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Insecure: The Cultural Politics of Neoliberalism

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Single Together: Using Media to Resist Marriage as Ideal in the Neoliberal Age

I am the kind of homosexual who believes that all liberation has an inextinguishable aspect that is collective, communitarian, and also millenarian, utopian, which is to say rooted in principle, theory, dream, imagination, in the absolute non-existence of the Absolute and in the eternal existence of the Alternative, of the Other, in the insistent unceasingly mutable character of our character.

-- Tony Kushner, "The Antitribalist Identity-Based Movement for a Pluralist Democracy"

The American public sphere is obsessed with marriage. Despite low marriage rates, widespread divorce, and the ability of globalization to inform cultural relativism, the cultural phenomena of the past few decades have led to a discourse that leaves unquestioned the dominance and general structure and purpose of the institution of marriage. This discourse reinforces the mandates of neoliberalism, which insists on the governmentality of the self by the self and through the state. Most notably, the debate over same-sex marriage has, for the most part, obsessed over these questions and reinforced the hegemonic ideals of marriage as ideal. In what follows, I intend to explore various strategies used by activist writers that work against the dominant mode of marriage discourse and intend to destabilize the notion of marriage as ideal.

While I would describe all of the writings I explore to be working to "queer"

notions of marriage, they consider themselves affiliated with queer or other identity politics to varying degrees. Though there are a number of examples I could explore, I will be limiting myself to three: one that exploits identity politics to invent a new identity category, Sasha Cagen's concept of "quirkyalone;" one that seeks to critique the greater political economic system surrounding weddings, Jaclyn Geller's *Here Comes the Bride*; and one which seeks to conjoin queer identity politics and broad political economic critiques, Ryan Conrad's collection of edited essays, *Against Equality: Queer Critiques of Gay Marriage*.

Frederic Jameson has noted the simultaneous development of late capitalism, or globalization, and postmodern aesthetics and ideologies. Various critics (chief among them, Naomi Klein) have extolled the work of culture jammers and other anti-corporate activists to resist the branding apparatus and the affect inherent in it that endears the public to the chief beneficiaries of neoliberalism ideology: corporations. In her study of anti-corporate activists of the same ilk, Christine Harold notes the genealogy of the tactics of culture jammers in the Situationist International. Harold provides this link in order to note that some of the work of culture jammers and other anti-corporate activists (e.g. the editors of *Adbusters*) rely too much on parody and a rejection of corporate culture without an alternative. She holds up other forms of activism (e.g. the work of The Yes Men, open source software movements) for their creative interventions meant to disrupt the domination of corporate culture. Following Harold, I want to acknowledge the productive creativity of each one of the works I examine below and appreciate the ways in which postmodern

cultural production can work to produce alternatives and critique the core of neoliberal policies.

In the concluding chapter to her book *The Twilight of Equality?*, historian and cultural critic Lisa Duggan echoes the sentiments of Tony Kushner's commencement address to Vassar College, excerpted above, and decries the de-linking of "identity and cultural politics" from "the mutating contemporary forms of left universalism, economism, and populism." Her critique of identity-based politics builds off of critiques of multiculturalism, by noting the strands of color-blindness and homonormativity that have been cultivated in the neoliberal age. Using the second President Bush's "colorblind" appointment policy and the homonormative transformation of LGBT organizations from direct action activist organizations into "lobbying, litigating, and fundraising" organizations (67), Duggan points to the complicity of identity politics ideologues and organizations with government and corporate institutions to reinforce and subsume the neoliberal agenda. In describing what the political economic populist movement misses by trivializing cultural and identity politics, Duggan notes,

This alienation of potential constituencies drains the left of creativity and vitality as well as reducing its body counts. And, without the analytic and organizing energy found within the identity-based political formations, the progressive-left has no hope of effectively grasping the forces it seeks to arrest and reverse—those promoting antidemocratic inequality on multiple fronts. (71)

Thus, Duggan rounds out the critique of multiculturalism with a complementary accusation to the development of populist movements. In so doing, she provides a well-rounded

critique of contemporary activism that proves useful to plotting a course for productive progressive activism in the face of neoliberalism.

