

Artifacts of Regional Consciousness in the Connecticut River Valley, 1700–1780

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Students of American material culture frequently atomize the cultural landscape into discrete “regional cultures,” or areas marked by similar styles or variants of form and linguistic dialect. Although these regions are empirically defined and of great diagnostic use in identifying the geographic origins of diverse artifacts, few scholars have explored the historical processes that underlay the formation of regional culture. In this essay on the emergence of regional consciousness in the Connecticut River Valley during the eighteenth century, Robert Blair St. George discovers that the stylistic uniformity of many surviving objects from that area cloaks an underlying tension between small yeomen freeholders and local elites.

Elites in the Connecticut River Valley styled themselves River Gods. Several wealthy families—the Williamses, the Pynchons, the Stoddards, the Dwights, and others—controlled most of the property and, by exercising their economic and political muscle, profited as middlemen in trade networks that linked the region to such colonial ports as Boston, Newport, New London, and New York. These same individuals assumed the role of cultural brokers and shaped the distribution of news and channels of communication to their advantage. In the century of economic and cultural growth before 1730, their secure hold on the region was carefully mediated through the strategic perpetuation of socially “open” forms: open fields, “traditional” central-chimney houses, chests without drawers. These objects created a symbolic identity between them and their social inferiors; in other words, elites coercively manipulated the landscape to hold the existing social hierarchy firmly in place.

But by the 1730s, local farmers began to resent the autonomy of these hereditary aristocrats. They

openly criticized the ostentation of newly built mansions and complained that rents were higher than greedy landlords need exact. No longer able to manipulate everyone in their towns, and striving to assume the airs of the English landed gentry, the River Gods withdrew into a new environment of controlled anonymity. Large houses with elaborate doorways provided impenetrable façades of order; inside, rooms remained oddly unfinished, symbolic statements of disarray beneath a calm surface. The efforts of the River Gods to use the landscape as a means of mystifying their power during the decades from 1750 to 1780 suggest that class solidification, rather than an easy consensus, underlay the “regional style” that marks many surviving (and economically biased) artifacts. If we fail to recognize beneath the guise of surface unity a series of deep fissures encoding themselves in coercive artifice, we, like the River Gods themselves, may confuse nostalgia with critical history.

Anyone who has seen the Connecticut River at dusk knows its seductive force. As it glides past Hadley and twists its current into the Ox-Bow at Northampton, the river seems knowable, even reassuring. Its surface is calming. But as the river winds its way into our historical imagination, its gently sloping banks are sometimes awash with violent currents. For even today this “great river” curses the benevolence of New England’s most fertile fields with occasional flooding that leaves crops and farmers in ruin. In the nineteenth century this river lifted Thomas Cole to transcendental visions and at the same time powered mills that produced cloth and a new genera-

tion of entrepreneurial capitalists straining to control the growing strength of industrial workers. And in the eighteenth century, it supported a regional culture shaped by the actions of individuals whose lives were similarly defined by tension and conflicting values.

Samuel Porter was one such individual. Like many of his neighbors in early eighteenth-century Hadley, Porter owned a farm and raised grain and livestock. At night he retired to his house, a six-room, central-chimney structure that resembled most of the others in town. By these indices he seems to have been a farmer among farmers in this prosperous agrarian community. But if we follow Porter's life farther, the dry details of his 1722 estate inventory reveal he kept a "Treading Shop." From this small structure adjacent to his house, Porter sold expensive textiles ("East-Endia Silk," "Mohare," "Canteloon," and "Caleminko"), pewter, glassware, spectacles, spices, sugar, buttons, and imported sewing implements; these commodities marked the arrival of a consumer revolution that had begun in London in the mid-seventeenth century and within fifty years had affected the everyday lives of settlers in England's most distant colonies. In 1722 Porter was worth more than £7,790, roughly fifty times what the average yeoman in the Connecticut River Valley was likely to have amassed during a life of constant toil and little earthly reward. When he died, in addition to household furnishings worth £388 and livestock valued at £131, he had 114 gallons of rum at Hartford ready for shipment upriver, furs worth £148 waiting to leave Boston for London, and trade goods in London valued at £196 loaded for shipment home.¹

