

## Reviews of Books

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*Making Manhood: Growing up Male in Colonial New England*. By Anne S. Lombard. (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2003. Pp. x, 299. \$45.00.)

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Masculinity studies have been increasing exponentially in the last few years, and it comes as no surprise that historians of colonial New England have taken a lead in this field as they have in many others. While we still know comparatively little about men's history in many parts of colonial North America or the early modern Atlantic world overall, Anne Lombard's *Making Manhood* is the newest of several monographs addressing masculinity in colonial New England. Lombard joins what could be called "second-wave" men's history, following on a "first wave" that structured its narratives around relations between men and women.<sup>1</sup> Lombard largely leaves women out of the picture, however, and concentrates instead on male homosociality. In this, she follows a spate of recent work in which one of the key themes is the socialization of young men by older men, albeit in times and places beyond colonial New England.<sup>2</sup> The shared conceptual premise of these books is that men's lives and masculine ideologies should not be reduced to the assertion of male power over women. Furthermore, although power may certainly be a component and consequence of all social relations, it is not always the explicit purpose behind them. Hence, to reduce social relations to the exercise of power is to overstate the role of power in society and to understate the complexity of social life. Lombard therefore looks to examine other fraught aspects of men's lives. How did one make the transition from boyhood to manhood in colonial New England? How did one become a man? This was no easy task, according to Lombard, and it was not accomplished simply by oppressing girls and women.

The socially and psychologically complex socialization of boys into men constitutes the heart and the bulk of Lombard's book. Chapter 1 details infancy and boyhood, chapters 2 and 3 dwell on youth, and chapter 4 concerns marriage and adulthood. Notably, Lombard finds that males of all ages spent most of their time, not with their peers, but with other males in a range of age groups. Colonial New England seems rather premodern in this respect, awaiting a transition to modernity and a valorization of male peer friendship that Lombard attributes to the nineteenth century.

Socialization was meant to imbue males with sufficient rational self-control<sup>1</sup> spurning female company and sexual desire, for example<sup>2</sup> so that at the appropriate time of life they could achieve economic independence, defined as the property and income necessary to support a household. This was the pinnacle of manhood, and these masculine ideals of rational self-control, economic independence, and responsible fatherhood endured from the late seventeenth century through the late eighteenth century, according to Lombard. Such continuity in masculine ideals was significant because the eighteenth century was replete with demographic, economic, social, and political transformations that certainly pressured men in their lives and theoretically could have either heightened or diminished the resonance of various possible masculine ideals. Yet with respect to fatherhood, uses of violence (discussed in chapter 5), and political rhetoric (chapter 6), Lombard ultimately detects more historical continuity than change in the period from 1676 to 1776. Plenty of scholarship suggests that honor culture legitimated male violence in other regions, but not at any time in New England. Similarly, other studies show patriarchal language disappearing from political discourse elsewhere in the colonies during the imperial crisis of the 1760s and 1770s, but it remained resonant in New England.

In the end, Lombard adds nuance to the historical narrative rather than providing a 3 definitive account of colonial men's history, because she does not round out her account by fully interrogating the operation of power in men's gendered lives. Like Wilson, Lombard concentrates on domains of life where power could ostensibly be secondary (fatherhood for Lombard, domesticity for Wilson), but she does not bring them into relationship to domains where power always prevailed (such as politics or economics). Indeed, Lombard has not reached beyond the parameters of middling Puritans in colonial New England. She acknowledges that men of other classes, races, regions, and religions may have upheld and deployed alternative notions of masculinity, but she devotes her energy to the middling Puritan men whom she deems hegemonic throughout the colonial period in New England. There are new monographs that have begun to foreground a multiplicity of identities including but also extending beyond the hegemonic. In *Peoples of a Spacious Land*, Gloria L. Main usefully compares the family dynamics of Native Americans and whites in seventeenth-century New England, although she does not address the question of masculinity directly. In *Meanings of Manhood in Early Modern England*, Alexandra Shepard impressively relates dominant to alternative masculinities in late sixteenth- and early seventeenth-century England.<sup>3</sup>

Such studies point us in the direction of ever greater social multiplicity and ever 4 more filigreed historical complexity. Tim Hitchcock and Michele Cohen, in their introduction to *English Masculinities*, suggest that this very multiplicity in the early modern era would eventually become so unsettling as to provoke the late eighteenth-century emergence of "separate spheres" ideology, whose appeal lay in binaries that simplified the daunting complexities of "modern" life.<sup>4</sup> The outcome in England was the achievement of middle-class hegemony in the early nineteenth century, the same kind of middling hegemony that Lombard locates in the late seventeenth century in New England. Comparison between this view of early modern England and Lombard's colonial New England seems to yield more divergence than convergence. Lombard's book fills an important historiographical gap on the New England side and offers a useful look at the socialization of men that could aid in further transatlantic

comparisons.

The question remains: does the study of masculinity have any explanatory force? 5  
Can masculinity be transformative, or is it merely reflective of power determined elsewhere? Anne Lombard deftly recasts the question by treating masculine ideals, not as a cause of historical change, but as a kind of anchor against the effects of change. This apparent cultural premium on minimizing the impact of cultural transformation is perhaps what makes colonial New England not quaintly premodern, as Lombard suggests, but eerily similar to American culture in the early twenty-first century.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> One "first wave" book, Mary Beth Norton's magisterial *Founding Mothers and Fathers: Gendered Power and the Forming of American Society* (New York, 1996), emphasized men's systematic subordination of women. Another, Lisa Wilson's *Ye Heart of a Man: The Domestic Life of Men in Colonial New England* (New Haven, 1999), paid attention to men's domestic life alongside women.

<sup>2</sup> Stephen M. Frank, *Life with Father: Parenthood and Masculinity in the Nineteenth-Century American North* (Baltimore, 1998); Shawn Johansen, *Family Men: Middle-Class Fatherhood in Industrializing America* (New York, 2001), and Ruth Mazo Karras, *From Boys to Men: Formations of Masculinity in Late Medieval Europe* (Philadelphia, 2002).

<sup>3</sup> Main, *Peoples of a Spacious Land: Families and Cultures in Colonial New England* (Cambridge, Mass., 2001); Shepard, *Meanings of Manhood in Early Modern England* (Oxford, 2003).

<sup>4</sup> Hitchcock and Cohen, *English Masculinities, 1660/ 1800* (London, 1999).

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