I have used Duggan's framework to delineate the three categories from which my examples come, and from here, I will judge the rhetorical efficacy of my three examples against Duggan's call for more considered, more complete activism. I have chosen my three examples because they fit my three categories closely and because they are cogent critiques of the institution of or movement in support of marriage. While the texts I have chosen are fairly exemplary of the categories I have placed them in, there are, of course, moments in all of the texts that cross boundaries into other categories. I will acknowledge these tendencies in my analysis of each example to respect the nuance of each media text or set of texts. I will heed the advice of the tripartite model of cultural studies (Kellner), in which cultural texts and phenomena should be analyzed from the perspective of 1.) the production of the text as well as the political economy from which it was produced; 2.) the contents and form of the text itself; 3.) the audience of the text and the communities that form around it.

My analysis will differ from this model as it is typically conceived for three main reasons. First, I am dealing with non-fiction texts, which, if studied and treated as texts that circulate at all, are typically placed in the less utilitarian framework of political communication. Second, I am not dealing with media texts that directly correlate with each other (i.e. the texts I am investigating are not all of the same type (e.g. three films)), and so I

will be paying more attention to media forms and intertextual transmedia campaigns than most such studies do. Finally, though it is not uncommon for such studies to superficially gesture to a text's audience, I do not want my study of the audience to be relegated to a footnote, an afterthought. I will provide perspective on the audience's interaction with these texts online, but, following Michael Warner, I will investigate the audience of these texts by observing the ways that the political economy, the form, and the content of the text call out to and address (counter)publics. Before I move to these close analyses, I will briefly survey American alternatives to marriage movements, leading up to the neoliberal era and review Warner's theory of multiple publics and counterpublics, as well as Chris Kelty's concept of the "recursive public."

While Engels uses Lewis Henry Morgan's anthropological studies of societies across time to remind us of the historical relativism of kinship and family structures, even in the history of the United States, there has been a turbulent history of the definition of marriage and movements which encourage a resistance to the institution-as-ideal. Evolving social movements and relations created new definitions for marriage, as the history of slavery, indentured labor, and other racialized social relations affected policies on miscegenation and general rights to marry, and the development of a polygamist Mormon community in the US forced the creation of policies that regulated multiple marriages (Cott). As the definition of marriage morphed over the centuries, several social phenomena affected the structure of sexuality, families, and marriage. The shifting of demographics

and historical contexts of immigration, ethnic and gendered dimensions of work, and the industrialization and de-industrialization of the country all affected American kinship structures. Policies on public sex, sex work, pornography (and the circulation thereof), acceptable marriage partners, access to contraceptives and abortions, and the legal definition of families have all morphed since the establishment of the nation and have all affected the dominance of marriage-as-ideal. The utopian communities that sprouted up in the antebellum era and the free love communes of the mid-twentieth century provided direct challenges to the hegemony of the monogamous heterosexual marriage (D'Emilio & Freeman).

The culture wars of the 80's and 90's worked to discipline the body politic by reinforcing heteronormativity. Noting the work of feminist and gay and lesbian scholars and activists from this period (notably, Gayle Rubin and Adrienne Rich), queer theorist Michael Warner developed the term "heteronormativity" to describe the enemy. He says, "These writers have argued that a non-oppressive gender order can only come about through a radical change in sexuality, even while they have also begun to argue that sexuality is a partially separate field of inquiry and activism" (3-4). As the culture wars raged on and Clinton and his posse of New Democrats began to drive the neoliberal agenda, the state began treating the LGBT population differently, paying the community lip service with recognition in platforms and some legislative initiatives, all the while signing DOMA (The Defense of Marriage Act) and Don't Ask Don't Tell into law (Duggan).

