

Class Notes: September 25, 2007

Narratives of Seduction and Abandonment

(What makes American Seduction and Sex so very American?)

Charlotte Temple:

Preface-

interesting part of Rowson's life- when she is lowered over the boat in winter by her father during her first relocation to the US. Her family was loyalist and is imprisoned during revolution and sent back to England

She migrates to the US again after her marriage- seems that she is in charge of this migration and has a plan

It seems that she strategically marries a ne'er-do-well to retain her independence. He doesn't seem to control her life- not classic patriarchal marriage

Chapter titles are very melodramatic

Female focused

Importance of the maternal- everything hovers around her mother

- but everything relates back to her father and protection of the male figure

female relationships central- mother and La Rue

- Douglas sees Montraville and her father as female identified men

- Most of us did not read them as female identified

patriarchy has a huge role but the role of women seems to be equal

Shows a transition in marriage models--> marriage of the heart

the grandfather, Montraville's father, Mr. Temple's father- all wealthy men who forbid their sons to make alliances of the heart

- must marry for money- this is where the trouble starts in the novel

risk of marriage of the heart- looks like a bad bet in *Charlotte Temple*

- money you can get what you want

- feelings are dangerous grounds

- works well for Charlotte's mother but is pure luck

- Mr. Temple cancels debt but has no motive (is this really believable?)

- same deal as the last guy but Temple offers marriage to Lucy where as bad guy just wants her a mistress

Charlotte's departure with Montraville

Charlotte gives in but is largely deceived by Montraville, La Rue and Belcour

- she doesn't really resist

important that La Rue is French- the French are considered to have loose morals

America- like the movie *American Tail*- place of dreams that aren't reality

She thinks that she is going to get married and that it will be a marriage of the heart

- what her parents have modeled for her- dangerous model

- She sees the risk when Belcour changes his mind

- freedom to do so in the marriage of the heart

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- America- the place where people are trying to decide for themselves
- there is law without tradition
 - not much force behind the law because people don't know you
 - allows La Rue to marry a wealthy and respectable man

Question top of page 2- (Does a short plot-driven novel like *Charlotte Temple* really address the Americanization of marriage, sex, and family, or does it in fact reinforce traditional British ideals of women's need to be pure or perish?)

Davidson rediscovered *Charlotte Temple*.

Douglas reads it that women still must be pure or parish

Tennenhause sees it different- as purely American

Grave- where Montraville wants to throw himself

- people would make pilgrimages there (Boston? Trinity Church?)
- People would go and weep in cemeteries in lower Manhattan
- Memorializing/monumentalizing Charlotte-experiencing her story

Rowson's interventions to the reader

- wants you to be affected and feel with Charlotte
- work against punishment of sin narrative
 - addresses matrons, men (seducers), young women, and oh heaven!
 - general moral reflection- page 25-26

The text is concerned parent and concealing friend to young women

- they would be wrong to let young women read it as bad influence
- voice seems like friend who guides

Risk---> Young girl would think this story romantic

- by saying that this won't turn heads she is turning heads

Charlotte has sex and maintains her innocence- there is no sex scene

- maintains her innocence in the absence of the sex scene that impregnated her

How Rowson just lets Charlotte be a weakling who dies when she herself was such a strong independent woman

Charlotte Temple was popular in England and America- many stories of seduction and abandonment

Fast paced (v. other long winded seduction novels)- people have strong sentimental reaction

Sentimental writing- you feel it in your body whether you like it or not ("Sober matron do not throw this book across the room")

Earliest novels more heady and less sentimental

Different marriage models and the risk of sentimental models- appealing way to structure marriage, but very dangerous- should follow religion and virtue

Maintains virtue through repenting- Charlotte values virtue

People moving to America trying to marry for wealth

ambivalence about obeying customary law which had screwed them into coming into the country in the first place.

legitimate bastards- outsiders to the English customs America is the place of illegitimate European love

