

COMING AROUND AGAIN

The Queer Momentum of *Far from Heaven*

Dana Luciano

In a key scene from Todd Haynes's *Far from Heaven* (2002), Cathy Whitaker, an affluent white housewife and the film's protagonist, arrives, slightly late, at a modern art exhibition organized by the Ladies Auxiliary of Hartford, Connecticut. There she runs into Raymond Deagan, her black gardener. While Hartford's high-society matrons whisper and stare at the unseemly interracial pairing, Cathy loses track of the minutes while chatting pleasantly with Raymond about Miró. Finally, when her friend Eleanor pulls her aside to wonder why she is on such "familiar terms" with her gardener, Cathy extracts herself by looking at her watch and exclaiming, "Jeepers! Will you look at the time!" Moments like this ensure that *Far from Heaven*'s spectators will never quite be able to look away from the time as it manifests on-screen: a lush, painstaking reproduction of a distinctly cinematic 1957. Inspired by Douglas Sirk's later Hollywood work, Haynes's film restores the machinery of those midcentury domestic melodramas in lavish detail, from its quaintly restrained dialogue to its shamelessly expressionistic use of light and color to its overdetermined plot, which plays Cathy's growing interest in Raymond against the protracted demise of her marriage as her husband, Frank, a successful television-sales executive, struggles with his long-ignored and increasingly irrepressible homosexuality.¹ But if the borrowed time that Haynes's film discloses is impossible to look away from, precisely how it should be *seen* is far less evident. *Far from Heaven* resists classification in terms of either of the stances toward the cinematic past—unabashed nostalgia or arch parody—that dominated mainstream cinema at the moment of its release. Instead, the film unfolds an unpredictable play of distance from and intimacy with the matter of its own time. While it pointedly underscores the conceptual and historical limits of midcentury melodrama's tendency to sentimentalize social conflict, it goes on to reproduce the

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framework of the genre's appeal to emotion; its most affecting scenes are rendered in a melodramatic style deliberately "played straight."²

This "straightness" is, ironically, the key to the queer force of Haynes's return to classic Hollywood form. Eschewing the set of "disruptive" effects (forking narrative streams, *temps morts*, jump cuts, etc.) used by postmodern cinema to demarcate film time, *Far from Heaven* instead lovingly embraces the rules of classic cinema. Consequently, the familiar sequencing of time is disrupted not in the film so much as *by* the film, by the outmoded feel of its melodramatic pacing and style—a dated feel that nevertheless successfully produces an intimate response in many of the film's viewers. The regressive disruption of both anticipated sequence and expected response points us toward the film's usefulness for exploring what it might mean to mark queer time in a time-based medium. *Far from Heaven's* (re)turn toward a picturesque past allows Haynes to sketch, through his film's outmoded style, the usually occluded biopolitical time-patterns that hide behind our naturalized sense of the present. Yet the film's belatedness also offers another prospect, bodied forth in the way the placidly normal lives of both Whitakers are thrown off course by the reemergence of earlier, abandoned ways of life. Frank's repressed tendencies initiate this narrative movement; however, the film's queerness fails to stop there. Instead, drawing on and displacing the pathologized view of homosexuality as psychosexual regression with perspectives from the queer spectator, Haynes's film proposes using the sensory caress of the past to move through time otherwise.

Looking at (Queer) Time

Far from Heaven is by no means the first of Haynes's films to flaunt its untimeliness; indeed, perverse temporal occupation is the unifying tendency of the gay American director's work.³ Beginning as early as the banned 1987 short film *Superstar: The Karen Carpenter Story*, a biopic using Barbie dolls to explore the life and death of the 1970s pop singer, through *Velvet Goldmine* (1998), a glam-rock fantasy drawing on both *Citizen Kane* (dir. Orson Welles, USA; 1941) and a scattering of late 1960s and early 1970s experimental filmmakers, Haynes's films typically bind dissident desire to temporal displacement, suspending repressed, regressive, or infantile protagonists within filmic frameworks built on the aesthetic and narrative conventions of prior historical periods. His cinematic play with developmental trajectories, chronology, and periodicity evokes the queer subject's oblique relation to normative modes of synching individual, familial, and historical time, a position queer historiographers have recently begun to eluci-

date.⁴ More centrally, however, his preoccupation with popular culture emphasizes the possibilities suspended within the modes of representation that one uses to know one's place in time. The queer slant of Haynes's take on cinematic history, in particular, reflects not only the spatial but also the temporal positioning of the gay spectator in relation to the heterocentric plots of classic Hollywood film; cast outside the text, he or she is obliged to read homoerotic possibility back into the story by tracing unspoken connections, teasing out the potential implications of incomplete narrative threads, rewriting or looking away from the hetero happy ending. Queer film criticism has recently begun to explore the temporal implications of this spectatorial position. As Patricia White has pointed out, the fact that "classical Hollywood cinema belongs to the past but is experienced in a present that affords us new ways of seeing" enables film historiographers to think through the temporality of deferral.⁵ Drawing in part on Haynes's 1993 short *Dottie Gets Spanked*, White proposes the term "retrospectatorship" to conceptualize the temporality of queer relations to classic Hollywood film; retrospectatorship takes seriously the après-coup by which the immediacy of a film's affective impact and a belated reading of that impact in terms of cultural codes of sexuality may be linked.

White's emphasis on delay helps illuminate how *Far from Heaven's* return to the past can, when folded back against that past, be conceived in terms of the irregular temporal energies unleashed within queer cultural consumption, impeding efforts to draw any kind of straight line between past and present. The film's content does, of course, implicitly flatter the present, as it brings to the fore issues that could not have been approached on-screen in the 1950s—an emphasis on progress that characterizes what Edward O'Neill critiques as the "now we know better" stance of contemporary nostalgia cinema. At the same time, however, its refusal to "update" its treatment of those stories undermines the self-assurance of the progressive view; indeed, as quite a few critics suggested, what the film ultimately foregrounds is the extent to which things have *not* changed.⁶ The film also complicates the forward movement of progress in the peculiar way it turns classic cinema subtext into contemporary text; the inclusion of a belated coming-out story line in a film drawing on Sirk, for instance, offered the opportunity to revisit the homoeroticism, both diegetic and extradiegetic, that permeated the German director's Hollywood work, from the passionate rivalry that *Written on the Wind's* tormented Kyle Hadley projects onto his virile sidekick Mitch Wayne to the director's frequent casting of famed Hollywood homo heartthrob Rock Hudson as the heterosexual love interest. Yet the notion that the film completes the suggestive homo trajectories opened by the earlier films in its representation of Frank is

paradoxically undercut by the fact that he is undoubtedly the “straightest” representation of male homosexuality Haynes has yet produced.

