

Men on Top? The Farmer, the Minister, and Marriage in Early New England

Ann M. Little
*University of Dayton**

At the beginning of *A Bride-Bush, or a Wedding Sermon*, William Whately expresses his frustration that the fashion in reformed preaching was to base a sermon on a biblical text, for “no one place of Scripture doth either directly containe, or plainly expresse the full dutie of the married couple.” Marriage was a complicated subject, and like most of his contemporaries, Whately cataloged the mutual duties of spouses as well as the separate duties of husbands to their wives, and of wives to their husbands. While no single verse or selection from the Bible would do justice to this complexity, Whately nevertheless cited a text he called “the ground of all my speech, those words of the Apostle *Paul, Ephesians*. 5.23. where he saith, “*The Husband is the Wives head*,” (emphasis Whately’s)¹ He chose well, for this one verse aptly communicates the essence of Anglo-American marriage in the early and mid-seventeenth century. As the source of all moral, legal, political, and economic authority, men were on top.

This rather bald statement of the essence of early modern marriage, and many others like it, have been forgotten or obscured by modern notions of marriage and gender roles that put women as wives and mothers at the heart of family life. The changes wrought by industrialization and the subsequent separation of work (male) and home (female) spaces have shaded our perceptions of the early modern family. Despite our better efforts, we have relied on these newfangled definitions of men’s and women’s proper (and separate) spheres instead of working to uncover early modern gender identities. In short, our poverty of imagination for the preindustrial world has warped our understanding of the early modern era. We thus produce studies of women that regard them only or primarily as wives and mothers, and studies that portray men only or primarily as workers and actors in the public sphere.² While we have started to put women’s work back into the household economy, we do not seriously entertain the proposition that men were also husbands and fathers bound legally and emotionally to their households.³ This is curious, because men in the early modern era profited much more from marriage than women ever did. Marriage was the defining event in a man’s life. As we will see, marriage is what made a man a man.

This essay attempts to put aside modern assumptions about household and family life—that men were autonomous actors and women wholly identified with marriage and the family—and tries to look at family history with men at the center of it, something ministers like William Whately insisted

upon.⁴ Thus this essay is an attempt to turn upside down, or at least to qualify, the self-representation of men who inhabited a world governed by a gendered hierarchy, and an attempt to challenge the assumptions historians have made about this world.⁵

While the subject of this essay is men and marriage, it does not urge an understanding of men's feelings about their personal or emotional connections, and it is certainly not a call for the Robert Bly-ification of early American gender studies.⁶ Rather, it is an attempt to see marriage as a crucial element in the reproduction and reassertion of this gendered hierarchy—an institution essential to the seamless integration of male authority at all levels of society, and an institution in which men were intimately involved. The latest research in colonial Anglo-American gender history argues that household government must be seen as a crucial part of the continuum of institutions designed to order and govern the English colonies.⁷ Marriage was at the heart of every household, which was the primary economic and political unit in the early modern period. Thus, marriage was above all a legal contract and an economic relationship which men enjoyed a broad mandate to govern.

This essay is an exploration of the very tangible material and social benefits marriage bestowed on men. My focus is on New Haven, a seventeenth-century Anglo-American colony whose court and probate records allow an exploration of the theoretical rights and responsibilities of married men, as well as of the actual benefits that came to them in marriage. First, I will suggest what marriage meant for men by describing the array of social and legal benefits that came to them when they became the head of a household. Secondly, this analysis of men's privileges in marriage will be supported with evidence from New Haven colony. Finally, we will see how married men used and enjoyed these legal and customary prerogatives by looking into the diaries of two Puritan men, Michael Wigglesworth, who grew up in the town of New Haven, and Thomas Minor, who owned and operated a farm in coastal Connecticut.⁸ Wigglesworth's diary is fairly well known for the personal spiritual struggles it records; it also records the years in which he was engaged and married to Mary Reyner and took his first position as a minister. Minor, a middle-aged householder, is considerably more obscure than Wigglesworth, but his descriptions of the work that went on at his farm reveal the rhythms of household and family life in seventeenth-century New England.

Of course, both diaries are also valuable for their omissions, for the things they neglected to explain or describe. In the end, despite their great differences in age, education, and family situation, the two men's diaries are strikingly similar when it comes to how they portrayed themselves and their family and working lives. Reading these diaries for their insights into marriage and household involves reading the omissions as well as the written record, and making educated historical guesses as to what was left unwritten.⁹ Together,

the Wigglesworth and the Minor diaries illustrate what I call domestic authority, or the privileges granted to male householders.¹⁰

Marriage and masculinity in early New England

In early New England, marriage was at its core a powerful legal contract that created and reproduced social and gender roles: men were to rule their wives, and their wives were to live in obedient subjection to their husbands.¹¹ This system of male superiority was not just a custom upheld by religious or cultural tradition; it was described, sanctioned, and enforced by laws and magistrates. Perhaps most significant for the enforcement of wifely dependence were the laws of coverture, which dictated that married women could not legally own property. What was theirs before and during marriage was subsumed into an estate in their husbands' names alone. Because of this legally defined and enforced position of superiority, men gained great advantages when they married: they claimed their wives' productive labor and skills in running a household and all of the profits that their labor might generate, as well as their wives' marriage portions from their in-laws. Men retained the legal authority to dispose of the vast majority of their families' worldly estates from beyond the grave, in death as in life. Husbands were bound by law to give their wives just one-third of the family estate to maintain them in their widowhood. Husbands could even control what happened to the remainder of that portion after their wives' deaths by giving their widows just a lifetime interest in the property.¹² Dependent children had much the same standing in colony law, except that male children eventually outgrew this status. Fathers were not bound to a legal minimum for their children's inheritance, although most adolescents and young adults contributed several years of productive labor to their parents' households. Clearly, the laws defining and governing marriage and families were instrumental in defining what it meant to be a man in early New England.¹³

Besides the great economic prerogatives, marriage for men also meant assuming a variety of positions of authority, both as "governors" of their own households and as participants in local political and governmental affairs. This common use of the word "governor" to stand for both a civil office and a household role is not accidental, for this eliding of civil and domestic authority is the essence of a corporate, patriarchal society. In marriage, a man became the head of his household, and only in becoming a householder could he also become a "free burgess," a participant in town meetings with full voting rights.¹⁴ Of course, being a husband in early New England was not just about rights, but about responsibilities, too. Men freed themselves of their fathers' authority by assuming governorship over—and responsibility for—wives, and eventually, over their children, servants, and slaves. But because men tied their claims of independence to their wives' dependence, what happened to married women

was something altogether different. While marriage was an actual attainment of adulthood for men, with a change in their legal status from governed to governor, marriage did not entail a dramatic change in women's legal status. Women merely transferred their coverture from father (or guardian) to husband.¹⁵

The definition of marriage presented here may sound rather clinical to some readers. However, it is necessarily so, first of all because of source limitations, and secondly because of the importance of marriage not as a personal relationship, but as a key social institution in the settlements of early New England. Most of the records that survive from seventeenth-century New England are public records, preserved by town and colony governments because they contain legal records and documents: court, land, and vital records from the first seventy years of English settlement. Very few personal documents and letters from men still exist; personal writings from women are scarcer still, for while most women could read, most women were not taught how to write.¹⁶ Even when personal documents like the Wigglesworth and Minor diaries survive, they are rather silent on the subject of emotional or romantic attachment, even to a spouse.¹⁷ So while there were undoubtedly many husbands and wives bound by honest affection in a loving relationship, the purpose of marriage was nevertheless to establish a legal definition, hierarchy, and boundaries for the creation of new households, which were the cornerstones of the social order in early New England.¹⁸ The contemporary prescriptive literature valued love in marriage, but the kind of love that ensured faithful attention to duty, not passionate or romantic love for its own sake. Marriage was not primarily, or even necessarily, supposed to provide for the emotional satisfaction of either party.¹⁹

Although women's legal rights in marriage were very limited, women nevertheless were crucial to the formation and functioning of households. It would be impossible to investigate this claim thoroughly here, but women could bring considerable wealth to a marriage.²⁰ It has long been noted that women brought household goods, or "moveables," into their marriages, such things as linens, kitchen tools, and perhaps a few pieces of furniture. These have traditionally been viewed—from the perspective of relative bourgeois comfort in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries—as minor contributions to a new household when compared to the landed wealth of their husbands.²¹

In a land-rich America that did not yet produce fine cloth domestically, the real value of cloth owned or produced by women in new households has especially been underestimated, especially for the first few decades of English settlement. Despite the high cost of textiles in the early years of the colony, even the humblest households in New Haven were equipped with sheets, pillow biers (pillow cases), bed curtains, blankets, tablecloths, napkins, and rugs.²² In inventoried households from 1647 through 1665, an average of nearly

thirteen percent of household wealth was in linens and cloth items alone. In middling households, that percentage of wealth in cloth fluctuated between five and thirty-five percent.²³ Cloth was clearly a valuable commodity. Women not only brought it into households as a finished good, many of them also worked to produce more textiles at home. Spinning wheels, cards, wool, and flax appear in some of the earliest New Haven inventories in the 1640s, and ownership of textile-producing tools increase over the next twenty years.²⁴ Moreover, the most notorious civil case in New Haven Colony involved a female trader accused of overcharging on many English-made goods, chief among them fine textiles.²⁵

The true value of cloth is just one example of how the material goods and labor women brought to marriage made their husbands significantly richer than unmarried men. Of course, it took some amount of capital to make a man eligible for marriage, but even if this skewing of the data is taken into account, a comparison of the estates of married versus unmarried men is still very dramatic. Of seventy-seven men who lived and died in New Haven colony, the fourteen never-married men in the sample had an average estate of just under £26 pounds (see Appendix). This number is somewhat inflated by two men of more prosperous standing who had estates of more than £100; six were worth between £10 and £20 at death, and the other six were worth less than £10 each. Of course, relative poverty was also correlated with youth as well as the single life, so (although the ages of these men cannot be determined) it is likely that they were younger men who died too young to have accumulated a substantial estate. A comparison of these men to their married peers shows the dramatic difference marriage could make: the estates of twenty younger married men (whose ages could be more readily estimated) were worth an average of £161. Even more dramatic is the difference among young and middling married men—men who were married more than fifteen years and whose children were adolescents or young adults. The estates of these men averaged £277, demonstrating that wives and growing families were valuable assets, not liabilities.²⁶ Wealth was spread more evenly among the married men too, as nearly half of the younger married men and almost all of the middling and older married men had estates valued at over a hundred pounds.²⁷ Thus in many ways, men without women were considerably poorer.

