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## Friends on Purpose: The Queer in Friendship

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*Friendship, when approached as an inherently queer relational form, challenges normative assumptions that hierarchise intimacy through the naturalisation and institutionalisation of the heteronormative family. Drawing on a personal narrative of a long-standing friendship, this article examines how such bonds can question and dismantle dominant intimacy hierarchies. It contributes to ongoing critiques of family as a normative institution by positioning friendship as a chosen, intentional and radical practice of intimacy: friends on purpose. To this end, autotheory is employed in order to represent the search for an adequate language for the intimate, non-institutionalised nature of relationships as well as to highlight its modes of radical subjectivity. The analysis further engages with historical concepts of intimate closeness such as the Boston Marriage, romantic friendship, the split-attraction model, and queerplatonic relationships, alongside the works of Michel Foucault, Didier Eribon, Angela Chen, and Geoffroy de Lagasnerie. Instead of integrating friendship into the institutional logic of family, it is conceptualised as a practice that disrupts conventional notions of kinship. At the same time, it is shown that non-institutionalised forms of relationships can still remain intertwined with amatonormativity and normative life scripts. By resisting the temporalities and prescribed values of romance, marriage, and reproduction, and by questioning their naturalisation, friendship opens up a powerful mode of relating beyond institutional recognition.*

We're not just friends: a phrase that usually marks the boundary between friendship and romance. But what if the lines between amorous and platonic relationships begin to blur?

This is a story about friendship, *without a 'just'*.

My best friend E. and I – both cis women – share a connection which has similarities to the structure of a queer amorous partnership. We plan to build our future together and share acts of affection, care, and intimacy. At one point during our teenage years, we lived together. I moved into her childhood bedroom at her parents' house, and every night we shared a bed and our lives. Even now we say 'lieb hab' at the end of every call or when we see each other. In German, it is a softer, more nuanced way of saying 'I love you'. Whenever I wake her up, I

slip beneath the bedsheet, where she cuddles up to me and lays her head on my lap while I gently stroke her hair. Once, when I came home exhausted from my first full-time job, she prepared a bath with rose petals and lavender for me. We still dream of buying a farmhouse and structure our lives around one another. She deeply wishes to become a mother one day, and we picture ourselves raising children together. When we talked about moving in together, we agreed that a living room was something we both really wanted. However, we also knew that we would probably not be able to afford a three-room flat. For us, this meant that we would simply share our bedroom and sleep in the same bed – just as amorous couples do. For teenage girls, it is considered normal to share a bed during sleepovers and while most female friendships tend to evolve away from this casual intimacy of youth, we have continued to do so in our adulthood.

Writing these lines, it felt like sketching a coming-of-age story of two queer people, who fell in love with their best friend, but our story is not like that. Although our plans may sound like a lesbian dream – living together on a farm and raising children – this description does not feel fitting for us. I struggle to categorise us with existing terminology: we are not ‘just friends’, we are *friends on purpose*. Throughout this text, I engage with a field of research that addresses the need to define the nuances of attraction and the different forms of friendship from an asexual and aromantic angle. Like Angela Chen, from an asexual perspective, points out: “Casual phrases like ‘just friends’ and ‘more than friends’ relegate friendship to something less special and less whole. Frustration over the devaluation of friendship is not new” (125). The word ‘friendship’ has nearly no nuanced stages for differentiation purposes compared to amorous relationships, for which there exist differentiations for every step: from seeing one another to dating, from dating casually to dating seriously, from engaged to married. However, there is no word to differentiate my friendship with E. from that with someone I meet for coffee once a month.

My text is a guided exploration of ways and concepts to describe the character and meaning of the friendship between E. and I. To do so, I engage with different theoretical conceptions of intimate closeness such as Boston Marriage, romantic friendship, the split attraction model, and queerplatonic relationships, alongside thinkers of friendship like Michel Foucault, Dider Eribon, Angela Chen, and Geoffery de Lagasnerie, whose reflections help me grapple with the specificity of my relationship with E. I will particularly draw on

autoethnographer Lisa Tillmann's notion of *friendship as a method* by approaching friendship not merely as an object of reflection, but as a way of thinking *with and through* it (745-746). In this sense, the text itself is shaped by the ethics of friendship, attentive to intimacy, vulnerability, and care as conditions of knowledge production. The bond between E. and I has always been intimate, intertwined, and deeply significant. The emotional closeness, the physical intimacy, the shared life plans, and the acts of care and affection – that is what makes me feel that there is something queer about this friendship and friendship in general. Through autotheory, I illustrate that friendship can challenge dominant hierarchies of intimacy, and I examine what kind of vocabulary is needed to describe non-normative bonds of intimacy.

