes the desire for joy and freedom.



*Circle left, star though social
categories of partnership.*

15 Andrea Ray

Utopians Dance

Digital video still. 7 minutes looped. 2013.

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16 Andrea Ray

Utopians Dance

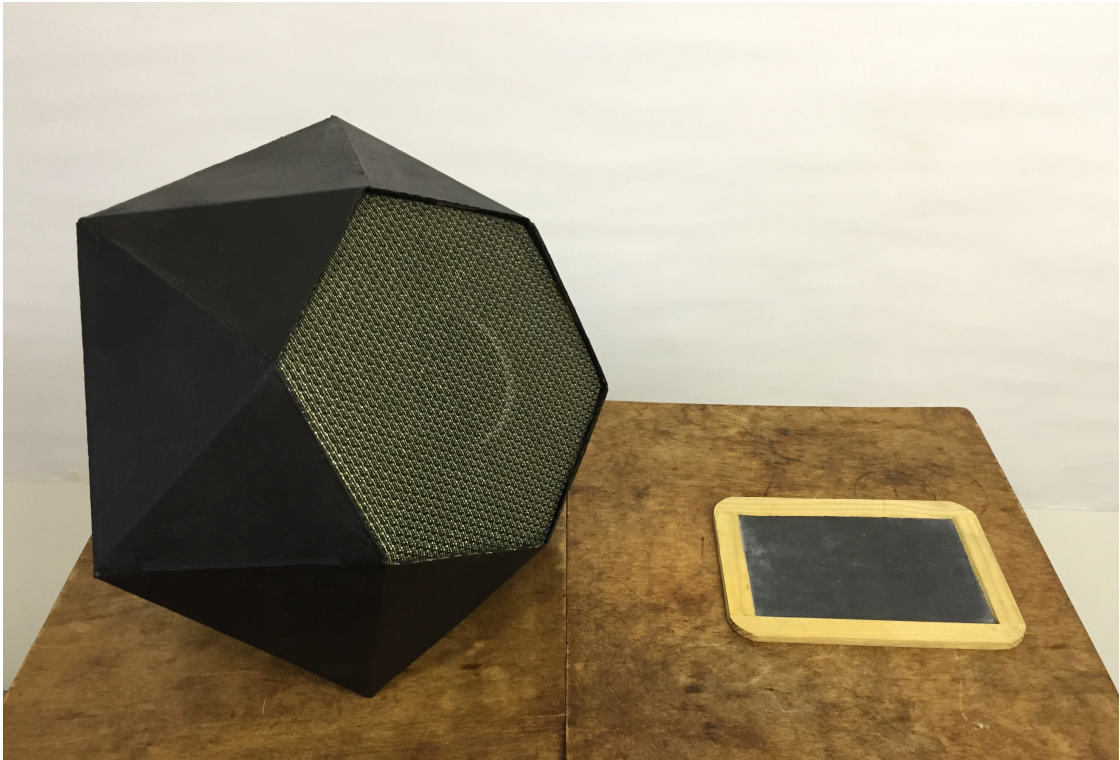
Digital video still. 7 minutes looped. 2013.

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ReCast: LIVE ON-AIR

ReCast: LIVE ON-AIR is a sound and sculpture installation. The script takes the shape of a live studio discussion that is broadcast from a fictive radio station in which people from across more than 200 years have come together to share their intimate experiences and perspectives on gender and non-monogamy. This group of specters and futuristics hash out the separation of love from pleasure, and debate the liberatory possibilities of various forms of caring such as free love and polyamory. They also express future forms such as the notion I call “expanded affinities” and another I term “compassioned expression”. One radio guest is a nineteenth century free love commune member who appears in the studio to share the continued relevance of their community’s free love practices; another is a twentieth century essentialist feminist who is unable to let go of the gender binary; others speak from a future where neither gendered subjectivities nor singular forms of relationships exist. The voices are inspired by people like Paul B. Preciado, Anaïs Nin, and Victoria Woodhull. The audio is installed in such a way that the voice of each “radio guest” plays back through an individual speaker within an enclosed space including a circle of seating. Spectators are able to commune with the disembodied voices in a listening space that evokes both a nineteenth century séance parlor and a futuristic radio station. The voices confer in an ever-present loop on WPPF Radio, and thus creates a type of utopian futurity.

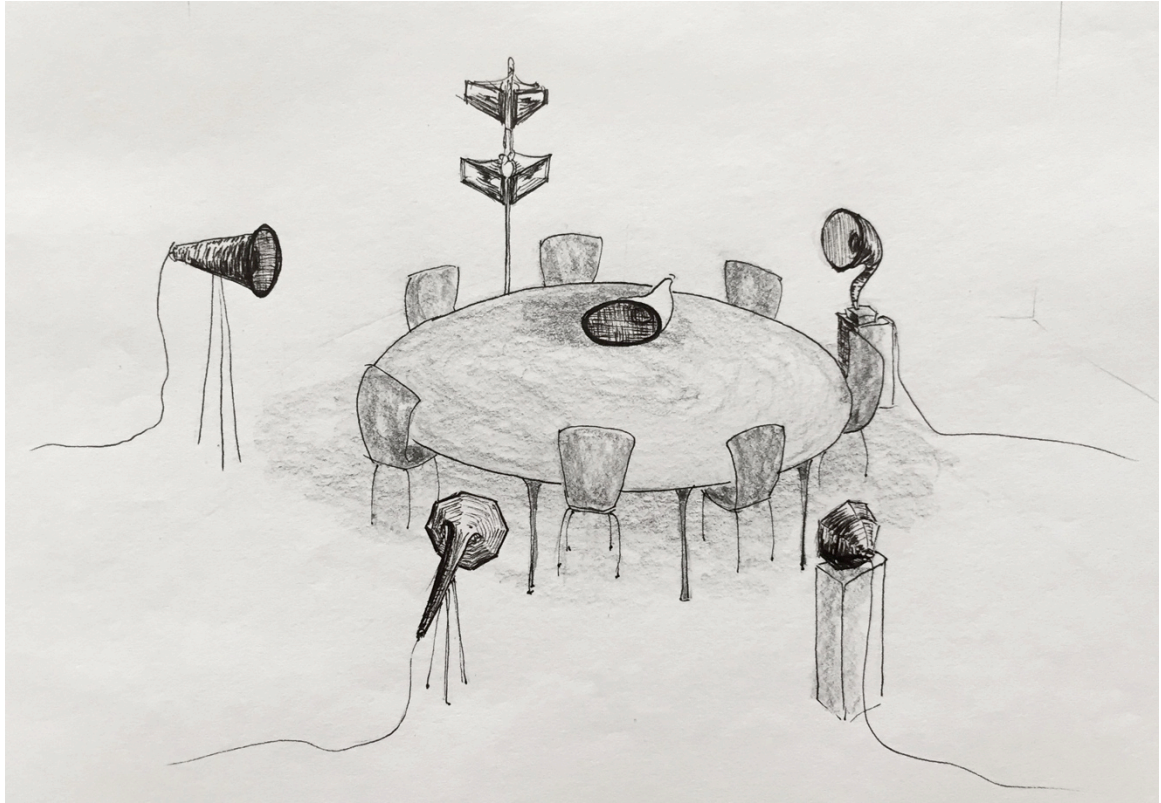
ReCast: LIVE ON AIR is produced from a sense of longing to be free from the here and now. The specters from the past, present, and future are summoned to confer and to release us from the immediate constraints of society, law, and culture in order to make way for a utopian future. Sounding like voices from an outer ring of space, the relationship radicals reject the charmed circle and the linearity of the relationship escalator that ascends from dating, to love, to marriage, and then children. The installation works to resist all forms of “straight time”.



17 Andrea Ray

ReCast LIVE ON-AIR

Process image of speaker sculpture model. Cardboard, paint, nylon acoustically transparent cloth. 36 x 30 x 20 centimeters. 2016.



18 Andrea Ray

ReCast LIVE ON-AIR

Process image of installation drawing. Graphite on paper. 23 x 30 centimeters. 2017.

Radio Play Script

“ReCast: LIVE ON AIR”

D: The RADIO HOST. A very smooth, mature voice, similar to a 1970s Motown disc jockey. They’ve been involved in radio programs during different time periods (1970, 2018, 2045), so this person has had direct experience with conversing with people of different time periods. They often speak slowly, as if working out their ideas and questions with great concentration. [They move smoothly from using gender specific or neutral pronouns responding appropriately to whatever is presented.]

A: A identifies as a feminist writer who is arrogant, bold, brash, and unwavering in opinion. Speaking from 1970 with a deep, mature, and raspy voice, their voice booms into the microphone, almost alarmingly. They are experiencing a life of bias that includes war, anti-Semitism, and racism. They are a political activist. [They are embedded in their own time and speak with gendered pronouns.]

G: This voice sounds more contemporaneous. Intelligent and even, yet they seem to be hiding a crack at times—like there’s a solid front, but a very sensitive under-layer. They live in a future not too far from our present (2035), yet seem to have the ability for a kind of time-travel. It’s not clear if it’s more mystical or hallucinatory. [G speaks with gender-neutral pronouns (or just writes with them, but speaks like the Radio Host does with them, following their lead)].

T: T is an intentional community member who believes in freedom and equality, but under the image of God as a man. Their voice is one that sounds of education, later nineteenth century phrasing (1880s), and while articulate and intelligent, there is a hint of politeness that verges on a tinge of insecurity or jitteriness in nature. They came to the utopian community as a child, were raised in it, and remains a believer in it, yet very aware of the rest of the world, events, practices, and customs. While they live in their own nineteenth century time, their experience seems to be that of a future because of they and their community’s radical beliefs are so ahead of their time. [T speaks without using pronouns as if they don’t recognize gender.]

Caller F: (Knocker): Automatic electronic voice. (From 2018 and 2045.)

Caller P: (Knocker): Young, narcissistic, strong. (From 2020.)

Caller V: (Knocker): Mature, strong. (From 2025.)

Radio Announcer: Voice akin to those heard on the BBC or NPR.

“ReCast: LIVE ON AIR”

STATION IDENTIFICATION: This is Radio Utopia, simulcast today, yesterday, and tomorrow. Bringing you voices from across time, all the time, everywhere present. A space where utopian dreams are real. [SPACEY MUSIC BEHIND]

RADIO ANNOUNCER: It’s 10:51 and the weather outside is perfect—sunshine with a warm 72 degrees Fahrenheit. In news, talks continue as plans take shape to use an airlift brigade to rescue children from war-torn Cambodia. Suffragettes are meeting again on the steps of the State Office building today. Clinton speaks to the remains of the UN about the continued success of the Women’s Party to eradicate income inequality through the Paid Domestic Work Act. And Ray also speaks on the effects of the expanded affinities initiative now being discussed in Congress. Up next, stay tuned for the next installment of WPPF’s ReCast: LIVE ON AIR.

STING: MUSICAL AND SPOKEN WORD INCLUDING: “Your now is not my now; and again, your then is not my then; but my now may be your then, and vice versa. Whose head is competent to these things?”²⁵⁶

NARRATIVE EXPOSITION BY RADIO HOST: [OVERLAYED WITH SOUNDS FROM PARIS STREETS] I’d gone to Paris. I was searching for Duras’ presence. Walking in their footsteps, I walk alongside them. I meet them in the cafes of the Left Bank to debate politics and communism. I wave to them from the street as they sit by their window and I meet with them in their apartment along Rue Saint-Benoît. I see them in the streets surrounding the Sorbonne standing next to their comrades. I march with them down the boulevards, and I sit with them in the cemetery of Montparnasse. [SILENCE and PAUSE] But, they’d been dead for years. What if within the present there always exists the past and future; what if we just ignore the occurrences and signs, in favor of sequence?