The Minister: Michael Wigglesworth and the “blessings of a married estate”

Having outlined the legal and customary privileges of married men and provided some examples of the practical effects of these privileges, we will turn now to Michael Wigglesworth's diary, which records the inner spiritual turmoil and outer practical concerns over his decision to marry.²⁸ Wigglesworth kept his diary from late adolescence until shortly after the birth of his first child and taking his first position as a town minister—that is, just at the point

when real adult responsibilities overtook him. We will focus on the last few years of his diary, the years in which Wigglesworth came into his inheritance and married Mary Reyner. This section of the diary is especially useful for three reasons. First, his words very openly express his eagerness to gain the prerogatives of marriage and of being the head of his own household. As a grown man, he became frustrated with his continued financial and emotional dependence on his parents, most especially with his father's influence over his affairs. His diary bears witness that Wigglesworth understood the great advantages marriage would bring. Second, the diary demonstrates that Wigglesworth's understood marriage as an institution, not just a personal relationship with a woman. Moreover, he understood it as an institution that he controlled. He never terrorized his wife or used her badly; on the contrary, he takes little notice of her, from their courtship, into marriage, and even in the birth of their daughter. Her very absence suggests how peripheral Mary Reyner was personally to Wigglesworth's understanding of himself as a married man. Her importance lay only in the role she fulfilled as his wife. Finally, Wigglesworth's diary reveals the fiction of male independence in the early modern period. Achieving independence from one's parents was not something that a man could do on his own; he needed the cooperation of a wife over whom he was master. Throughout his life, a man was caught in the hierarchy of familial interdependence; marriage just moved him to the top of that hierarchy. But first, in order to understand his decision to marry in its full context, an examination of his birth family and their roots in the town of New Haven will be helpful. His relationship with his parents in his student years demonstrates his frustration with remaining a dependent child, and his determination to stake his claim to manhood through marriage.

Wigglesworth's parents Edward and Esther Wigglesworth were two of the wealthier founders of the town of New Haven. Arriving in Charlestown, Massachusetts from Yorkshire in the summer of 1638 with seven-year-old Michael, the Wigglesworths removed to what was then called Quinnipiac in October and spent a treacherous winter in the primitive village. Edward was listed as one of the original freemen of the town in 1639, and was among the first to take the oath of the free burgesses of New Haven colony in 1644. He and his wife were also founding members of the church, and were given prominent seats in the meeting house when the first seating arrangement was recorded in 1647.²⁹

The Wigglesworth family prospered: another child, Abigail, was born in their first few years in New Haven, and the young family possessed a substantial estate of at least £300 in 1643. Michael began his studies with schoolmaster Ezekiel Cheever, but was taken out of school to assist with household responsibilities after his father sustained a debilitating injury in 1641. The son was able to resume his studies a few years later at his father's insistence, Edward

“not judging [him] fit for husbandry,” and was able to matriculate at Harvard at the age of sixteen in 1647.³⁰ This judgment of Michael as unfit for farming was in the end probably correct, given his success as a scholar and his long life as a hypochondriac, but it was also characteristic of this father-son relationship. Michael frequently felt the humiliation of being judged by his father and found lacking in many of the virtues necessary for adult manhood. Edward’s injury cast him into a long, slow decline, but he and Esther continued to add to the family’s store even after his accident, probably as local and international merchants who invested heavily in the Atlantic trade. Another clue to the Wigglesworths’ success in trade is that the colony borrowed money from them when they needed ready silver and the town’s coffers were low on specie. Through these loans the Wigglesworths financed two emergency trips to Boston for colony officials to plead for assistance during the first Anglo-Dutch war.³¹

While the father worked to build a sufficient worldly estate for his family, his son agonized over his calling and his own spiritual estate. Michael Wigglesworth graduated from Harvard in 1651 and stayed on in Cambridge as a tutor as he prepared himself for a career in the ministry. The struggles of the Wigglesworths were familiar to neighboring families. While Wigglesworth’s education and calling set him apart from the other boys of New Haven, his parents concentrated on achieving worldly prosperity as well as spiritual grace to provide for their children’s futures. After all, without support from his parents, Wigglesworth would not have been able to marry in a timely fashion, and the peripatetic career of a young minister required the care and comfort of a wife. This conundrum—that he was dependent on his parents to provide him the means for his liberation from their household—is a recurring theme of his diary in the years before his marriage.

The portrait of Wigglesworth that emerges from the diary is that of a young man very eager to achieve adulthood by escaping his parents’ household to head his own. Although he did not live with them when he kept the diary, he was nevertheless frustrated by his continued dependent status as an unmarried man and resentful of his father’s influence over his life, morally and financially. This was not an uncomplicated resentment, as he also described frequent pangs of guilt for his bitterness about his parents. His diary entries recorded during a visit home to New Haven in the spring of 1653 are particularly revealing. In describing his interactions with his father, he makes his uneasy feelings very apparent: “I think I never had my folly so uncased, as since my coming home....God makes my father an instrument of so discovering my weak and silly management of every business, that he makes my savour to stink in my owne nosethrils.”³² He felt guilty for “want of natural affection to my father, in desiring the continuance of his life *which God ranks among those sins whereto men were given up of God to a reprobate mind*” (emphasis Wigglesworth’s). He resented the interference of his mother as well, as he also

confessed rather luridly in his diary his *“want of honoring my mother yea slighting of her speech now the eye that despises his mother the ravens of the valley shall peck it out and the young ravens shall eat it”* (emphasis Wigglesworth’s). This resentment of parental authority was all the more vexing for a young man who couldn’t afford to keep himself. Wigglesworth was still financially dependent on his parents, and used his visit home to secure financial assistance from his parents to pay off the lordly debts he had accumulated in his years in Cambridge. Characteristically, he notes in his diary while still in New Haven that “the former day god heard my earnest prayer for supply of mony that I might discharge my debts according to his command,” although God apparently found it most prudent to discharge Wigglesworth’s debts through his parents’ pocketbook. Perhaps crediting his heavenly father with such timely assistance was more comfortable than acknowledging his earthly parents.³³

After he returned to his work at Harvard, Wigglesworth continued to wrestle with his “want of love and dutyfulness to my parents.” As it happened, his spring trip to New Haven was the last time he would see his father alive: Edward died on October 1, 1653. Wigglesworth received word of his father’s death two weeks later, “whereupon I set my self to confess before the Lord my sins against him: want of naturall affections to, and sympathy with my afflicted parents, my not prizing them and their life which god hath graciously continued so long.” Yet what troubled him immediately was not the fact of his father’s death, but his own “stupid frame of spirit unsensible of gods visitation and my owne loss in losing such friend.” Wigglesworth’s troubled emotions about his father lasted even beyond Edward’s death, as he asked “for a right spirit under God’s afflicting hand that I might not be seeming glad that my father was gone.”³⁴ This became a major preoccupation in the month after his father’s death: “I was assayled with feares in reference to my unsensibleness under gods visitation in my fathers death and I feared least there should be some root of bitterness that I were not willing to part with, unsearched out.” Communion with the Lord yielded little comfort, and tended to reinforce “my desert to be kickt out of this world because I have not had naturall affections to my naturall father, but requited him and all my governours evill for good: and to be shut out of the world to come, because I have rebell’d against and dishonour’d and disregarded my heavenly father, been a viper in his bosom where he has nourished me.”³⁵ His father’s death did not bring him peace, but only magnified his frustrations about his continued dependence on his birth family.