In this light, the film’s queerest aspect is not its inclusion of a gay man’s story but its implicit incorporation of the history that enables that subtext itself to have become so familiar—the history of queer, and particularly gay male, attachment to Sirk and to domestic melodrama in general.⁷ The complexity of these attachments, I suggest, generates the unusual force of the relations *Far from Heaven* makes with the past.⁸ Critical attempts to account for the queer affinity for melodrama trace out a complex affective overlay; while they generally concede that this affinity is strongly marked by a camp sensibility that turns on what Mark Finch and Richard Kwietniowski identify as “an ironic appreciation of the genre’s excesses”—an irony that highlights the false universality of its normative values—many have also observed that the relationship nevertheless exceeds the ironic, incorporating a susceptibility to melodrama’s drive to overidentification and what Finch and Kwietniowski term an “empathy with melodrama’s painful impossibilities.”⁹ The coexistence of irony and empathy in this history of attachment sets into play a complex and often unpredictable combination of distance and closeness—the very combination that characterizes, as I noted above, the stance of *Far from Heaven*, catching audiences who expected one or the other by surprise. The queer inventiveness, imagination, and what White calls “dreaming” that, as she observes, “sustained [gay and lesbian] viewers in the face of invisibility” effectively link the two responses, fusing anti-heterocentric critique with a passionate receptivity that is itself a mode of critical resistance, though it continues to carry some of the baggage of sentimental culture.¹⁰

Queer spectators who work to reoccupy film narratives that do not ostensibly address them can, moreover, be understood as particularly sensitive to the body of the film—sonic as well as visual—and hence to its temporal force. From this perspective, what Brett Farmer identifies, in a discussion of gay appreciation of domestic/maternal melodrama, as an attachment to “the highly stylized mise en scène” of these films resonates as something other than the conventional projection of a gay man’s appreciation for fabulous interior decor.¹¹ Marxist critics, as Barbara Klinger points out, have generally read this stylistic “density” as either “critique of bourgeois acquisitiveness or deconstructive artifice,” while psychoanalytic readings depict it as “a symptomatic reaction against repression.”¹² But what we might comprehend as the questing vision of queer aficionados of this traditionally heteronormative genre opens an alternate perspective on its meticulous designs, one that seeks out and attaches to the surplus significance (visual, sonorous, and rhythmic as well as affective, narrative, and intertextual) of the domestic melodrama to acti-

vate possibilities left undeveloped in the plot. In a recent analysis of gay cinephilia, Roger Hallas observes, along these lines, that queer cinematic spectatorship, seeking to revise narratives that afford no recognition to the nonheteronormative, couples “a rejection or neglect of narrative linearity and trajectory” with “a fetishistic preoccupation with the moment, the detail, the fragment.”¹³ This inclination toward the *moment*, I want to suggest, may render the queer spectator particularly receptive to the ambivalent promise of melodrama’s momentum — to feeling, at once, the melancholic force of its emotional foreclosures and the compellingly textured friction that might incorporate affect otherwise.

It can, of course, be objected that in turning from the fact of gay and lesbian attachment to classic Hollywood domestic melodramas to recent queer critical attempts to fathom these attachments, I have moved from a history to a hypothesis. This, however, is precisely the critical-creative conjunction that we can understand Haynes’s film to be attempting — a move, that is, from an investigative take on the past to the speculative time of the not-yet. Haynes’s painstaking reproduction not only of the form but the feel of the period film bespeaks a desire to (re)activate the potentiality of a minoritarian spectatorial angle of vision by refracting it onto the audience as a whole, rendering queer temporality not as an actualized truth but as the possible effect of an exploratory process of displacement.

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Still Life and the Movies

In an influential analysis of melodramatic form, Thomas Elsaesser observes that the visual weight assigned, in the domestic melodrama, to the meticulous arrangement of household objects reveals the “characteristic attempt of the bourgeois household to make time stand still, immobilize life, and fix forever domestic property relations as the model of social life.”¹⁴ Haynes’s *Safe* (1995), a film we might view as *Far from Heaven*’s morose twin, illustrates this immobility.¹⁵ The tale of an affluent white housewife — named, not incidentally, Carol White and played by Julianne Moore, the actress who portrays Cathy Whitaker — who suffers from environmental illness, *Safe* emphasizes, in its eerily slow movement, the paralytic tendency of 1980s bourgeois domestic life, exposing the history of stagnation and toxicity (smugly isolated affluence, casual misogyny, unremarked racism) congealed within the structure of the Whites’ suburban dream house. Replicating Carol’s sudden sensitivity to chemicals of which most people have no awareness, *Safe*’s achievement is, in effect, to make time itself visible as an irritant, countering the concerted effort to make modernity’s contingent braid of public-private temporalities appear invisible and hence inevitable.

Safe's protracted elaboration of White's pathological place in time returns in a very different affective register in *Far from Heaven's* reproduction of a time that Geoffrey O'Brien describes as "all the more welcoming for never having quite existed."¹⁶ The later film folds Elsaesser's reading of domestic melodrama against itself, enclosing film, television, and advertising among the objects helping form, and freeze, the middle-class American familial image. Indeed, *Far from Heaven* stages two crucial scenes around a Hartford movie house. In one, Cathy, crumbling under combined spousal and social pressure, breaks off her friendship with Raymond under a marquee that advertises the film *Hilda Crane*—the very one whose interiors inspired Elsaesser's reading of domesticity's stifling arrangements. Haynes's queer critical angle on Hollywood, moreover, expands the scope of Elsaesser's framework, tallying the "values" of heteronormativity and whiteness as particularly cherished aspects of domestic "property."

The film's critique of film conventions manifests on-screen from the first image we see: a shot of a painting of tree branches in autumn foliage, over which the words "a film by Todd Haynes" appear. These words have a performative effect: the moment they fade out, the painting dissolves into the filmed image of a "real" tree, its "live" status emphasized by the slow motion of the wind in its leaves, signifying that time is now passing. The camera tracks slowly across the trees and down into a town square, where the movements of nature (the fluttering of leaves and birds) gradually give way to those of people and cars. As the shot centers on the brick facade of a train station with a large clock in its central window, the camera pauses and the film's title finally appears. The opening sequence thus invokes a familiar story about time in modernity: the historical move from the light of the sun and the changing of the seasons to the clock and the railway schedule, as a historical transition that has distanced the human world not simply from nature but concomitantly from God's traditional authority over time.¹⁷ This story is unsettled, however, by the artifice with which the "natural" itself is signified—not simply in the image of the painted branch but also in the filmed trees, whose brilliant, uniformly autumn-red leaves positively flaunt their color enhancement, drawing attention to how Hollywood itself plays God. Yet I would not read these images of imitation nature as signaling merely a filmic "falseness," as far from "real" nature as, say, Hartford is from heaven. Instead, the sequence—which closely follows the opening of Sirk's *All That Heaven Allows* (1955)—foregrounds how the film marks time within the circuit of artifice (its closing shot is of another tree branch, now bursting into spring flower, fading to black, to be replaced by its own painted image behind the credits) that Gilles Deleuze identifies as the crystal-image, the detachment of time from movement

and thus from any natural or necessary sequence.¹⁸ The painted stills that open and close the film underscore its persistent denaturalization of time, implicit in its arrest in the look Haynes designed for the film as a whole, which retains in its stylized arrangement, coloration, lighting, and pacing a trace of this painted, stilled quality. As a result, the separation of the image from natural inevitability spills over onto *Far from Heaven's* depiction of that complex ideogeme, “family time,” whose rhythms it begins to track as soon as its title fades from view. A cross-fade to another clock, on a different street corner, alerts us to the fact that the camera is following the movements of the two-tone Chevy station wagon that drove past the train station behind the title—Cathy Whitaker’s car, on its way home after her afternoon’s round of errands. The film thus travels smoothly from the public space of the town square to the suburban private sphere, and from “public” means of reckoning time to the regular movements of a suburban white middle-class family, complete with two gender-normative kids and a reliable black housekeeper—so predictably picture-perfect one might be tempted to rename the film *Still Life with Bourgeois Heteronormativity*.