From this point, the neoliberal agenda co-opted large (dominant) factions of the gay rights movement to promote conservative policies complicit with a neoliberal neo-imperial agenda bent on regulation and governance over the body (see Ch. 3 of Duggan and Puar).

The various marriage equality groups and activists that have cropped up in recent years have all encourage a neoliberal agenda of being complicit in the governmentality of the self, of the regulation of the body politic at the expense of recognizing larger, more systematic issues of (economic) inequality (Whitehead). Both hetero- and homonormativity have made their constituent mainstreams into more robust dominant publics. The twenty-first Century has welcomed a continuation and even intensification of the encouragement of marriage with Bush's (and later Obama's) more-than-billion dollar Healthy Marriage Initiative, meant to foster healthy marriages (and valorize them along the way). While neoliberal and corporate culture has infused itself into most public and official discourses, there still remains counterpublics committed to disrupting the effects of neoliberalism.

Warner, writing in his series of essay critiques of Harbermas's concept of the public sphere, points out that the public sphere is truly made up of multiple small, overlapping publics. These publics are called upon by certain modes of address and by varying configurations of people and means of communication across space and time.

Speaking of counterpublics, Warner says,

[These] publics are defined by their tension with the larger public. Their participants are marked off from persons or citizens in general. Discussion within such a public is understood to contravene the rules obtaining in the world at large, being structured by alternative dispositions or protocols, making different assumptions about what can be

said or what goes without saying. (*Publics* 56)

In the complete formation of counterpublics in the environment of other publics, counterpublics have the ability to cultivate critique and dissent and to disrupt the momentum of the hegemony of dominant publics. In considering my three contemporary critiques of marriage, I will be considering the ability for their rhetorical devices to call upon and foster a counterpublic.

The critiques of marriage that follow and the examples I bring up tangentially to these core texts were all born in the neoliberal era. Beyond critiques of hetero- and homonormativity, critiques of marriage in the neoliberal era are interested more broadly in critiquing the sex negativity of the culture wars. Unlike the movements to encourage alternatives to marriage in the mid nineteenth and twentieth centuries, the campaigns to encourage alternatives to marriage are not geographically localized movements and are thus less recognizable as a cohesive movement by outsiders. It is here that Kelty's conception of the "recursive public" comes in handy. Building off of Warner's conception of the counterpublic, and the work of Charles Taylor (who complicates the spatiality of the public sphere) and Habermas, Kelty notes that his ethnographic object of study, the Free/Open Source Software movement, is a "recursive public," which Kelty defines as "a particular form of social imaginary through which this group imagines in common the means of their own association, the material forms this imagination takes, and what place it has in the contemporary development of the Internet" (186). Kelty's conception of "recursive



publics” is applicable to the formation of sexual counterpublics so long as those counterpublics are reinforced by a development of sexual networks and sexual identity self-awareness that is born out of the content and mode of address of the media that addresses these counterpublics.

In my first example of media that encourages alternatives to marriage, I will examine the media campaign around Sasha Cagen’s formulation of the “quirkyalone.” In what has been published as a short essay in the inaugural issue of her zine *To-Do List* (which was reprinted in the *Utne Reader*), as a book published by HarperSanFrancisco that appropriates zine aesthetics on its pages, and as a blog (quirkyalone.net), Cagen defines the concept for unfamiliar readers and then moves to address and cultivate a community of quirkyalones. Cagen has also established a holiday (not so coincidentally conflicting with Valentine’s Day) called Quirkyalone Day. In the book, her blog, and the press releases for her holiday, Cagen gives a dictionary-like definition of “quirkyalone.” They differ by word count, but the following was found on the blog in May 2011: “a person who enjoys being single (or spending time alone) and so prefers to wait for the right person to come along rather than dating indiscriminately.”

