Marriage has come a long way in Australia, from 1788 to last year’s historic victory for marriage equality, but it seems there’s still a long way to go. Just before Alecia Simmonds left Sydney to spend a week in the Blue Mountains writing a chapter about the history of marriage in Australia, a friend suggested she watch an episode of Married at First Sight. Seven days later, with barely any writing done, Simmonds realises there’s a problem: MAFs.

Simmonds examines the continuing tension on MAFs between desire and dictate in an entertaining, searing, clear-eyed look at Australia’s highest-rating television show and the ‘chamber of heterosexual horrors’ it reveals.

‘Shows about someone’s quest to find the right partner presuppose a person with will and desire; the capacity to choose, seduce, and consent ... What happens when you begin a show with a contract rather than romantic protagonists? And what if this marriage is arranged not according to an individual or a family’s wishes, but by technocratic expertise, by a group of psychologists, one of whom appears in a lab coat?’

N.B. Alecia Simmond’s article will be online at midday on Friday March 29

Alecia Simmonds is an interdisciplinary scholar in law and history at UTS and NYU-Sydney, and a writer for Gourmet Traveller and Fairfax Digital. Her book Wild Man: A true story of a police killing, mental illness and the law won the 2016 Davitt Prize for best crime non-fiction. She is currently working on a book on the historical relationship between love and law in Australia.

Alecia Simmonds is available for interview. (See below)

Further information

More information about Australian Book Review can be found on the ABR website.

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