

AMST 335  
New England  
Roger Williams University  
2:00-3:20  
CAS 228  
Fall Semester, 2006

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## Week of November 14, 2006

For *Tuesday, November 14*

This week we return our focus to Karen Hansen's book, and begin to delve into what New England Culture was like and how it formed a unique New England character type.

### Your Second Paper is Due this Class Period.

Read, in *Hansen*,

#### Review Chapter I

Chapter 2. "*I Never Forget What I Remember*"

pp. 29 - 51

Chapter 3, "*Unbosom your Heart: Friendship and the Construction of Gender*"

pp. 52 - 78

Chapter 2 continues the methodological concerns which began in Chapter I. The first two pages present the questions Hansen wishes to raise and the reasons why she wishes to raise them. The chapter also presents the groups upon which Hansen will focus. You should be able to compare her subject population with the subject population upon which Nylander focuses. The last section of the chapter is interesting both for the introduction it gives to a number of persons whose stories are at the core of this study and for the way Hansen shares her initial reaction to the persons she encounters as she reads through the diaries and autobiographies which form her principal sources. This is another of the rare scholarly books in which the author does *not* adopt a position of anonymity throughout the investigation. I think you may enjoy watching Hansen's mind at work.

Nylander has given us some ideas about the mechanisms through which friendships were formed and perpetuated in New England, especially amongst members of the elite. Hansen's observations in **Chapter 3** will expand on these insights. The idea of *gender construction* is interesting. More typically we think of gender as something we're born with. You'll notice, however, that what Hansen is interested in primarily is the way gender *behavior* is constructed. What kinds of expression of friendship and affection were tolerated and indeed encouraged in New England communities, and how were these expressions different, depending on the gender involved. Note that there are at least three different types of friendships to consider:

friendships between women, friendships between men, and friendships between men and women. Note, too, that there seem to be some class and race differences in the ways friendship was expressed.

For *Friday, November 17*

*Read, in Hansen*

Chapter 4, “ <i>Social Work: Visiting and the Creation of Community</i> ”	pp. 79 - 113
Chapter 5, “ <i>True Opinion, Clear of Polish</i> ”	114 - 136

**Regarding Chapter 4**, one of the things we observed through Nylander is that friendships were formed and sustained through working together, and that at least in the class of persons which concerns her the most, these projects took place within the confines of the houses of neighbors. Hansen will look at the situation amongst men and women (though women, primarily) of the working classes. How does the transient labor of domestic workers and the intrusion of the factory system as it develops in larger communities affect the ability to make and hold friends?

Gossip may be one of the most universal forms of human behavior. If it is so pervasive, it must have some social purpose, even if persons generally condemn its practice. Hansen looks at this question from a sociological and anthropological point of view, and this forms the focus of **Chapter 5**. We’ll want to look at the content of gossip, at the reasons why reputation was so jealously guarded, at what kind of sanctions arose against persons based on “community juries,” and how all of these tended to enforce the solidarity of communities.

Communities as close knit as New England communities are become subject to all sorts of stresses. Often these stresses lead to varieties of anti-social behavior: drunkenness, abuse of children and spouses, and the like. Against those forces of disintegration are arraigned informal practices like gossip and formal social institutions like the Church. We’ll look at religion next week.