Zines, produced and distributed as they are in a do-it-yourself, anarchic fashion, have as their intended audience a counterpublic. In his analysis of zine culture, Stephen Duncombe notes the opposing potentialities for zinesters to network or to develop ideologies and tactics in an insular fashion:

Ideally, the individuals who make up the network of

communities of the zine world communicate to another, sharing their differences, and speaking across voids, materializing the vision of the networked community sketched on the cover of *Factsheet Five* [a zine aggregator zine]. There is plenty of evidence that this does happen. But there is also a tendency to move in the opposite direction: hunkering down in your micro-community, surrounded by only your own reality. (77-8)

In this formulation of the zine world, Duncombe notes that members of the zine world are often aware of the work of their co-zinesters, but that they can often become enmeshed in the reality their zine is intent on perpetuating, at the expense of other perspectives.

Counterpublics like the one that Cagen addresses in her elaboration of quirkyalone allow for a space to critique dominant culture, but as Harold reminds us, this critique is only salient and can only escape the insularity Duncombe describes when it provides an alternative or a choice of alternatives onto which the audience can latch.

The ability for the concept to transcend the borders of Cagen's own blog is shown by its republishing in the alternative press magazine the *Utne Reader*. The book also got released by a major publisher (HarperCollins, albeit through their trendy/hipster imprint HarperSanFrancisco). In this way, Cagen's ideas developed a larger circulation and were thus more easily spread. The limited editing (read: corporate censorship) allowed by self-publishing (as in the case of her zine) or by publishing on an "alternative" imprint (as in the case of the book), is replicated by Cagen's final site of publishing. Cagen maintains a blog that explores various cultural phenomena that have to do with or are of interest to quirkyalones. This not only allows for Cagen to continuously extend the official

quirkyalone oeuvre, it also provides an opportunity for her to update the brand.

In the final case of Cagen's mediation of quirkyalone, she has promoted Quirkyalone Day. On this day, February 14<sup>th</sup>, the quirkyalone is celebrated. The corporatization of love and the calls upon lovers to recognize their beloved with material gifts is challenged in a way that de-emphasizes the link between love and consumerism and of love and our ideal image-repertoire of it. Akin to the Adbusters Media Foundation's Buy Nothing Day and TV Turnoff Week, the holiday seeks to destabilize cultural control over our life and love. Unlike Buy Nothing Day and TV Turnoff Week, the implicit nature of the critique of corporate culture has allowed for the day to be picked up vastly by various media outlets and city mayors, who have proclaimed February 14<sup>th</sup> Quirkyalone Day for any given year (no doubt with the urging of Cagen and her PR team as these dates are mostly clustered close to the release date of the book).

More broadly, Cagen is exploiting the structures that facilitate the identity politics movement with the rhetoric of quirkyalone. As the sociologist and historian of science Ian Hacking notes, types of people are "made up" by diverse institutional, specifically scientific delineations and discourses. According to Hacking, there are ten engines of "making up people" that lead to the creation of new categories or new understandings of being. There are seven engines of discovery (counting, quantifying, creating norms, correlating, medicalizing, biologizing, and geneticizing), which follow, through the use of the scientific method, various hunches in order to come to an understanding of streaks of human

behavior. Hacking's eighth engine, one of practice, is normalization; his ninth, one of administration, is bureaucratization; and his tenth is resistant: reclaiming identity.

Hacking's formulation of the creation of identity types alludes to sexual identities, but it is uncommon for relationship statuses to figure into the consideration of an identity type. By creating a named and thus typified relationship status/sexual identity, Cagen has bypassed the scientific process of naming and typifying (though she has no doubt, as Foucault would remind us, been inundated by the various effects of the Western obsession with *scientia sexualis*) to create a new personality type that rejects a whole category of relationship types and our collective romanticizing of what Barthes would call our image-repertoire of love.

In fact, Cagen notices a whole industry of self-help books, romantic films, and dating facilitators (e.g. dating websites) that profit off of our idealization of the relationship, using phrases like "the anti-quirkyalone movement" to identify such artifacts.