²⁵⁶ Charles Lamb in a letter to Barron Field dated August 31, 1817. Charles Lamb, *The Works of Charles Lamb* (London: Edward Moxon, Dover Street, 1852), 103.

INTRODUCTION: THEME MUSIC, SOUND, AND SPOKEN WORD INCLUDING:

WPPF Radio Utopia presents ReCast: LIVE ON AIR. Radio Utopia—of ideas forming, of individuals becoming. Reality is a sound. You have to tune in to it, not just keep yelling. A Past, Potential Future.

RADIO HOST: Greetings listeners and welcome to Radio Utopia. You may recall Freeman’s visit to the studio to discuss their book, *The Wedding Complex*.²⁵⁷ Their book suggests more expansive ideas of what marriage ceremonies symbolize and the purpose they serve. It includes an analysis of how weddings are represented in various pieces of literature and film. The book begins with a recounting of a group wedding where some proclaimed attachment to their material objects, to multiple people, and other unorthodox unions were represented, as well. The book includes a brief history of marriage and goes on to use examples, like the imaginings of McCullers’ *Member of the Wedding* character Frankie, to explore attachment structures existing beyond and in addition to couplehood. Given our essential need for a sense of belonging, how do forms that limit us (in terms of who and under what circumstances we form bonds and relationships), how do these structures effect our psyche? Does the expanded affinities initiative really change our relationships and family? To engage these questions, let’s tune into Radio Utopia where we can bring together those from the other sides and give sound to other ways of relating in a here, now, then, and to come.

STING: SOUND AND SPOKEN WORD: LIVE ON AIR, this is Radio Utopia—of ideas forming, of individuals becoming. Time is a sound. You have to tune in to it, not just keep yelling. WPPF; Past, Potential Future.

RADIO HOST: So, we invited three people to the studio to extend and debate ideas of attachment and belonging by discussing desire for the other, a separation of pleasure from love, and alternatives to couplehood. Sitting with us now is G, a writer who in 2045, has been writing a *fictive journal* of sorts that takes place before they joined their present community of those who practice what is called “compassioned expression”. Also joining us is T, a socialist free love commune member from an area of great religious zeal in

²⁵⁷ Elizabeth Freeman, *The Wedding Complex: Forms of Belonging in Modern American Culture* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2002).

upstate New York. T's community practices "complex marriage" and joins us today to recount an exchange from last night in 1883. And finally, A is a writer who will reflect on recent observations of gender and sexuality from 1972. Everyone is joining us now to contribute their ideas through select passages of their writing and through our joint conversation.

To frame the start of today's subject, I'd like to start with G. Would you share a portion of your new book with us?

G: Yes, thank you for the invitation to come together in this special radio studio today, D.
[EVERYONE MAKES VARIOUS AGREEMENT SOUNDS]

It's so exciting to be here, especially with you, A and T! While you were away last Thursday afternoon, I happened to have visited your homes in upstate New York and Paris. So yes, I'd be pleased to read to you and your listeners. This section is in the first half of the book where the main character had been dating someone they care about for a couple of years, but at this point they are broken up, yet still continuing with elements of their relationship. It's a confusing situation for the main character.

"I don't know if I want to strangle you or have sex with you", I blurted. They rolled their eyes, put their hand on the door, and then their rigid posture changed. They softened, turned to look at me, walked over, and kissed me passionately.

Yes, a summer read, this is—the language of romance novels.

Having only come over to borrow a tool for a job nearby, they left again for work, but returned later, hungry for food and drink first, before the promise of sex. Afterward, I told them I would like it if they stayed, if we could sleep while holding each other through the night. I needed the comfort of close friendship to restore the self-confidence recently shaken by outside circumstances. But no, in

that moment they said no. That was not part of their unspoken bargain for this exchange.

I never knew which way they'd go. Their ego had to control, limit, attract, and repel me. The rejections were coming closer and closer to the sex now, indications that the attachment was against our (unknown to me and always shifting by them) agreement. A season passed and they initiated another meeting. During this one, they asked me to stay the night. I did. It was familiar and kind of wonderful.

And so, attachment. They would get upset with me if I cared. They'd get especially upset if I wanted them to be a consistent friend. Somehow I was supposed to sense the parameters of each engagement, but my feelings never changed much. I cared deeply for them. I haven't figured out how some control their emotions or why they would want to control them. Doesn't that deny one of the greatest beauties of life? Impose limits?

The imposed and ever changing limits of intimacy they kept—a line not to be crossed. I wanted in them a friend always, a lover sometimes. But they were so inconsistent, I think in part because they were defending themselves against being the one *special* person in my life. I wouldn't want one. I prefer many. This they never understood.

How might the heart live at ends that society doesn't yet allow?

RADIO HOST: Thank you, G. This is an intriguing beginning. What strikes me the most is that it seems that there might be distinct and separate conflicts within each of these characters. Where does this story take us? It makes us want to hear more. [QUIETLY] Maybe later in the segment we could get to that. We always have “time” on WPPF. [QUIET LAUGHTER FROM SOME] What about that main character? They seem conflicted about where they locate the pleasure that intimacy creates. Would you agree?

G: Oh, ha! Conflicted. Yes, that's a pretty good character analysis. Uhm, with this passage, I'd agree. But as the writing progresses, the character goes through many and overlapping people that they have momentary or longer-term relationships with. As the journal entries continue, the main character comes to be comfortable and even happy with the way they maintain various relationships.

RADIO HOST: [SPOKEN SLOWLY AS IF JUST THINKING IT THROUGH] So, through these experiences, does this character *reassign* the site of pleasure to that of the self, rather than in the other? Or is it more that the engagement with the other can be [PAUSE] not selfish [PAUSE AS IF SEARCHING FOR THE RIGHT WORD] but *compassionate* instead?

G: This is such an interesting and complex question. I'd say that, yes, the main character does shift perspectives to find pleasure in many types of relations with others. They forget about or abandon the narrative of needing another to provide everything. As their sexual practices become more broad and experimental, the negative feelings, like those associative things about a lack or void, fall away. They end up finding more pleasure within themselves, instead of others, but at the same time, I'd say the level of compassion they have for others is actually increased, and more healthy, I guess. I'm thinking of a section where the main character is writing about their former long-term partner who is now having a lot of financial problems. The old version of the character might have had so much empathy that they'd lose days at work, or stretch themselves too thin to help, like they themselves had the financial problems. But through this series of relationships, they come to notice that their relationship to compassion shifts—it's as if they have some superpower to hover above themselves and can feel deep compassion—deeper, but from a greater distance.²⁵⁸ I hope it comes through that this is less about detachment or anything negative, but actually about something more aligned with the true definition of compassion. I think in my book, there are strong crossovers with what people in some times practice as polyamory, but still, it's a bit different.

RADIO HOST: Uhm, a true definition of compassion? Or a detached compassion?

²⁵⁸ Jan Frazier, *When Fear Falls Away: The Story of an Awakening* (San Francisco, CA: Weiser Books, 2007).

G: Maybe I should give a bit of background, first. Their time doesn't include "compassioned expression", it doesn't include the practice of platonic and sexual amative forces that are shared with many and different people, for long or short periods. "Compassioned expression" is more than love because it doesn't involve the confusion of desire and ownership that so many relationship forms are delineated by. Anyway, this writing takes place before that.

RADIO HOST: So, would you say that... [G INTERRUPTS]

G: Oh, wait, I just want to come back...

RADIO HOST: Oh, yes, please...

G: I want to return to the part of your question about whether intimacy with someone else can be practiced as pure compassion. This is really interesting because I think there was, uhm, there is all this talk about GGG—of the practice of being good, giving and game. It's not clear to me if this is the same as what you elude to in your question. I think that maybe they're different. I mean, I believe there is a way to practice compassion through sex. Oh, I'm sorry. Maybe I am getting off track from your question, but I am thinking of this group that specifically see themselves as healers—sexual healers—by giving pleasure to people through their bodies, to the disabled, to the hurt especially, but to anyone more generally. There's a way that this group shares their activities with prostitution, but this sex labor is more solidly sited in the healing arts.

RADIO HOST: I've heard about this! It's contemporaneous with the poly movement, right?

G: Yeah, that's right. Well, there's a scholar who has traced this specifically to the early modern period. Oh wait, no, I'm thinking of the wrong lover. Nevermind. [EVERYONE laughs a little] Oh, I get so confused. I hear all these voices in my head at once and

sometimes I can't decipher who is who or from when. I remember now. It's written about in *Solution 535*, wait, no, it's 257. Yes, that's it, and Niermann is the author.²⁵⁹

This other lover I was thinking of doesn't study attachment, love, or compassion at all—there's more an extrusion of the sex practice from the heart entirely, but it's interesting none-the-less. Anyway, I mean to mention sexual practice and compassion, specifically together. Niermann's book hovers around these issues in a story-telling way. The book somehow feels futuristic but contemporary, sci-fi yet real.

RADIO HOST: I think these ideas of sexual compassion have so much potential!

T: Hmm, oh, uhm, may I share something?

RADIO HOST: Please, T at any point, please interrupt, contest, and share anything you'd like. It is such a pleasure to have you all here at once, in this moment. I'd like the conversation to flow easily as we probe the depths of time and relationships.

T: Thank you. Thank you for inviting me here. It makes me feel a bit queer, but I greatly enjoy the feeling. While I listen, I am recalling another example Skinner brought to us in a "hometalk" recently. Skinner read Preciado's "Contra-Sexual Manifesto".²⁶⁰ The text came to S while experiencing H's fit during the last moon. I recorded something in my little book that I think adds to this conversation.

It is P's purpose to modify "the ordinary uses of the sexual body, by subverting what they called their 'biopolitical reactions'". Skinner read that this exercise is based on the practice of grafting new meanings onto certain body parts (in their case, a forearm) using the operation of dildotectonic *inversion* (a reaction causing a change from one biopolitical configuration of the body into another, opening a possibility of new uses of the self) and

²⁵⁹ Ingo Niermann, *Solution 257: Complete Love* (Berlin, Germany: Sternberg Press, 2016).

²⁶⁰ Paul B. Preciado, "The Contra-Sexual Manifesto (Excerpt)". *Total Art Journal* 1, no. 1 (Summer 2011), <http://totalartjournal.com/archives/1402/the-contra-sexual-manifesto/>.

investment (the action of investing a surplus of energy or political meaning onto an organ).

G: That's super interesting, T. Does the full body become one sex organ?

T: I believe that in this case it is assigned to particular parts. But, certainly, yes, there is that possibility. The notion of prosthesis is very important and gives attention to portions, areas, and parts of a body in a flexible and transmutable way.

P: [SOUNDS TO BE SPEAKING FROM AFAR, NOT IN THE STUDIO] The somatopolitical revolution will have come! Thinking that the body ends where the skin does is ridiculous, and yet that's how we think. Instead of talking about the "body", I use the term "body archive". I see the body as a cultural and political archive, with images, narratives and practices stored in it. Our body is small but the wider somatic apparatus is gigantic.

RADIO HOST: Oh, to explain to our listeners, T has summoned P by quoting them. They are not fully with us here. I've been meaning to invite P to the studio. Glad to have them here, but these ideas would be better suited for a different conversation. I can extend their point to approach our radio studio as an archive, though—of the histories and possibilities of experience and thinking that represent a "body archive" perhaps analogous to what P offers.

