



Single: Arguments for the Uncoupled

Michael Cobb

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What single person hasn't suffered? Everyone, it seems, must be (or must want to be) in a couple. To exist outside of the couple is to assume an antisocial position that is ruthlessly discouraged because being in a couple is the way most people bind themselves to the social. Singles might just be the single most reviled sexual minorities today. *Single: Arguments for the Uncoupled* offers a polemic account of this supremacy of the couple form, and how that supremacy blocks our understanding of the single. Michael Cobb reads the figurative language surrounding singleness as it traverses an eclectic set of literary, cultural, philosophical, psychoanalytical, and popular culture objects from Plato, Freud, Ralph Ellison, Herman Melville, Virginia Woolf, Barack Obama, Emily Dickinson, Morrissey, Georgia O'Keeffe, and Hannah Arendt to the *Bible*, *Sex and the City*, *Bridget Jones' Diary*, Beyoncé's "Single Ladies (Put a Ring On It)," and HBO's *Big Love*. Within these flights of fancy, poetry, fiction, strange moments in film and video, paintings made in the desert, bits of song, and memoirs of hiking in national parks, Cobb offers an inspired, eloquent rumination on the single, which is guaranteed to spark conversation and consideration.

Single: Arguments for the Uncoupled Details

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Morgan says

This book was more like arguments against the coupled, but it suited me just fine for a pre-Valentines read. He makes some very good points, though I feel some he belaboured a bit.

Karli says

This is a book that answers back to "a world slavishly devoted to the supremacy of the couple." Cobb promises to explore an "aesthetics of distance" rather than intimacy, and offers lucid and insightful arguments for the single life in a world that is saturated with new media and technology, commodity fetishism, and economies of desire, which are all built to encourage couple and family models. He is very careful to parse the difference between loneliness and aloneness and traces how our society constructs the single as lonely, regardless of the lived experience of singles. I was in some ways reminded of Laura Kipnis's *Against Love: A Polemic*, but Cobb is quick to point out Kipnis's oversight in failing to critique the valorization of the couple form itself. He argues that American society has become suspicious of the single, who is left without its own language, without a means to perhaps give an account of oneself, to articulate and be understood. Cobb's reprise is to account for the single, to "think through the impossibility of nonrelation," and to recuperate the space that has been lost as people became a crowd operating under the impetus to be together.

Regina Barona says

A rather heady read that involves much involvement in the knowledge of contemporary media as well as modern literature. Cobb's words seems to be arguments against the coupled, much more than it is arguments for the uncoupled. I had the privilege of hearing Cobb speaking at a queer literature lecture at the University of Toronto, so I know that the manner in which he writes is unparalleled to the manner in which he lectures; he is animated, introspective, relatable, funny and lacking the literary jargon I didn't enjoy within his book. Regardless, I liked the unique perspective he brings to academia; a fresh outlook on a world that privileges a resolute and strong island of singleness. An author who critiques the flow that the rivers of society leave unquestioned, is always a welcome to my curiosity, and for that I applaud Cobb's work.

Michelle says

Sadly, my brain is too rotted to read this, I couldn't even get through the whole introduction, nor subsequently the first chapter. This is an academic, philosophical, intellectual book that constantly references literature, film etc., which wasn't what I really expected or wanted. But more to the point, I'm just no longer smart enough to read this.

Melinda Lewis says

This is a bit heady, but pretty compelling and wonderfully written read concerning cultural investment in "the couple."

Gabriel C. says

I'm going to complain that this was false advertising. I feel like the thesis, or rather central idea, was such a gossamer confection that any books or painters or landscape could have been tied to it. I mean, that's the nature of the beast, but I guess I was expecting this to be some sort of practical or social-scientific document, not a post-modern polemic.

Peter North says

Great topic but a bleak demonstration. It's very much a thesis and a bundle of research. Cobb's references are clever, although he has a hard time connecting with his reader and making many points. As other reviewers said, the momentum of the intro was great. Cobb should have continued this pace through the whole piece but the rest reads quite diluted.

Stephen Durell says

The intro was great. The rest of the book was more academic than I was looking for.