In disrupting the typical progression for the creation of a new type of person, Cagen must backtrack and actually imagines a time when one can check "quirkyalone" on a census box. In imagining this scenario, as well as one in which quirkyalone is in the dictionary and is used in common conversation, and in creating a history in which she can anachronistically attribute "quirkyaleness" onto historical figures, Cagen is asking for the quirkyalone to be bureaucratized. But in creating the typology before it can be scientifically discovered and thus affected by the biases of scientific discoveries (bent on finding the aberrant, the abnormal, in order to normalize it), Cagen is hoping to create a bureaucratic

governmentality that is more conducive to the lived reality of more than those for whom the heteronormative (and now homonormative) expectations of lifelong partnering (i.e. marriage) is an ideal. In creating a brand empire for her new personality type, Cagen is not only using the branding tools of corporate America, she is also appropriating the various structures of biopolitics that rely on the neoliberal state's own "branding" or encouragement of the normal. In this way, Cagen is providing a creative alternative to the preexisting categories for classification while not eliminating categories of sexual orientation (e.g. gay, lesbian, bisexual, straight). Cagen's formulation de-emphasizes the ideals of marriage, cohabitation, and serial monogamy in order to bring attention to alternative approaches to romantic pursuit.

All of this comes at the expense of dealing with a class critique. Cagen's formulation is an appeal to an as-yet-uncalled-upon counterpublic to both recognize themselves in her description of "uncompromising romantics" and to consider themselves as part of the addressed community. None of this rhetoric has anything to do with acknowledging how other people may be affected by such a reformulation of expected romantic/sexual expectations. In her chapter "Born or Made?," Cagen engages with the nature versus nurture debate as it relates to the quirkyalone. She uses her experience talking to people who consider themselves a part of the quirkyalone counterpublic to note the typologies of those who consider themselves born or gradually made this way. Of course, monogamy was not always the dominant or the ideal, and so the tenets of the

question are a bit absurd. However, more disappointing for the ability for the new category to be a productive intervention into the deleterious effects of the end of the welfare state and the disenfranchisement of those whose family and relationship structures do not allow them to manage their various responsibilities (to themselves, to their families and other loved ones, to their job) the ways that the benefits afforded to the married do. In fact, in detailing the typical story of one who “becomes” quirkyalone (instead of being “born” quirkyalone), Cagen explains that one typically is turned off by bad dating experiences, a realization that dating and persistent serial monogamy isn’t ideal. In doing so, she elides the experience of those that de-emphasize relationships based on economic necessity, who are generally unable to devote time to dating. Thus, the quirkyalone identifier is an ideal fit to those who have the leisure time available to consider dating.

In one section in which she discusses the demographics of quirkyalones, based on a survey she sent out to self-identified quirkyalones, Cagen includes data on sexual orientation, geography, age, gender, and pets owned (22-4), but elides discussion of class and race, two categories whose minorities are greatly affected by the inequities imposed by the current organization of the neoliberal state’s idealization of marriage. In her discussion of the quirkyalone’s occupation, Cagen says,

Clearly quirkyalones are creative types. Their occupations are infinitely varied, but one thing is true of them as a group. They often distinguish between “what I do for a living” and “who I really am.” Whether their extracurricular activity takes the form of surfing, knitting, writing, saving the world through activism, or making art out of dryer lint, these passions can take on as much importance as “the job” or “the relationship.” (21)

Here, Cagen solidifies her focus on those with leisure time. While a long history of organized labor struggles have focused on the opening up of leisure time to members of all classes, class divides still provide distinctions in how that leisure time can be spent. It is no coincidence that the quirkyalone typology includes the time and opportunity for (often bourgeois) hobbies.