But if we can, let's get back to the relations themselves, beyond the limitations of the body and beyond the couple, if we can. I know it's confusing because some of us are fighting the repetition of two bodies and one experience while others mean many bodies, and others still, mean the broadening of the limits of one! [LAUGHTER]

A: "I think you refer here to inhibitions and attempts to dissipate them, whether at the individual level, or through relations with others. The true liberation of eroticism lies in accepting the fact that there are a million facets to it, a million forms of eroticism, a

million objects of it, situations, atmospheres, and variations. We have, first of all, to dispense with guilt concerning its expansion, then remain open to its surprises, varied expressions, and (to add my personal formula for the full enjoyment of it) fuse it with individual love and passion for a particular human being, mingle it with dreams, fantasies, and emotions for it to attain its highest potency. There may have been a time of collective rituals, when sensual release attained its apogee, but we are no longer engaged in collective rituals, and the stronger the passion for one individual, the more concentrated, intensified, and ecstatic the ritual of one to one can prove to be.”²⁶¹

D: For our listeners, that was A, author of *In Defense of the Sensitive Male*.

G: Oh, well there’s a scholar who lectures about sexual practice and duration, together. The focus is less on the couple and more on the practice as an individual spiritual experience, even though it’s experienced with an other or others. Their work includes a broad study of tantric sex practices. I think, T, the practice of your community is included as well.

T: Oh, really? I’d be interested to know more about it. During the work-bees at the community one person reads aloud writings from other places, like about these tantric sex practices. It does have some relation to our “continence” practice, actually. I see a relation to the slowness of our activity, to the spiritual communing with a partner, and most centrally in avoiding the quick exercise that so often leads to “crisis”.

RADIO HOST: Oh, this is very interesting. I’d like to come back to what G was talking about earlier. Would you say G, that compassion can lead to a flight of freedom of sorts, rather than an imposing responsibility related to couplehood? And can you talk about how this work might point to different sorts of affinities, different sorts of relationships?

G: My book contains traces of my experiences to support some kind of analysis. In terms of your question about the work producing alternative affinities, what gets difficult is

²⁶¹ Anaïs Nin, *In Favor of the Sensitive Man and Other Essays* (New York: Harcourt, 1966), 11.

finding commonalities in my experiences with the experiences of others. Everyone has a different motivation, so the question arises, is it even possible to effectively draw any conclusions in relation to all forms of affinities? I hope my exchanges and correspondences might become case studies, but I question whether this is even possible. I do believe this separation of pleasure from love that you bring up is a solid starting point from which certain alternatives are linked. In my book, it takes the character a series of experiences with new people to figure out and come to terms with their desires as they match up with or divert from how everyone else envisions relationships in their time.

RADIO HOST: Well, let's take that up. Earlier in your book your character recounts various sexual encounters, as you mention. Perhaps you might read one of the earlier passages that takes place in the other world where certain gender roles existed, those familiar to A, for instance. I think it might be good for bridging some of the differences existing in your respective times.

G: Ok, sure. Let me flip back. I think I have an idea of what would be good.

[MUSIC BREAK]

RADIO HOST: G, are you ready?

G: Yes, I found it.

[G READS] "Love is where our hope of ending domination is."²⁶²

They'd met on an internet date on Halloween night. Crowds of young costumed people swarmed around the new pair as they tried to negotiate a path to his favorite noodle shop in the east village. He seemed to her, almost manic as right away his gestures and smiles were overdone, superfluous, almost creepy (perhaps creepy was the All Soul's Eve influence). He walked like a person with a scattered mind—changing

²⁶² bell hooks, "Transgressions (in conversation with Gloria Steinem)" (talk, Eugene Lang College, The New School, New York, October 7, 2014).

direction abruptly. He launched into blabbing on about the possible sale of his Tribeca studio and how much he could make, the building he'd like to build—it'd be green, he already knew which architect he would use, and about how he was going to do all of this over the coming winter. He had an air of desperation to be intimate right away, to disclose secrets, to have a partner instantaneously—like the way he spoke about his money with her as if she could council him, enjoy the decisions with him, share his success with him. Most likely it was nervous energy misdirected into thinking he'd impress her by listing his financials. Wrong. They were five minutes in and she had an urge to turn around and disappear into the subway tunnel they just passed, but instead she plodded on along side him. She felt that to have said yes to meet, obligated her to share at least one drink. So instead, at the same moment she wanted to go home, she acquiesced when he'd decided to turn their drink into a meal. Over dinner, the conversation was smooth, yet with strange choppy moments interspersed. He ordered them sake after sake. She felt warm from it. It induced their glances to include grins, maybe even a sparkle in the eye. She hadn't eaten much that day, so now she was feeling the effects rather heavily and he seemed to like where this was going. It seemed to follow his script. She was a woman out with a man. He insisted on paying the check himself. He insisted on helping her with her coat and holding each door for her. It was excessive, or complete, she wasn't sure how to think of it, but she had never been with a person who so wholeheartedly took on those chivalrous (she'd read them as chauvinistic) manners.

What she did like were his sincere glances, stares, and gestures that poured forward, speeding ahead of his posturing and dismantling her caution. It had been years since she'd met a potential mate who'd exhibited the ability to be attached, to be vulnerable, to fall into a relationship. He also seemed to have the tools to work things out.

She wanted to sleep beside him. She had to coerce him because it didn't appear in his script until later. This was the beginning of a period of heat, delight, and sweetness that filled them both with hope and anticipation that

this was something. It was going to *be* something, perhaps *the* thing. As each meeting slowly revealed a bit more to her about him, there were clues that needed deciphering despite the challenges of alcohol that fueled each meeting. There was such an underside that began to reveal itself, that he began to reveal. Women to him, needed to be strong and powerful in public, but in private, he required a subservient masochist. She thought about his age—how much did his generational and regional zeitgeist have to do with his Neanderthal ways that found their legitimate home in S/M? When the lights turned on and the alcohol wore off, there before her stood a man—a controlling, selfish man with a love of, and identification with, material wealth matched only by a dot-comer from the nineties. This would be her last parlay into internet dating.

RADIO HOST: Well, this certainly does outline the more stagnant roles of certain times. Isn't it problematic that his S/M needs are cast as abusive and somehow associated with man's domination over women? I mean, doesn't that implicitly demonize the S/M community?

G: Well, that is a problem with reading just a section of my book and probably the problem of where I chose to stop reading. Here I can quote A, if you don't mind?

A: Oh, really? This should be interesting. Go on.

G: [SPOKEN DIRECTLY TO A] Your work makes mine possible, A.

[SPOKEN TO THE GROUP] The quote is, "The first half of the novel is all incident; the second is all ecstasy, rivers of poetry and surrealism issuing from the adventures, explorations, and fascinating completion".²⁶³

RADIO HOST: [SPOKEN SOFTLY] That's just beautiful.

²⁶³ Anaïs Nin, *The Diary of Anaïs Nin 1931-1934* (New York: Harcourt, 1966), 166.

A: Well, I understand from my own experience, how enormous influences can be in life and work.

G: Of course, the passage doesn't mean to cast all of S/M practices as the domination of men over women. That is a misreading. This practitioner, though, does thrive on excessive control of his partner, a woman, it's true. I wouldn't want this to be generalized beyond this story, though. I mean, returning to the thrust of the book, it is an exploration of a host of different ways of relating. My main character moves away from being able to relate to a male/female coupling at all, and this brief affair is an important part of her change.

And you're right, these are archaic gender roles, but the important point is that it takes place in a time of conflict where on the one hand, people think they are living in a time of gender equality, I mean that is the talk, but the reality was, that they were not. It's one thing to read and comprehend theory, and it's an altogether different thing to live it. She was living the constraints. She recognized how completely she and those around her were living the cultural mores they inherited. Osmosis. Proximity. Chronology. Repetition. Language. An actor in one's own life, on the stage of earth, acting out various roles, sometimes, no, often times, the scripts were being re-cast, re-circulated, and re-played. Flowing under the surface, people were consistently acting out the disparity—the oppression and domination of one romantic partner over the other. That's why it is so fraught. The main character struggles to figure out how to negotiate a time that publically claims equality, but privately imposes subjugation. It's a dishonest time.

RADIO HOST: And do you believe most people are dishonest in relationships?

G: Well, I think there has always been an impossible standard that people have too much trouble adhering to when they follow monogamy. It amazes me that people still do it. At least it is a minority now.

A: Most monogamous people's intentions are just that, monogamy. And they'd say they only have monogamous relationships, but the truth is that it doesn't happen that way. I think most people force themselves into this unrealistic custom that makes them have to deal with the weight of lying and being unethical.

G: That's one of the reasons I am so happy to be here today because T understands this, and so does everyone in their community and mine. T's community understands the criticism of compulsory monogamy that so many have written about, but still not everyone acts on.

D, you introduced this program by mentioning the book *The Wedding Complex*. Maybe the word "complex" can refer to the word *institution*, but maybe Freeman also means it to refer to a certain attempt to make what a wedding means or how it functions more *complex*? I'm thinking about the term "complex marriage" and curious to know if it means something different to T, for instance.

RADIO HOST: Yes T, you live in a community under beliefs and practices of something you call "complex marriage", where all members are married to each other, and in place of couplehood, is the group. It seems like you are on to something great because multiple affinities are encouraged, nurtured, and lived out. In theory it is supposed to eliminate jealousy. I mean, does it eliminate jealousy?

T: Oh, thank you for that question, A and D.

Before I speak of jealousy, I'd like to contribute that indeed, you have it right about my community. At its start, the community members believed that marriage is slavery for women, which is why they realigned marriage to be to that of the group, yes. I'd also like to make mention of my friend Woodhull who preaches free love and recently spoke at the Cooper Union Great Hall and I attended.²⁶⁴ Perhaps some here, were there, too?

²⁶⁴ Victoria Woodhull, "The Naked Truth" (speech The Great Hall, Cooper Union, New York, January 9, 1873).

EVERYONE [WITH OVERLAPS]: **D:** No, I missed it. **A:** It was before my time. **G:** I've seen a flyer about that.

T: Well then, if I may, free love in that case is about the right to have as many lovers as fancied, and to change those partners as often as wished. Ours is less of an approach to an inattentive heart, and more of a unified heart for God, under and through whom we experience intimacy.

I haven't read Freeman's book, but as I understand it, the type of attachment they discuss is a couplehood that is independent from state rhetoric and laws. That one is similar, yet different again from my community's practices and from what Woodhull's speech on free love speaks of.

RADIO HOST: OK, I'd just like to state for our listeners, but mostly for my own conceptual organization, that we've already made mention of four distinct forms of interpersonal relationships! A, what do you make of this? Can we back up a bit? Part of what you read, G, seems to be that intimacy is about those connections, those intertwined emotions that sex brings about?

G: That's true, but I'd also say that the conflicting feelings each of us feel when we experience intimacy with others is what makes the characters' experience so painful and fraught.

A: "This may or may not disappear in 'modern woman', intent on denying all of her past selves, and she may achieve this separation of sex and love, which to my belief, diminishes pleasure and reduces the heightened quality of lovemaking. For lovemaking is enhanced, heightened, intensified by its emotional content. You might compare the difference to a solo player and the vast reaches of an orchestra."²⁶⁵

[CHUCKLES FROM ALL]

²⁶⁵ Nin, *In Favor of the Sensitive Man and Other Essays*, 3-4.