In the end, though, Wigglesworth reaped great worldly profits from his father’s death, and thereby would gain his independence from his parents. Edward left behind an estate valued at £401,14s, and £160 in cash to his son—a share only a few shillings short of the portion he left Esther, his widow, and an extremely lavish sum compared to what other men’s sons received. Giving a son his portion in cash was unusual in New Haven—most sons

inherited at least some land—but it was an appropriate legacy for a son who awaited an appointment in the ministry, and most likely would not get a position in New Haven.³⁶ Edward's death put the means to marry in Wigglesworth's hands. Like others of his generation in New Haven, a substantial gift or inheritance from a parent allowed him to consider setting up his own household. Wigglesworth had completed his education, and his inheritance afforded him the other thing necessary for his career in the ministry: a wife. Not coincidentally, shortly after receiving his father's legacy in the late spring of 1654, Wigglesworth first records his thoughts about his marriage prospects. Only with the substantial means left him by his father could he marry, and only in marriage to a woman could men in early New England claim their place as full adults.³⁷

Wigglesworth soon fixed on a bride, and eagerly anticipated his wedding to his cousin, Mary Reyner, who lived in Rowley, Massachusetts. Interestingly, he makes no note of his courtship of Mary; his plans to marry her seem to have little to do with her personally, and everything to do with him. Even after he received his inheritance, however, there were two obstacles to his marriage, and his efforts to overcome them are evidence of the importance he placed on his marriage. First, his mother had extended a proposal to another young woman on his behalf. This greatly vexed Wigglesworth, and her interference undoubtedly strengthened his determination to become the master of his own household. He was quite relieved when he learned that the young woman had married in England while he was seeking to clear up the confusion as to his own marital prospects.³⁸ The other impediment was his fear that the nocturnal emissions that had long troubled him were evidence of ill health. He did not want to further strain himself by the demands of conjugal love, nor did he want to "be injurious to another besides my self, whom I least desire to injure." In the winter of 1654-55, this issue was the most serious obstacle to his marriage, and his diary reveals the desperation he felt when he thought it might prevent his marriage. He had concluded that "to continue in a single estate, Is both uncomfortable many wayes, and dangerous (as I conceiv) to my life, and exposeth to sin,...[but] to change my condition endangers to bring me into a pining and loathsom diseases, to a wretched life and miserable death, the beginnings whereof I do already feel at sometimes, and dread more than death." He bravely warned his fiancée of this problem, and also wrote to three doctors for their advice. He was comforted somewhat by their assurances that not only would marriage endanger neither himself nor his bride, but in fact might bring relief from his affliction. Happily, he received word from Rowley in April that "the heart of my cousen (after myne received) is toward me as before," and proceeded with his plans to marry.³⁹ The banns were published in Rowley the same month, and Wigglesworth pressed for a May wedding date.

As Wigglesworth's fears about his health were quieted and his wedding approached, his diary betrays an excitement over his impending nuptials that verges on giddiness. Once again, his determination to marry as soon as possible is very evident, although as before he remained focused on his wedding rather than on his bride. Mary receives only scant notice in the entries leading up to their wedding and immediately afterward. He visited Rowley several times in the course of the wedding preparations. Fearing that postponing the ceremony until after the elections at the end of May would mean an interminable two month delay, the impatient suitor was able to fix a wedding date within a fortnight. There remained much work to be done in a very short time, and he delightedly chronicles that "all things we found conspiring to further our intendment, Taylors ready to do the work in time, merchants ready to take provisions for shopp commoditys, &c. blessed be god! who worketh all our works in us and for us. oh! I am ashamed of my frothines and vanity and fruitless conversation, and sensuality and all those sins whereby I am offending so good a god." Despite his studied denunciation of his "frothines," he seems to revel in the anticipation of the transformative wedding ceremony. Finally, on May 18, 1655, "at the time appointed with fear and trembling I came to Rowley to be married....oh Lord! let my cry come up unto thee for all the blessings of a married estate, A heart sutable thereto, chastity especially thereby, and life and health if it be thy will."⁴⁰

Wigglesworth found marriage a happy arrangement: "I am infinitely indebted unto the Lord that gives me so much comfort in a married estate contrary to my fears; for this I wil prais him whilst I have a being."⁴¹ However, it did not immediately relieve him of two of his greatest troubles as a single man: his nocturnal emissions, and his dependence on parental assistance. As he did not yet have a position with a congregation, he and Mary spent the first several months of their life together sharing a single room in her family home in Rowley. Making their life together even more chaotic and crowded, Wigglesworth's mother and sister left New Haven to live with him and his new bride in their room. Finding employment became a matter of great urgency, as he records in his diary, "we cannot winter here. Because the hous is cold, becaus the room too strait (here is not a private room for me) because also *we must lay together constantly which I can't bare*."⁴² Moreover, at this time his worries and complaints about his health, which had always been peculiar in such a young man, verged on the hypochondria. Although he had hoped for a more prestigious pulpit, he found that he could not refuse when the town of Malden, Massachusetts asked him to be its minister. Becoming the master of his own household was absolutely imperative.⁴³

As during their courtship and wedding planning, Mary remains almost totally invisible in Wigglesworth's diary through their early married life. Even on such critical matters as their living conditions and Wigglesworth's

employment, her feelings are unrecorded. Because she was several months pregnant when she began sharing a room with her in-laws, she may have looked forward to the move to Malden and to a house of their own. Then again, such a move would take her away from her own family at a time when her mother's and sisters' support and assistance was extremely valuable.⁴⁴

Curiously, as her pregnancy progressed, Mary Reyner Wigglesworth became even less visible in her husband's diary. His description of her labor and delivery of their daughter in the winter of 1656 demonstrates the elaborate lengths Wigglesworth went to to remain the central figure in his account of their family life. He dwells almost exclusively on his own sympathetic labor before and during the child's birth, appropriating Mary's travail to an alarming degree. Even at the very moment when a wife's and mother's contribution is central to the growing young family, Wigglesworth pushes Mary to the margins of his narrative: The evening of the 20th "my wife began to travail and had sore paines. The nearnes of my bed to hers made me hear all the nois. her pangs pained my heart, broke my sleep the most off that night I lay sighing, sweating, praying, almost fainting through wearines before morning." Taking the notion of the husband and wife as "one flesh" in marriage quite literally, his sympathetic labor continues through the next day; he does not remark upon Mary's condition, but writes in great detail that his "spleen" bothered him all the next day, causing great weakness and nausea. He dreaded facing another night of labor: "For so long as my love lay crying I lay sweating, and groaning. I was now apt to be hasty and impatient, but the Lord made me desirous to stoop to his wil (if he should take away her whom he had given, much more) if he should onely prolong her pains (himself supporting) and in time restore her."⁴⁵ Although Mary's well-being worried him, he only wrote about her in relation to him as his wife. He does not speculate on the sad fate of a motherless babe, nor of the tragedy of a young woman's life cut short, nor of her family's sure distress if they should lose her, but of his own desperation "if [God] should take away her" from him.⁴⁶ Family life was important to Wigglesworth because it anchored his identity as master of his household—no longer a boy, but a man with a man's responsibilities.

In all likelihood, Mary was not the only woman written out of Wigglesworth's diary account of her laying in. Labor and delivery were not private family events, but were shared among and assisted by the women in the community. Childbirth was a traumatic experience turned into a soothing ritual by the company of women, ample refreshments, and free-flowing liquor. Wigglesworth's own mother and sister probably had some role in his daughter's birth, perhaps distracting Mary from her pains and bringing her bites of cake and sips of wine to refresh her through the long hours of her travail. And surely there was a midwife directing the course of Mary's labor, administering healing herbal preparations and supporting her through her pain.⁴⁷ The presence

of all of these women at the birth must remain conjectural, however; Wigglesworth reports having word of his daughter's birth not from a mere mortal like his mother, a neighbor, or a midwife, but directly from the Lord himself: "Being brought to this the Lord gave some support to my heart. After about midnight he sent me the glad tidings of a daughter that and they both living; after she had been in paines about 30 houres or more." One of the lessons Wigglesworth drew from this experience was that "if the dolours of child-bearing be so bitter (which may be onely fatherly chastizement) then how dreadful are the pangs of eternal death." Perhaps this is why he and Mary named the child Mercy, the only hope for God's salvation.⁴⁸ One can only wonder about Mary's thoughts and feelings, or how comforting she might have found her husband's notion of her travail as "onely fatherly chastizement," although the experience of childbirth was often traumatic enough to remind a Christian woman of her mortality and might cause her to reflect upon the condition of her soul. However, her husband leaves the details of her experience and her postpartum condition unrecorded. Flesh of his flesh, perhaps he assumed she shared his feelings as he had shared her travail.

After his daughter's birth, the diary soon ceases to record regular entries. It appears that the responsibilities of Wigglesworth's profession and his duties to his family occupied more and more of his time. The remainder of 1656 is recorded in a few bare fits and starts of entries over a few pages, and is followed by a few paragraphs that bring the diary into 1657. After a discussion of some of the frustrations that vexed him at Malden, the diary ends. Given what we know of his relationship with his parents and his traumatic experience with labor and childbirth, family life undoubtedly took a lot out of Wigglesworth.

As for almost every young man in early New England, marriage was a key event in the life of Michael Wigglesworth. Even a man with his wealth and education relied on the transformative power of marriage and household mastery in order to achieve full adulthood. He understood that marriage was the only means by which he could separate himself from his birth family, and having a wife and child allowed him to claim his place as a patriarch in his own right.

The Farmer: Thomas Minor and the prerogatives of household authority

Having examined how a young man in early New England thought about and experienced marriage and family life, we will now visit a more mature man and his large family. The diary of Thomas Minor offers a look at the full fruits of married life, for when he begins his diary, Minor is a middle-aged man, still married to his first wife and with a household full of nearly-grown children. As Minor is not just a master of a wife but of an entire household, his diary provides an opportunity to examine the interplay between the legal and theoretical constructions of male power, and the practical uses of male privilege

in the daily operations of a family farm. Minor's diary provides a useful contrast to Wigglesworth's not just because Minor is an older man, but because he is a simpler man as well. Wigglesworth's diary is written in the form of a spiritual journal, a place for an individual to examine his soul and to reflect on his relationship with God and his faithfulness to God's covenant. Minor's diary is much starker, as it is for the most part a record of business concerning his farm. Weather, crop sowings, and personal debt and credit are standard fare in this diary; even when Minor records some information about his family or community affairs, there is little or no emotional content. He made diary entries on a monthly basis, noting sabbath days and Anglican holidays as a way to keep his dates correct. Very few individual diary entries are very interesting, but altogether Minor's prosaic record reveals the seasonal patterns of life in coastal southern New England.⁴⁹ Still, as taciturn as it is, the diary reveals much about Minor, his family, and their life on the farm. It reveals what he found remarkable, and what he found too trivial to remark upon. But as in Wigglesworth's diary, sometimes the omissions are more telling than the words on the page.