Far from Heaven's depiction of the bourgeois family’s (stilled) life rhythms underscores how circulated images produce what passes for the natural organization of time—chronologies, including trajectories of psychosexual maturity and affective domestic arrangements—that the film consistently locates within aspects of interior decor. The psychiatrist’s office that Frank visits as a result of his (re)emergent homosexuality clearly illustrates the former, as it organizes itself implicitly around the very phallogentric developmental time line it knows to be normal. Visible behind the doctor, on his office wall, is a profile of Nefertiti, positing the female as the archaic, while at the front corner of the doctor’s desk sits a modern-looking brass paperweight in the shape of a male symbol, phallic arrow pointing upward and forward—the triumphant telos of the (male) sexual subject. Each time the shot reverses to show Frank responding to the doctor, however, the paperweight, which, given its placement on the desk, should remain visible, disappears. The good doctor’s perspective on Frank is one that views sexual normalcy as a question of timing as much as of the direction of desire, and one that knows time, moreover, as linear: either a man moves sexually forward, leading the race into the future, or he falls behind. Behind, however, is where women are located in this arrangement: a psychic archaism—traditionally associated, as Julia Kristeva observes, with the “anterior temporal modalities” of monumentality and repetition¹⁹—that is neatly converted, in bourgeois domestic ideology, into the cheerily sexless perpetual presence of the (white) “good mother.” This spatialized temporal placement is highlighted during a scene in which the society reporter from the *Hartford*

Weekly Gazette, justifying her decision to profile Cathy, mentions Frank's sales success and her supportive role; the reporter nods toward the wall above Cathy's head, where we see a framed magazine advertisement in which Frank and Cathy appear sitting alongside a fine new television, captioned by the logo: "Mr. and Mrs. Magnatech choose nothing but the best for their home." The camera pulls back from the ad to frame Cathy sitting below it, and the "live" image reproduces the scene in the painted one—Cathy, in a similar full-skirted blue dress, sits in a similar pose next to a similar television. (There is, however, one key difference between the two images: in the film's domestic "real time," Frank does not appear, having left a few moments before for the office, on whose wall, as we later learn, hangs another reproduction of this ad.) Echoing the temporal transposition that opens the film—the move from the still life of the painting to the "live" image of the tree—the shot of Cathy imitating the ad's presentation of family life indicates that what is at issue in this film is not the production of false copies of real life but the identification of circuits of reflection. The implicit reproduction of Cathy's image across various media—magazine ads, television, film—suggests the investment of midcentury American popular culture in circulating a modern image of the good-old-fashioned mother, who dutifully works to stabilize the form of the middle-class family (and, consequently, her own form) by reproducing sameness across the linear difference of historical time.

The stability of that family is, however, also predicated on its self-positioning at a certain distance from the flux of history, so that the timeless family values it encloses may be kept safe. And indeed, the attitude of the white families that make up *Far from Heaven's* suburban middle class underscores the extent to which bourgeois privacy affords the illusion of living outside history—which includes, in 1957–58, the burgeoning civil rights movement. In an early scene, a television set in the background shows President Eisenhower's live-broadcast announcement that he is sending federal troops to enforce court-ordered school desegregation in Little Rock, Arkansas, while Frank, a television salesman distracted by his own troubles, ignores the set entirely. Later, the guests at the Whitakers' annual Magnatech cocktail party, discussing the anti-integration violence in Little Rock, discount the possibility that something similar might happen in Hartford, because, as one smugly announces, "there are no Negroes in Connecticut." As the guests laugh at his pronouncement, the camera follows a white hand grabbing a canapé from a tray, and then pulls back to catch the steely-eyed glare of the black waiter who holds it. Suburban Hartford's determination to look away from all markers of historical change coincides with the temporal status it assigns to black servants, who, at once framed by and ignored within the structures of the white middle-

class home, are assumed by their white employers to lack chronology, possessing neither past nor any particular future. The film critically echoes this assumption through its depiction of the Whitaker's maid, Sybil. Sybil is the person who actually keeps the Whitaker household running on schedule—a fact Cathy admits more than once—yet she is perhaps the most oblique character in the entire film; the spectator is made to know, more than once, that she or he knows almost nothing about Sybil. In a scene adapted from Sirk's *Imitation of Life*, Cathy marvels to learn that Sybil can “find the time” to do community work on top of her labor for the Whitakers, making it clear that it has never before occurred to her to wonder whether Sybil has a life. Not coincidentally, however, this is just about the *only* thing the film's spectator will learn about that life, for in a milieu centered on perpetuating the middle-class white family, Sybil's life story simply does not signify.

Raymond presents a partial exception to this rule, as Cathy's developing friendship with him allows him to fill in something of his personal history—or, more precisely, Cathy is able to develop a friendship with him because she locates him within a generational succession she can recognize as akin to her own. Though her first response to the unknown black man walking through her suburban yard is predictably hostile, she is mollified into polite civility once she can identify Raymond as the son of her former gardener. This politeness takes a positively friendly turn as Cathy learns he is a business owner and, crucially, a parent, which allows her to identify her own time-values in his appeal for integration; when he asserts that he, “like any other father,” only wants his daughter, Sarah, to have the opportunities that he as a child did not, Cathy replies, without missing a beat, “naturally.” Yet Cathy's identification with Raymond also suggests the problems opened by this familiarly authorized sympathy for others. Her curiosity about his life is, significantly, limited to how it mirrors her own, as shown in her unwitting reduction of what it feels like to be “colored” to what it feels like to be “the only one in a room”—a framing of blackness that restructures it according to conditions with which she, as a white woman isolated within a bad marriage, might identify. As a result, her liberal-sentimental exploration of race relations, transposed into personal terms, is, again, deprived of any relation to history.

The time-stopping effect of the sentimental insistence on sameness characterizes not only the framing of race relations but also the transgenerational insistence on gender normativity. Early on, Cathy is glimpsed in a mirror shot that couples her with her eight-year-old daughter, Janice. Wondering whether Cathy, as a little girl, looked like her, Janice closes the circuit by hoping she will look “exactly as pretty” as her mother when she grows up. Janice's comments and behavior reveal the mode of femininity she perceives within the family form: the

generational repetition of a largely ornamental function. The film depicts both Whitaker children's persistent efforts to "reflect" their respective gender positions as a campaign of retrospective normalization. Stray moments at home are filled with the domestic white noise of Janice's campaign to wheedle the perfect pair of pink ballet shoes out of her mother and David's attempts to bond with his distracted father over sports, cars, and his oedipal disdain for Cathy's authority, as if both children were determined to ensure their parents' strict conformity to the gender codes they project backward onto them.