We are all engaged in the task of peeling off the false selves, the programmed selves, the selves created by our families, our culture, our religions . . .

RADIO HOST: A, when you speak of a “modern woman” I’m wondering, not what she looks like, of course, but what does she behave like? What does the world that she lives in look like? Maybe you’d also like to respond to that, T?

T: Certainly, yes. I would say this separation that A refers to is a healthy one. It supersedes jealousy that gives way to rash and rage behavior. As our N states, “Liberty breeds virtue”.²⁶⁶ Ours is a wonderful testament to what God gave us. It is truly heaven on earth.

RADIO HOST: So, how do the sex practices figure into these identifications of independence and compassion? Are they fully experiencing all that love can supply?

[A CALLER PIPES IN UNANNOUNCED AFTER A SERIES OF KNOCKS ARE HEARD]

Caller F: I’m interested in what’s being discussed here, but the gender identifications of it is making me kind of sick. What’s with the archaic man/woman description? Why are we still discussing things in terms of the binary, at all?

RADIO HOST: Our caller, uhm, our knocker makes a point, but still. Let’s return to you T. Please.

T: Yes, well, “I maintain that complex marriage, combined with community-shared property eliminates the very sources of adultery, whoredom, and all sexual abuse. The

²⁶⁶ John Humphrey Noyes, *Slavery and Marriage: A Dialogue* (Oneida, NY: s.n., 1850), 12.

feeling of plenty would directly stimulate chastity and self-control”,²⁶⁷ if properly practiced. It is a full love.

RADIO HOST: Let’s take this up for a moment. Earlier a book was mentioned about sex labor as a healing art. I can understand the political potential of this. Because it is social in nature, could we consider it a social practice that is just as important as a social service?

A: Yes! There must be a space for this, for abandon release from repression. The women I speak of feel restrained and disallowed from feeling the full depths of their sexuality.

[SPOKEN UNDER BREATH] That caller gets it wrong. There will have never been a thing called post-gender. There must be space for difference that post-gender implies an erasure of. They shouldn’t be so naïve. They shouldn’t be so militant!

G: It’s tricky though, don’t you think? I mean, this generally only happens in small communities, or it has, anyway.

RADIO HOST: But doesn’t revolution always exist somewhere? Aren’t these ideas in every time, just written in different languages and given different names?

[**G, RADIO HOST, and T** QUIETLY TO EACH OTHER:]

G: Do you know why A is talking like this?

RADIO HOST: Yes, some hold onto that way of talking about people, always dividing them into men and women.

T: I thought it so. Skinner lectured on something similar. But they did it to acknowledge the divided and unfair effects of capitalism and war.

²⁶⁷ John Humphrey Noyes, *Slavery and Marriage: A Dialogue* (Oneida, NY: s.n., 1850), 12.

[LOUDER, REENTERING THE GROUP CONVERSATION]

T: Uhm, excuse me, D, I think, perhaps this might be a good time to share what happened at the community yesterday. It concerns the possessive spirit that you asked about before. R. Fox took down the exchange. I've borrowed it in anticipation of our conversation at the studio here today. May I read it now?

RADIO HOST: Yes, please do.

T: Very good. [CLEARS THROAT]

“It was a bright afternoon.

J. Skinner came into the meeting room where we were sitting together conscientiously carrying, and with great care, having prepared a picnic lunch for A. Hobart. An invitation they declined. ‘Alas, I am not hungry,’ they said coldly. They pleaded, ‘Wait, A. Please.’ They turned around briskly and said, ‘J. S., you let me fall asleep.’ They then declared, ‘I wanted to sleep with you, dear A.’ A. then declared, ‘To stay the night together is against the policy of the Community!’ ‘Policy!’, J. replied. “Do you need a curfew to cut off any true attachment you might feel, A. H.?’ With restraint and composure, A. exclaimed, ‘I am attached to the whole Community, and to stay with one person for the night cuts off the Community. It tends to special love. It breeds exclusivity and jealousy—and leads to the sin of adultery. It is adultery against the Community.’ ‘That is old Noyes’s speech, and not the sentiment of a young vibrant person,’ implored J. ‘J. S., if you wish to see me, you may submit your written request through a proper intermediary, and I will consider slating an appointment. But we will not stay the whole night, nor will we pair off and picnic, nor anything of the sort. Good day, J. Skinner.’ A abruptly turned and walked away, ending the conversation.”²⁶⁸

²⁶⁸ Russell Fox, *The Noyes Plays* (New York: iUniverse, 2010), 108-109.

RADIO HOST: Thank you, T. How fantastic that this exchange happened just last night before our conversation. If we compare this reading to G's we find ideas of desire present and, coincidentally, in both is the sleepover. If desire *is* at the center of the problem, as it were, in both instances, how then would desire be tamed to accommodate a community-centered form of loving more than one? Of the non-monogamous?

A: It is not, from my perspective, about taming desire, at all, but living more presently in desire, itself!

G: I think that when more live like T or other examples, like those in my community, that gender role distinctions recede to a distance no longer heard, that can't even sustain themselves over these radio waves.

RADIO HOST: Let's pause here for a Station Identification, and when we come back, we'll switch gears to speak about the politics of relationships. Speaking in a certain present where same-sex marriage is newly accepted, but less and less people get married, how might the politics of relationships catch up with the people's practices?

A NARRATIVE EXPOSITION BY A DIFFERENT RADIO HOST: The four continue speaking about these experiences, two of whom argue for a necessary separation between love and pleasure, while G isn't fully convinced. Torn between romantic love affairs and the knowledge that romance is only a construction, a template they buy into from a society they resent being stuck in, they are cast just short of hypocrites. Because they are unable to fully live out their unique ideas for freedom in relationships in their own time, they take momentary refuge and find solace, here at WPPF.

STING: SOUND AND SPOKEN WORD: LIVE ON AIR, this is Radio Utopia—of ideas forming, of individuals becoming. Reality is a sound. You have to tune in to it, not just keep yelling. A Past, Potential Future. "I have the kind of imagination that hears. I think of it as radio imagination."²⁶⁹

²⁶⁹ Octavia E. Butler, "Radio Imagination': Octavia Butler on the Poetics of Narrative Embodiment", *MELUS* 26, no. 1 (Spring 2001): 45-76.

[MUSIC BREAK]

RADIO ANNOUNCER: It's 1:51 and the weather outside is stormy—snow with a frigid 2 degrees Fahrenheit. In news, plans for the fifty-eighth Presidential inauguration continue to invoke protests from around the world. The Supreme Court is meeting to determine if they have the power to block the event from happening due to the elected one's multiple violations of the Equal Rights Amendment, the amendment that was introduced in 1923, passed in Congress in 1972, and ratified in all States by 2007. The Women's Liberation Army is remembered today, for their successful initiatives to eliminate the necessity for female reproductive care. But first, stay tuned for the next installment of WPPF's ReCast: LIVE ON AIR.

RADIO HOST: Welcome back. So the question I'd like to pose to you three, and perhaps we can take a caller's reaction too, is about free love, polyamory, compassionated expression, and the other forms of non-monogamous relationships that you are involved with that we perhaps don't have names for. When they are legislated as acceptable forms of relationships and the laws of the state aren't marriage-dependent, but expanded affinities are present, then is there the greatest sense of liberation? Are free subjectivities attained? How, in your experience, do relationship forms establish, make, or encourage an egalitarian climate? T, can we start with you?

T: Yes, of course, but first I wonder if it is the sexual practices themselves that create the conditions. In my experience living in the Community (while being conscious of the outside and of the practices I left behind), I'd say it is the architecture of the community that creates the egalitarian nature. Outside of it, I do not think, would have the same effect. Because our community is planned with equality as a main goal, it is more than the sexual practice itself that makes it secure.

A: Group thinking does not give strength. It weakens the will.

RADIO HOST: Oh A, please go on. This offers an interesting contrast to T's points about community.

A: I think differently than T. Majority thinking is oppressive because it inhibits individual growth. It seeks one formula for all. Individual growth is what makes communal living of higher quality. This I will say in support of T's community, if it exists that way, but I always hear them speak of it as community first. "Any attack against individual development belongs to the dark ages. If I am able to help or inspire women today, it is because I persisted in my individual development and I never give up because I realize that at the bottom of every failed system to improve the lot of man lies an imperfect, corruptible human being."²⁷⁰

RADIO HOST: How do we trace these relations? How do we trace what is the result of social organization or that of the individual? What has been referred to as alternative sexual practices have been present always, in every moment this radio cast reaches. There's something about a trail of events and the momentum surrounding them that eventually point to a more mainstream acceptance. It usually follows that there is first objection, then protest, and finally laws made. But the question of social organization as necessary to permit, allow, and encourage certain behaviors is an important one.

A: I start to think about this utopian community idea, like that that T lives in and whether violence correspondingly lessens. Does it really?

T: But it greatly aids. My community is an example of expanded relationships freeing people, firming equal footing in labor, education, and sex . . .

RADIO HOST [INTERRUPTS]: But to back up for a moment, are we speaking of non-monogamy? Doesn't that idea ignore the romantic in people—the romantic ideas of a special mate, however misleading? I see two different agendas at play, one about governance and equal divisions, the other about an uncontrollable heart and desire. G, what would you add to this?

²⁷⁰ Nin, *In Favor of the Sensitive Man and Other Essays*, 31.

G: Sure well, I think only “compassioned belonging” makes sense here because it is different than sex-practices of two or many—it may not include sex, necessarily.

A: Again, this is where we’d diverge, G. I disagree entirely. Any permutation and orientation *can* work if one is modern. It is about individual growth. Because of the constraints of the patriarchy, it must be about the individual.

Caller F: I can’t see the usefulness of that term, patriarchy!

A: That caller speaks from a privilege not everyone shares. Yes, I said patriarchy! “I have always wanted to blur the distinction of masculinity and femininity in my writing. I have tried to establish the fluid connections beyond sex. At the same time, our erotic energy is taboo. But in my writing, in my writing is a different sense—I write a freer sexuality, free love, and freedom. I write it quietly, my writing is quiet, but still.”²⁷¹

Caller F: [MUTTERED UNDER BREATH] We have such trouble relating to your binary ways.

A: [SPOKEN AS IF A DIDN’T HEAR F] Let me say it this way, the nature of my contribution to the Women’s Liberation Movement is not political, but psychological.

T: However, the influence of capitalism on our thinking about relationships is important to consider.

A: I understand. You spoke of it not one minute ago.

T: I ask your forgiveness. You *misunderstand*. Not in *that* way. Not of property inheritance and ownership, but the holding of wealth and property must be included in

²⁷¹ Nin, *In Favor of the Sensitive Man and Other Essays*, 21.

the discussion if we are to speak of patriarchy. It is communism, against capitalism, in this sense.

A: Then we return to the beginning. To *herstory*. We should consult Steinem. I have here that they told the readers of *Wonder Woman*:

“Once upon a time, the many cultures of this world were all part of the gynocratic age. Paternity had not yet been discovered, and it was thought [...] that women bore fruit like trees—when they were ripe. Childbirth was mysterious. It was vital. And it was envied. Women were worshipped because of it, were considered superior because of it. [...] Men were on the periphery—an interchangeable body of workers for, and worshippers of, the female center, the principle of life.

The discovery of paternity, of sexual cause and childbirth effect, was as cataclysmic for society as, say, the discovery of fire or the shattering of the atom. Gradually, the idea of male ownership of children took hold.