In the second brand of anti-marriage activist writing, the focus is on the corporatized marriage industry. Chrys Ingraham defines the wedding industrial complex (WIC), as a structure that “reflects the close association among weddings, the transnational wedding industry, labor, global economics, marriage, the state, finance, religion, media, the World Wide Web, and popular culture” (38). Ingraham’s most convincing claims to a WIC are outlined in the standard critiques against a globalized economy of production and consumption flows. Thus the familiar courses of the transnational flows of capital in a global economy are simply heightened by the hyper-consumerism espoused by the WIC. In her chapter explicating the WIC, Ingraham notes the quantitative research that has tracked the trends of marriage amongst various demographics; however, because of the data that is available and the focus on other parts of the WIC, she does little to critique the white-washing of the wedding industry but to say that marriage patterns for America’s ethnic minorities have developed trends separate from the white majority. She gestures toward the structural disadvantage accorded to low-income people of color that can account for the difference in their marriage patterns, but on a whole, the critique against the WIC is one

against hyperconsumerism and not one against the basic economic structures that structure family, romance, and general personal life of particularly low-income citizens. As a part of the WIC, Ingraham notes the way that the state controls the ability for certain populations to participate in the institution of marriage. While there is a gesture towards the various identity categories through which marriage cannot be accessed or through which the state's endorsement of marriage and elimination of elements of the Keynesian welfare state encourages an particular (often unrealistic) family and kinship structure.

In her book *Here Comes the Bride*, Jaclyn Geller outlines the ways that the wedding industrial complex (a term she only sometimes relies on) affects the subjectivity of women who spend great amounts of energy anticipating and preparing for their wedding day. In various sections, Geller interrogates and castigates the superficiality of many elements of the marriage ceremony and the precursors to it. Clinging to and celebrating her own identity as spinster, Geller critiques the image-repertoire associated with the ideal wedding, its heteronormativity and its inseparability from a heightened form of consumerism.

Bridging the second and third waves of feminism, Geller focuses on the subjectivity of the bride/bride-to-be/wannabe bride as she idealizes and fetishizes the wedding and its attendant commodities. Geller's analysis links the exploitation of the female subject in the formation of the image-repertoire of weddings and marriage, but it does little to complicate the multiple identity intersectionalities that may inform women's subjectivities. Little



attention is paid to the classed and racialized identities of Geller's widely defined feminine subject. In the case of Geller and other feminist writers (many of whom publish online) who utilize the WIC identifier, rarely is a complicated link made between the various globally produced commodities and the vilified WIC. Instead, it is typically just the commodification of emotion or of affect, in this case, of love, which is castigated. While the concern is primarily informed by an analysis of political economy, the critique of neoliberal economies and the implication of the bride in the WIC in all of its effects is often elided in such rhetoric. It is not inherent in such rhetorical strategies. In fact, Ingraham's explication of the WIC does include an explanation of the global networks of capital implicated in such a hyperconsumerist social practice.

If we think of the role of activists as bringing to light important issues in ways that are palatable or comprehensible to those who wish to fight hegemonic power but do not have the rhetorical ammunition, Anthony Giddens's conception of the double hermeneutic may help to elucidate the problem with the WIC as a naming device. That is, the sociological identification of the WIC as a cultural phenomenon under neoliberalism may work as a double hermeneutic that makes clear the private interests that have affected the importance and air bestowed upon marriage/weddings, but it also does not make immediately apparent the social inequities perpetuated by the importance placed upon marriage in contemporary neoliberal society. This is not to say that the corpus of work explicating the wedding industrial complex does not critique globalization and other

neoliberal policies, only that the rhetorical baggage of the “industrial complex” does not make apparent to the lay observer or reader the larger flaws in neoliberal social and economic culture.