Samuel Porter is just one of many people whose lives raise questions concerning the internal complexities and apparent contradictions that characterized routine social relations in the Connecticut River Valley during the eighteenth century. If the distance between Porter and his neighbors was already evident in 1722, it gained visibility for his son in the 1740s and was glaring when his grandson inherited the farm in the 1760s. Yet in the decades between 1750 and 1780, the regional culture that emerged in the Connecticut River Valley derived an ironic coherence as the Porters and other elite families struggled to perpetuate specific economic and social inequalities on which their grasp of local affairs depended. This brief moment of coherence raises more questions than it

answers about eighteenth-century New England society. How useful is the "regional culture" approach in discovering meaningful linkages between social history and artifact study? In what ways were social and economic relations distinctive in the Connecticut River Valley?

Despite its long and complex history, the concept of regional culture remains an inexact analytical tool for two reasons. First, its meaning is weakened by definitions that extend imprecisely in all directions. Howard W. Odum and Harry Estill Moore, the great advocates of American regionalism and theorists of regional culture, claimed in 1938 that five distinct "types of regions" exist for study: the "natural region" (like a river valley); the "metropolitan region," in which a city is the center and focus of adjacent areas; a "loosely defined region," or provincial locality bound together by common loyalties and "folkways"; the "region for convenience," or area that is articulated for political or bureaucratic purposes"; and the "group of states" region, such as the Northeast. Odum and Moore classified other regions on the basis of disciplinary approaches to the study of culture and society. Here they included the "functional regions" of geographers, the "mercantile regions" of economists, the "administrative regions" of political scientists, and the "aesthetic and literary regions" of art historians and literary critics.² The problem with all of this is apparent; a quick glance shows that *all* these definitions partially describe the Connecticut River Valley during the eighteenth century and suggests they are ahistorical categories external to the culture as it was actually lived.

Fortunately, there is a practical common denominator to the confusion. Whether plotting demographic activity, exchange relations, or the distribution of isolable "culture traits" like material artifacts, the identification of regional culture is at one level a spatial activity fundamentally geographic in nature. Ideally, when maps detailing singular patterns are superimposed, the area of overlap indicates genuine regional boundaries based on all available evidence. In an attempt to chart cultural regions with greater precision, geographers and folklorists have relied on extensive fieldwork. Fred Kniffen, dean of American cultural geographers, was among the first to superimpose maps when, in the course of testing "the diagnostic power of folk housing" as an indicator of regional boundaries, he noted the overlapping

distributional patterns of domestic architecture and speech dialect in the eastern United States. Based on additional field study, Henry Glassie in 1968 extended and revised Kniffen's work and, in so doing, grounded the reality of regional culture in the rigorous analysis of artifacts that vary predictably from place to place.³

Materials have already been studied in the Connecticut River Valley that, in deviating from related forms found elsewhere in New England, assert its integrity as a regional culture during the middle decades of the eighteenth century. Here the evidence—and the boundaries—are above dispute. Hans Kurath found that historical patterns of local speech dialect united the valley in Connecticut and Massachusetts but broke sharply once north of the Vermont border, a boundary that Amelia Miller's detailed and systematic study of eighteenth-century doorways confirms. Miller's findings in the lower valley provide an architectural complement to John T. Kirk's studies of household furniture and to Dr. Ernest Caulfield's exhaustive research on Connecticut gravestones.⁴

The efforts of cultural geographers, folklorists, and students of the decorative arts demonstrate one point clearly: it is one thing to chart the boundaries of a distinct cultural region, but quite another to explain the constitutive logic of its assumed underlying cultural unity. Here we confront the second reason why the regional culture concept is analytically impoverished; its advocates have always stopped short of fully explaining why apparent similarities emerge. Indeed, they have systematically neglected its utility in exploring conflicting social values and emergent forms of class consciousness.