In reflecting on my relationship with E., I came across the term Boston Marriage and was struck by the parallels. Coined in late nineteenth-century England and popularised by Henry James's 1886 novel *The Bostonians*, the term describes two unmarried, often middle- or upper-class women who lived together in lifelong, committed partnerships. James's characters Olive and Verena share a deep emotional bond, expressed through intimate language and gestures: they hold hands, kiss, cuddle, and share feminist ideals. Olive asks Verena: "Will you be my friend, my friend of friends, beyond everyone, everything, forever and forever?" (James 85). We can see here how the Boston Marriage emerges along three distinct affective vectors: a lifelong commitment, one person's most intimate relationship, and an articulation through the lens of friendship, in its most intimate and singular form. Would mine and E.'s friendship have been understood in this way 125 years ago? I believe so. Boston Marriages offered women independence from men, which supported their professional autonomy and aligned with feminist values such as autonomy, solidarity, and female empowerment. Due to the secrecy surrounding them, the relationships described by this term ranged from deep friendships and professional partnerships to amorous and/or sexual relationships. Scholars like Esther Rothblum and Kathleen Brehony use the term to highlight asexuality in lesbian relationships in the 1990s, drawing on Lillian Faderman's work on romantic friendship (6). Faderman argues that these relationships were primarily emotional and that the modern fixation on sexuality is a projection of later social perceptions (*Surpassing* 311). Yet she also emphasises their romantic elements (Faderman, *Surpassing* 190). The sexuality historians John D'Emilio and Estelle Freedman caution against oversimplifying and homogenising Boston Marriages (192). Some involved sexual intimacy,

though often unnoticed due to prevailing notions of feminine closeness (Coontz 184); while some were homosexual relationships, others may have been aromantic friendships or romantic asexual relationships – perhaps even resembling my friendship with E. Friendships with romantic, sexual, or intimate undertones have always existed, even if categorised differently. While a distinct definition of these social bonds remains elusive, they share a nonconforming approach to living. While one might be tempted to categorise them as queer, that is, as expressions of homosexual desire, the queer character of Boston Marriages lies in their nonconformity.

The term's reference to the institution of marriage contributed to boosting its function and wider social acceptance. These relationships were tolerated largely because they appeared feminine and did not demand masculine privileges; as part of a framework of friendship, they posed no threat to the heterosexual patriarchy (Coontz 184; Faderman, *Surpassing* 17). As Faderman notes, these relationships were not taken seriously in a patriarchal society as they were seen as "temporary, or at least secondary to marriage" ("Nineteenth-century Boston Marriage" 32). This ambiguity offers a protective obscuring, both back then and in relationships like mine with E. Queer amorous relationships are likely to be seen deviating from social norms, while close friendships are rarely perceived as disruptive. Even when such friendships include elements of physical intimacy or emotional intensity, they are often not read as queer and not seen as a danger to heteronormativity. This discrepancy raises questions about the societal coding of intimacy: is friendship perceived as less threatening than an amorous relationship? Similarly, Marilyn Yalom and Theresa Donovan Brown write that "female romantic friendships were generally not thought to be sexual, so a woman could express great affection, and even deep love, for another woman without incurring the suspicion of impropriety" (82). This is still the case today: to the world, E. and I are 'merely' close friends, but only between the two of us does the term friendship carry a more profound meaning, encompassing not only deep emotional connection and affection but also the mutual responsibilities and commitments that arise from such intimacy, just as it did for many women in Boston Marriages.

While the concept of a Boston Marriage helps to make sense of certain aspects of my relationship with E., that lens of friendship remains rooted in a specific historical context and therefore cannot simply be transferred and directly applied to our relationship today. Boston

Marriages were shaped by the social and economic conditions of the late nineteenth century, which differ significantly from the context in which my relationship with E. exists. Although the term has been adapted to refer to amorous asexual lesbian relationships, Rothblum and Brehony argue that it remains useful for understanding the role of non-sexual intimacy between women, particularly given that most amorous, non-marital “relationships are defined by the presence of sexual activity” (6). The relationships they describe are typically dyadic, self-defined lesbian partnerships. While we share emotional intimacy and mutual support, my bond with E. does not involve an amorous or sexual identification, nor do we define ourselves as a lesbian couple. But referring to the relationship between E. and myself as a Boston Marriage would run the risk of obfuscating both the term’s distinct historical meaning and the specific qualities of our relationship. In the case of E. and myself, I like to call it friendship.