Charlottes parents have every possible virtue but they are poor because of a ridiculous series of legal maneuvers around marriage laws

they are happy but that's random and almost utopian- hard to believe

Charlotte has no dowry only a history of being shafted by a system that didn't make room for her parents or companionate marriage in general

no one else succeeds in this type of marriage

(Montraville's projection of the Temple family upon them)

La Rue's wickedness v. Charlotte's inactivity

No actual sex- do the readers feel that they would be seduced better

Americanization of Seduction tradition- sentimental, survival of her daughter Lucy, purity of charlotte, novel refuses to condemn illegitimacy- you must forgive her

In most of the British seduction novels the person maintains her purity never has sex until marriage

- if there is sex there's a lot more condemnation

- the death is a just retribution

- Charlotte never really has bad behavior to be punished

Accepts illegitimacy but doesn't accept sex

- different than Puritan- accepts sex with in bounds, but not illegitimacy

Separation from England latter part of 18th century

America as different from England in a lot of ways that have to do with sex and marriage

Anne Orthwood's Bastard: Relation to Godbeer- prevalence of premarital se, but focuses on only one instance with several cases

John Kendall is not the father but he has to pay the support

- American work around

- keeps status but must pay

- keeping down taxes in the colony

- allows him to keep his image but church doesn't pay for raising the child

Image helps the trail- Pagan says yes- image gives status

- status determined by public relations in America

- Britain- status is determined by long standing aristocracy

In America you can gain or lose status- public opinion changes the law, the court can give and take your public standing

Support- they didn't deviate from the policy of taking the woman's word because the judges would have lost their credibility- combination of women's word and midwife's.

Moral question different- doubt cast.

Separation of the legal and moral.

- Different models of medical truth- different diagnosis.

Midwife not really helping Anne much during labor. Forced confession for the sake of medical help. Big twins fully develop= nine months in their world

Power of women: Anne's word and the midwife's influence- gone shortly after this period.

The men could not be there (at birthing) and they give their power to women

Possibility if Anne lived she could have come in to wealth and power

she was illegitimate but if she played her marriage cards right she could have ended in a very different position

is this how she was seduced?

- thinking that she would get wealth in this sexual engagement w/John Kendall

His origins not so different than hers

- his uncle was an indentured servant- social mobility

- Uncle under pressure to keep things stratified

- more invested in hierarchy because his status could come under question

Waiting to be at the top to help people

We don't want society to hold responsibility even now, we withhold services from those who don't confess. We just don't physically torture women now.

If you have mothers who have an unknown status there are different protocols

- punishment in labor for being bad mothers

- prosecution for everything from negligence to entrapment.

Doctor's perception influences patient treatment

Cases in *Anne Orthwood's Bastard*:

1. *Waters v. Bishopp*: Favored selling of the contract *caveat venditor* (seller beware) versus *caveat emptor* (buyer beware) which is law in England

Virginians believed seller had the upper hand

judges were all buyers of labor (were landowners)

In England you couldn't sell an indenture, in the colonies you could simply transfer it without the worker's consent

Justification is the desperate need for labor

- workers keep dying

- the agriculture is much larger than in England

- American farms have NO variety (its a one crop system)

- this changes the production model

- tons of labor at specific times and commodity pricing (variable prices)

- people need to be able to divest themselves of workers

- can't have long term contract

- they may need to get rid of workers if the industry goes down

- quick shifts are needed

- shift to responsibility on the seller, sales of bad contract will be punished so more sales can happen more quickly

Virginia transferring to slave system- indentured servant part of this.