Perhaps the oversight results from their diverse methods and theoretical goals. Students of folklore, geography, social history, and the decorative arts usually ask different questions of their data, and, in the end, they tell different stories. The lack of conceptual precision that characterizes studies of American regional artifacts results directly from the fact that most students have asked questions *about* the artifact and not *of* it. Studying shadowy references to objects in probate records, tax lists, and account books more often than real objects, they fail to confront the values that artifacts actively assert.⁵ The principal question that community and regional studies must ask of the artifact is not "How much did it cost?" or "Does this demonstrate the spread of the consumer

revolution?" or even, *pace res semiotica*, "Is it a sign, a moment of 'nonverbal communication'?" The challenge instead lies in addressing anew an issue raised without conclusion by John Demos fifteen years ago: "How did people *feel* about this or that object?"⁶

This single question urges us to place the surviving fragments of eighteenth-century culture in the Connecticut River Valley within a specific structure, a structure whose context frames the period aesthetic standards and the values—or conflicts—that characterized that society as a whole. In defining this structure, Raymond Williams reminds us that "we are talking about characteristic elements of impulse, restraint, and tone; specifically affective elements of consciousness and relationships: not feelings against thought, but thought as felt and feeling as thought: practical consciousness of a present kind, in a living and interrelating continuity. We are then defining these elements as a 'structure': as a set, with specific internal relations, at once interlocking and in tension."⁷ To fuse thought with feeling, to collapse our need to isolate intellect from emotion, to see the history of ideas and the history of their material enactments as a unity basic to human experience in past and present: these are prerequisites of establishing a social history that transforms the descriptive study of regional culture into the analytical exploration of regional consciousness.

Regional consciousness in the valley defined a series of felt tensions between social homogeneity and social fragmentation, wealth and poverty, and mobility and stasis. It affected and in part was derived from the valley's agrarian economy, from the gentry's purposeful use of houses, doorways, and gravestones to create both a distance from and a paradoxical reliance on local craftsmen, and from the resulting dependence and occasional resentment of laboring people for their elite neighbors. Because the valley's regional culture defined a tension between community and class, between communication and the maintenance of social distance, it allows us to link artifacts as enactments of cultural values to other power structures in local society.

Although previous writers have stated that social homogeneity and a consensus in values characterized the Connecticut River Valley during the eighteenth century,⁸ regional consciousness in the valley derived first from a form of agrarian capitalism that made a consensus of values logically impossible. Like its

counterpart in eighteenth-century rural England, Connecticut River Valley society was built on a single great contradiction: while its economy gestured to a market run by individuals acting as free agents of profits, its political and social structures were based on a system of aristocratic preference linked by an intricate web of kin relations.⁹ We can begin an analysis of how regional consciousness emerged by examining each side of this contradiction separately.

English settlement in the Connecticut River Valley was market oriented from its beginnings and quick to turn a profit from the land, river, and forests. In Connecticut, sons of prominent English families—men like George Wyllys of Hartford and John Chester of Wethersfield—recreated with remarkable speed the well-capitalized farms and system of tenant labor they remembered from their gentle upbringings. These first-generation landlords shared a vision of society essentially the same as that expressed by John Winthrop when he explained that the “rich and mighty” were morally charged to nurture qualities of “love, mercy, gentleness, and temperance” and urged “not to eat up the poor.” In return for their love and protection, the “poor and inferior sort” were to practice “faith, patience, and obedience” so as not to “rise up against their superiors and shake off their yoke.” In Massachusetts, William Pynchon concurred as he profited from the lucrative fur trade. By 1650 he had created a fiefdom that his descendants would inherit and rely on as a power base for the next century.¹⁰

