Bryce Hickerty T00242104 History 4250 Reading Log 6

The chapter *The Boston Marriage* centers around the term “Boston marriage” a term used in the late 19th century to describe the practice of long-term monogamous relationships between two unmarried women. These such unions were, as discussed in the article, not uncommon at the time, and were, by many, considered not abnormal or unnatural. I found this article interesting in its analysis of how these unions were understood at the time, and how this understanding has changed with time. For instance, the article points out that at the time of the use of this term, such an arrangement was not considered abnormal, and only later in the 20th century did such lifestyles begin to be considered abnormal, demonized and termed a “mental malady” 1. In fact, the author points to the perspective of a contemporary who argues that these such unions were in fact possible more fulfilling than those between a man and a woman, as heterosexual relationships cause women to:

[M]erge identities with their husbands, lose interest in things outside the house, feel themselves going rusty and behind the times, suspect their spouses can get along pretty well without them, regret having missed much of life, and generally believe that they are failures 2

As such, this person’s argument is that the fundamental differences between women and men causes them to conflict with men, and that by being together they may perhaps better thrive in their naturally designated space, the home. The chapter concludes by stating that such arrangements during this time were also common perhaps because love between women was assumed to be asexual, and so could be admired for its presumed innocent nature3. I found this article interesting in its analysis of how the perception of these relationships has changed drastically since the time in which the term “Boston marriage” was used. I found this work relevant to my own research in its discussion of this perception, and how circumstance and the proliferation of industry both shaped common perception.

Klorer’s article *My story, Your Story Our Stories: A Community Art-Based research Project* discusses a historical exhibit in which museum attendants would have to search through the museum library in order to find hidden works of art4.I found the article interesting in its conception of history not only as a scholarly practice, but as a community-based storytelling project that can manifest itself in any art form, such as the quilt discussed in Collins’ article *Cycles of Mourning and Memory: Quilts by Mother and daughter in Gee’s Bend, Alabama*5*.* In this way history can be interpreted as not only scholarly work, but also any work which serves to hold onto and convey the meaning and stories of the past6.

In my own research I looked at Nicole Neatby et al.’s book *Social Control in Canada: Issues in the Social Construction of Deviance.* This book discusses the concept of social control, and looks at how changing concepts of deviance have been defined based on law, sexuality, health, race, and education. It argues that deviance is not a set construct which is infallible and which does not change over time, but is a construct of socio-historical significance which reflects the shifting and evolving values of the time. This book is of particular use in my own research as it highlights the changing nature of morality, and shows how many factors interact to help mold common morality7. As such, this book informs my view of A. May, and helps to situate her story within this concept of evolving morality. I also felt that this book paired well with the *Boston Marriage* reading for this week, in its analysis of how changing constructs of sexuality and of women in general have shaped and continue to shape socially constructed ‘norms’ and expectations.

Endnotes

1. Faderman, *Boston Marriage*, 195
2. Ibid, 198.
3. Ibid, 203.
4. P. Gussie Klorer, “Your Story, Our Stories: A Community Art-Based Research Project”*, Art Therapy: Journal of the American Art Therapy Association,* 31, 4. 146.
5. Collins, Lisa, “Cycles of Mourning and Memory: Quilts by Mother and Daughter in Gee’s Bend, Alabama,” *The Journal of the History of Childhood and Youth,* 8, 3. 346
6. Ibid, 158.
7. Schissel, Bernard and Linda Manhood eds., *Social Control in Canada: Issues in the Social Construction of Deviance* (Ontario: Oxford University Press, 1996). 21.

Bibliography

Collins, Lisa, “Cycles of Mourning and Memory: Quilts by Mother and Daughter in Gee’s Bend, Alabama,” *The Journal of the History of Childhood and Youth,* 8, 3. 345-352.

Faderman, *Boston Marriage*

Neatby, Nicole et al., *Social Control in Canada: Issues in the Social Construction of Deviance* (Ontario: Oxford University Press, 1996).

P. Gussie Klorer, “Your Story, Our Stories: A Community Art-Based Research Project”*, Art Therapy: Journal of the American Art Therapy Association,* 31, 4. 146-154.