Although he never achieved the fame of Wigglesworth, Thomas Minor was a notable figure in the early history of coastal Connecticut. Known as a reliable Indian-language translator and a prosperous farmer, he arrived in New England in the company of John Winthrop on the *Arabella*, and settled successively in Salem, Charlestown, and Hingham, Massachusetts from 1630 to 1640. He learned the Algonkian language, and was especially sought after for communication with the Narragansett Indians. After some years in "Pequit," now New London, Connecticut, he made his final home in Quiambaug in 1653 or 1654, where he had been granted a large tract of land for his services as a translator. Here he began the diary in 1653, and kept it faithfully for over thirty years. As noted above, when Thomas Minor started his farm on the shores of Long Island Sound he was already a man in his middle forties with children who were adolescents or nearly grown. At the time in his family's life cycle the farm was most productive: some of his seven children were capable of adult labor, and most remained at home through the decade of the 1650s.⁵⁰

For all of their differences, however, Minor's diary reads very much like Wigglesworth's in that his wife and large family very rarely appear in it. This is remarkable, for as he depended on his large household of able workers to turn his land grant so quickly into a very complex and profitable farm. Wigglesworth earned his living by his specialized education and doubtlessly spent several hours each day working alone in silent contemplation; to some extent, his self-absorption might be explained away as an occupational hazard. Skeptics might say that Wigglesworth's diary has long been famous for its monomania. But Minor's diary reads from much the same perspective, despite the fact that the family farm was not a one-man operation. They cultivated Indian corn,

wheat, winter wheat, oats, and rye, as well as vegetables such as turnips, parsnips, peas, and cabbage. They also planted an orchard so that they might press their own cider, and hops so that they could brew their own beer. Besides food products, they also grew hemp, hay, and flax. In addition to all this, they kept a large number of farm animals: oxen and horses for labor and transportation; cows for dairy products and meat; pigs for meat; and sheep for meat and wool. The Minor family was prosperous—not rich, but a comfortable, land-owning, surplus-producing family.⁵¹ That Minor's diary so closely resembles Wigglesworth's means that overlooking one's wife and children was perhaps not a peculiarity of Wigglesworth's, or even of ministers who spent so much time alone. It is perhaps indicative of the degree to which men as husbands and heads of households unthinkingly commanded and enjoyed legal ownership of their family's productive labor.

Accordingly, Thomas Minor's description of his farm is a subjective rather than an objective account. In fact, he presents himself in his diary almost as a stereotypical Turnerian frontiersman, vigorous and self-reliant as he single-handedly hews civilization from the wilderness. Like Wigglesworth, he is his own protagonist, and the presence and contributions of his large family are almost totally invisible in his accounts of farm life. A typical example is his account of April, 1655:

The secone month is Aprile and hath .30. days sabath day the first and thursday the .5. I made an End of covering the house and friday the .6. I sowed the wheate and satterday the .7. I begun to garden and sabath day the .8. and sabath day the .15. I was at Coneticut and came whome on thursday being the .19. the .13. of this month being friday John began to board with the widow Smith and sabath day the .22. monday .23. I made an end of gardning tuesday .24. I sowed hemp and sabath day.29. monday the .30.⁵²

Doubtlessly Minor worked hard, getting in the year's crops and still gradually shingling his new house. But who is John? And what about that nearly week-long trip to Connecticut? There must have been a lot going on that Minor never describes in his diary.

This diary entry is fairly typical. Although his prosperity was clearly built upon the labor of all the people in his household, Minor very rarely mentions his wife and family at all, and never notes their contributions to the well-being and proper functioning of the household and farm. But even more importantly than the exact value of the labor Minor apparently overlooked is the fact that he seems to have taken it all for granted. Supported by a culture that placed every man at the head of his household, and a legal system that granted the householder almost absolute legal authority over his family and

sole legal title to their lands, house, and everything therein, it is no wonder that Thomas Minor did not acknowledge his family's contributions to the household. Perhaps he never even saw them as individual contributors to a collective enterprise. After all, what theirs was really his.

That Minor took his family's labor for granted becomes clear given the context in which family members appear in his diary. When he does mention his wife or his children, it is because they are sick, being put out to service in another man's household, or are marrying and starting households of their own. The common link in all these events is that someone in the family is no longer able to perform the work he depends on. As in the diary entry above, we hear of Minor's eldest son John only when he leaves the household to enter an apprenticeship, and can no longer help out with the planting and shingling Minor describes.⁵³ In other diary entries, we learn incidentally that "hanah [his daughter] burned her hand," that "Joseph [his son] had the measles," and that his "wife was very sicke," but otherwise, their work went on unremarkably. While he neglected to catalog the work his family performed at the farm, Minor worked actively to ensure an adequate supply of labor, taking in servants as his elder children grew up and, like John above, entered apprenticeships, served in another household, or married. For example, after John permanently left his parents' home and married in October, 1658, and son Clement began an apprenticeship in weaving in February, 1659, Minor took in two male servants in the next two years—a one-for-one exchange.⁵⁴ In these years he resorts more often to the pronoun "we" instead of "I" in describing his activities on the farm, although he rarely details the activities of individuals. By the mid-1660s, after he had seen three sons married and another in an apprenticeship, he did not take in any more servants, and reverts to using the pronoun "I" almost exclusively in narrating the planting, fencing, livestock-tending, and general maintenance of the house and farm.⁵⁵

Minor had to think strategically about his labor force, because his work as a translator and community elder required him to attend court sessions, diplomatic negotiations, and the like throughout New England. His travel schedule meant that every year he spent several days and nights away from his farm. In the years 1656 through 1659, and 1663 through 1670, Minor traveled to New London, New Haven, Narragansett Bay, Fisher's Island, Hartford, Boston, and various smaller towns, spending an average of three full weeks a year away from his farm. From 1660 through 1662, when his labor supply of young men was at its highest, he averaged nearly six weeks away from the farm annually.⁵⁶ Minor was able to travel so often because he could rely on his able wife, children, and servants to ensure that the daily operation of the farm was uninterrupted.

Although Minor did not usually acknowledge his family's labor, he did not overlook the contributions of everyone on the farm. Some of the producers

on Minor's farm merit regular mention in his diary: his cows. Minor's concern and affection for his cows is very clear, as is the cultural and economic importance of cows and dairy products in all seventeenth-century Anglo-American households. Of all of his farm animals in the late 1650s (with the lone exception of one of his mares), only Minor's cows are given proper names—Whit, Gentill, Browne, Berie, Colie, and Pidie, for example.⁵⁷ Moreover, his cows are mentioned by name in the diary more often than are Minor's wife and children. The cows receive special attention in the late winter and early spring, which is when they usually calved. Minor records each calf's birth with care, and provides on-going postpartum reports on the status of the cows who had difficult births. By the early 1660s, when Minor's stock had grown to a large number of cows, calves, horses, colts, sheep, and kids, he no longer referred to each of them by name, but livestock was still the aspect of farming that interested him most.⁵⁸

Cows warranted their exalted status in Minor's diary, and on New England farms in general. Keeping cattle and producing dairy items were activities that not only provided nutrition and variety to the diets of English settlers, but they were also important markers of cultural Englishness. After being exposed to English livestock, New England Indians incorporated hog-keeping into their mobile lifestyle, but very rarely cattle. These Indian neighbors never made or consumed dairy products, and in fact expressed great resentment for the land-devouring needs of cattle-keeping.⁵⁹ Besides their cultural value, cows were economically valuable as well. Dairying, an exclusively female activity, was one of the most lucrative means to produce a surplus for trade in local and regional markets. The ownership of dairying equipment was strongly correlated to the presence of women in households. Over half of the inventories of the men of the town of New Haven who left widows or adult daughters featured dairying equipment, whereas only one in fourteen never-married men owned such equipment.⁶⁰

The Minor family was no exception to this rule. Thomas Minor was able to recognize female labor on his farm—as long as it was the labor and produce of cows, and not of women. In the diary, which also functioned as an informal account book for Minor's transactions, we can see that dairy products were the most frequently traded item of household surplus through the 1650s and 1660s. In June, 1657, Minor writes of selling fifty-four pounds of butter at seven shillings a pound, which would yield the equivalent of nineteen pounds cash. The following year, he bought a quantity of pewter goods for the house with butter alone. Another time, he paid off a debt with just over nine shillings' worth of cheese.⁶¹ Minor's wife Grace and daughters Ann and Maria were most likely responsible for the production of butter and cheese that brought in much more than just "pin money." However, like Michael Wigglesworth and all seventeenth-century husbands, fathers, and masters, he wasn't bound to recognize it—not in wills, in the courts, or even in his own writing.⁶²

* * *

Marriage was a transformative event in men's lives in early New England, much more so than it was for women. It set men atop a household hierarchy, and this mastery in turn gave them broad social, economic, and political prerogatives. Michael Wigglesworth's diary reveals the frustrations of a young man who felt himself too old to live under his parents' household government, and his attempts to achieve adulthood and independence for himself in marriage. Thomas Minor's diary demonstrates that the benefits of marriage for men were ongoing. Through his position as the patriarch of a large family and a productive farm, we see the very real advantages of being a husband, father, and master. The economic benefits were foremost: while custom held that fathers were to assist their children in setting up their own households upon marriage, there was no law that bound them to do so. Similarly, while wives worked alongside their husbands throughout their married lives, they were entitled to only a lifetime share of one-third of their estate as widows. But the political and social benefits of being a married man were not inconsiderable. Taking vows of marriage made young men eligible to take another transformative oath, significantly called the "Free Mans Charge," and allowed them a voice in local and colonial government and in public affairs in general.⁶³

In early New England, a man tethered his independence to his wife's and family's dependence. In a world organized and vertically linked by a gendered hierarchy, this was no paradox. But the notion of a wife's and family's dependence has to be qualified, considering the productive and reproductive power they possessed. Men were on top of this world, but it should be remembered just how they got there and how they stayed there. The centrality of wives and families to men's identity and masculinity gives the lie to male independence in the early modern period.

