ASA SERESIN —

The Villa and the Outside

THOU SHALT MAKE CASTLES THAN IN SPAINE,
AND DREAME OF JOY, ALL BUT IN VAINE,
AND THEE DELIGHTEN OF RIGHT NOUGHT,
WHILE THOU SO SLUMBREST IN THAT THOUGHT,
THAT IS SO SWEETE AND DELITABLE,
FOR WHICH IN SOOTH N'IS BUT A FABLE.
— GEOFFREY CHAUCER, MIDDLE ENGLISH TRANSLATION OF LE ROMAN DE LA ROSE, CA. 1360S

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In his strange 1897 novel *The Well-Beloved: A Sketch of a Temperament*, Thomas Hardy satirizes the pursuit—and genre—of romance. The narrative follows Jocelyn Pierston, a sculptor haunted by the skittish spirit of desire. This specter, the Well-Beloved, moves into the bodies of different women as quickly as she departs from them, and Jocelyn falls instantly in and out of love accordingly. Yet when a friend accuses him of being fickle, Jocelyn protests: "Surely fickle is not the word? Fickleness means getting weary of a thing while the thing remains the same. But I have always been faithful to the elusive creature whom I have never been able to get a firm hold of."[1]

[1] Thomas Hardy, *The Well-Beloved: A Sketch of a Temperament* (New York: Everyman, 1997), 33. –

In claiming that he is always "faithful" to the source of his desire, Jocelyn echoes one of the canonical stock phrases voiced by contestants on the British reality television show *Love Island* (2015–). When facing accusations of fickleness, the Islanders (as they are known in the show's parlance) tend to respond with the claim, "I've got to be true to myself," often voiced in combination with an insistence, "I've got to follow my heart." While purportedly addressed to one (or more) of their fellow Islanders, these claims are always in actuality directed at the invisibilized public watching from home. On *Love Island*, following one's own desire, while arguably the most natural of human tendencies, needs to be backed up with moral justification.

Combining the relentless communality and surveillance of Big Brother with the aim of traditional dating programs like *The Bachelor*, *Love Island* is—as surprising as this might sound—a show about ethics. Inadvertently, it is a show specifically about a crisis in heterosexual ethics in contemporary Britain, one produced by the uneasy convergence of secularism, feminism, and the fraught political landscape of social media. The show processes this crisis via a pointed, occasionally cartoonish spatialization of sexual morality. Placing contestants inside an artificial, secluded environment,

Love Island bestows on its viewers the illusion of omnipotence and invites them to make continual moral evaluations of contestants' behavior. The metaphorical island of the show's title is halfway between paradise and laboratory, the viewers a combination of social scientist and God.

Set in a villa named Sa Vinyassa in the sixteenth-century village of Sant Llorenç des Cardassar (population: 3,000) in Mallorca, Spain, the show hinges on the what-happens-in-Vegas inconsequentiality of a raucous group holiday. The Islanders are totally cut off from the outside world for the duration of their time on the show; they cannot watch TV, read, or speak to anyone outside the villa. They have phones whose only function is to take pictures, which they are not allowed to keep, and to receive high-stakes communiqués from the show's producers. Perhaps the most extreme measure the show takes to distort Islanders' sense of reality is to conceal from them, casino-style, the time of day. Every night they must fall asleep at the hour producers choose to switch the light off, and every morning they are awoken by the fluorescent blare of the lights coming on again. (The brutality of this system leads to one of the show's key visual tropes, in which the Islanders don sunglasses as soon as they wake up.) In a TikTok in which she answered questions about life in the villa, Season 5 Islander Amy Hart explained that she retroactively calculated that on long nights contestants would be kept awake until 4 or 5 a.m. Asked by a fan if she minded not knowing the time, Hart responded: "I didn't feel the need to know the time when I was in there, because I hadn't got to be anywhere, so I couldn't be late anywhere."[2]