The retro-projected norms enforced by the Whitaker children point toward the way that, as feminist and queer theorists have outlined, the "needs" of the child are conventionally positioned to keep adults on the straight path, lest their gender nonconformity or sexual behavior disrupts the orderly progression of generations. The figure of the child-as-future serves, in Mary Ann Doane's assessment of the woman's film, to order its depiction of the untimeliness of (heterosexual) female desire; in Lee Edelman's more recent assessment, it signals, within the domestic melodrama that American national politics has become, the need to abject the un(re)productive pleasures comprehended as queer sexuality.²⁰ To these analyses, *Far from Heaven* appends the question of whether certain children may also be policed by the adult sexualities with which they are linked, as Raymond's attempt to lay claim to the appeal of the child-as-future is twisted by the chant of a pack of white boys, who, in the wake of rumors about Raymond's affair with Cathy, chase Sarah down after school, calling her "Daddy's girl"; trapping her in an alley, they pelt her with rocks, stoning the daughter for the "sins" of the father. The obscene lilt they give to the taunt "Daddy's girl," which they rhyme with the idea of her "daddy's white girlfriend," conveys their take on this familial arrangement: Raymond's transgressions both signal and spawn a gendered and a generational collapse. The violent struggle over whose children get to carry forward the future thus reveals the claims made on behalf of the child to be anything *but* innocent.²¹

The expressive style licensed by *Far from Heaven*'s self-conscious anachronism permits its visual and narrative arrangements to interrogate middle-class chronopolitics, capturing how it seeks to hypostatize its modes of conceiving familial and national movement forward. Its elaborate suspension of a displaced past to denaturalize relations to the present, in turn, suggests that one might be able to imagine other modes of proceeding in time. Indeed, the very belatedness of *Far from Heaven*'s reproduction of classic Hollywood style raises the question of whether delay itself might work, as a strategy, to dislodge middle-class spatio-temporal norms, making space within their regular repetition for the possibility of difference. It is to this possibility that I now turn.

Domesticity on Delay

One potential mode of variation is traced through the temporal code assigned to Frank's increasingly obvious deviations from the idealized role of Mr. Magnatech. Just a few minutes into the film, Cathy cheerfully alludes to her husband's reputation for rigorous punctuality. This reputation is, however, soon to be tarnished, as that very evening the Whitakers must miss their dinner party because Frank has been arrested as a "loiterer." The charge of loitering is a deliciously appropriate euphemism for Frank's as-yet-unnameable homosexuality; recalling the temporal errancy of Haynes's film itself, it also connotes the colloquial understanding of queerness as an inappropriate relation to hetero temporal norms, a failure or disinclination to live up to the time-patterns of the straight world, as well as the delayed emergence of Frank's tendencies after over a decade of marriage to Cathy (although, as we later learn, his deviation is actually the return of some "problems" he had "a long, long time ago").²² The experience of arrest does not, however, halt Frank's inclination to loiter; less than ten minutes of screen time will pass before he is again seen going astray on his way home from work. He stops in, apparently on a whim, at an evening screening of *The Three Faces of Eve*, scopes out the "mysterious" activity in the balcony, and then, leaving the theater, trails two men down a side alley until he finally locates the gay bar he has pretended not to be seeking all along. From this point, despite Frank's efforts to straighten himself out, the viewer can predict that the termination of the Whitakers' marriage will be only a matter of time.

Yet although Frank's temporal issues become visible early on, it is Cathy, not Frank, whom the film most insistently, if more subtly, associates with the difficulty of keeping to a schedule. Continually alluding to the pressure of her daily and weekly routines, Cathy, despite her picture-perfect homemaker image, likewise appears predisposed toward missing beats in the repetitive rhythms of domesticity. Though she generally lacks the freedom to loiter around town, her ambivalent relation to the familial schedule manifests in a tendency to misplace things, run late, and forget the time. This tendency is suggested, indeed, during the same exchange with the society reporter that features the visual comment on her stable domestic location. Cathy opens the interview by asserting that her "life is no different from any other wife and mother's." But her attempt to follow through with this claim—"I don't think I've ever wanted anything"—is tellingly broken off in an accident of timing, as she becomes distracted by her first sight of Raymond and walks outside to confront him. Raymond's (un)timely interruption of the interview at once succeeds at allowing Cathy to bespeak the conventional expectation of

maternal desirelessness—being the same as any other wife and mother means, simply, not wanting anything—and at falsifying it, since Raymond is, of course, destined to become something Cathy wants. The sudden displacement that marks the surfacing of Cathy’s desire—she stands up and walks away from the wall on which the image of Mr. and Mrs. Magnatech is framed—raises the question of whether the maternal side of the hetero reproductive circuit is quite as stable as that image makes it appear, underscoring the presumed incompatibility of female desire and domestic duty. As Doane points out, Freud’s account of the disphasure characterizing heterosexuality, his observation that “a man’s desire and a woman’s are a phase apart,” with women’s desire transferred onto their children, effectively sketches the temporal norms of the middle-class family: men transfer desire for their mothers “forward” onto other women, and women, in turn, transmute it into maternal affection. Doane argues that a mother’s present-tense relation to sexual desire thus represents, in midcentury melodrama, an “impossibility” that “must remain unfulfilled precisely because it is ‘out of synch’ with the proper order of generations.”²³ On this schedule, a family-oriented, domesticated heteronormativity, predicated on directing women toward maternity and mothers toward the absence of desire, can oppose even heterosexuality when it appears *as* sexuality, in excess of the reproductive-generational order. Hence Cathy’s dutiful profession of desirelessness; she is, by now, expected to have moved on to seeing sex as simply part of her wife-and-mother schedule, along with grocery shopping and carpool days. Her women friends’ tipsy complaints, at Cathy’s daiquiri-laced lunch party, about the number of times per week their husbands “insist” emphasize the extent to which Cathy is out of sync with her expected position. Her notably off-tempo response to their merriment posits the existence of unfulfilled desire and therefore the existence *of* desire, as her own secret, at once a consequence of and a complement to Frank’s loitering. For the domestic problem intimated in this scene is not simply Cathy’s private puzzlement over Frank’s failure to insist more often but also that, over a decade and two children into their marriage, she seems to *mind*.

While Doane does not trace out the queer implications of hetero disphasure, her assessment of the nonsynchronous status of the sexualized mother, the mother in whom sexual desire has persisted or resurfaced, underscores the extent to which the self-understanding of the normative family is haunted by the potential effects of this (ma)lingering, the anxiety that it will act as a counterforce, disarranging the domestic balance and imperiling or perverting the future. In this light, Cathy’s untimely desire ties her to the temporal errancy that appears, in this film, as a kind of queerness—one determined not, as homosexuality, by the gender of object-choice but by a perceived “mistiming” of desire, a lack of

synchronicity with the reproductive-generational order. This characterization is given a suggestive prehistory in a comment Eleanor makes on the day her women friends come over for lunch and sexual-schedule confessions. Reading aloud from the *Hartford Weekly Gazette's* profile of Cathy, which proclaims her "as devoted to her family as she is kind to Negroes," Eleanor knowingly informs the other women that Cathy has "always been liberal, ever since she played summer stock at college with all those steamy Jewish boys." This memory of Cathy's antemarital activities alters the terms of the profile; where the *Gazette*, drawing on the ideal of the genteel, sympathetic middle-class white woman, balances her "charitable" trans-racial kindness with familial devotion, Eleanor instead associates that tendency with curiosity, rendering it the afterlife of youthful contact, in a corporeally and phantasmically charged setting, with otherness. If Cathy's collegiate flirtation with theater was "just a phase" on the way to settled suburban motherhood, it nevertheless seems to have left its mark. Just as Frank's long-ago problems — possibly tied to his naval experience, about which he brags to his coworkers in the scene preceding this one, just before loitering his way into the gay bar — resurface to alter his life course, Eleanor's comment insinuates the residual possibility that Cathy might also regress toward some other trajectory.