- Distinct races were just developing in Anne's time

- racial categories written into law very late

- race is not that old of an idea

- laws defining races are made to make labor contracts work

Race is not such an active category- but you can see why race would be a desirable category

William Kendall forced together with ex. master's wife- there are not clear lines between servant and master as there are no clear lines in Anne's case

2. Ex Parte Kendall-

moral case- the woman's word was taken as truth in Virginia where as it was one of numerous factors in England- They actually had a romance and William separated them and they came together later

3. Rex v. Kendall-

fornication case- whether they actually had sex- it was decided that they didn't because the babies were born after only eight months

4. Jasper's case- Orthwood v. Warren-

wanted to be free at 21 instead of England's 24 (pay for the years of unproductively). In Virginia parents provided them until they were old enough to work so they didn't have to repay the unproductive years and thus could be released at a younger age
Chance at upward mobility- he could move on though he had no family roots or land.

- Doesn't matter in this country who/what your father was

Armstrong and Tennenhouse a couple- working on these essays together

Tennenhouse- a good woman *is* in England, in America the good woman builds a good family

- it's what you do not who you are

- has drawbacks and possibilities- you must act it out properly

In America its how you play you cares and how you respond.

-You can be a big loser if you don't play your cards right though you could conceivably win

- the men stand to win more

In pre-raced based slavery in Virginia, the conditions for African American and English American servants were similar on the 'what you do' model, but after race it becomes what you are- race based code

People who benefit from the race based system are the people who were lower class and worked up

- Power becomes consolidated in the white male upper class.

The women becomes at fault for the pregnancy

there becomes less of incentive from ratting out the father

maybe if she doesn't drag him down he'll help in some way

Mid-19th century African American family cannot exist

there is not the possibility to practice family life if you are not white

this develops over time- there is less possibility in 1850 than in 1750- and maybe even less in 1950-- tightening grip of racial definitions that then seem like they are timeless

In Anne Orthwood's bastard we see a time where things are changing. The system that is built is built on purpose to consolidate power

In *Charlotte Temple* there is a different type of work than *Anne Orthwood's Bastard*

it is moral not legal- you are what you do

Charlotte is able to create the good english family even though she has to die to do it

Perception that you can make something else than what you were born as out lasts the legal system which evolves over time- even though some of the things that make mobility possible are no longer possible (good land gets taken, people moving to urban settings)

Ideology

possibility that you are what you do and you can create yourself and in marriage you can create a family you don't have to follow any rules you can build it from your heart, yet it is really dangerous to do this

Charlotte holds on to the idea of companionate marriage

the novel as a whole warns against falling too deeply into love, it suggests that a woman needs to be smart and think about her future and all possibilities

Considers the down sides of marriage

- La Rue's marriage ending in shambles
- Montraville's demise after Charlotte's death
- the only happy marriage is Charlotte's parents marriage
 - problematic: seen fake and raised Charlotte as ignorant (Charlotte's father essentially bought her mother by paying the family debt)
- the perfection of Mrs. Beauchamp and her good marriage

The redeemers of the story are members of 'ideal' marriages

- Mrs. Beauchamp and Charlotte's father

Father's acts of charity as feminizing- but he was a bread winner and that's how he was able to give- emotionally female

La Rue as Charlotte's real seducer-

La Rue doesn't want her new husband to meet Charlotte because this could uncover La Rue's past- La Rue is the one who is punished in the end

Status description v. status achievement-

ascribed to achieved- people who achieve want all the things that come with ascribed status

Lack of community and infrastructure combined with disease and 'dangerous' natives

Two different social processes

-One of the problems is that a lot of people who came to the colonies were in desperate situations how terrible the voyage to America was (death, sickness) these people had

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no status but could start over in a virgin land that they might be able to make some thing of themselves. Had to adapt quickly learn agriculture. Marriage plays a very complicated role, ascribed status more than achieved, possibility of 'achieving' marriage in the new world. Ideological but not practical.

Economic stability of marriage -

highly unlikely depending on social class- two poor people don't make a rich person, people still don't often marry down. if marriage is forced no benefits may come to be- emotional stability and economically stability don't go hand in hand. Expensive to establish a household. Takes a certain amount of wherewithal to do this independently, if you don't have money you have to share a household.

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