The goal of large landowners in the valley was not mere self-sufficiency but rather to “improve” a surplus of goods to sell to Boston merchants at a high profit. Describing New England in 1645, Robert Child of Boston attested to the level of production already occurring in parts of the lower valley. “The next jurisdiction is Connecticut river,” he wrote, “where Mr. Hooker lives containing 5 or 6 good plantations, exceedingly abounding in come. the last yeare they spared 20000 bushell, and have already this yeare sent to the bay 4000 bushell at least of come. these are the fruitfulest places in all new England.”¹¹ Within one or two decades of settlement, the Connecticut River Valley was inextricably bound up in the destiny of the colonial marketplace. By the close of the seventeenth century, mercantile dependence on the Connecticut River as a trade route was

widely recognized. After a poor harvest in 1695, the Massachusetts assembly ordered that “no grain of any sort, bisket or flower shall be exported or carried out of this province by land or water (*excepted what is brought from the western towns to Hartford, in order to be transported from thence to Boston*).”¹²

Agricultural specialization emerged by the mid-1730s. Wethersfield farmers raised onions. Yeomen in Hadley, Hatfield, and Deerfield fattened livestock for Boston slaughterers and meat packers. Householders in Enfield, Longmeadow, and Northampton grew the wheat that made their area the “breadbasket of New England,” and farmers in Glastonbury, Windsor, and East Hartford cultivated tobacco. On the one hand, this economic system fostered an interdependence between towns that lent the region coherence and integration. On the other hand, it gave the merchants in Springfield, Hartford, Middletown, Colchester, and East Haddam an unrivaled opportunity for profit as middlemen.¹³

Like many market-oriented rural landscapes, the Connecticut Valley was a meeting place for individuals with different visions of how society should work, to whose advantage it should work, and whose interests should dominate local affairs. In this contest for social and political influence, a local gentry made up of recognized River Gods and a series of lesser aristocrats arose as the clear victor. In brief, their power was grounded in mercantile activity supported by the control of large areas of land during a period of rapid population growth. They maintained their hegemony by performing real and ceremonial functions of leadership that skillfully balanced assertions of social difference against benevolent rituals of moral identification.¹⁴

The trappings of proclaimed social difference were immediately apparent. Some local elites were officers in the county militia who led local troops both in drills and in field duty. Others enhanced their authority as lawyers and magistrates. Colonel Fisher Gay of Farmington, for example, owned such basic texts as the “Connecticut Law Book,” “Jacobs Law dictionary,” “Woods Institutes,” “Everyman his own Lawyer,” and “Burns Justice 4 vol.” when he died in 1779.¹⁵ Still other elites served as physicians and through the mystification of medical knowledge took control of people’s bodies. In the “Surgeons Shop” worth £60 on his Wethersfield estate in 1775, Ezekiel Porter kept the tools of his trade ready for use, in-

cluding "3 Cases of Surgeons Instruments," "2 Sets Do. for Drawing teeth," and "1 Set of amputating [Do]." ¹⁶ Finally, the authority of ministers extended over the spiritual welfare of those beneath them. The power of the clergy was in part due to their role in perpetuating an orthodox covenant theology with roots in seventeenth-century social structure. The library of the Reverend William Russell of Windsor, Connecticut, who died in 1775 with an impressive estate of £1,416, illustrates how conservative accepted doctrine was; his favorite authors included such well-known seventeenth-century Puritan ministers as William Perkins, John Preston, Thomas Hooker, and Richard Baxter. ¹⁷ In its emphasis on the sanctity of a hierarchic society ruled by wise patriarchs, such conservative doctrine legitimized the unchallenged authority of the Connecticut River Valley gentry into the third quarter of the eighteenth century. Without doubt, local elites in the 1770s would have appreciated the Reverend Solomon Stoddard's sense of hierarchy when he urged, "authority must be kept up . . . and . . . we must take heed that we don't Suffer people to trample upon us." ¹⁸