[...] women gradually lost their freedom, mystery, and superior position. For five thousand years or more, the gynocratic age had flowered in peace and productivity. Slowly, in varying stages and in different parts of the world, the social order was painfully reversed. Women became the underclass, marked by their visible differences.”²⁷²

[SOUND OF KNOCKING AS IF ON A WALL]

VOICE [FROM A DISTANCE]: Sometimes you have to make your own history.²⁷³

RADIO HOST: Yes, we are making our own history! [**EVERYONE:** LAUGHTER]
Maybe we’d like to invite a caller. Caller?

²⁷² Gloria Steinem, “Wonder Woman.” Written in 1972 and found in: *The Superhero Reader*, ed. Charles Hatfield, Jeet Heer, and Kent Worcester (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2013), 209-210.

²⁷³ *The Watermelon Woman*, written and directed by Cheryl Dunye (New York: First Run Features, 1996).

CALLER V: Sometimes you have to scream to be heard. I've been screaming so loud that I can be heard across, outside, before, and beyond time. I'm screaming the injustices done. I'm screaming to be heard. Who listens?

CALLER F [INTERRUPTS]: They had to be militant so that those straight times of men on the right and women on the left were abolished. Get off those train rails. Jump off the rails.

A: How many generations will it take to disband patriarchy and live out a state of liberation?

RADIO HOST: A, perhaps now is a good time for you to read from your book? Can you bring us to a place where we can consider our relation to reality, *her* relation to reality?

A: Yes, certainly, I can.

“The first time J came to Louveciennes all I noticed were her eyes, the distress in them, the wild swimming of the pupils in their orbit. She was tall, blonde; she looked like Darrieux with less softness of contour, a more austere quality. She limped. She dragged her leg and she talked continuously saying:

‘I hate to see my brothers as bodies, to see them growing old. Once I sat writing a letter in a room and the two of them were playing cards. I looked at them and thought: What a crime that we should be alive, it is a simulacrum, everything was finished long ago, we have lived already, we are far away from our husbands, wives, children, friends. I have tried so hard to love, and I can, up to a certain point, and then no further.’

She said this as we were sitting in the back of the garden, where trees, bushes, flowers, ivy, all grow wildly, and a small trickle of water runs under a small Japanese bridge. Her husband was visiting the house and talking with other friends. J was so restless, her eyes tossing like miniature ships at sea, that I offered to walk through the forest. We walked over a thick carpet of pine needles, and she

talked some more:

‘I have no human sympathy, I suffer neither pain nor feel joy either. I am only aware of my brothers. I know only fear, a great fear which makes me stay away from the theater, from reading, from analysis, from any avenue of realization, of clarification. I want to preserve my divorce from reality, and yet I know that at times this divorce is so absolute a step that I step into madness. I reach moments when I become deaf to the world. I stand in the street and see the automobiles passing and I hear nothing. I stamp my feet and hear nothing. I ran into a bar and asked the woman serving drinks a question. I saw her lips moving but I could not hear the words. I was terrified. I may be lying on my bed and this great fear invades me. I begin to knock on the floor or the wall, to break this silence; I knock and I sing until the fear passes.’²⁷⁴

RADIO HOST: Knock and sing, indeed. Thank you for that moving passage A, which would be great to get into and discuss, but we have run out of time. [LIGHT LAUGHTER] Thank you, guests. Until next time, this is D and you’re listening to WPPF, Radio Utopia.

[END]

Written by Andrea Ray

²⁷⁴ Nin, *The Diary of Anais Nin 1931-1934*, 167.

APPENDIX B

Andrea Ray by Matthew Buckingham
BOMB Magazine Art : Interview

BOMB

Andrea Ray by Matthew Buckingham

Andrea Ray speaks to Matthew Buckingham about 19th century sexual freedom, the caring economy and her recent exhibition, Utopians Dance.



All images are installation views of Utopians Dance, 2013 and courtesy of the artist.

I met Andrea Ray in the autumn of 1996 when we were both students at the Whitney Museum of American Art Independent Study Program. Over the years we've remained close friends, sharing studios, reading groups, and teaching venues. I was always intrigued by how A.Ray invited viewers to investigate her installation works in ways a scientist or a doctor might. At the end of that year together at the ISP A.Ray showed her installation Architecture of Resistance in which visitors used stethoscopes to listen to murmuring and breathing translucent walls. This was the beginning of a series of projects in which A.Ray dealt with environmental illness, both metaphoric and literal. These works were structured so that the process of investigating them led viewers to discover and identify with human subjects who were unwilling or

unable to assimilate to their environments. A.Ray used these characters, caught between their own psychology and physiology, to spin narratives that question our whole relation to the built environment and the economies that support them—monetary or otherwise. Subsequent works have continued to use sound as a hinge between narrative fiction and real bodies in real space while expanding into questions of social and political self-discovery. Her exhibition, *Utopians Dance* at Open Source in South Slope, Brooklyn, this past spring comprised an ensemble of works that employed light, video, sound, hand-bound books, photographs and other objects. We got together during the last week of the show to talk about the work.

Matthew Buckingham The thing that struck me, walking up to your show *Utopians Dance*, and seeing the quote-unquote “empty” space, a very brightly-lit room that opens directly out onto the street, was that I had to put back together, in my imagination, what it once was—a parking garage—and then seeing how you had transformed it, or what had happened, and what was part of the project versus the original space. The atmosphere of the opening and people socializing there, which was seamless with the work, told me something about how to look at the work. And I felt like that carried through everything, a kind of deliberate absent center, that wasn’t melancholic, but instead was a way of both putting the viewers onstage and making the viewers see themselves on that stage.

Andrea Ray Yes, I hoped the piece could be inviting but not demanding, not an obligation. To bring in that social engagement, at the opening in particular, to have a group of children dancing around to the music in that space and the older folks sort of mingling through and socializing under the strings of lights, was very pleasing. I mean, it’s one of the things with the work—you don’t know until you have the event, how it will truly be utilized.

MB Right. “Participatory” artworks are more interesting to me than “interactive” ones, but they’re both oxymoronic to some degree, and for opposite reasons. Very few projects are truly interactive in the sense that the viewer has a real effect on the artwork; and, on the other hand, all art is participatory. By being present I’m already doing something, taking action, in relation to the idea of the work itself. And if the work has an effect on me I will continue to act in relation to it.

AR Recently, I heard Doug Ashford speaking about institutions, in this case museums, as they produce viewer-subjects before they even enter through the door. The viewer as participant is an example. This related to his work with *Group Material* and their attempt to reject that relationship. It made me think about relational aesthetics—on the one hand there’s the claim that viewers are free to have some participatory stake in the work, but on the other, the role of the viewer is pre-determined by the work.

MB I guess I end up thinking of participatory art as work that confronts me in a productive way with my own spectating— reminding me that

I'm there, looking and listening. In your installation there are many curious aspects that one tries to fill in or ends up leaving empty. There's the space itself, and then there are a lot of objects. One is an empty record jacket, titled *In My Utopia*, that implies a whole listening experience I can't have—an invitation to imagine an album of songs. Then there is the small back room that I didn't notice at first—a place to read your book, titled *A Cure for the Marriage Spirit*, which again felt like an invitation for the viewer to become the subject of the work. Parts of the exhibition suggest narratives as well as various narrative connections. I want to ask you about the story that's in the book and its relation to the whole space, and the even more poetic narrative that's in the video playing back in the larger room. Because they're spatially separated, I also separated the content of these two narratives. Should I have?



AR I do think of them as two separate narratives, but I like having them bleed into each other through sound or text repetition.

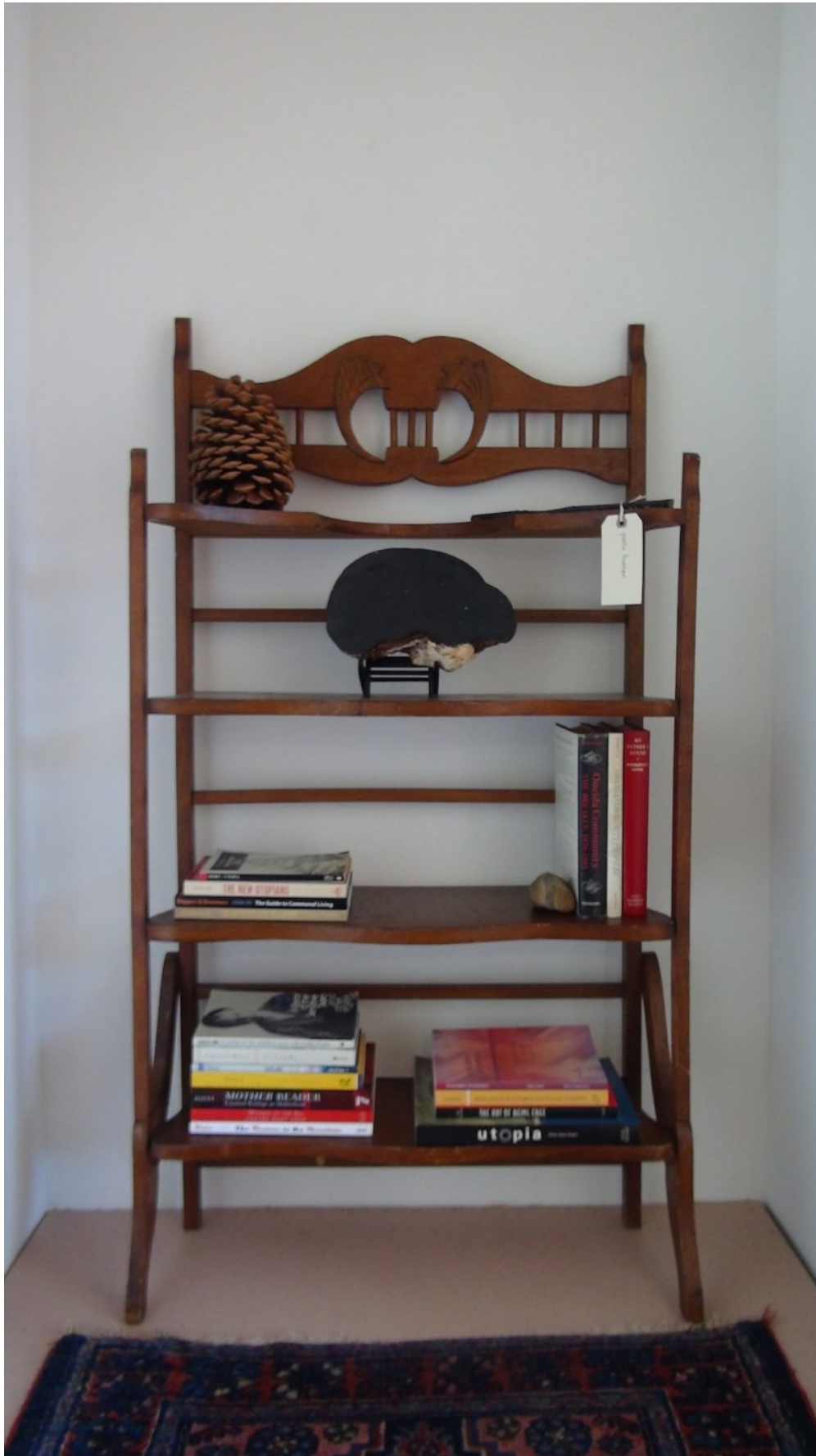
The way the book is written, it's only a prologue so far. It's an introduction to a character who is doing research and writing in her journal but in the third person. There's this consistent removal of fixed identification that was important to me. Then we have the voice of the book's narrator as well as a voice taken directly from a memoir written by a 19th-century woman who lived in a feminist utopian community. This may seem from left field, but there's something about the *nouveau roman*, where there are close descriptions of objects and less of a linear character development or narrative that interests me. Things might jump out of place in a way that allows the reader to then

enter into the structure of the story and make their own writing of it. I'm thinking of Marguerite Duras' *Destroy, She Said*, specifically, where there are four characters, but one of the characters sometimes seems that he might represent the subconscious of the other three characters, and at other moments I believe he really exists. I'm interested in how this form can be reworked in an installation.