Expressly a counterpublic collective, *Against Equality*, under the leadership/ editorship of Ryan Conrad, has published a collection titled *Against Equality: Queer Critiques of Gay Marriage*. Self-published using a vanity press, the small booklet is a collection of essays written by activists and scholars who wish to reprioritize the mainstream (read: homonormative) LGBT movement to ignore the quest for same-sex marriage. Despite being self-published, the collection is available at radical independent bookstores and online on sites like Amazon. A collection of essays primarily reprinted from its contributors’ personal blogs or other self-edited online spaces or from academic journals, *Against Equality* collects a number of writers (e.g. Kate Bornstein, Kenyon Farrow, John D’Emilio, Mattilda Bernstein Sycamore) whose work seeks to decouple the gay rights movement from any ties with the neoliberal pro-marriage agenda.

Typically defined in opposition to “assimilationist” gay and lesbian politics, queer politics and queer counterpublics provide an antidote to the homonormative agenda of the mainstream gay and lesbian movement. From a variety of queer identities, carefully contextualized by individual writers, the contributors to *Against Equality* remind readers that the queer movement should be more inclusive and diversify between the coupled white leaders that dominate organizations and media representations and that it should be more

mindful of broader societal inequities and injustices.

In contextualizing the book and its reason for being, Yasmin Nair writes in the introduction,

Such convoluted pieces of logic [of a conflation of the rights granted with gay marriage with the dignity needed to overcome queer suicide] overdetermine today's relentless quest for gay marriage, a quest that is portrayed in terms of an attainment of "full citizenship" (begging the question: who has half citizenship, exactly?) and in terms of "full equality." (3)

More broadly, the introductory essay provides a queer activist history that exists as an alternative, a direct resistance, to a version of gay and lesbian activism that paints the Stonewall Riots and its resulting cultural products as the result of the work of concerned white gay men. Nair not only reminds us of the sexual, gender, racial, and class diversity of the community, the movement, and its most active members, she also integrates the queer movement within greater equality movements.

The counterpublic addressed by *Against Equality* not only lives on with the broader oeuvre of the included contributors, it also is encouraged in a tour of college towns and radical bookstores, on various online spaces branded with the *Against Equality* moniker (e.g. Facebook groups) and by online radical publications frequented by the *Against Equality* contributors (e.g. The Bilerico Project). Thus, not only is the counterpublic addressed by the collection able to be addressed broadly across media, its communication is continuous and contribution is open and robust, most notably through commenting. The Bilerico Project also allows for a broad-based queer critique of the policies of the

neoliberal era, providing a forum for perspectives on time-sensitive news to be published, as well as one for continuous news items and cultural events to be commented upon. The project and that of *Against Equality* epitomizes an engaged activist that actively engages its counterpublic in a way that allows for progressive alternatives to the status quo to be elaborated, fine tuned, and operationalized.

Through an understanding of anti-neoliberal activism and rhetoric informed through the work of Duggan and supplemented by that of Warner and Harold, I hope to have shown the value of an activist rhetoric that incorporates both identity politics and a rounded critique against the unfair and unbalanced economic policies of neoliberalism. In the case of marriage activism, this comes through most presciently through the cultural work of the writers collected by *Against Equality* in their collection of critiques of the gay marriage movement. It is not necessary for activism thus integrated to have the most salient critiques against the privilege the neoliberal state bestows upon marriage and the married. That is, I do not find that those with queer sexual and gender identities are the only people to whom critique of this power can come from. I do argue, however, that an acknowledgement of the queerness (i.e. the deviance) inherent in most sexualities can be harnessed to develop similar critiques that run a wider gamut of the experience of sexualized selves as they experience the bureaucratization, institutionalization, governmentalization, or regulation of their sexualities and their relationships.

I do not mean here to completely dismiss the contributions provided by writers such

as Geller and Cagen, I only wish to acknowledge the shortsightedness of such activism and the changes it seeks to impose. It is only by following the lead of such integrated thinkers as the Against Equality collective that those that wish to critique the state of governmentality in the neoliberal era, including those that currently choose to ignore the ways in which the state dictates their relationship abilities, can work to win certain battles of the culture wars and de-link the regulation of their bodies and their relationships with the neoliberal and neo-imperial agenda.

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