The allusion to Cathy's past occurs, moreover, in a scene where she is visually marked as different from the other women by an intriguingly excessive detail. Gathered around Eleanor as she reads the paper, the four women are all clothed in autumnal reds, beautifully matching one another and the fall leaves that abundantly frame the Whitaker's front lawn. Cathy, however, has finished off her outfit with a clashing lavender scarf, which, as Sharon Willis remarks, "interrupts the seamless texture of analogous colors" on-screen.²⁴ Willis points out that the scarf launches a number of puns on color; it spins off Cathy's allusion to Joe McCarthy, recalling the homophobic dimension of his anticommunist campaigning, which is not mentioned in the dialogue; it suggests Frank, whose tendencies have been confirmed for the viewer in the preceding scene; and finally, it predicts the "color line" Cathy herself will shortly cross (indeed, after a gust of wind carries the scarf into the backyard, it is Raymond who finds it and returns it to her) (149). The multiplicity of puns collected in and around the lavender scarf, drawing together disparate moments in the film, in turn indexes the scarf's function as a marker of temporal surplus. Just as the color in the autumn-red scene sets Cathy visually apart from the otherwise universal blending with the stylized artifice of the natural environment, the scarf also carries chronic possibilities not contained in normative developmental models or familiar modes of narrative progression. The use of lavender to mark this difference in a scene that is notably subsequent to the

one featuring the bout of loitering that outs Frank to the viewer might then draw our attention to the effect of retrospectively crossing a putatively normal, properly maternal femininity with homosexuality—a question that might, of course, just as well be posed of this film, a gay man’s take on a maternally marked genre.²⁵ Farmer’s recent consideration of gay male attachment to maternal melodrama registers the conceptual and temporal possibilities emerging from the matrocentric queer subject’s resistance to the oedipal course; both gay male and lesbian maternal attachment disarrange the teleological sexual norms on which generational time depends, seizing on femininity and moving it onto a path unrelated to reproductivity.²⁶ The queered femininity that emerges from these conjunctions emphasizes the issue of erotic *aim* over object-choice; separating sex from the generational production of life, it seeks, instead, to proliferate the possibilities of “aliveness.” From this perspective, the lavender scarf’s spatiotemporal play on color evokes the trajectories a queered femininity might develop—ones that would be, unlike Frank’s ultimate path, indeterminate; it appears, that is, not as a signpost marking a known route of sexual deviation but as a gesture toward the potentiality of desiring otherwise.

The scarf’s metonymic link to Raymond seemingly identifies the otherwise trajectory that Cathy will (abortively) pursue in the narrative as a transracial heterosexual one, extending Eleanor’s offhand reference to her earlier cross-ethnic contact. This incident, in turn, puts forward a view of the film as linking interracial heterosexuality and homosexuality and, by extension, racism and homophobia.²⁷ But to foreground this analogy is implicitly to privilege the (visible) aspect of object-choice over the (less visible) aspect of aim; while this is, of course, precisely what Hartford does, a closer attention to the latter, and a more careful attention to context, complicates the significance assigned to Raymond’s connection to the scarf. When he hands it back to Cathy, he comments that he knew it was hers because its color “seem[s] right,” an observation that, linked to his commentary in the art exhibit scene, underscores a marked aesthetic proclivity (and here, we might also recall that the Jewish boys with whom the younger Cathy was linked are also marked as aesthetes by their theatrical occupation). This interest indexes both Raymond’s connection to and his difference from Ron Kirby, the gardener/lover from Sirk’s *All That Heaven Allows*. Both men are positioned in the hoary role of the outsider who offers spiritual regeneration to a morally bankrupt white middle class (a role Haynes’s film ironizes by naming Raymond the Deagan (Deacon) to Cathy’s Whit[e]-taker). Ron does so via a manly embrace of nature, living out his outdoor labor as an alternative to the rat race. Raymond, in contrast, seems to see gardening as simply a living, a trade inherited from his father and

one of the few he can viably practice in Hartford. His pleasures incline, instead, toward the intellectual; when he hands a flowering branch to Cathy, he cannot resist identifying it by its Latin name. He regards his plant shop as an ability to put his education to use; and he marks his own distance from the rat race by launching theories about the theological significance of modern art and the affective force—the “feel”—of its play with shape and color. Raymond’s displacement of the truth of nature in favor of the value of the *interesting* introduces modes of thinking about space and time that need no “alibi” in nature. While his propensity for posing these in religiously inflected language recalls the sentimentalized “spiritual-outsider” figure, it also might propose a reckoning with affect to disrupt the circuits of sameness that characterize the sentimental. His reading, in the art-exhibit scene, of Cathy’s response to one of Miró’s Constellations—that her adoration of “the feeling [the painting] gives” that can’t be put into words is a reaction to the painter’s effort to “somehow . . . show you divinity” through “the basic elements of shape and color”—resonates in both directions. In one reading, it constitutes the kind of clichéd commentary on the sacred power of art (posed against the presence of Hartford’s moneyed set, who are too busy staring at him to spare a glance for the paintings) that befits the liberal-sentimental politics of the melodrama. In another, however, the synaesthetic transposition (between looking and feeling) he draws from Cathy’s comment posits a corporeal connection that enlivens the process of making connections. In Deleuze’s commentary on modern cinema, the affective force of an image that momentarily disrupts conventional representational sequences (as do both the Miró painting, for a viewer schooled in realism, and, for the film’s own viewer, the unexpected cross-fade between the three-dimensional human traffic in the exhibit entryway and the abstracted, diffuse surface of the Miró that opens this scene itself) is linked to the restoration of belief, which is, on this view, not “believing in another world, or in a transformed world,” but in *this* world, meaning, on the most basic level, “believing in the body.”²⁸ From this perception, the allusion to divinity would point to the reactivation of life as the power to differ, to offer neither the reproduction of sameness that guides a stabilized reproductive-generational chronology nor the inconsequential variations that fall into the capitalist demand for novelty, but radically new points of departure. Moreover, Raymond’s quasi-religious observations consistently fail to include God as an authoritative point of reference—an omission that itself suggests the possibility of dislocating the outside-time of eternity from its ahistorical frame and re-creating it as a force that might generate difference *within* time.