A thought lingers throughout the discussion of the Boston Marriage: why does society struggle to recognise friendship as a legitimate relationship around which to structure living, rather than merely a placeholder for amorous relationships? The philosopher Elisabeth Brake’s work on marriage frames this disparity as amatonormativity:

I call this disproportionate focus on marital and amorous love relationships as special site of value, and the assumption that romantic love is a universal goal, ‘amatonormativity’: This consists of the assumption that a central, exclusive, amorous relationship is normal for humans, in that it is a universally shared goal, and that such a relationship is normative, in that it should be aimed at in preference to other relationship types. (88–89)

The concept of amatonormativity describes the normative assumption that amorous relationships, particularly monogamous and heterosexual ones, should be prioritised over other types of relationships. It also describes the resulting devaluation and marginalisation of friendships and alternative bonds and reinforces a normative hierarchy of relationships. The way E. and I were raised – to prioritise amorous relationships with men – was shaped and influenced by these normative systems. Judith Butler called this the heterosexual matrix, which structures our lives and perception of relationships in general. The heterosexual matrix is “that grid of cultural intelligibility through which bodies, genders, and desires are naturalized” (Butler 194 fn6). It functions as a hegemonic system in which bodies must cohere

through a fixed sex-gender-desire alignment. Butler calls this “a stable sex expressed through a stable gender [...] defined through the compulsory practice of heterosexuality” (ibid). Bodies are structured and regulated in a coherent heterosexual way by various power mechanisms, including social norms, legal frameworks, and cultural practices. The logic of the heterosexual matrix and amatonormativity dictates which relationships are prioritised, allowed to determine our lives, and granted social legitimacy. With Butler’s concept of the heterosexual matrix, the normative heterosexual and naturalised structuring of bodies like E.’s and mine becomes traceable, revealing the mechanism of heteronormativity. Given its universalising tendency, amatonormativity can be argued to apply to queer people as well. Building on this, Brake analyses how this matrix is reinforced through legally and socially privileged relationship forms and critiques the resulting relational hierarchies. Amatonormativity both builds upon and overlaps with heteronormativity, thereby sustaining a system in which amorous forms of intimacy are the norm. Here, the devaluation of friendship becomes evident. I have often wondered how and why my friendship with E. is markedly different from the way we were taught friendships should look like. A particularly illustrative example occurred when I moved abroad for my studies, where we had planned for E. to join me later. However, those around her responded with concern and scepticism, questioning the legitimacy of relocating ‘just for a friend’. Had we been in an amorous relationship, I am convinced the situation would have been perceived differently: our bond would have been taken more seriously, and our decision likely met with understanding and support.

This social scepticism we encountered reveals friendship’s systematic devaluation in comparison to amorous relationships. But this devaluation is itself historically specific. In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the concept of romantic friendship offered a culturally recognised framework for deep emotional intimacy between two friends. A romantic friendship was a very close and intimate bond, while Boston Marriages transformed such friendships into a committed form of life characterised by cohabitation and mutual support. As Faderman describes, romantic friendships “were love relationships in every sense except perhaps the genital” (*Surpassing* 16) and the term itself functioned as a “term for love between women” (ibid). Her emphasis on the absence of genital sexuality as the key distinction implicitly reinforces a normative view of love, one that equates romantic love with sexual expression. However, romantic friendships challenge the binary of romantic versus

platonic: they are marked by romantic intimacy without sexual attraction. In contrast, amorous love is typically assumed to involve both. This reveals the limitations of binary distinctions such as romantic (love) versus platonic (friendship), which fail to account for relational forms. Precisely because of this, I use the term amorous to refer exclusively to love bonds, as we see here that romance may extend into the realm of friendship. These reflections of non-specific relational markers are echoed in the spilt attraction model, developed within asexual and aromantic communities, which differentiates between various types of attraction: sexual, romantic, sensual, aesthetic, platonic, and others (Costello and Kaszyca 22). Romantic friendship demonstrates that, historically, deep intimacy has existed outside of marriage or amorous bonds. Friendship once occupied a more central and legitimate position within social life (Faderman, *Surpassing* 16). The concept of the romantic friendship began to fade as the modern understanding of sexuality emerged in the twentieth century and brought with it a new sexual taxonomy. The ‘invention’ of the term ‘homosexuality’ led to a more rigid categorisation of relationships and increasingly sexualised and pathologised same-sex relationships in the early twentieth century (Faderman, *Surpassing* 411–15). This historical shift helps explain the loss of vocabulary to describe nuanced relationships such as E.’s and mine and puts the limited ways of expressing relationality into perspective.