[2] Amy Hart, *TikTok*, 2022, link. –

Love Island not only obscures contestants' sense of time, but place too. Other than the presenter occasionally using the word Mallorca, there is no sense that the villa is in Spain, or in any concrete location. The presence of Sant Llorenç des Cardassar, its inhabitants, and any hint of a local culture is aggressively erased. In this sense *Love Island* is the product of a pre-Brexit imaginary. Spain has long been the most popular country for British holidaymakers, with Mallorca in particular the single top destination.[3] Until recently, flights from the UK to Spain on European budget airlines could be purchased for as little as 20 or 30 round-trip, which, along with visa-less entry and the ubiquity of English, made for a seamless travel experience and one notably more accessible to working-class people than is true of, say, the US. Many Brits have purchased holiday homes in Spain or chosen to retire there; some tourist enclaves boast British supermarkets and sports bars, as well as restaurants and hotels that serve Full English breakfasts and Sunday roasts. This sense of spatial blur is captured in one of the most famous clips to come out of *Love Island*, in which Season 4 contestant Hayley Hughes broadcasts a profoundly poor understanding of geography while a group of her fellow female Islanders respond in horror. "Essex is a continent. A what, a country? What's the difference between a county and a country?" she asks. "So, I'm from Liverpool so I live in a country… A city? So, if you go in a plane and you go to another place that's still United Kingdom? So, Spain…" At this point the other Islanders intervene to explain that Spain is a country in Europe, to which Hayley responds: "But it's still in the United Kingdom…?"[4]

[3] Reemul Balla, "Outbound Tourism Statistics," *Finder*, August 8, 2022, link; Majorca Daily Bulletin Reporter, "One in Four Visitors to Spain from the UK, Canaries and Balearics Top Destinations," *Majorca Daily Bulletin*, July 18, 2022, link. –

[4] "essex is a continent," uploaded by MitchellWard, *YouTube*, June 21, 2018, link –

With this context in mind, the *Love Island* villa resembles less a real geographical location and more the liminal fantasy of vacationing without leaving home. The impact of this on the show's exploration of sexual ethics is

significant. In one sense, the unreality of the villa as a mythic zone detached from the wider world might be seen to sanction chaotic behavior, heightening the vacation fantasy of being able to act without consequences. Yet at the same time, the Islanders' actions will never be under greater scrutiny than they are during their time on the show. While the surreal vacation-space they inhabit is designed to lead them into temptation, this very same environment places them under a surveillance system that ensures that their slightest movements are disproportionately consequential.

Adding to this paradox, the competition that structures life in the villa consists of two conflicting aims. In order to win *Love Island*—and secure a prize consisting of £50,000 along with lucrative brand partnership opportunities—contestants must successfully find love in a couple with another participant while simultaneously winning the favor of the public, whose votes are crucial to prevent elimination and exile from the island. These two purposes are frequently at odds with each other, and notably operate on completely different scales. While the contestants and their fellow Islanders must dwell in all-too-cozy proximity inside a carefully constructed, isolated environment, the public exists far away, on the other side of a one-way mirror. Under normal circumstances, falling in love is an intensely private experience—one that draws a person further and further into a pocket of spacetime largely unseen and unpenetrated by the outside world. On *Love Island*, it is a public performance, one staged in the hope that the relationship will not only succeed but simultaneously enhance both partners' likability.

While the audience may be hidden from the Islanders' sight, an atmosphere of surveillance nonetheless pervades the villa, which is highly communal in structure and features almost zero private space. The Islanders sleep in one large bedroom, adorned with "sexy" Pop Art-style images of lips consuming various sweet treats: a lollipop, soda, watermelon. Almost all the common areas, where the Islanders spend their time, are outside: there is an infinity pool, an outdoor kitchen, bean bags, a bed, and two firepits, the larger of which is used for significant occasions: when a new Islander arrives, or when contestants are voted off in periodic "dumpings." There are large, sex-segregated bathrooms and dressing rooms brimming with preselected products that can be identified and purchased via the *Love Island* app. This app is one of the key ways in which the show's creators simulate a feeling of access into the villa, as if viewers could reach through their screen and grab a Sculpted by Aimee Connolly Second Skin Dewy Finish Foundation directly from the shelf. (This feeling of access is further heightened by the fact that the villa in its entirety can also be rented when shooting is not taking place, for £5,000 a week.) [5] Likely due to their semiprivate, sex-segregated status, much of the show's action takes place inside these bathrooms, where the Islanders complete the plucking, primping, hairstyling, and makeup application that readies them for each evening's activity, before undoing it all with vigorous wipes a few hours later. It is in this part of the villa that contestants often choose to let slip a quiet, intimate admission: a complaint about their relationship, or the admission of a crush. It is often where they flee when they need to cry. Islanders are never permitted to remove their mics, although these are switched off for the seconds they spend in the toilet. (The contestants only have access to one toilet, in order to facilitate this logistically.)