So after being in that space of the small, self-reflective reading room you step into a social space of dance. But the thread that connects the two is the search for freedom. In the story the character is trying to find freedom through research. Then as you come out into a garage, a former space of labor, that's been transformed into a dancehall, the question of whether freedom might be found through dance is revealed.

MB It's not something I've thought of before—the connection between the countryside and a barn dance, and compact urban space and a two-car garage dance. (_laughter_) Most people hanging out outside at your show on a very nice evening exploited the nature of that space, being both inside and outside at the same time. Maybe it's a question of protagonists, and the viewer using your work to try out the roles of the protagonists in the work. How many elements in the show have a voice, and how many discreet works are in the show? Or is it all one work?



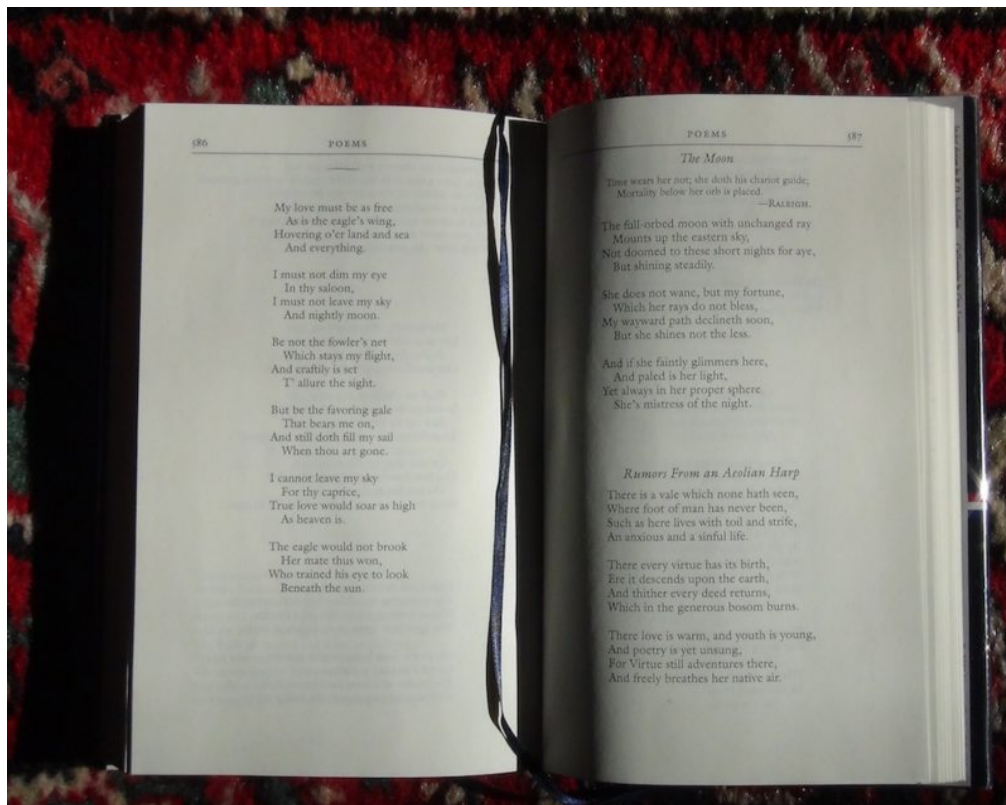


AR I consider them to be two pieces presented as one exhibition. I haven't

counted the number of voices in the work, but it'd be interesting to look at it that way. There are several distinct voices, for sure. The front dancehall room is entitled Utopians Dance, which is also the title of the show. The smaller reading room installation is called A Reeducation and the individual pieces within that room do have titles.

There's my book, A Cure for the Marriage Spirit, which sits on a table set up with a chair and lamp; a landscape painting Past Present, The Oneida Community Lawn, a bookshelf holding various books on utopia, feminism and economics where the viewer is perhaps furthering the research that the character in the book is doing or just picking up on threads of things; there's a series of natural objects such as a stick with a label of Poetic Hunter attached; there is a photograph of a book opened to a poem that Henry David Thoreau wrote called Free Love; there are two photographs of dresses in the woods titled Herland after Charlotte Perkins Gilman's novel; and the room is completed with oriental rugs covering the floor. Most of the titles can be found again as song titles on the album jacket In My Utopia found leaning against the floor in Utopians Dance, or in the section headings within the book. For me, this collection of song titles and objects adds up to a site or a situation and by proximity they speak to each other.

MB It's not biography and it's not autobiography, but we're given specific and deep pockets of information that are not necessarily connected, except when you show these works together. The album feels the most fictional because it's not there and yet it's authored by you. It's an album of your music that could exist but doesn't yet.



AR That's right. I think it is a hopeful projection of "make it and it will come," meaning I haven't gotten down to the songwriting yet.

MB Tell me something about the liner notes, because there's a hinge there with some of the material found in the book.

AR Thinking about the form of an album cover and the information you would find on it, I wanted to create a discrete piece where images, titles, and blocks of texts could work next to each other to express the concepts of utopia and feminism that I'm engaged with. It also allowed me to present small parts of my book together on the album cover, I think the passages communicate differently —it's certainly less linear than the experience of reading the book. And I have a real interest in bluegrass and folk music now, so for me it's about exploring how the visual work can incorporate the sonic and textual.

There's a section in the book with bits of a memoir written by a woman from the Oneida Community named Tirzah. She speaks about when she left music for writing and how it was like the death of a cherished friend. This switch from music to writing, to leave something, is interesting to me. As a visual artist, I've been writing more and more in my work and incorporating her passage is an acknowledgement of that shift.

MB What about the song title "Human"?

AR Charlotte Perkins Gilman wrote a lot about how we are only living through one sex, the male sex—this is around 1915—and that we each (male and female) had the possibility to live through our femaleness but we weren't allowing ourselves to do that since the given relation was male or not-male, and we were therefore, only half-human. She often referred to the "human" as opposed to the male or female.

MB I guess there's an interface between this investigating subject, who could be the artist, and the viewer, who's vicariously experiencing that new level of self-discovery.

AR Yes. I'm interested to look at history in terms of sexual politics, to see how conditions that fostered radical utopian thoughts and activities, like that of the former free lovers, for example, might converse with the present moment to illuminate a freer future- identity. This is why my book mixes time periods—the main character, through her research into 19th-century feminists, resists a linear idea of historical time, she imagines she's communing with the dead, she imagines she's found comrades who enable her to dream up alternative social conditions in the present moment.

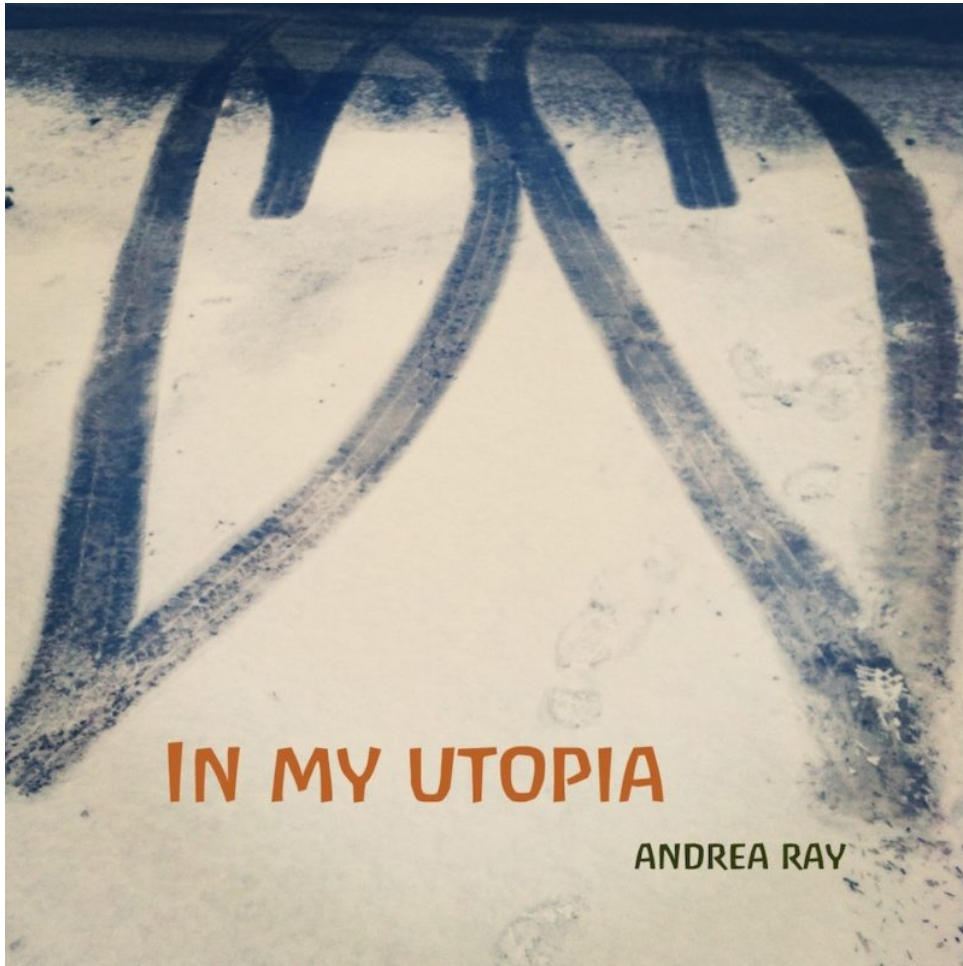
MB As a historical project, it's interesting to me that you've set things up so that words and ideas that have, over time, become over- determined, can be seen in a fresh way through the eyes of the fictional characters in the work.

