

Interrogating Marriage Class Notes 9/11/07

Godbeer

- Views sex as an activity—contrast with Foucault, who views sex as an identity
 - There was sex, but not sexuality (as we now conceive of it)
 - Conceptions of sexuality and sexual acts change over time
- Sodomy conceived as exploitive sex more than same-sex acts
 - But there is not a consistent definition
- Puritan religious rhetoric sexualizes the divine and feminizes male Christians
 - Taylor’s poem “Huswifery” is an example
 - Fluidity of sex roles: there exists an idea of rigid gender categories, but “one-sex model” allows for flexibility in the spiritual realm
 - Remember that “separate spheres” is an upper-class 19th cen. Phenomenon
- Sex in marriage
 - Puritans emphasize importance of sexual pleasure for both partners—if one partner is not “delighted,” this is grounds for divorce
 - Puritans had a different conception of privacy than exists today (evident in Lawrence v. Texas)
 - Frankness in sexual discussions
 - Sexual relationships harder to keep secret in the 17th cen.
 - Community members encouraged to spy on each other and report illicit sex
 - The expectation was that sins would be confessed publicly
 - Ironic because there were rules regarding purity of language—by confessing publicly, people were forced to speak of impure occurrences
 - Puritans believe companionship/friendship/sexual fulfillment should be part of marriage
 - Before this time, marriage functions as a property relation
 - Puritan churches pressure people to marry even if they don’t own property because religious belief is a marriage with the divine
 - Religious people strive for emblematic marriages as one way in which to live out their spiritual relationships
- Sexual relations between women
 - Challenging for the Puritans to prove as well as to conceive of
 - Fixation on the penis=Sex between women is not really sex because it produces no tangible consequences (such as pregnancy)
 - Notion of privacy—perhaps women had more privacy together due to standards of purity and propriety
 - Godbeer cites incidences of sex between women, but notes that the acts are described in a vague manner (“unseemly practices”) and are not characterized as sodomy
 - He concludes that based on the lack of evidence, sex between women was either completely acceptable or completely challenging for Puritan society

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- Presumes gender=sexed bodies
 - Dillon proposes a shift from one “multiply-sexed” body to the “two-sex” binary model of boy identity

Lawrence v. Texas

- Godbeer’s work is important here because before this decision, it was believed that legal decisions regarding same-sex sex stemmed from Puritan laws—untrue
- Kennedy—there’s not a concrete problem with same-sex sexual acts
 - Similar to the marriage issue—what is it? How do we define it?
- Rights
 - Sense of individual privacy is key—very different from the sense of privacy in the Puritan era
 - Sharp divide between acceptable (sexual) behavior in public vs. private
 - Lawrence v. Texas addresses how rights to have sex with whom one chooses (and therefore rights to sexuality/sexual orientation) affect the rights of individuals generally
 - Our conception of sexuality places sexual orientation as fundamental to who an individual is as a person
 - Pre-Lawrence, if you participate in same-sex sexual acts, you are a criminal, therefore, identifying as queer automatically makes you a criminal
 - Sexual orientation was not believed to be someone’s master status in Puritan era
 - Kennedy—you have a right to an identity
 - Scalia uses Judith Butler’s model to assert that same-sex acts are performance, not identity and the two should be separate—argues to uphold sodomy laws, but not discriminate against queer identity

Marriage and Property

- Marriage previously very much tied to property—could the current association of marriage and healthcare be analogous?
 - Sex as part of marriage makes it a different kind of contract
 - Marriage is difficult to define—we know what it entails approximately
 - Also difficult to define sex and the relationship between marriage and sex

Poems

- Use idiom/metaphor to illustrate relations between people and nations
- Donne English living in England
 - Explicitly sexual, colonized America imagery—he wants to penetrate the virgin land
- Bradstreet
 - English living in New England
 - Love seems more equal, friendship important in marriage
 - Colonial language references—“riches of the east”
- Taylor

- Explicitly sexual, theologized
- What is the speaker's gender?
- Is wedding's knot a spiritual joining? Her vagina?

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