[5] Lucy Robinson, "You Can Rent the Love Island Villa for £5k a Week—but It Looks Very Different," *Ok!*, July 8, 2022, link. –

The Love Island communal bedroom from Season 8. Courtesy of ITV. Photograph by Matt Frost.

The visual tropes from which the villa is constructed—the gaudy colors, the firepit, the dressing tables spilling over with beauty products—have a direct connection to the patterns of behavior that the Islanders begin to enact from the instant they arrive. Every morning, contestants split themselves into two groups and assemble at the same location—for the women, this is the terrace, and for the men, a lounge area near the pool—in order to discuss the events of the previous nights and perform a general dissection of the status of each couple. The highly formulaic nature of this social event and the strict reliability of where it occurs are reflected in the way the Islanders speak. You only have to watch an episode or two of *Love Island* to see that contestants reliably refer back to an unofficial moral code bespoke-made for life in the villa. To return to this essay's opening, one of the signs of this moral code's existence is the set of stock phrases that the Islanders use to communicate. In addition to "I've got to be true to myself," there is "getting to know you," "my type on paper," "crack on," "pull you for a chat," "turn my head," "closed off," "I'm not here to make friends," and more. In particularly this last phrase, *Love Island*'s lexicon belongs to a longer history of reality TV; it's understood that Islanders have generally not only watched prior seasons of *Love Island* but reality TV as a whole as well. The morality of the Islanders, while specific to their program, belongs to a larger subset of reality TV ethics, where anything goes—until the public decides it doesn't. Indeed, the aforementioned phrases—and the ethics they entail—are so essential to the *Love Island* environment that many of them have been inscribed onto the walls of the villa, in the same ugly cursive that adorns the show's branded water bottles, suitcases, and other merchandise. In this merchandising, the consumer gets to pretend they are Islanders, held by the same moral code.

One could argue that, rather than denoting a *Love Island* specific moral code, these phrases simply constitute the lexicon of dating among young people in the UK. Yet far from being a single dialect, British English is an extraordinarily complex mosaic of speech patterns that varies intensely accord-

ing to class, ethnicity, and highly specific regional differences. Contestants are selected from all across the British Isles, and some, like Season 8 winner Davide Sanclimenti, are not native English speakers, which means that there is significant diversity in their natural habits of speech. Yet just as the villa's Mallorca location is streamlined into a generic holiday nowhere, this variation is subsumed by the Islanders' appeal to the established code of *Love Island* ethics as expressed through a set of verbal tropes.

Exacerbated by the fact that *Love Island* is screened six nights a week, the formulaic predictability with which the Islanders communicate can make the show feel scripted, repetitive, and at times dull. Yet what this cloying familiarity obscures—or perhaps more accurately, compensates for—is a crisis in heterosexual ethics. Contemporary British culture, and the culture of *Love Island* in particular, is awkwardly suspended between residual patriarchal ideology, girl-power feminism, a vehemently judgmental media system, and secular listlessness. While many of the severe religious and patriarchal codes that formerly governed sexual behavior have fallen away, what remains hardly resembles sexual liberation. And though feminism and social media have at times powerfully converged to generate accountability for sexual harm, the general mood of online discussion about heterosexuality is one of uncertainty, embarrassment, and pessimism. The difficulty of evaluating behavior in the midst of these competing forces leads the Islanders to cling to verbal tropes all the more tightly. In this sense, the show fills the void of a religious value system. Believers shore up their knowledge of—and faith in—the catalog of virtues and sins by integrating references to them in daily life. Passed through enough mouths, a phrase takes on a sense of reality.

In addition to enshrining the show's particular lexicon by pasting it onto the villa's walls, *Love Island* gives spatial form to the ethical uncertainty at the heart of its heterosexual culture through the triangulation of the show's main sites: the Villa, the Hideaway, and Casa Amor. Adjoined to the main villa, the Hideaway is a private bedroom where couples are sent for a night alone as a reward for their commitment to each other. Each time the producers announce via text message that the Hideaway will be open for the night, the Islanders informally vote on the couple they believe are most deserving of this rare opportunity for secluded intimacy. Once again, however, the reality of a night in the Hideaway—aggressively decorated in crimson, hot pink, and purple, with a neon light fixture spelling out "Lust" above the bed—is the opposite of private. The chosen woman dons elaborate lingerie with the help of her fellow female Islanders, and once the couple are ready, they are paraded off to the Hideaway by the other Islanders in a kind of ecstatic sendoff reminiscent of rituals celebrating the consummation of marriage. It is expected that the opportunity the Hideaway provides of sleeping away from the communal bedroom will encourage the couple to have more extensive sexual contact than they usually permit themselves—intimacy that is then broadcast to a viewing public eager to see if they will take appropriate advantage of the "reward" that's been bestowed on them.