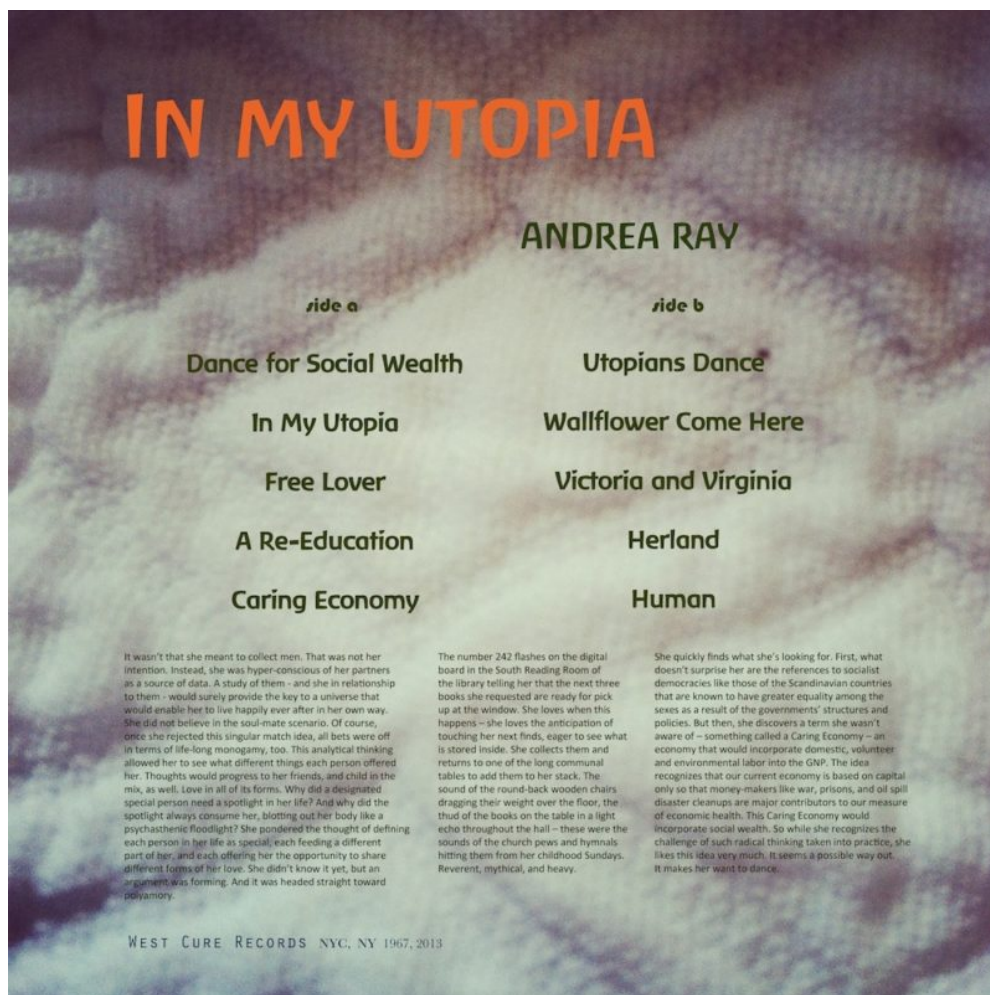
We are forced to reconsider a range of 18th and 19th-century progressive social and political movements from our current perspective.



AR In the 19th century, you have something like the Oneida Community, an intentional free-love community, but then you have someone like Victoria Woodhull, who's also a free lover, the first woman to run for president in the US, she's a stockbroker and she's a spiritualist. Amazing! But the Oneida Community women were not fond of Victoria Woodhull. There were all kinds of breaks in that feminist movement. Unfortunately in the case of the Oneida Community women, I think they believed that the male was inherently strongest.

So, as I'm reading about them, I'm reconsidering the present moment and I'm wondering how I might use these histories and about the way in which history is displayed or identified within the work of this project that makes it contemporary. In a deliberate way, within my book, you have this woman doing research into the past, while she's having her own self-discovery today. And in the video the ideas about economics are contemporary. That "caring economy" term, for instance, is from an interesting woman who's writing today, Riane Eisler.





MB This notion of “caring economy” takes us back to what we think of as “utopian.”

AR When we talk about our economic health, when we determine the GNP, it’s based on capital. It’s the money that’s made. Things like prisons, wars and environmental disaster cleanups make a lot of money, and therefore contribute greatly to our economic health, and that’s so ridiculous when you think about it. So Riane Eisler’s proposal is that domestic labor, volunteer labor, and environmental work should get added in, in some measure. I find it very interesting to think about how those additions might recalibrate our values.

MB Is it connected with the concept of social wealth? Is that the right term?

AR Yes, caring economy and social wealth are related. The concepts are found in the subtitles of the video, one reads “dance for social wealth,” and there are also lines about a “caring economy” in how it relates to the way ants and bees live communally. They cooperate. They don’t compete. That’s the foundation of these terms.

MB That points to the main question surrounding the use of the term “utopia.”

Is the “perfect place that is nowhere” meant to be a real objective? Does it represent the desire to create the perfect social, political, economic system? Or is it meant as a critique of present circumstances, describing the perfect society in order to point out our shortcomings? The most urgent question, either way, is always for whom would utopia be utopic?

AR Right. The intentional communities themselves always have that problem of attempting to create “one good for all,” which of course falls apart. I don’t look at former utopian communities as experiments that failed, but I look at utopia as a process or a drive. Utopia can operate in this presence and absence way that you’re describing. It can operate as a template from which to critique the present.

So when I take from previous historical moments, I can rethink what’s happening today. I mean, it’s kind of astounding what’s happening in the Supreme Court. I’m referring to the discussions they’ve been having this spring about DOMA and proposition 8— two landmark gay rights cases. Too many federal laws depend on legal marital status. The centrality of marriage is so present.

MB And personal. The term polyamory, on the other hand, stands out in your project for being a very recent term, if not concept. It does not come into use until 1990 and after.

AR You are referring to the sexual freedom topic that’s found in my book *A Cure for the Marriage Spirit*. During the 19th century there were many communities that practiced free love—meaning to have many sexual partners without feeling guilt or being considered a sinner. At the time there was a new separation between sex for procreation within the institution of marriage and sex for pleasure. The Oneida Community adopted it, in part, as a resistance to marriage. They believed that marriage was slavery to women and their version of free love discouraged the pairing of couples in favor of being married to the group. Polyamory is a newer term for another non-monogamous form of open relationships where one has many special partners. The main character of my book is engaged in a search for freedom through sexuality. The foundation for this project is a related question: if as Foucault would say, an individual’s subjectivity is constructed by institutions, then how can the feminist project be realized if the marriage institution is still at the core of our value system? The ghosts of what the institution was will necessarily be present. So this is where the title *A Reeducation* comes from. For instance, taking Sweden as an example, their Social Democratic system cares for each individual without the same privileging of the married unit found in this country. I’m so interested in Sweden, and not to characterize the country as a utopia, but recently Sweden adopted a third pronoun, a gender-neutral pronoun. It’s very exciting. This project is not a rejection of gender, and it’s not a rejection of marriage either, but it is about the desire for our value system to root somewhere else.

MB Which is interesting now, at a point where the marriage rate has never been lower in the States. Are those values migrating somewhere else? Are they transforming as well? I have no idea how to answer that.

AR I'm surprised to hear that it's at an all time low. I had a different impression. I support anyone who wants to get married, but at the same time, I question why we want to keep replicating that form. In Mexico a couple of years ago, a legislator proposed there to be a two-year marriage dissolution option—after two years, you wouldn't be married anymore. You'd have to go get remarried.

MB I want to ask you more about the video in the open room and the music that these feet we see on screen are dancing to. For me this setup, once again, makes me the protagonist of the project. The room is ready for a dance and I see someone “practicing,” as it were, in the video. The video has superimposed text that reads like subtitling, but there is no dialogue or voiceover, so the only meaning to be translated is the music and/or the sock-footed dance-steps. What does that particular music and type of dancing suggest for you?

For Utopians Dance 1 - Andrea Ray

from **BOMB Magazine**



06:24

AR It's in relationship to summer outdoor folk festivals. It's utopian, you know, these temporary communities that pop up. To twirl under the stars or twirl under the lights of a dance tent are special things that I live for. The festivals create a communal euphoria that you feel through your whole body—if you are into such things. The space of dance in Utopians Dance, is inspired by my love of dancing under the stars. And my book opens with a woman's experience dancing, too.

I began to see a relationship between dance and a form of cooperative economics. In contra dances the steps are planned and everyone is cooperating. It's the ants, it's the bees, it's the contra dancing. The subtitles in the video combine contra-dancing calls with my writing.

MB You also mentioned that the book is a prologue. So, even though we don't know, and it's maybe not fair to ask “prologue to what?” I'm going to ask anyway: What's going to happen to your protagonist on her quest for self-discovery?

AR I'd like to use the protagonist further as a vehicle to present my research. Right now I'm reading more about feminist utopias and experimental forms of economics. In the prologue, there's an interaction with one particular

character, called The Artist, who represents the window to her awakening. She now needs to live out these ideas of freedom she's researching. I hope chapter one picks up with her engaging in living—outside of the pages of the books. If my utopia existed, and she's in it, what will it look like and what will happen to her? That journey should begin with chapter one. Of course, chapter one may take the form of the vinyl for my album cover—who knows.

For more on Andrea Ray, visit her website.

Matthew Buckingham is an artist based in New York. He is Associate Professor and Director of Graduate Studies at Columbia University School of the Arts.

economy and society sex sexuality utopia interactive art

Read also:

Matthew Buckingham by Josiah McElheny



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APPENDIX C

“A Reeducation” by Andrea Ray
Not Now! Now! Chronopolitics, Art and Research
Renate Lorenz (Ed.)

Publication Series of the Academy of Fine Arts Vienna
Eva Blimlinger, Andrea B. Braidt, Karin Riegler (Series Eds.)
Volume 15

Not Now!
Now!
Chronopolitics,
Art & Research
Renate Lorenz (ed.)

SternbergPress 

A Reeducation

Andrea Ray



Fig. 32
Andrea Ray, *Free Love*, 2013.

If an individual's subjectivity is in great part constructed by institutions, as Michel Foucault described, how can the feminist project advance when marriage is still at the core of our value system? My work aims to intervene, counter, and rework the chronopolitical and heteronormative narratives of constraint, omission, and dominance that institutions like marriage still retain.

Looking at history in terms of sexual politics, I'm beginning to formulate conversations between, for instance, the radical utopian voices of the former free-lovers with those of the present moment, in an effort to illuminate a freer future-subject. Marriage, since its inception as a patriarchal concept of ownership, inheritance, and property law, perpetuates and retains ghosts of its discriminatory beginnings. Such apparitions are readily seen in the USA where over one thousand laws are dependent on marriage status. While gay-rights activists fight to legalize same-sex marriage to match these privileges, I question whether we shouldn't instead open up recognized affinities to include more than singular romantic partners—so that one may assign different people as beneficiary or proxy to the various health, tax, and inheritance laws. Challenging the legitimacy of linear, normalizing constructions, my project seeks to link voices across time, to present a synchronous conversation of feminist utterances that reveal a sense of always having been present. I'm also evaluating how non-monogamous forms, like that of polyamory, might influence and shift perceived values at both individual and social levels.

Free love refers to a nineteenth-century movement that heralded a right to having many lovers outside the artificial constraints of marriage. My interest in this non-monogamous movement is that it was intrinsically tied to politics. The movement's beliefs were formalized in the egalitarian structures of many contemporaneous intentional communities, like that of the former Oneida Community of New York State—a group that believed marriage was slavery for women; subsequently, each member was *married* to the group, and to maintain the group allegiance, members were encouraged to change sex partners frequently so as not to develop special bonds with any one member. Looking into the more recent history of free love, that of the late 1960s and early '70s, I've found it generally represented a more individualistic and less political pursuit, although it did later prove to have had important effects on the progress of women's rights, like a woman's right to abortion, for example.

Polyamory is a recent term (from 1990) referring to the non-monogamous practice of having many special relationships in which, ideally, all partners are open, honest, and care for one another a great deal. While it has not yet been theorized much, what I've found so far is a discussion of subjectivity related to gender and power as they operate within polyamorous relationships. Only little discusses the larger framework of potential social and cultural implica-



Fig. 33
Andrea Ray, installation detail of *A Reeducation*, 2013.



Fig. 34
Andrea Ray, installation detail of *A Reeducation*, 2013.

tions, and the practice itself isn't political in the way that the early free-love movement was.

With less and less people getting married, could the privileges connected to marital status dissolve within our legal system? How might the sexual freedoms of non-monogamous relationships be useful to feminism? How might the concept of chronopolitics be a useful strategy for feminism?