Appendix

A comparison of male decedents according to marital status and stage in life
(first generation)

	<u>Never married</u>	<u>Young married</u>	<u>Middle married</u>	<u>Older married</u>	<u>Widowed</u>	<u>Married, no children</u>
N=	14	20	17	13	4	3
avg £:	26	161	277	296	(not useful for these low #s)	
% >£100	0	55	88	77	75	100
range £:	0-155	26-406	50-1,091	30-1,466	20-535	142-430

Young married - men married less than fifteen years or whose children were predominantly preadolescent.

Middle married - men whose children were adolescents/young adults

Older married - men whose children had come of age/married

Source: New Haven Town Probate Records, 71 probate records of men whose marital status could be determined, 1647-1665.

Notes

Earlier versions of this essay were presented at the first annual conference of the Institute for Early American History and Culture in Ann Arbor, Michigan, June 4, 1995, and at the John Nicholas Borwn Center for the Study of American Civilization in Providence, Rhode Island, November 21, 1996. Parts of this essay were adapted from Ann M. Little, "A 'Well Ordered Commonwealth': Gender and Politics in New Haven Colony, 1636-1690" (Ph.D. Diss., University of Pennsylvania, 1996), ch. 4, and were presented at the Philadelphia Center for Early American Studies, December 16, 1994. The author would like to thank the various friends and colleagues whose comments have helped to shape the present work, especially Richard Dunn, Michael Zuckerman, Karin Wulf, Susan Juster, Sharon Block, John Sweet, Susan Lively, Lisa Wilson, and Joyce Botelho.

1. William Whately, *A Bride-Bush, or a Wedding Sermon* (London, 1617). Other pamphlets or books with similar advice are: John Dod and Richard Cleaver, *A Godly Form of Household Government* (London, 1614); John Wing, *The Crown Conjugal or Spouse Royal* (London, 1620); William Gouge, *Domestical Duties* (London, 1622); and Daniel Rogers, *Matrimoniall Honour* (London, 1642). No such pamphlets were printed in America in the seventeenth century, although many New England colonists were familiar with their general advice.

Two of these books appear in New Haven Colony: a copy of Wing's *Spouse Royal* is listed among Joan Wilkes' worldly possessions in the 1647 inventory of her estate, New Haven Probate Records, 1647-1687, v. I, part I [hereafter NHT Probate], Connecticut State Library, Hartford, Connecticut, 18. Wing's book is only one publication out of two besides the Bible listed specifically by its title in New Haven Colony inventories. Also, a copy of Dod and Cleaver's *A Godly Form of Household Government* was listed in an inventory of "the Townes bookes" compiled by the Colony's Governor Theophilus Eaton, and New Haven Town's minister, Rev. John Davenport. This list was probably an inventory of their personal libraries—see MSS 28B, item 9, folder A: New

Haven Town Records, 1665-1691, in the Whitney Library of the New Haven Colony Historical Society; this list was also published by Franklin Bowditch Dexter as "The First Public Library in New Haven," *Papers of the New Haven Colony Historical Society* vol. VI (1900), 301-313.

2. This is no doubt due in part to the fact that much of the historiography on American women originated in the early Republic and antebellum period, when American men and women already inhabited "separate spheres." For examples, see Barbara Welter, "The Cult of True Womanhood," *American Quarterly* 18 (1966) 151-174, Nancy F. Cott, *The Bonds of Womanhood: "Woman's Sphere" in New England, 1780-1835* (New Haven, 1977); Linda Kerber, *Women of the Republic: Intellect and Ideology in Revolutionary America* (Chapel Hill, N.C., 1980); Mary Ryan, *Cradle of the Middle Class: The Family in Oneida County, New York, 1790-1865* (Cambridge and New York, 1981). The "separate spheres" paradigm has become influential in the colonial scholarship, leading historians to organize women's history around their roles as wives and mothers. Some examples of this are: Carol Berkin, *First Generations: Women in Colonial America* (New York, 1996); Sylvia R. Frey and Marian J. Morton, *New World, New Roles: A Documentary History of Women in Pre-Industrial America* (Westport, Conn., 1986); Mary Beth Norton, *Liberty's Daughters: The Revolutionary Experience of American Women, 1750-1800* (Boston, 1980); Daniel Blake Smith, *Inside the Great House: Planter Family Life in Eighteenth-Century Chesapeake Society* (Ithaca and London, 1980). Moreover, few works address the role of men in family life; most of the family histories of the colonial period have grown out of women's history.

3. For example, Laurel Thatcher Ulrich's work, *Goodwives: Image and Reality in the Lives of Women in Northern New England, 1650-1750* (New York, 1982) and *A Midwife's Tale: The Life of Martha Ballard, Based on Her Diary, 1785-1812* (New York, 1990), puts colonial Anglo-American women's working lives front and center.

A few new studies put men back into their

own households and family life. Kenneth A. Lockridge, in *On the Sources of Patriarchal Rage: The Commonplace Books of William Byrd and Thomas Jefferson and the Gendering of Power in the Eighteenth Century* (New York, 1992), argues for an understanding of the family and home life of two Virginia planters, although he remains very focused on their personal viewpoints and does not delve into the wider workings of their households. John P. Demos' *The Unredeemed Captive: A Family Story from Early America* (New York, 1994) puts the Rev. John Williams as a father at the center of his family's emotional ordeal when his daughter is taken in the 1704 Indian raid on Deerfield, Massachusetts, and never rejoins Anglo-American society.

4. The title of this essay is a play on Natalie Zemon Davis' essay "Women on Top," from *Society and Culture in Early Modern France* (Stanford, 1975). In "Women on Top," Davis argues that rituals of sex-role inversion—charivari, skimmingtons, and the like—both undercut and reinforced separate gender roles. In researching seventeenth-century New Haven, which in its dourness sometimes seems more than an ocean away from the village festivals Davis describes, her essay has been a helpful reminder of the possibilities people had for subverting the hierarchies that structured their lives.

5. By gendered hierarchy, or patriarchy, I mean a system of social organization based on the supremacy of male heads of household. While this hierarchy is rooted in gender identities, it was a comprehensive system that also articulated divisions and rank according to status (as a free or unfree laborer), age, and in the American colonies, race.

6. Robert Bly, *Iron John: A Book About Men* (Reading, Mass., 1990). Some serious attempts to write gendered histories of American men have recently been published, but most tend to focus almost exclusively on the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. See for example, E. Anthony Rotundo, *American Manhood: Transformations in Masculinity from the Revolution to the Modern Era* (New York, 1993), and Gail Bederman, *Manliness and Civilization: a Cultural History of Gender and Race in the United States, 1880-1917* (Chicago,

1995).

7. By my lights, to speak of "patriarchal authority" in the seventeenth-century is a redundancy. Power was a thoroughly (male) gendered concept, so "authority" needs no further qualification to be understood as a prerogative of men.

Mary Beth Norton, *Founding Mothers and Fathers: Gendered Power and the Forming of American Society* (New York, 1996); Carole Shammas, "Anglo-American Household Government in Comparative Perspective," *William and Mary Quarterly*, 3d ser. 52 (January 1995), 104-144. [hereafter WMQ].

8. "The Diary of Michael Wigglesworth" (hereafter referred to as *Wigglesworth Diary*), Edmund Morgan, ed., *Publications of the Colonial Society of Massachusetts: Transactions, 1942-1946*, vol. 35 (Boston, 1951), 311-444; *The Diary of Thomas Minor, Stonington, Connecticut, 1653 to 1684* (hereafter referred to as *Minor Diary*), ed. Sidney H. Miner and George D. Stanton, Jr. (New London, 1899). (The published record is the only useful copy of the diary available; the manuscript diary is in the Connecticut State Library in Hartford, Connecticut, but is so faded as to be almost entirely illegible.)