The designation ‘friend’ functions as a reservoir for all relationships that do not neatly fit into established social roles and categories, such as spouse, colleague, or neighbour. This broad usage devalues friendship by rendering it vague and unspecific, while simultaneously opening the term to personal definitions. The resulting tension becomes evident in normative practices: moving cities for an amorous partner is perceived as legitimate, but doing so for a friend is often questioned; amorous cohabitation is normalised, while domestic or financial interdependence between friends remains socially atypical. Even sharing a bedroom is standard for amorous couples but it is potentially unconventional for friends. The most striking disparity lies in rituals – symbolically charged norm-stabilising practices. Amorous relationships are supported by a dense network of cultural and institutional affirmations: from legal recognitions like marriage to social customs such as anniversaries or family approval. These norms, whether in the form of shared households, parenting, or celebrated coupledness, are culturally reinforced and retain their legitimacy. While friendship lacks



institutional recognition or symbolic rituals, it is rendered less visible and less socially valued. These normative practices that sustain amorous bonds are deeply embedded in broader socio-political structures shaped by capitalism, colonialism, and heteropatriarchy. As Brake argues in her critique of marriage, colonialism – particularly in North America – used marriage “as a eugenic tool and tool of racial subordination” (125) to enforce racial hierarchies. Colonial marriage laws regulated who was legally permitted to marry and with whom, as seen, for instance, in anti-miscegenation laws intended to preserve racial ‘purity’ (Brake 125-126). Furthermore, as Brake notes, contemporary rituals continue to commodify connection – most clearly in the ‘wedding-industrial complex’ – framing relational fulfilment as something to be achieved through consumption (13–14). These rituals stabilise social norms by rewarding conformity and marginalising alternative forms of closeness. The absence of formal rituals for friendships thus reflects not a lack of meaning, but a structural ignorance to recognise them. These norms reinforce the logic of amatonormativity by favouring amorous and dyadic partnerships as the default mode of meaningful relationships.

When my mother got married a few years ago, I became aware of the tradition of wedding anniversaries common in Germany: each anniversary has a designated name, from ‘paper marriage’ after one year to ‘rose marriage’ after ten, and so on. There is no formal equivalent for friendships. In response, E., my brother, his best friend, and I joked that we would celebrate our ‘rose friendship’ on 2 February 2022 – marking ten years of sustained friendship. We even created a group chat named ‘friendship’ with a rose emoji on each side. We never held the celebration, but the group chat still exists. However, the solution to the lack of formal rituals for friendships does not lie in adopting and reproducing the rhythms and logic of the heterosexual matrix and amatonormativity within friendships, along with its structuring elements of power and subjugation. Friendship may extend beyond these societal rhythms without simply reproducing them in a different key. By consciously choosing to challenge these narratives and asking how we could live together outside these normative logics, we create new forms of commitment and intimacy that are not tied to the structures of marriage or reproduction. Unlike amorous relationships, which are often bound to social expectations of monogamy, cohabitation, and child-rearing, friendship allows for more fluid and self-defined forms of connection. From the perspective of my and E.’s future plans, there seems to be an irresolvable tension: I am drawn to forms of cohabitation and child-rearing

that resemble the structure I want to escape. This is again an instance of amatonormativity affecting queer communities by determining the way we internalise heteronormative ideals as personal aspirations. However, queerness does not lie in the complete rejection of these desires, but in questioning their supposed naturalness. The potential of non-normative ways of life arises from a conscious refusal to understand and naturalise the nuclear family as the only viable context for reproduction and intimacy. Even though it may echo certain elements of the normative – shared household, dyadic bonds, parenthood, enjoyment of country life – it also reconfigures them, not as a relapse into heteronormativity, but as a conscious reconfiguration of caring relationships beyond amorous heterosexual coupledness. Reproduction is no longer bound to cis-heterosexual intercourse, but includes co-parenting, in vitro fertilisation, or adoption. The problem does not lie in reproduction itself, but rather in the heteronormative conditions under which it has been naturalised. A non-normative way of life does not require a rejection of child-rearing or cohabitation per se but calls for a partial disentanglement from the heterosexual matrix pervading them, while also enduring a certain irreducible ambivalence between personal desires and normative social scripts. Perhaps this is why E. and I did not celebrate our rose friendship; these established rituals do not align with a way of life which resists them. When friendship is taken seriously, it disrupts the heterosexual matrix and creates possibilities for restructuring our lives, such as living on a farm and raising children with a friend. Allowing us to move beyond the naturalisation of heterosexuality, friendship shifts the marker of meaningful relationships away from reproduction in its narrow biological sense. Yet even these reconfigurations do not entirely liberate us from personal expectations, which are interspersed with norms. Friendship offers no direct escape from normative practices, but is a practice through which we learn to negotiate with this contradiction.