The Love Island Hideaway. Still from Season 8, Episode 8. Courtesy of ITV.

On the opposite end of the spectrum from the Hideaway, Casa Amor—a parallel-world villa to which one half of the Islanders are sent for multiple days somewhere around the midpoint of the show—is designed as a test of the Islanders' relationships. Once the original group has been split up, new men and women are introduced to the respective groups, and everyone must (temporarily) couple up with these new contestants for the undetermined length of time that they spend away from their original partners. Again, the conflicting roles Islanders must play in order to have a chance at winning—devoted partner and watchable entertainer—clash dramatically. Those who refuse to partake in Casa Amor's antics, who retreat from temptation and fade, wallflower-like, into the background, come across as boring. Yet those who seize the opportunity to "get to know" new contestants—to flirt, kiss, or sneak a caress in the beds they are forced to share—tend to be harshly condemned by both their fellow Islanders and the public at large. This paradox reflects a contradiction at the heart of heterosexuality itself: the qualities (particularly in men) that are denounced as immature, unethical, and threatening to a healthy relationship are the same ones that tend to be enshrined as attractive.

Despite this evident double bind, the Casa Amor period is framed as a meaningful measure of contestants' morality. At times, Islanders refer to it as a test for "the outside," or life beyond the villa. While at times the outside is made to stand in for normality—the opposite of the highly artificial, unreal, and heavily surveilled zone in which the Islanders meet—it also denotes something more nebulous and threatening. Contestants betray an evident awareness that life after *Love Island* will not constitute a return to their previous existence. Inside the villa, they anxiously anticipate the fame, money, and glamour presumed to await them once they depart, along with a newfound set of challenges to which their villa-based relationships will be subjected. In this sense, the outside becomes as unreal a fantasy space as the villa itself.

In spatializing the crisis of heterosexual ethics through architectural contrivances, Love Island resembles another contemporary dating show, *Fboy Island* (2021), with which it shares half a title and a general investment in the social and aesthetic tropes of the vacation as a kind of metaphor for dating. American in origin, *Fboy Island* is less concerned with simulating a sense of authentic round-the-clock access to its contestants and, as is typical of Ameri-

can reality TV, is more interested in glossy surfaces, polished performance, and the spirit of competition. In the show, three female contestants are presented with a comically large group of 24 men, half of whom are self-identified "fboys" in contrast to the other half of "nice guys." After a series of dates with the men, the women periodically identify individuals whom they believe to be fboys and eliminate them from the island. If identified correctly, the fboys are sent to an arid enclosure named "Limbro" dotted with shipwreck aesthetics, forced to endure a kind of purgatory-as-punishment while dressed as castaways. Nice guys, meanwhile, are relocated to a luxury villa, the "Nice Guy Grotto," from which they can look down smugly at the imprisoned fboys while sipping cocktails.

Fboy Island. Courtesy of HBO Max/Warner Bros. Entertainment.

Fboy Island is caricaturish and crude; its reductive perspective and contrived aesthetics make Love Island appear subtle and authentic in comparison (never words I believed I would write). Yet in its oversimplicity *Fboy Island* conveys a very real desire animating heterosexual culture today. The mainstreaming of feminist theory, the #MeToo movement, and the cancellation drive of social media have combined to produce a scenario in which the problem of patriarchy is presumed to be solvable by sorting good men from bad ones (or "abusers" from victims). *Fboy Island* theatrically expounds the belief that fuckboys are a real, meaningful category, and that women's success in life and love is dependent on their ability to skillfully spot them in the wild. The show's construction of cartoonish architectural destinations for the two categories of men—nice guys go to heaven, fboys go to hell—reveals a strong religious impulse undergirding this binary mode of thought, another reminder that the crisis in heterosexuality is in part spawned by the indeterminacy of secularism.