The social differences manifest in holding civil and religious power over the body and souls of other men and women were intensified as the gentry exploited positions of prestige for personal gain. Local merchants like Samuel Porter played a vital role in sustaining their communities, while at the same time controlling prices and availability so that laws of supply and demand worked to their own advantage. As Kevin M. Sweeney has pointed out, merchants who served as subcommissaries in the militia stood to gain if they could make clever use of government bills of credit extended to them during wartime. The shrewd handling of £6,000 in drafts on the Royal Paymaster General in London made Joseph Dwight a fast personal fortune in 1748, at the same time that it ensured his Hampshire County troops their pay before going to war. In addition, merchant subcommissaries decided which local farmers could sell their produce to the militia, thus enabling them to bless certain plebeians with their favor while denying it to others. ¹⁹

The gentry also made the most of their frequent stints as justices of the peace, the one job that all of the known River Gods in Massachusetts at one point held, as did many of their fathers. John Adams summarized the social distance that justices experienced as a result of their power, especially in rural districts.

"The Office of a Justice of the Peace," he wrote in 1774, "is a great Acquisition in the Country, and such a Distinction to a Man among his Neighbours as is enough to purchase and corrupt almost any man." ²⁰ Once in power, justices could easily define the public good in terms of personal agendas. As a result, the political goals of the Connecticut River Valley gentry were typically parochial and concerned principally with jurisdictional issues and military allocations that would guarantee their return to office and insure the protection of their own landholdings in case the French or Indians were to attack. ²¹

Joseph Hawley of Northampton, for example, in 1754 considered using his power as a representative to the Massachusetts assembly in order to block the nomination of a rival for a military post he wanted. Threatening to stop military allocations that his local constituents coveted, he wrote to Israel Williams that if his own goals could not be realized, "it seems to me *all our separate designs and projections* will be likely to prove abortive. I don't think that in my private capacity I am of much importance as to such matters," he continued, "but as a member of the House it is possible I may be, for I have always spoke my mind in the House and sometimes have been heard." ²² Despite how subtly or how overtly they fought their own private battles, members of the valley gentry—merchants, ministers, magistrates, and militia officers—would have agreed that the fulfillment of personal interests was a necessary privilege of being atop the "natural order" of their society.

When a single individual filled more than one of these roles, that person could become extremely powerful. Samuel Porter, our original protagonist, was a merchant who also dispensed legal advice from the pages of the "Province Law-Book" he kept in the "hall," or public room, of his house. Most powerful was Israel Williams of Hatfield, whose position of unchallenged authority caused his political opponents in Boston to call him the "monarch of Hampshire." Local plebeians acknowledged his River God status literally by calling him "our father." ²³ The hegemony that Williams and others enjoyed derived directly from a structure of wealth based on radical inequalities in land ownership that also informed the political economy and its ecclesiastical outposts. While most yeomen worked farms that may have grown as large as 100 acres, the gentry had vast holdings that often included the most productive acreage. Samuel

Porter owned 2,801 acres of land in Hadley worth £1,194. Seth Wetmore of Middletown died in 1778 with an estate valued at £14,535. Of this, his 1,282 acres of land accounted for £9,129 (63 percent). The 164 animals he owned accounted for another £394 (3 percent), while an additional £1,083 (7.5 percent) was invested in the "Old Mansion house & out houses with 17 Acres Meadow east of house & 3 Acres West [of] where the house stands." Members of the gentry who relied on tenant farmers to work their estates were called "Landlord" in return.²⁴

The unequal distribution of property extended beyond land to engage a system of explicit status markers that the gentry depended on as a means of glorifying their own social position. From these artifacts they built a theater of class dominance and control that functioned in two ways. First, it created symbolic barriers between themselves and their neighbors. Second, it used these barriers to link their own authority to the authority of God. Most evident in this new disjunctive landscape were the large, elaborately carpentered houses they built, the doorways with which they dramatized the front (and occasionally the side) doors of these structures, and the impressive gravestones they placed over their dead relatives.