9. In many ways, the term "diary" is problematic, as its modern sense connotes a record of one's personal life and emotional connections to friends and family. I use it here, as both Wigglesworth's and Minor's writings were published as "diaries," although neither set out to write this kind of record of his life. Seventeenth-century journals usually served another primary function—a spiritual diary, like Wigglesworth's, was a record of the spiritual struggle of a Christian attempting to find signs of God's grace in his life. Another example of this kind of diary by an Puritan minister in London is *The Diary of Ralph Josselin, 1616-1683*, ed. Alan Macfarlane (London, 1976); see also Macfarlane's analysis of the diary in *The Family Life of Ralph Josselin, a seventeenth-century clergyman: an essay in historical anthropology* (Cambridge, 1970). Minor's diary, on the other hand, served the practical purpose of a business record of his farm. Another kind of journal was kept by Simon Bradstreet to record only the

"remarkable Providences and Accidents genll and prticular." It contains no personal information whatsoever, but is a combinaton of true-crime stories, Indian attacks, violent weather events, deaths of revered New England ministers and political leaders, and wonders of astronomy, all collected or personally observed by him at his home in New London, Connecticut—see "Bradstreet's Journal, 1664-1683," *New England Historical and Genealogical Register* 9 (1855), 43-51.

10. In *Tobacco and Slaves: The Development of Southern Cultures in the Chesapeake, 1680-1800* (Chapel Hill, 1986), Allan Kulikoff uses the term "domestic patriarchy," and I use domestic authority here in much the same way. I adopted the term to distinguish domestic authority, or male-directed household government, from what I call civil authority, or the town and colonial governments of early New England (see Little, "A 'Wel Ordered Commonwealth,'" chapter 1). In *Founding Mothers and Fathers*, Mary Beth Norton uses the term "family government," a term used in the seventeenth century.

11. In *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (New York, 1990), Judith Butler argues that heterosexual coupling reifies gender "differences" and serves to (literally) reproduce traditional gender roles. Catherine MacKinnon in *Toward a Feminist Theory of the State* (Cambridge, 1989) also notes the centrality of heterosexual sexuality to the definition of separate male and female gender roles. She calls this sexuality, "which institutionalizes male sexual dominance and female sexual submission," "the linchpin of gender inequality," 112. The understanding that heterosexuality is based on separate gender roles and serves to replicate those roles is not just the opinion of post-structuralist academics, but of conservative members of the U.S. Congress and of the President. In the summer of 1996, President Bill Clinton signed a bill into law that defines marriage as strictly a heterosexual union of one woman and one man. Conservatives making the case for a restrictive federal definition of marriage cited Biblical law and historical precedent, and described heterosexual marriage as the foundation of civilized society even today.

12. "New-Haven's Settling in New-England, And some Lawes for Government, &c.," *Records of the Colony or Jurisdiction of New Haven from May 1653 to the Union* (hereafter referred to as NHCR II), ed. Charles J. Hoadly (Hartford, 1858), 586-87 (on divorce and dower rights), 599-600 (on marriage), 607 (on vital records), 612-613 (on wills, inventories, and probate). Marriage law required only that husbands live with their wives, and physically consummate the marriage. The dereliction of either of these duties were the for the most part the only grounds upon which New England women might successfully sue for divorce in the seventeenth century. For more on divorce, see Cornelia Hughes Dayton, *Women Before the Bar: Gender, Law, and Society in Connecticut, 1639-1789* (Chapel Hill, 1995), 105-130, 329-333.

13. The literature on masculinity in the early modern period is rather limited but of high quality. Two signal articles on the subject are Susan D. Amussen, "Gender, Family, and the Social Order, 1560-1725," and David E. Underdown, "The Taming of the Scold: the Enforcement of Patriarchal Authority in Early Modern England," both in *Order and Disorder in Early Modern England*, eds. Anthony Fletcher and John Stevenson (Cambridge, 1985). Anthony Fletcher's *Gender, Sex, and Subordination in England, 1500-1800* (New Haven and London, 1995) presents a sound survey of the English literature on masculinity. Jane Kamensky explores the discursive construction of gender in early New England in "Talk Like a Man: Speech, Power, and Masculinity in Early New England," *Gender and History* 8:1 (1996), 22-47, and identifies free speech as a cornerstone of masculinity.

Merry Wiesner in "Wandervogels and Women: Journeymen's Concepts of Masculinity in Early Modern Germany," *Journal of Social History* 24:4 (1991), 767-782, demonstrates the centrality of a gendered hierarchy to masculine identity even outside of marriage. Sixteenth-century journeymen, deprived of the benefits of marriage and of mastery, organized around their fears of permanent economic insecurity and their resentment of competition from women, and amassed enough unified strength to enforce

their refusal to work with women by boycotting guilds, if necessary.

14. Charles J. Hoadly, ed., *Records of the Colony and Plantation of New Haven, 1638-1649* (Hartford, 1857), I: 14-15, 70, 136-141 (hereafter NHCRI); NHCRII: 567. It was illegal to live outside of "household government" in New Haven colony, and voting rights in New Haven were restricted to these heads of household, also called "planters" in the early court records. Voting rights for New England men were also contingent upon land ownership, and in New Haven, on church membership. While I do not mean to slight these other very important factors that determined a man's social status, I feel that these other qualifications have received sufficient attention elsewhere. Marriage, however, has been overlooked in its contributions to men's status. In Connecticut, being the head of a household was not in itself a requirement, but the means by which one could have a vote—being a twenty-one year old man of "civil conversation" with an estate of thirty pounds were the means by which a young man might marry. However, only heads of household were eligible to take the oath of allegiance to King Charles in 1665. (See *The Public Records of the Colony of Connecticut to May 1665*, J. Hammond Trumbull, ed. (Hartford, 1850), 21, 23, 62, 331, 439.)

15. The transformative power of marriage for men was needed only once, as becoming a widower did not revoke a man's status as the head of his household. This is another distinction between men and women, in that widowhood cast women into very different social, legal, and economic circumstances.

16. E. Jennifer Monaghan, "Literacy Instruction and Gender in Colonial New England," *American Quarterly* 40 (1988). I have found no letters from women in New Haven colony, and just one after the colony's union with Connecticut. Although this letter is badly deteriorated, it appears to be a letter from a sister to her brother urging him to execute their father's will faithfully and in a fair manner for his siblings. Thus, it illustrates the absolute authority over economic matters men enjoyed and women endured. (Katherine Rosewell to Daniel Russell, June 14, 1676;

Connecticut Archives, Ecclesiastical Affairs, vol. I, doc. 42, at the Connecticut State Library, Hartford, Conn.) When people unable to write had to sign official documents, they would affix a personal mark (such as an X, or a cross, or crudely drawn initials) above or below their names as written out by someone else. Katherine Rosewell's name appears at the end of the letter without a companion "mark," which indicates that she herself at least signed her own name to the letter. However, it is impossible to determine if she actually penned the document herself, or dictated it to an amanuensis.

17. When emotions about family members are revealed in personal writings, they tend to center on the parent-child relationship, from both ends: children are most emotionally expressive about their parents, and parents are most emotionally expressive about their children. For an example of this, see the discussion of Michael Wigglesworth's relationship with his parents below.

18. Anthony Fletcher argues that the key quality for wives in England from 1580 to 1650 was not love for their husbands but submission to husbandly authority; similarly, the primary husbandly function was to rule their wives kindly but effectively; Sex was important in marriage, insofar as it encouraged the special matrimonial love of husbands and wives. (See *Gender, Sex, and Subordination in England*, 105-114, 204-222.) Other historians have chosen to focus on the affective, companionate aspects of puritan marriage. See for example, Richard Godbeer, "Love Raptures": Marital, Romantic, and Erotic Images of Jesus Christ in Puritan New England, 1670-1730," *New England Quarterly* 68:3 (1995), 355-384; and Edmund Leites, "The Duty to Desire: Love, Friendship, and Sexuality in Some Puritan Theories of Marriage," *Journal of Social History* 15 (1981-82), 383-408. Godbeer downplays the hierarchy of gender and argues for an understanding of puritan gender roles as somewhat flexible and permeable because of the ecstatic, gender-morphing language both men and women used to describe their loving relationship with Christ.

19. In *A Bride-Bush*, Whately calls love "the

life, the soule of marriage, without which it is no more it selfe, than a carcase is a man," and calls it a duty of marriage: "the want of this, causeth defectivenesse in all other duties," 7. But the gendered hierarchy of marriage even dictates the source of love in marriage: Rogers, in *Matrimonial Honour*, writes of husbandly love, "Now, it is true, the wife in this respect, oweth the like tye of tendernesse towards him: But, we must know, this first lyes upon the man; to her ward, because he is the roote of the relation. Wee say, that love descendes from the Father to the Child, because he is the foundation of the reference. Not, but that mutualnesse is required; But the Originall roote must first impart himselfe; Now upon this roote of union, the Apostle enforceth this duty: No man ever hated his owne flesh, But nourished & cherished it as himselfe: He then that hates his wife, is an unnaturall monster, and devoures his owne flesh. He that loveth his wife, loveth himselfe," 236-237. Thus, there was no emotion, no space in a marriage that was theoretically free of the hierarchy that maintained separate roles for husbands and wives

20. For a fuller discussion of the economic value of wives, see Little, "A 'Wel Ordered Commonwealth,'" ch. 4.

21. New scholarship is challenging this. See for example, Adrienne D. Hood, "The Material World of Cloth: Production and Use in Eighteenth-Century Rural Pennsylvania," *WMQ* 53 (1996), 43-66.

22. See *New England Begins: The Seventeenth Century, Vol. 2, Mentality and Environment* (Boston, 1982), for descriptions and illustrations of the tablecloth and damask napkin, 236-37, and of the counterpane, pillow bier, and bed curtain, 258-61. "Rugs" in the seventeenth century were heavy looped or piled wool stitched onto a linen backing, but were not used as floor coverings. They were placed on top of beds for warmth. For women's association with cloth and cloth production, see Ulrich, *A Midwife's Tale*, ch. 2, "warpt a piece." Her analysis covers the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century, and thus emphasizes a more severe division of labor than probably existed in the seventeenth century.