Raymond’s gloss on the force of this image might return us, then, to another consideration of the images that compose this film itself. While they illustrate, as

I earlier proposed, the stasis of white-bourgeois chronopolitics, they also invite, in their evocative play with color and lighting and the arrangement of surplus detail, a heightened receptiveness, one that links them to a temporality we might understand not as stilled but as inviting alteration. This mode of receptiveness is connected to times of delay and dilation, pausing over the impact of the entire image or else tracing out varying implications of an exceptional fragment thereof. The ties the film posits between these irregular temporal movements and the body intimates, further, that desiring and feeling unsynched from the ordered reproduction of sameness might inspire a rethinking of the order of life itself, opening it toward speculative time. But we might, in turn, fold this opening-onto-speculation back toward the chronopolitical critique I elaborated in the first section, questioning the extent to which the turn to difference can evade the pressure to reproduce the same. Taking into consideration Haynes's carefully considered reproduction not only of the visual style but also of the rhythms of classic melodrama, then, I would like to look into the suggestively doubled reflection on queer temporality that emerges from this critical overlay.

Open Memory: Feminine Endings

Despite Haynes's careful attention to Sirk's style and persistent borrowing of moments and themes from his work, the end of *Far from Heaven* breaks notably with the Sirkean mode of tacking on forced or flawed "happy endings" that at once satisfied and critiqued the viewer's desire for them. Of the film's central narrative threads, Frank's story line alone is reserved for this kind of closure. He seems to end up relatively well-off, having not only come to terms with being gay but also "fallen in love" with the young blond man whom he met while on vacation with Cathy. Yet the promise of an idyllic happily-ever-after for Frank is undermined by the implied cynicism of his final scene, in which he is seen in a badly decorated motel room, his face half-shadowed as he stammers through an awkward conversation with Cathy about finalizing their divorce while, in the background, his boyfriend lounges on the bed reading a magazine and eating from a box of chocolates. Raymond, for his part, ends the film on an even less certain path. Professionally ruined by the scandal erupting from his supposed affair with Cathy, he declares that "things are pretty well finished for me here" and decides, after the attack on Sarah, to move to Baltimore, where his brother has promised to find him work; when Cathy proposes that she, soon to be single again, might come visit him there, he rebuffs her, insisting that "what's right for Sarah" has got to matter most. Like

those aspects of his life that did not touch on a connection with Cathy, then, the film renders this last journey as an uncertain, unforeseeable future.

In marked contrast to the departures assigned to Frank and Raymond, we leave Cathy, at the end of the film, precisely where we first encountered her, driving the family station wagon through the town square. This recourse to the gesture of repetitive return recalls Max Ophuls's celebrated "women's films" of the late 1940s, *Letter from an Unknown Woman* (1948) and *The Reckless Moment* (1949), which leave their protagonists (both mothers with illicit romantic attachments) pointedly going nowhere—either dead or "imprisoned" within domesticity. Two scenes near the end of *Far from Heaven* place Cathy in the precise position occupied by Ophuls's protagonists, further underscoring the connection between those films and the distinctly gendered momentum of Haynes's ending. The return to Ophuls foregrounds his films' emphasis on the timing of desire, suggesting that Cathy's regressive movement might be read as a consequence of her decision to revert to the middle-class form and abandon the possibility of desiring otherwise—a decision that ultimately leaves her in the position of being left behind. This positioning is emphasized in the film's final sequence, set on the last day of the story, a Friday in early March, which opens as Cathy takes a break from paying bills and comes upon Sybil, who is energetically polishing the dining-room table—a task that, as she reminds Cathy, she performs every Friday. Cathy tries to dissuade Sybil by invoking the changed circumstances of the household, but Sybil, still polishing, answers, "No reason not to keep things up—no reason at all," and then reminds Cathy not to forget the grocery list. Cathy discovers the aforementioned lavender scarf in her coat pocket, ties it on, and heads out; we next see her, children in tow, driving up to the train station she passed in the opening sequence and rushing under its clock (which reads 4:25) to the platform, where she arrives just in time to wave good-bye to Raymond. The "moving" final railway platform sequence (which cites a similar scene from *Letter from an Unknown Woman*) is carefully staged to underscore the temporal implications of its movements. Filmed by a stationary camera, Cathy's perspective shows Raymond on a train that is moving slowly forward; shot from a moving train, Raymond's, however, gives the impression that Cathy, who stands still on the platform, is moving backward, regressing in time as well as space. We become intensely aware at this point that the film has come full circle, bringing Cathy's station wagon back to the train station where it began—a cycle we will be reminded of by the closing return to the branch motif. Whatever alternate trajectories the film's dilatory movement may have opened thus seem to give way once again to the fixity of the stilled life.

Yet this bleak reading of the ending fails to consider the lavender scarf's evocative reappearance at and, in a sense, *as* the moment of closure. The simplest explanation for this detail is that it is intended to function as a memento, to speak mournfully of "another time," an appraisal in keeping with melodrama's typically melancholy endings. But this object's earlier resistance to a singular reading, its ability to articulate intricate spatiotemporal foldings of the film, warrants reconsidering its potential mnemonicity. The key to this reconsideration is suggested in Tania Modleski's reading of *Letter from an Unknown Woman*, which argues for a feminine orientation to the melodramatic investment in rhythms of repetition and return. Observing that it seems to be precisely the moments of affective excess, and specifically moments in which the protagonist relinquishes something beloved, that the feminine spectator cherishes and returns to, Modleski, drawing on Hélène Cixous's conception of "open memory," suggests that perhaps the melodrama's inclination to return speaks not of an attempt to abolish the "difficult time of desire" but of a dissimilar economy of pleasure, "another relationship to time and space, desire and memory."²⁹ Cixous's open memory is developed against what she identifies as a masculine, phallic economy of mourning, one in which the passage of time establishes the distance that permits the subject to resign himself to (and so to deny) loss. She contends that "when you've mourned, it's all over after a year. . . . Woman, though, *does not mourn*, does not resign herself to loss. She basically *takes up the challenge of loss* in order to go on living. . . . It's like a kind of open memory that ceaselessly makes way."³⁰ The nonmourning Cixous describes here arranges an open relationship to time, a continual interpenetration between past, present, and future; counterpointing both a normative psychic economy of mourning, whose telos is the full recovery of investment in the lost object ("when you've mourned, it's all over after a year") and the paralyzing stasis of melancholia, where the rift between past and present is experienced as insurmountable, the making way of open memory renders the presence of the past a potential resource for the receptive subject. What appears from a narrative perspective as loss and consequent diminishment returns, from Cixous's perspective, as a continual, ateleological opening to the affective forces of another time—a feminine dilation on the past. Cixous's rendering of the figure "Woman," sometimes linked to an essentially maternal femaleness, is also, even more so, a hypothesis identifying a set of possibilities opened by a way of inhabiting the body (female, male, or otherwise) that refuses the phallic sexual/reproductive order and displaces, as a consequence, the false opposition between progress and stasis, and between redemptive and unremitting modes of suffering, encoded in the mourning-melancholia distinction.³¹

