

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

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Week of **October 24, 2006**

This seems to be the season for computer glitches of one sort or another. At the beginning of the week, blackboard mysteriously lost bunches of students in all my classes (they're all back now). Yesterday, Homestead, the website announced there were technical difficulties they were "working to fix as quickly as possible". These difficulties don't effect the work that is already there, but they keep persons like myself from being able to sign in and update their materials. Consequently, I'm sitting here typing up the syllabus for you and it looks like I'll have to distribute it in paper fashion. When the website gets fixed, I'll send out an e-mail to you all and let you know you can see the usual, expanded version. *Update: My jinx continued. The machine on which I was working in Gabelli had its time altered, and I zoned right through class. UGH. Well, I've already apologizes for that. There shouldn't be much problem catching up, as the little bit I gave in Nylander won't take us a lot of time.*

For **Tuesday, October 24:**

**Read, in Hansen, *A Very Social Time***

*Acknowledgments, Author's Note*, pp. xi-xv

*Chapter I. Making the Social Central, an Introduction* pp. 1-28

Take some time to look at the illustrations, gathered together following p. 112.

*Chapter II. "I Never Forget What I Remember"* pp. 29 - 51

The *Acknowledgments and Author's Note* will explain the author's interests and methodology, including the editorial process (remember we considered this in the case of William Wood's book as edited by Alden Vaughn).

- **Chapter One** suggests that while we normally divide human activity in to *private* and *public* spheres, there are actually three spheres, rather than just two. We need to consider the *social sphere* apart from the public and private. Make sure that you understand how Ms. Hansen defines these. The key section begins on p. 7.
- When you look at the illustrations, try to develop both *empathy* with and *curiosity about* the subjects posing for them. Note that the sources of these illustrations are similar to the sources for the illustrations in Ms. Nylander's book, but the **content** in them is different. We'll perhaps want to discuss this a bit.
- **Chapter Two** 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.

**For Friday, October 27**

**Read, in Nylander,**

Chapter II. *Our Great Family*, pp. 20 - 53

Chapter III. *Going to Housekeeping*, pp. 54 - 73

- We'll begin our look at family and community with Nylander's exposition of what she calls a "Great" family. We'll quickly realize that great describes numbers, not qualities. We've mentioned before that many more people occupied a New England house in days past than occupies a typical New England house now. We have to turn this from an abstraction into something more real... considering the various generations within the family structure, for one thing, and also considering "kin": the collateral relatives (aunts, uncles, and cousins) who quite often found themselves part of the family unit as well. Finally, we'll have to consider those who bore no blood relationship to the "help".
- Pay particular attention to the illustrations. Some of them are romantic realizations. Others are more realistic portrayals of some of the advantages (and disadvantages) of living within a large group. Pay some attention to the life cycle, which is laid out for you with some care. It will take some act of creative imagination to bring this to life, and I hope you'll employ your empathy to get inside the stories of these New England Families.
- Going to Housekeeping refers to the rituals surrounding courtship, marriage, and the establishment of new households. You will want to note the ages at which marriage happened, and also the relationship between marriage and household establishment...these two things were not as closely allied as they are in our day. Note the degree to which marriage remained a financial arrangement, and the legal aspects, including those designed to protect women. New England (more particularly, Boston) became a center of self-help books for women establishing new households, and women's magazines start to shape "taste" much the way they do today. Some of this will reaffirm things you saw in the video, *Midwife's Tale*.

Enjoy Homecoming Weekend and Parent's Day. I know this will impact on your study time some. (You all do spend hours and hours studying don't you?) The internet bollix has kept me frustrated and a bit behind in returning stuff to you, for which I apologize. Expect a communication over the weekend regarding this. I will also inform you when I have the "real" web page up and running. Also, the second paper is ready to post for you, and when I have it posted I'll send you an e-mail about it.