23. NHT Probate, personal database of 81 records from 1647 through 1665. The "middling" households are the middle third of inventories, ranging in total value from £75 to £175.

24. NHT Probate, 12, 21, and *passim*. Looms begin to appear in inventories in 1660, indicating an increase in the volume of domestic cloth production. (see NHT Probate, 93, 97, 108, 115). In fact, from 1660 through 1665, the average percentage of household wealth in cloth increased from 12.7 percent to over sixteen percent. (This increase in cloth ownership is also perhaps due to the greater number of years the later decedents had to accumulate cloth.)

25. *Turner v Stolyon*, 12/7/45, NHCR I:174-175.

26. See Appendix. Young married men are defined as men who have been married less than fifteen years or whose children are predominantly preadolescent.

27. NHT Probate, Appendix. Eleven out of the twenty young married men had estates of more than £100. Based on Jackson Turner Main's analysis in *Society and Economy in Colonial Connecticut* (Princeton, 1985), a £100 estate would be quite "comfortable" for a young, growing family (ch. 2). The average estate value of married men overall was £237:10:00. For a comparative overview of men's and women's day labor, see Gloria L. Main's "Gender, Work, and Wages in Colonial New England," *WMQ* 3d ser., 51 (1994), 39-66.

28. The following discussion of this diary is adapted from Little, "A 'Wel Ordered Commonwealth,'" ch. 4.

29. Esther is also alternately Hesther in the public records. For Edward's political affiliation, see NHCR I:9, 136-139. For information on church membership, see NHCR I: 17, 302-303; Franklin Bowditch Dexter, in *Historical Catalogue of the Members of the First Church of Christ in New Haven, Connecticut, 1639-1914* (New Haven, 1914), lists Esther as a member by 1646, a claim probably based on her appearance in the meetinghouse seating chart in early 1647. She was probably a member earlier than that, although the records of early church

membership among women are scant. Men's early membership was recorded in the public records because of the decision to make church membership a prerequisite for the franchise in New Haven. For more on the Wigglesworths' background in Yorkshire and Charlestown, and for general biographical information on Michael, see Richard Crowder, *No Featherbed to Heaven: A Biography of Michael Wigglesworth, 1631-1705* (East Lansing, 1962).

30. NHCR I:93, 368. Crowder, chs 1-2.

31. NHT Probate 54, NHCR II:23, 102. The first loan was for four pounds in April of 1653, and the second, contracted by the recently widowed Esther, was for five pounds in the summer of 1654. Edward Wigglesworth's inventory lists £288 "in peeces of Spanish money whereof one hundred pounds is yet owing and to receive," NHT Probate 54. This sum of money, probably invested in the Atlantic trade, indicates that the Wigglesworths were some of the largest and most successful merchants in the colony.

32. *Wigglesworth Diary*, 333. Philip Greven discusses the difficult relationship between Michael and Edward Wigglesworth in "Some Root of Bitterness: Corporal Punishment, Child Abuse, and the Apocalyptic Impulse in Michael Wigglesworth," in *The Transformation of Early American History: Society, Authority, and Ideology*, eds. James A. Henretta, Michael Kammen, and Stanley N. Katz (New York, 1991). He believes that Michael must have been subjected to physical abuse as a boy because of his common literary motifs of sin and crushing, merciless punishment. He goes so far as to suggest that Michael's eventual inability to serve in the ministry was due to battered child syndrome. While the diary shows that Wigglesworth was a troubled young man, there is no evidence in this or any of his writings to provide proof for the physical abuse hypothesis. Crowder also notes Michael's problems with his parents, especially with his father, chs. 2-3.

33. *Wigglesworth Diary*, 336-38, 355. There is more evidence that in the summer of 1653 Michael received what amounted to an advance on his inheritance to pay debts that had been accumulating in his name in Boston.

When his mother appeared in town court to swear to the accuracy of their estate inventory the following year, she swore that the valuation was true "unless her sonn in ye bay have spent any of that hundred pound owing there," Franklin Bowditch Dexter, *Ancient Town Records, Vol. I: New Haven Town Records, 1649-1662* (New Haven, 1917), 208 (hereafter NHTR I).

34. *Wigglesworth Diary*, 369.

35. *Wigglesworth Diary*, 374, 376.

36. NHT Probate, 53-54. Esther's portion came to £161, 14 s., or 40.25% of the estate's total adjusted value. Edward left his young daughter Abigail £80, and followed the usual practice of making the portions of an underage daughter collectible on her twentieth birthday or her wedding day—whichever came first. (Some parents set the age at which their daughters might inherit at eighteen, while some like Edward Wigglesworth set it at twenty. When an age was set for boys, however, it was invariably twenty-one.) Abigail's portion amounted to half of what he left Michael, conforming to the practice of leaving a double child's portion to the eldest son.

37. The will and inventory were proved in town court on May 2, 1654, and in colony court on May 29, 1654 (NHTR I:208; NHCR II:90). Wigglesworth was unusual in receiving his portion after a father's death, as most parents in New Haven Colony provided a portion of their inheritance for their children when they wished to marry. While Wigglesworth's troubled relationship with his father suggests that Edward might have resisted this kind of settlement for his son, he was only twenty-two when his father died, and thus would not have been ready for marriage much before this. The average age of marriage for first-born sons of the second generation was 22.6 years. (See Little, "A 'Wel Ordered Commonwealth,'" chapter 4.)

38. *Wigglesworth Diary*, 394.

39. *Wigglesworth Diary*, 344, 398, 403, 405. Wigglesworth feared that the nocturnal emissions were some kind of venereal disease. The three doctors he wrote to were John Winthrop Jr., John Alcock, and John Rogers; for his correspondence with them and their

replies, see 399-406. John Rogers initially warned Michael "to rectify the habit of my body and afterward to proceed" with marriage, but changed his mind to concur with the opinions of the other two doctors. In his introduction, Edmund Morgan singles out Wigglesworth's deliberations about marriage and what he thought was his venereal disease as evidence of "an unrestrained selfishness" because of his evidently greater concern with his own health than that of his future bride's.

As for other obstacles to his marriage, Crowder says that Michael also feared marriage to Mary Reynier because of her near relation to him as his mother's niece, ch. 4. However, this reason remained subordinate to his health concerns.

40. *Wigglesworth Diary*, 406-408. As marriage was a civil contract, weddings in New England tended to coincide with General Court dates in late May, early August, November, and March. Wigglesworth was loath to miss the May court date for fear of having to postpone his wedding until August.

41. *Wigglesworth Diary*, 407-408.

42. *Wigglesworth Diary*, 409, 411, 413. Emphasis is Wigglesworth's own. Mary and Michael Wigglesworth's situation was doubly unusual for their cohabitation with both sides of their families, for marriage in early New England usually meant the establishment of a new, separate household for the newlyweds. They probably stayed with her family while Michael pursued employment, which could have been anywhere in New England. The terms of Edward Wigglesworth's will dictated that his surviving family remain together if at all possible. This was the reason for Esther's and Abigail's remove to Rowley despite the crowded circumstances (NHT Probate 54).

43. In mulling over the decision to take the Malden job, he writes of his "fear of increas of weaknes as the cold increaseth because it is an extraordinary propensity to take cold at my nostrils." He complains of suffering from a "rhewm" in late August, and at one point told the Malden congregation that he had misgivings about their offer because "I found preaching very hazzardful at present in that it exposed such dangerous coulds," see *Wigglesworth Diary*, 408, 409, 411. Because

he lived to the age of 74, calling Michael Wigglesworth a hypochondriac at the age of 24 is probably not an exaggeration. He withdrew from an active ministry in the early 1660s, and spent the rest of his life in literary pursuits. Greven suggests that Michael's illnesses and infirmities paralleled his father's early incapacity, and were perhaps physical manifestations of Michael's psychological distress over his relationship with Edward ("Some Root of Bitterness," 108).

44. Other recent scholarship on similar diaries has revealed that seventeenth-century New England men rarely mentioned their wives and families, and then only in the case of serious illness or other remarkable circumstances in family life. Ulrich notes a similar pattern in the diary of Henry Sewall in comparison to Martha Ballard's diary in *A Midwife's Tale*. Further, Virginia Bernhard, in "Cotton Mather's 'Most Unhappy Wife': Reflections on the Uses of Historical Evidence," *New England Quarterly* (60) 1987, 341-362, has shown that making suppositions about the lives of the wives of these diary writers is always risky business. Bernhard relates the story of Lydia Lee George, Mather's third and final wife, whom he describes in his diary as inflicting "prodigious paroxysms" of rage on him and the members of their household. Mather's portrait of his wife is of a reckless madwoman, and this has been her historical reputation in most scholarly and biographical work on Mather despite the fact that the Mather diary is a single, uncorroborated source.

For a brilliant reconstruction of a woman's household from a man's diary, see Marion Nelson Winship, "Safety and Danger in a Puritan Home: Life in the Hull-Sewall House, 1676-1717," in Neville McD. Thompson, ed., *The American Home: Material Culture, Domestic Space, and Family Life* (Winterthur, 1997).