Friendship's non-conformity and its relationship to queerness, as seen above, also emerges in Michel Foucault's reflections in "Friendship as a Way of Life" (1984). Reconsidering social conventions, Foucault argues that homosexuality should not be reduced to questions like "Who am I?" or "What is the secret of my desire?" (135). These questions, he suggests, individualise and psychologise homosexuality rather than seeing its transformative potential. Instead, he proposes a shift in perspective: through homosexuality, relationships can be "established, invented, multiplied and modulated" – "homosexuality is not a form of desire

but something desirable” (Foucault 135-136). Thus, we should desire relationships outside those legitimised and supported by institutions, such as heterosexual marriage or the nuclear family. This allows individuals to invent their own structure and functions, independent of institutional frameworks. Foucault recognises friendship as the form of relationship that homosexuality tends towards, because it reveals the possibility of relational forms that exist beyond normative models (136). This suggests that homosexuality opens towards thinking about intimacy in ways that do not neatly separate love, sex, and friendship. Being gay is less about fixed identity than about cultivating a “way of life” (Foucault 138). Queerness, then, is not solely about who we love, but also about how we live and relate. Foucault’s thoughts resonate with my sense that my bond with E. – as a deep friendship – has an inherently queer element. Together, we seek an alternative way of living beyond normative structures. Foucault does not introduce queerness into friendship – he reveals what is already there, making visible a non-normative potential we are already enacting in our friendship. Flattening the hierarchical order of amorous relationships allows queerness’s horizontality to emerge, disrupting heteronormativity and amatonormativity.

Why do we, why do so many queer people, desire alternative forms of relationships besides the ones the heterosexual matrix offers us? Why do my friend E. and I desire a language through which we can describe our relationship outside heteropatriarchal norms? The sociologist Didier Eribon describes a specifically homosexual ‘melancholy’ caused by “the loss of heterosexual ways of life, ways that are refused and rejected (or that you are obliged to reject because they reject you)” (37). Queer people are forced to find other ways of living, because the heterosexual way rejects them as a subject. Eribon links this melancholy to the loss of familial bonds and to an unacknowledged longing for a family life, a dream that some queer people try to realise by building a life as a dyadic couple, sometimes with children. He rejects the binary opposition between queer people who seek life outside institutions and those who desire marriage or parenthood, as both responses express attempts to cope with the suffering that results from being excluded from heteronormative life (Eribon 36–37). This is deeply connected to the repressive logics of familial order, which cause oppression, restriction, and suffering for many outside the norms imposed by the heterosexual matrix and amatonormativity. As Sara Ahmed notes, the family can itself become a site of injury: “The queer child can only, in this wish for the straight line, be read as the source of injury: a sign of

the failure to repay the debt of life by becoming straight” (*Queer Phenomenology* 91). These rejections show how queerness is positioned as failure within the family structures, unable to fulfil its normative expectations, and why seeking other relational forms becomes necessary. At this point, the concept of ‘found family’ becomes important: many queer people respond to familial exclusion by creating chosen bonds of care and support. Eribon points out that for queer people, their life often focuses on building stable friendship circles (25–26). These friendships function as an alternative form of kinship. Someone who breaks with the norm loses their place in traditional institutions and must find other places – like friendships – for support and recognition.

These alternative forms of kinship remain structurally precarious, as they are rarely recognised by law or public policy. As Brake argues, friendships lack access to basic protections and benefits that come automatically with marriage. For example, married couples enjoy substantial financial advantages: they get tax benefits and receive health insurance for their spouses at a reduced rate, benefits that are unavailable to friends (Brake 93, 159). Moreover, spouses are legally “designated as next of kin ‘in cases of death, medical emergency, or mental incapacity’” (Brake 159), and they inherit their spouse’s wealth automatically if no will exists – rights systematically denied to even the most intimate friendships. To live with friendships as a primary mode of life means navigating a system that structurally favours the dyadic amorous couple legally, economically, and symbolically.