My research, interests, and voice are organized into individual projects of multiple installations. I build environments where ideas may play against one another to produce spaces of simultaneous knowing and unknowing. A recent project, *Utopians Dance*, is comprised of two installations—*A Reeducation* and the titular *Utopians Dance*. The project simultaneously engages moments of the past, the present, and the future, exploring an individual's journey through the lens of the social, while calling across histories of social experimentation to speak with subjectivities of today.

A Reeducation evokes a turn-of-the-century reading room. A bookshelf (holding books about utopia, feminism, and economics), antique rugs, photographs, a painting, and natural objects comprise the environment (Fig. 2).

A small table displays a book I've written and hand-bound (Fig. 3). The book is titled *A Cure for the Marriage Spirit* and incorporates a bit of time travel. The main character, through her research into nineteenth-century feminists and her experimentation with polyamory, resists a linear concept of time as she imagines communing with the dead—comrades who enable her to dream up alternative social conditions in her own time, to rethink marriage, questions of equality and sexual politics, and to challenge what is considered normal. It is my hope that the text's non-linear temporal construction enables viewer-subjects to similarly engage in formulating future possibilities.

Surrounding the walls are photographs, one of a book that lays open to a poem by Henry David Thoreau about free love (Fig. 1), and two others that reference Charlotte Perkins Gilman's *Herland*, a utopian feminist novel from 1915 in which three male explorers discover an all-female civilization—a frame within which to contrast gender discrimination with social alternatives. My photographs present evidence of that civilization, of the former persisting in the present. Moving beyond this example of early twentieth-century binary politics, I'm interested instead in productive dissent among non-fixed subject identities—a model to replace that of the center/periphery.

In a larger open space is *Utopians Dance* where wood flooring, music, and video create a space of levity that encourages dance under a series of strung lights (Fig. 4). The video monitor displays dancing feet with subtitles that con-

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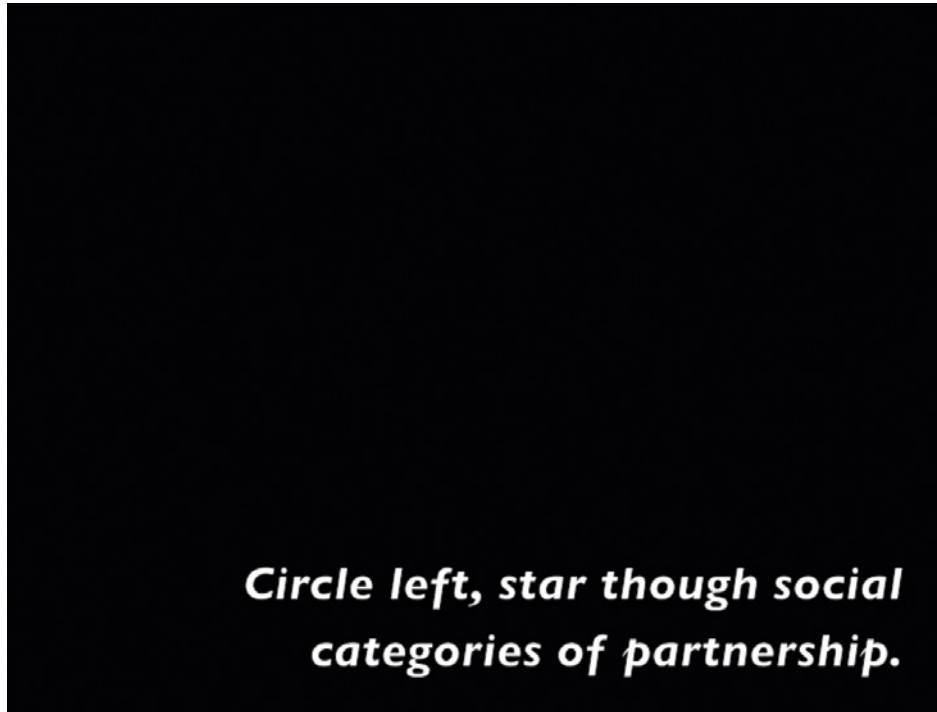


Fig. 35
Andrea Ray, *Utopians Dance*, 2013.

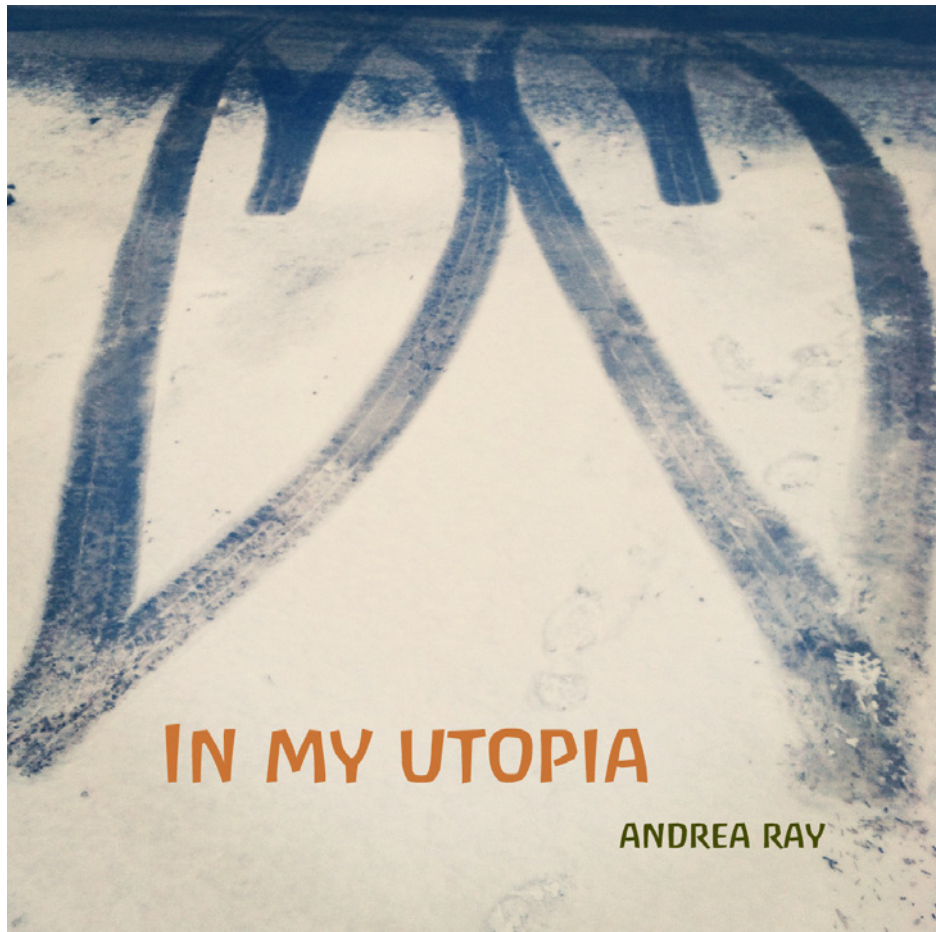


Fig. 36
Andrea Ray, video stills from *Utopians Dance*, 2013.

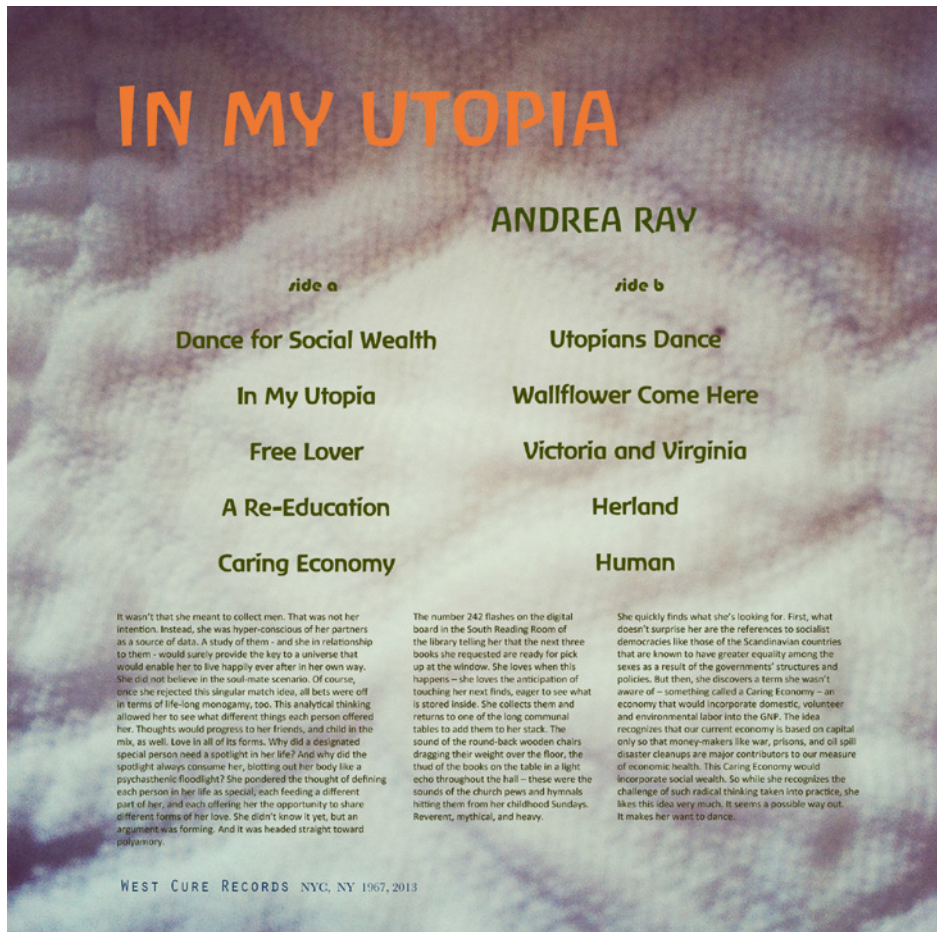


Fig. 37
 Andrea Ray, *In My Utopia*, 2013.

vey messages combining fringe, caring-based economies with contra-dancing calls (Figs. 5–6). In both models cooperation is embraced, and competition, and therefore power relations, are discouraged. The atmosphere of *Utopians Dance* evokes the desire for joy and freedom, and asks whether we'll join the dance.

Propped up on the dance floor is an album cover titled *In My Utopia* (Fig. 7). It represents a future not yet realized. I haven't written or recorded the songs yet. No vinyl has been produced. The album sleeve is empty. The song titles correspond to my interest in feminism and utopia and the liner notes are taken from my book *A Cure for the Marriage Spirit* (Fig. 8).

Viewers enter the open dance floor space and find that they occupy a dual position, one of observing while being observed. Who am I? Who is she? I'm considering this dual position of subjectivity and how it relates to larger notions of belonging and community (Fig. 9).

Within both installations comprising *Utopians Dance*, viewers are invited to imagine themselves as the protagonist, and to participate in meaning-making while standing (and perhaps dancing) on the floor/stage, projecting what music might come from the absent vinyl, or while reading the book's third-person narration and non-sequential series of voices. It is my hope that a collection of radical moments and proposals across time may result in an altered perception and reevaluation of the monogamous-normative state—a state of politics that rules our health care, family laws, and much more. The project is not simply a rejection of gender difference and marriage. The focus of the project is the desire for our value system to root somewhere else.

Utopians Dance seeks to create an open position from which a subject is placed in the possibility of dreaming through the disruption of linear time while also citing alternatives to the normative. My related PhD research project departs from here with the desire to establish a new ground of resistance—refusing the positions we think we must assume—so that perhaps then, we may begin anew.