45. *Wigglesworth Diary*, 415. Contemporary prescriptive literature also encouraged men to understand the "one flesh" metaphor of marriage as a very concrete reality. In *Matrimoniall Honour* (London, 1642), a four-hundred-plus page marriage manual, Daniel Rogers writes of the wife that "she is one with

him in all things, one in flesh, one in generation and posterity, one in blessings and welfare, copartner also in all crosses and wants: All these are common: the husband shares with the wife, and suffers in all her diseases, paines, trials spirituall and bodily," 237.

In Wigglesworth's defense, key Puritan biblical texts frequently used the metaphor of childbirth to illustrate the suffering of humanity in the presence of an all-powerful God, and puritan ministers were not shy about appropriating these female experiences. For example, see Isaiah 21:3, "Therefore are my loins filled with pain: pangs have taken hold upon me, as the pangs of a woman that travaileth: I was bowed down at the hearing of it; I was dismayed at the seeing of it," and Isaiah 26:17, "Like a woman with child, that draweth near the time of her delivery, is in pain, and crieth out in her pangs; so have we been in thy sight, O Lord," (King James Version). 46. Ann Kibbey has argued that viewing their families as extensions of themselves was characteristic of seventeenth-century New England puritan men. In "Mutations of the Supernatural: Witchcraft, Remarkable Providences, and the Power of Puritan Men," *American Quarterly* 34:2 (1982), 125-148, she notes that puritan men understood the illness or death of a child or wife as God's judgment on their soul. This can help explain Wigglesworth's position during his wife's travail. At one point, Wigglesworth notes that his wife "had in this time (her labor) 2 pittiful nights, especially the one of them." But instead of expanding on this sympathy for her, he states quite baldly that "at that time 2 things I desir'd of the Lord 1. A heart to subject my wisdom and wil to his touching the childs life or Extremity. he knows what is best and is as tenderly affected as I, and much more. 2. That I may maintain good thoughts of god while he afflicts amare deum castigantem." According to this entry, Mary's safety and health were not his chief concerns; only his relationship with God was at stake.

47. Ulrich, *Goodwives*, ch. 7; *A Midwife's Tale*, 162-203. Winship in "Safety and Danger in a Puritan Home," shows that the "chamber" was "the key to the meaning of the home life of this Puritan family." She distinguishes the

uses of this room from that of the larger, more public hall. The two rooms had overlapping uses, such as for weddings and prayer meetings, but the chamber was reserved for smaller, more private family concerns such as a sickroom and for childbirth.

48. *Wigglesworth Diary*, 415.

49. *Minor Diary*, *passim*. While Minor's farm at Quiambaug is near modern-day Stonington, Connecticut, and was never part of New Haven colony, like that colony it was located on Long Island Sound and thus probably represents a range and style of agricultural production common to all of coastal southern New England.

50. *Minor Diary*, 2-4, 43, 50, 207, 209-210. Minor was forty-five years old and had eight children when he began his diary; they ranged in age from infancy to seventeen years, and included three teenage boys. Eight Minor children survived to adulthood, although son Thomas died young and unmarried at twenty-two. Daughter Ann probably died in infancy or very young, and daughter Marie died at age ten. No accounting of their birth dates appears in the diary, but William Richard Cutter's *New England Families: Genealogical and Memorial*, vol. III (New York, 1915) states that the Minor children were born as follows: John, 1636; Clement, 1638; Thomas, 1640; Ephraim, 1642; Joseph, 1644; Manasseh, 1647; Ann, 1649; Maria (or Marie), 1650; Samuel, 1652; and Hannah, 1655, 1614-1615.

51. In an informal inventory in March, 1655, Minor writes, "I gave Captaine denison a list of what I had fower oxen five cows fower yarlings and ten ackers of land butting upon the river at pequit and the farme that I bought of Cary latham by me," *Minor Diary*, 12. Two years later he writes that the farm is "252 akers one mile lounge & 40 pole lounge," *Minor Diary*, 15. In *Society and Economy in Colonial Connecticut*, Main claims that "eighty acres was adequate for a yeoman and his family, while true comfort required at least a hundred," 30. Minor's land holdings would have put him and his family in the very comfortable range, even with so many children coming of age in the decade from 1655 to 1665.

52. *Minor Diary*, 13-14. The diary's editors

conclude their introduction with a Turnerian flourish: "In the life of Thomas Minor we have a prominent example of those men, who with their families, came to this country and fulfilled the purpose of time in creating in the new world a people of illimitable resources, jealous of personal rights, with brawny arms and fertile brain and with the unconquerable perseverance so characteristic of the pioneer settlers who attacked the forces of nature's wilderness that a nation might be built for the world to respect," 4.

53. John was trained to follow in his father's footsteps as a translator, and was sent to Hartford at the expense of the colony in 1655 to learn Indian languages to assist in missionary works. *Minor Diary*, 14, 15, 16; *The Public Records of the Colony of Connecticut to May 1665*, 265.

54. *Minor Diary*, 25-27, 31, 33, 37, 41, 44. The second servant taken in was referred to only as "our Indean," an unusual designation in a diary in which Indians are frequently referred to by name as trading partners, and the diplomats and political leaders he dealt with in his service as a translator.

55. Clement married Frances Willie November 26, 1662, Ephraim married Hannah Avery on June 22, 1666, and Manasseh began an apprenticeship or went into service for Richard Dart for two years on November 2, 1663, thus cutting into Minor's labor supply significantly. All of the other brothers eventually married, although Samuel remained in his parents' home for most of the rest of his father's life. Joseph married Marie Avery March 18, 1668, although he seems to have intended marriage at the same time as his brother Ephraim in 1666. Not coincidentally, each of these men were admitted as freemen around or immediately after their marriage. (See *The Public Records of the Colony of Connecticut, 1665 to 1678*, J. Hammond Trumbull, ed. (Hartford, 1852), 32-33, 523). Manasseh was married September 26, 1670, and Samuel married on December 15, 1681. (*Minor Diary*, 9, 50, 55, 74, 83, 98, 169, 195; Samuel was the youngest brother, and married much older than his brothers at age twenty-nine.)

56. Minor was away 23 days in 1656, 11 in 1657, 29 in 1658, 24 in 1659, 28 in 1660, 55

in 1661, 35 in 1662, 18 in 1663, 23 in 1664, 32 in 1665, 28 in 1666, 20 in 1667, 23 in 1668, 15 in 1669, and 19 in 1670. *Minor Diary*, 17-100.

57. Philip Morgan also notes the importance English put on cattle, even to naming them individually, in "Slaves and Livestock in Eighteenth-Century Jamaica: Vineyard Pen, 1750-51," *WMQ* 52 (January 1995) 47-76. Minor also owned one steer he called by name: Kent. (*Minor Diary*, 16).

58. For example, in February of 1657, Minor writes that "white calved gentile calved the 1.11 of februarie...the last day of this month Browne begin to mend. The .19. of februarie Browne calved....Colie calved the .6. day (of March)....thursday the .16. (of April) Browne died," *Minor Diary*, 22-23. Minor kept pigs as well, but only mentions them in his diary at the end of every autumn when he slaughters them.

59. Virginia DeJohn Anderson, "King Philip's Herds: Indians, Colonists, and the Problem of Livestock in Early New England," *WMQ* 3d ser., 51 (1994), 601-624. Anderson describes English cultural affinity to cattle raising because of the settled, "cultivated" lifestyle encouraged by cattle herding. By contrast, when Indians adopted European livestock, they preferred hog raising because hogs forage for themselves and don't require grazing land, and thus were more compatible with their mobile lifestyle. See also Sarah F. McMahon, "Laying Foods By: Gender, Dietary Decisions, and the Technology of Food Preservation in New England Households, 1750-1850," in *Early American Technology: Making and Doing Things in the Colonial Era to 1850*, ed. Judith A. McGaw (Chapel Hill, 1994), 191; McMahon, "A Comfortable Subsistence: the Changing Composition of Diet in Rural New England, 1620-1840," *WMQ* 3d ser., 42(1985), 26-65; and Gloria L. Main, "The Standard of Living in Southern New England, 1640-1773," *WMQ* 3d ser., 45 (1988), 124-134.

60. These numbers are calculated from eighty-one pre-1666 inventories, four of female decedents, fourteen never-married men, fifty-three of male decedents with wives, four widowers, and six male decedents whose

marital status at death is uncertain. The rates of equipment ownership cited here are higher than Laurel Ulrich's 1670 estimates for Essex and York counties, perhaps because they have been adjusted for marital status (*Goodwives*, 16, NHT Probate.)

61. Minor, 24, 25, 30, *passim*. The price of 7s per pound of butter is not out of line with evidence from the New Haven Town Probate records, 1647-1662. A 1662 inventory lists a firkin of butter, approximately three or four pounds, as worth 31s 2p (or 7.75 to 10.3 shillings per pound), and a 1647 inventory lists a firkin and a half of butter at approximately 40s (or 6.7 to 8.9 shillings per pound), NHT Probate, 15, 105. The imprecision of these figures stems from the imprecision of the

weight of the firkins.

62. Philip Morgan makes a parallel point about the close association between livestock and African slaves in "Slaves and Livestock." While his focus is on the dehumanizing equations English masters made between their slaves and cattle, perhaps the same kind of associations were made between women and cows (similar breeding and milk-producing functions). Still, this doesn't explain why Minor would be more eager to note the breeding and production of his cows more than that of his wife and daughter.

63. NHCR I: 19, 136-137. In Connecticut, a similar oath was called "The Oath of a Freeman," *The Public Records of the Colony of Connecticut to May 1665*, 62-63.