It might not be surprising that Eribon lives and works in friendship with other intellectual gay men, namely Édouard Louis and Geoffroy de Lagasnerie. These three friends celebrate an established family holiday together every year: Christmas. However, they refuse the concept of friendship as a ‘chosen family’ as proposed by Kath Weston in *Families We Choose*. They advocate for living friendship as an independent, non-familial form of relationship because these narratives of chosen families still centre traditional kinship and adopt their structures (Lagasnerie 73, 119). Instead, friendship becomes an ‘antifamily’ alliance (Lagasnerie 119). This argues, from a family abolitionist background, that friendship is not understood as a substitute for family, but as something inherently different that challenges the social centrality, structure, and norm of the family. Continuing to critique the institution of family, Ahmed’s critique on gay marriage complements the perspective of friendship as an antifamily alliance: “queers need to do more than marry each other to destroy the institution of

marriage" (*What's the use?* 209). The institution of marriage remains even when queer people can enter into it, and the same is true for the family. Both positions argue directly against mere inclusion in existing institutions; instead, they call for a rethinking of relationships and a break from normative structures. E. and I, the women who lived together in Boston Marriages, or Louis, Eribon, and Lagasnerie – all these friendships differ from institutionalised relationships. They are not part of an established framework – instead, they allow for individual reinvention.

Lagasnerie devoted a book to this special form of relationship with Louis und Eribon in 3: *Une Aspiration au Dehors. Éloge de l'amitié* (2023), which describes their friendship as a way of life and their subjectification through it. He named their friendship 'a search for an outside', beyond normative expectations and structures, driven by the desire to transcend society's prescribed forms (Lagasnerie 45). Accordingly, Lagasnerie describes it as a guide for an anti-institutional life, a utopian striving for a different life (24). Within the tradition of 'a search for an outside' stands the umbrella term queerplatonic relationship as a committed, intimate, non-normative relationship. It serves as an example of how queerness operates: "The *queer* part is not about gender but about queering the social border" (Chen 125). 'Queer' is understood not as a term limited to sexual orientation, sexual expression, and gender identity, but as a broader scope of resistance to normativity. The queerplatonic relationship, according to Sarah Costello and Kayla Kaszyca, is based on friendship (74). This differs from Chen's view, which places the queerplatonic relationship between friendship and amorous relationship (125). This supposed contradiction reflects their flexible nature, as their meaning is shaped individually by each relationship's participants. The difference between a friendship and queerplatonic relationship is the level of commitment: "With a typical friend, you may not sit down with them to discuss your combined life goals, you might not merge your finances or build a shared life together. Often, QPRs will have the same type of formal commitment and planning that a romantic-sexual relationship would have" (Castello and Kaszyca 74). It also rejects the normative expectations of a friend or amorous partner. This 'utopian striving' from Lagasnerie can be seen in queerplatonic relationships, as it "forces the relationship into a new place, with the ability to build new obligations and new expectations together" (Chen 127). As argued with the meaningfulness of queerplatonic relationships, the

term gives these alternative, queer relationships – in my case, the *friends on purpose* – a platform and vocabulary, and shows their social legitimacy.

Boston Marriages, romantic friendship, amatonormativity, the work of theorists like Foucault, Eribon, and Lagasnerie, and my own experience reveal a pattern: many queer people live a life in friendship. In doing so, they establish different rhythms and structures that challenge normative ways of being by refusing marriage, traditional reproduction and institutionalised bonds. Friendship exceeds the boundaries of normative life and constantly redefines what it means to be queer. We form bonds that are desirable, not by normative standards, but because we choose them deliberately. The friendship between E. and I is queer, not just because we are but because of the nonconforming, deliberate way we choose to live. Through this personal exploration, I encourage others to expand theoretical discussions of friendship, where so far its queer and transformative potential is often overlooked. Moreover, the need and search for a nuanced way to describe intimate relationships can be recognised alongside the simultaneous hierarchisation of these relationships. In our case, friendship becomes a site of resistance against normative life structures. It is a way of life in which we both prioritise our friendship, actively creating a different kind of world for ourselves – one purposefully rooted beyond tradition. This is what I want to capture with the term *friends on purpose*: to be friends on purpose is not a diminished or secondary form of love, but rather an intentional, powerful mode of relating. It resists normative scripts and structures, which makes it inherently queer.

E. and I are not just friends.

We are *friends on purpose*.

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