Meanwhile, if *Love Island* is a religion, then the viewers are God, charged with evaluating each contestant's behavior and assessing whether they may continue to reside in the villa's Eden, or be cast out into the seven circles of hell (brand collabs, paid appearances in nightclubs, spinoff shows, dwindling celebrity, substance abuse, etc.). Or perhaps it would be more accurate to compare viewers to a Greek chorus, producing an endless stream of commentary that, no matter how zealously expressed, cannot penetrate the invisible barrier surrounding the villa to be heard by those inside. An enormous community of viewers post opinions on social media—largely Twitter and TikTok—shouting

into what is essentially a void since contestants have no internet access until they leave the island. Like a chorus, viewers take it upon themselves to play the role of moral arbiters, and can often accurately predict an Islander's downfall before they see it coming themselves. Yet also like a chorus, the audience has no power to warn contestants of their tragic fate—no matter how accurate their predictions may be. The net result is a feeling of frustrated omniscience. If only they could see what we see, the chorus thinks—they might be able to avoid this fate.

To many, the idea of being under a state of constant surveillance—one that extends even to sleep and showering—sounds tantamount to torture. Yet the structure of *Love Island* nonetheless fulfills a desire that even those most averse to exhibitionism likely harbor, one that tends to make itself most apparent after a breakup, or in couples therapy: the desire for a witness.

Wanting to be seen in your love is a stark contrast from the usual setup of the couple form, a closed unit whose contents are all but totally concealed from the outside world. Jean Garnett summed this up in a recent *Paris Review* essay on marital nonmonogamy: "The black-box privacy of a 'closed' marriage can be its own kind of intimacy, an unassailable communion not unlike sex, perhaps."[6] Part of the promise the couple form provides is this zone of seclusion from the wider world, a curious inverse of the communal beds and glaringly bright lips of the *Love Island* bedroom. Yet when conflict arises—or when a couple separates and the world they created dissolves forever—so does the desire for third-person perspective. In the heat of an argument, many of us find ourselves craving a witness, confident that this neutral observer would balk in horror at our partner's offenses and validate our victimhood.

[6] Jean Garnett, "Scenes from an Open Marriage." *The Paris Review*, June 29, 2022, link. –

The desire for a witness is on full view on Showtime's *Couples Therapy*, a series in which participants receive free counseling from a New York–based psychoanalytic psychotherapist, Orna Guralnik, in exchange for their sessions being televised. Following the success of megatherapist Esther Perel's podcast, *Where Should We Begin*, *Couples Therapy* breaks one of therapy's most fundamental rules—privacy—in service of a greater purpose (entertainment? pedagogy?) it never quite defines. Multiple layers of witnessing structure this project: there is Guralnik herself, her adviser, Virginia Goldner, her working group of fellow therapists, and, finally, the viewers at home. Crucially, the show's success hinges on the sly concealment of this final form of witnessing, such that the couples behave as if it is only Guralnik's eyes on them. This provided a challenge for the construction of the show's set, as it was essential that no cameras or crew would be visible to the couples. While the production team initially considered using Guralnik's real office, they ultimately determined it was too small, leading led them to construct a pristine simulation of a therapist's consulting room complete with overflowing bookshelves, scans of Guralnik's diplomas, and carefully selected items from the MoMA Design Store.[7] In an interview with *Vulture*, production designer Nora Mendis explained that her team initially considered structuring the room around a wall of two-way glass, but this ended up problematically resembling an interrogation room.[8] Instead, they opted to integrate smaller strips of two-way glass behind which cameras could be hidden, but "only in places where it would make sense to put a mirror, like the waiting-room area."[9]

[7] Kathryn VanArendonk, "*Couples Therapy* Built the World's Most Convincing Reality-TV Set," *Vulture*, July 8, 2020, link. –

[8] VanArendonk, "*Couples Therapy* Built the World's Most Convincing Reality-TV Set." –

[9] VanArendonk, "*Couples Therapy* Built the World's Most Convincing Reality-TV Set." –

A surprisingly substantial amount of the show's content emerges from this fake waiting room, where patients are shown anticipating their

Will and Ping, a couple from *Couples Therapy* Season 3, in the waiting room. Courtesy of Showtime/Paramount Media Networks.

session. These scenes represent the most intimate level of entry into the black box of the couple, a perspective to which even Guralnik herself does not have access, and their quiet authenticity is astonishing—the couples speak in soft tones, make small jokes, or sit tensely without speaking at all. Their restraint feels unrelated to any knowledge that they are being filmed—a sign of the show's effectiveness—and comes off more as a solemn preparation for the scrutiny they are about to undergo.