This formulation of open memory posits one way that a supposedly lost time might remain an active force. And in this light, we can consider Cathy's decision to wear the lavender scarf to the farewell scene not as the mournful remembrance of a bygone past moment but as a re-collection of the temporal possibilities the scarf has indexed, bringing to this scene of departure a reminder that "another relationship to time and space," following none of the trajectories we have seen in the film, may yet be possible. The surplus of the scarf, its ability to at once interrupt continuities and make unexpected connections, allows the rhythms of return that close the film to resonate as something other than the compulsory repetition of sameness. This perspective, in turn, allows a more precise consideration of the brief exchange between Sybil and Cathy in the preceding scene. For while the scene's dialogue, as I earlier glossed it, seemingly conforms to the requirement that women remain in the various positions that mark a static domesticity, the scene's pacing pulses open other accounts. Sybil's firmly voiced insistence to "keep things up," for instance, can be read alternately as enjoining excessive self-indulgence in mournfulness or as proposing that a considered embrace of repetition might also function as defiance. Indeed, in the wake of her comment, a slight shift in the balance of power between the two women becomes visible—or rather, audible. While, for most of the film, Sybil has been pointedly reduced to following Cathy verbally, agreeing with or confirming whatever she says (a positioning emphasized when she delays telling Cathy about the attack on Sarah Deagan because speaking up is not "her place," which Cathy inadvertently confirms by yelling at her for *not* having spoken), in this scene, it is Cathy who ends up agreeing with Sybil. The change in dynamics continues as Sybil reminds Cathy not to forget the grocery list. Cathy begins thanking her in the gushingly grateful manner we have seen her previously employ when she recognizes Sybil's role in "keeping up" the household. The sentence—"I don't know how I would ever manage"—is, however, broken off as Sybil looks up to meet her gaze directly. Instead, Cathy falls awkwardly silent, glancing down and then shyly back at Sybil, and, after a short pause, walking into the hallway, where, pulling on her coat, she discovers in her pocket the lavender scarf.

Countering the banality of the dialogue, the carefully orchestrated rhythms of the scene—its vocal emphases, pauses, glances, and gestures—freight it with additional but enigmatic significance, foregrounding meaningfulness while withholding meaning. Lynne Joyrich observes that the scene might insinuate a (belated) recognition of Cathy and Sybil as the film's "primary couple," extending its earlier allusion to Sirk's *Imitation of Life*, which has also been read as a gesture toward lesbianism—although, as Joyrich notes, this pairing is one the film itself

is “unable to narrate” except through extratextual allusion, as its complexities would “disorder the limits” of the narrative.³² Complicating this possibility, however, is the fact that Sybil invokes an intricate array of extratextual allusions. If, as I earlier proposed, she denotes the raced distribution of gendered labor in the white middle-class household, holding it steady, out of necessity, against Cathy’s inclination to forget its time and, in the absence of any backstory, to underscore the narrowness of a white-centered Hollywood perspective, she also operates as a hypercondensation of classic Hollywood black-maid figures. In the imitation of the scene from *Imitation*, she brings to mind that film’s Annie Johnson; she also recalls her namesake Sybil from *The Reckless Moment* (the model, Doane contends, for her apparent insight into her employer’s feelings);³³ and her initially suspicious response to Raymond evokes Tillie Binks from *Guess Who’s Coming to Dinner* (dir. Stanley Kramer, USA; 1967). These compound allusions offer a sketch of the history in which Hollywood melodrama doubles the household labor of the black-woman-as-maid by requiring her to support, complete, and “echo” the affective circuits of white domesticity.³⁴ If Cathy’s habitual apology, in this scene, points us back toward Sybil’s similar positioning in this film, the force of Sybil’s gaze, as it unexpectedly interrupts that rote repetition, recalls us to the possibility and the necessity of altering the sedimented rhythms of domestic life.

That recollection itself suggests not a conclusive reading *of* but a number of caveats about reading *through* this scene’s suggestive pacing. For if we cannot prise from the measured gaps in the dialogue some definitive plot trajectory that counters the initial assumption of stasis, wresting a happy ending (or a happy beyond-the-ending) from the jaws of melodramatic defeatedness, we may yet develop, as the effect of looking back at this scene and its manifold relations to the film, a few observations in conjunction with the speculative time whose possibilities I have been thinking through—observations that might prevent the desire to launch that speculation in an optimistic direction from devolving into a repetition of the paralyzing chronopolitics we saw earlier. For by folding affective and erotic intimations alongside a record of exploitation, the scene underscores the challenge of opening up but not effacing history—not, that is, sentimentalizing the possibilities of queer relations to the past.³⁵ The penultimate scene’s exchange between Sybil and Cathy resonates, as well, as a reminder of the film’s deliberately limited perspective, drawing from this repeated emphasis the reminder that the hypothesis of queered femininity not be considered in relation to white femininity alone. And, crucially, the scene emphasizes the importance of rethinking the time of domestic relations from within, rather than simply highlight alternative escape routes. Haynes’s played-straight reoccupation of the classic domestic melodrama

thus prompts us, through this gesture, to engage a more speculative take on queer temporality itself, considering it as the (exiled, dislocated, or oppositional) time in which the lives of those whom we already comprehend as queer take form and as a mode of hypothesizing forms not yet given in our time. *Far from Heaven*'s irregular relation to the past suggests, then, not only the need to think differently about the matter of history but also that our take on queer time would do best to remain radically dispossessive, incorporating the suggestive record of queer attachments not to "fix," in turn, the time of the queer but to engage its impulses to move toward a future that history has not yet envisioned.

Notes

For helpful commentary on earlier drafts of this essay I am indebted to Christopher Nealon, Sarah McNamer, Patrick O'Malley, Ricardo Ortíz, Elizabeth Freeman, and *GLQ*'s anonymous reviewers.

1. While *Far from Heaven* most closely recalls, from its title onward, Sirk's *All That Heaven Allows* (1955), in which a middle-class, middle-aged widow scandalizes her small-minded town by beginning an affair with a younger man who happens to be her gardener, the influence of other Sirk films, particularly *Written on the Wind* (1956) and *Imitation of Life* (1959), surfaces intermittently throughout the film. Its cinematic archive also includes Max Ophüls's "women's films" of the late 1940s as well as Rainer Werner Fassbinder's 1974 remake of *All That Heaven Allows*, *Ali: Fear Eats the Soul*, and nods to Haynes's own earlier films.
2. Todd Haynes, "Far from Heaven: Director's Statement," in *Far from Heaven, Safe, and Superstar: The Karen Carpenter Story: Three Screenplays* (New York: Grove, 2003), xiv.
3. For recent work on Haynes that addresses issues of temporality and revisionist historiography, see Marcia Landy, "The Dream of the Gesture: The Body of/in Todd Haynes's Films," *boundary 2* 30, no. 3 (2003): 123–40; Michael DeAngelis, "The Characteristics of New Queer Filmmaking: Case Study—Todd Haynes," in *New Queer Cinema: A Critical Reader*, ed. Michele Aaron (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2004), 41–52; Edward O'Neill, "Traumatic Postmodern Histories: *Velvet Goldmine*'s Phantasmatic Testimonies," *Camera Obscura*, no. 57 (2004): 157–85; and Elana Gorfinkel, "The Future of Anachronism: Todd Haynes and the Magnificent Andersons," in *Cinephilia: Movies, Love, and Memory*, ed. Marijke de Valck and Malte Hagener (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2005), 153–68.
4. See Tamara K. Hareven, "Synchronizing Individual Time, Family Time, and Historical Time," in *Chronotypes: The Construction of Time*, ed. John Bender and David E. Wellbery (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1991), 167–82; for a queer per-

- spective on hetero synchronicity, see Judith Halberstam, *In a Queer Time and Place: Transgender Bodies, Subcultural Lives* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2005).
5. Patricia White, *Uninvited: Classical Hollywood Cinema and Lesbian Representability* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1999), 197.
 6. O'Neill, "Traumatic Postmodern Histories," 160. For a review of *Far from Heaven* that underscores its commentary on the present, see Amy Taubin, "In Every Dream Home," *Film Comment* 38, no. 5 (2002): 22–24, 26.
 7. On gay men and melodrama, see Brett Farmer, *Spectacular Passions: Cinema, Fantasy, Gay Male Spectatorships* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2000), 151–97. Although lesbians have not historically been known as aficionados of domestic melodrama, the question of whether this indicates a lack of attachment or a lack of visibility remains an open one; lesbians, and especially femme or feminine lesbians, watching melodrama do not figure as the kind of flaming signifier that a man taking pleasure in a "woman's film" constitutes. For a provocative reading of lesbian attachment to classic Hollywood "femme films," including melodrama, see White, *Uninvited*.
 8. Hudson's homosexuality, of course, has long ceased to be merely subcultural knowledge; see Barbara Klinger's discussion of the potential homophobia that lurks within mass-camp responses to Sirk in *Melodrama and Meaning: History, Culture, and the Films of Douglas Sirk* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994), 149–51.
 9. Mark Finch and Richard Kwietniowski, "Melodrama and *Maurice*: Homo Is Where the Het Is," *Screen* 29, no. 3 (1988): 73.
 10. White, *Uninvited*, 1–2, xv. For a critique of sentimental politics, see Lauren Berlant, "The Subject of True Feeling: Pain, Privacy, and Politics," in *Cultural Studies and Political Theory*, ed. Jodi Dean (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2000), 42–62. I discuss *Far from Heaven*'s reading of the limits of sentimental identification later in this essay.
 11. Farmer, *Spectacular Passions*, 176.
 12. Klinger, *Melodrama and Meaning*, 24.
 13. Roger Hallas, "AIDS and Gay Cinephilia," *Camera Obscura*, no. 52 (2003): 93. Though Hallas's essay focuses specifically on gay male filmmakers, his claims here draw on both lesbian and gay scholarship on film spectatorship, including that of White and Farmer.
 14. Thomas Elsaesser, "Tales of Sound and Fury: Observations on the Family Melodrama," reprinted in *Home Is Where the Heart Is: Studies in Melodrama and the Woman's Film*, ed. Christine Gledhill (London: BFI Books, 1987), 61–62.
 15. Haynes himself describes their relationship as sororal; see Haynes, "Three Screenplays: An Introduction," in *Far from Heaven, Safe, Superstar*, viii.
 16. Geoffrey O'Brien, "Past Perfect," *Artforum International* 41, no. 3 (2002): 152.
 17. For a historical overview of the religious implications attached to the changes in

- time created by industrialization, see Michael O'Malley, *Keeping Watch: A History of American Time* (New York: Viking, 1990), esp. chap. 1.
18. Gilles Deleuze, *Cinema II: The Time-Image* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1989).
 19. Julia Kristeva, "Women's Time," in *The Kristeva Reader*, ed. Toril Moi (New York: Columbia University Press, 1986), 192.
 20. Mary Ann Doane, *The Desire to Desire: The Woman's Film of the 1940s* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1987); Lee Edelman, *No Future: Queer Theory and the Death Drive* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2004).
 21. In *No Future*, Edelman does not specifically address whether black children can figure the sacred child. Given the asynchronous status historically assigned to both black individuals and the black family, however, it seems that black children are unlikely to signify this way in the American national imaginary even though, as Edelman asserts, "diversity's child" may do so. For an analysis of the pathologizing of the black family in white America, see Hortense Spillers, "Mama's Baby, Papa's Maybe: An American Grammar Book," *Diacritics* 17, no. 2 (1987): 65–81.
 22. For a consideration of gay male narratives of distraction and delay, see Ross Chambers, *Loiterature* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1999).
 23. Doane, *Desire to Desire*, 94. Doane's argument here is based on a reading of Max Ophuls's 1949 *The Reckless Moment*, which is, as I show, an important intertext for *Far from Heaven*.
 24. Sharon Willis, "The Politics of Disappointment: Todd Haynes Rewrites Douglas Sirk," *Camera Obscura*, no. 54 (2003): 149.
 25. Willis contends that the film's "overarching project aims at restoring maternal plenitude" ("Politics of Disappointment," 144).
 26. For takes on queer maternal attachments in relation to melodrama, see Farmer, *Spectacular Passions*, and White, *Uninvited*.
 27. See Willis, "Politics of Disappointment," 164–65.
 28. Deleuze, *Cinema II*, 172. Landy identifies Deleuze's insistence on restoring belief in the world as central to Haynes's work overall (Landy, "Dream of the Gesture," 139–40).
 29. Tania Modleski, "Time and Desire in the Woman's Film," in Gledhill, *Home Is Where the Heart Is*, 336. Modleski uses the language of sex difference to designate spectatorial positions (citing "female" vs. "male" responses); given Hélène Cixous's more capacious take on femininity and my own critical stake, however, I have used the adjective *feminine* as one more easily transposed across sexes.
 30. Hélène Cixous, "Castration or Decapitation?" trans. Annette Kuhn, *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 7 (1981): 54, emphasis in original.
 31. This construction is recognized by John Paul Ricco, who suggestively links the notion of open memory to a more ethical queer (male) relation to the time of AIDS. See

Ricco, *The Logic of the Lure* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002), 36–37. In line with Ricco's comments, I would propose that the notion of open memory, as a nonlinear and antiteleological (non)mourning, redirects and furthers recent attempts, particularly in queer and postcolonial studies, to reframe melancholia not as the sign of a failure in the subject but as a strategic gesture of resistance by minoritized and queer subjects. See, for example, José Esteban Muñoz, *Disidentifications: Queers of Color and the Performance of Politics* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1999). See also Elizabeth Freeman's recent consideration of the way an unexpected politics of pleasure might emerge from the less phallic model of the ego conveyed in Abraham and Torok's rethinking of melancholia (Freeman, "Time Binds, or, Eroto-historiography," *Social Text*, nos. 84–85 [2005]: 57–68).

32. Lynne Joyrich, "Written on the Screen: Mediation and Immersion in *Far from Heaven*," *Camera Obscura*, no. 57 (2004): 203.
33. Mary Ann Doane, "Pathos and Pathology: The Cinema of Todd Haynes," *Camera Obscura*, no. 57 (2004): 12.
34. Cf. Mary Ann Doane, *Femmes Fatales: Feminism, Film Theory, Psychoanalysis* (New York: Routledge, 1991), 240.
35. See White on the servant-mistress relation in *Uninvited*, esp. 152–54.