In stark contrast, when the couples enter Guralnik's consulting room, many of them begin by desperately entreating her to be their witness. They address her only, list their partner's sins, and make exclamations along the lines of "See! This is what I have to deal with!" Although the setup of the room encourages this kind of address—Guralnik sits directly opposite her patients' couch, looking right at them—Guralnik maintains the couples counselor's custom of refusing their petition, inviting them instead to address each other in the second person, as if she weren't there at all. In order for couples therapy to work, the witness must efface herself, refraining from making verbal judgments except in extremely rare circumstances.

In individual therapy, the logic behind the analyst's self-erasure is that it better enables transference, the process by which patients project relationships with others onto their therapist. But in couples work, there is another, even more urgent reason for the therapist to hold back. As a self-contained unit, each couple has its own immanent ethical system. Requesting that a third person summon an exterior moral system to make a judgment is incompatible with the ongoing existence of the couple, and thus should only be done when the relationship needs to end. To quote the most famous line from Gillian Rose's *Love's Work*, "There is no democracy in any love relation, only mercy."[10] I've often found this line saccharine, turned off by the bleating tenderness of "only mercy." Yet the inescapable absence of democracy in love is the great lesson of psychoanalysis, a practice that—although it can be put to important political and ethical uses—is primarily concerned with freedom, not justice. To concede that remaining in a couple requires relinquishing some degree of fairness and committing to the immanent ethics of a two-person world is a humbling experience, but a transformative one too. The ethical system that unfolds

[10] Gillian Rose, *Love's Work* (London: Vintage, 1997), 55. –

in *Love Island* is similarly immanent to the artificial environment of the villa. When evaluating the moral valence of their behavior, Islanders often invoke the outside as a point of comparison. “If we were on the outside,” they say, or sometimes, “When we’re on the outside.” The outside looms large, the threat of instability and uncertainty that it poses palpable in the Islanders’ tone.

In *The Well-Beloved*, Hardy evokes common turn-of-the-century concerns about the impact of urban modernity and women’s participation in the public sphere on individual subjectivity and desire. The novel’s protagonist, Jocelyn, hails from the ancient, remote Isle of Slingers (a fictionalized version of the Isle of Portland), and his success as a sculptor has led him to relocate to the metropolitan chaos of London. In a notable sign of the times, many of the women whose bodies the Well-Beloved temporarily inhabits are professionals—actors, musicians, authors—and the novel makes much of the fact that Jocelyn encounters them in public space, often at their workplaces, on public transport, or in the street.

The Well-Beloved is, in this sense, a novel of “the outside”—a text that grapples with the dizzying commotion of urban modernity and the deindividualizing sense of interchangeability produced by life in the crowd. None of these canonical modernist concerns can be divorced from the destabilizing impact of shifting gender relations and the concurrent emergence of heterosexual culture. (The term “heterosexuality” was coined at the same time as “homosexuality” by the Austro-Hungarian writer Karl Maria Kertbeny in 1868, and historians of sexuality tend to believe that the concept of heterosexuality as we know it today was also a product of the late nineteenth century.) In *The Well-Beloved*, Hardy suggests that the romantic genres of the past may not be suited to capturing the reality of heterosexual desire in his—and our—contemporary world. A distinct sense of fear surrounds the novel’s depiction of “the outside,” which it suggests might be incompatible with the traditional pursuit of romantic love.

By contrasting the chimerical vacation-space of the villa with the promise and threat of the outside, *Love Island* plays on a similar line of thought. An argument could certainly be made that the show’s artificiality means that the Islanders have as much an ethical obligation to one another as strangers on a city street. After all, they do not know one another before the show, do not encounter one another organically, and whatever kindness they bestow on one another could be reduced to a cynical ploy to gain public approval and win the competition. Yet anyone who has spent time on a group vacation, at summer camp, at a residency, or any other enclosed environment knows how quickly and intensely relations form within them. In such spaces, it can take a mere twenty-four hours for one to feel deeply, irrevocably bound to another, as if nothing outside matters, as if you weren’t even really living before washing up on that island’s shores.