A brief examination of roof structures clarifies one aspect of architectural difference. The yeoman's house in the Connecticut River Valley was normally roofed in one of two ways. One system employed a series of principal rafters joined together by principal purlins, or horizontal timbers that were framed between each pair of rafter couplings and steadied the trusses. Typically, the outside surface of these purlins supported a second set of smaller, secondary rafters. The other type relied on a series of common rafters steadied by the horizontal roof boards. Like similar examples built at Massachusetts Bay and in Rhode Island, the surviving Connecticut River Valley examples, such as those at the Buttolph-Williams house in Wethersfield and the Joseph Hollister house in Glastonbury (fig. 1), have clear antecedents in postmedieval timber framed buildings in England.²⁵ Under their peaked timbers, these roofs afforded a small garret suitable for the storage of processed grains, spare tools, or old furniture in the space around a massive central chimney stack.

The difference between these roofs and the large gambrel roof that merchant Joseph Webb put on his

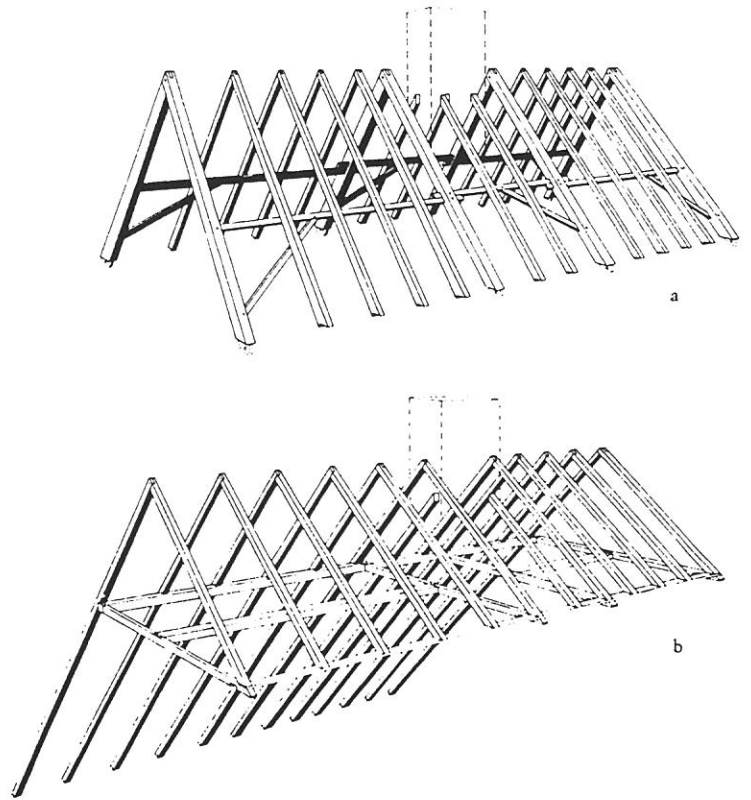


Fig. 1. *a.* Roof frame of Buttolph-Williams house, Wethersfield, Connecticut, ca. 1695–1700. (Drawing by Robert St. George, based on fieldwork conducted by Robert St. George and R. Trent, October 1984.) *b.* Second roof frame of Joseph Hollister's house, South Glastonbury, Connecticut, ca. 1740. (Drawing and fieldwork by Robert St. George, November 1984.)

new Wethersfield house in 1752 is immediately apparent (fig. 2). At one level, the design of Webb's gambrel frame gestured to bookish prototypes available in the standard eighteenth-century English building manuals of Batty Langley and Francis Price.²⁶ The form of his roof was foreign to the domestic experience of most of his fellow townsmen and may have been calculated to put them in awe of his knowledge of the world beyond their farm fences. It was also a roof type that, when built locally, was commonly reserved for public buildings and for the houses of justices of the peace. In short, it carried associations of political authority.²⁷

In its structural complexity, Webb's roof signaled his ability to pay for materials and for the labor of Judah Wright, the carpenter who masterminded the project. Webb's overt consumption of skill was remarkable, as his account for Wright's work indicates.

For carpentry work alone, Webb credited Wright with a total of almost £169.²⁸ In addition, Webb bought 5,100 pine shingles in July 1752 from William Eastman of Hadley²⁹ and probably purchased dressed red sandstone foundation blocks in Middletown, making the completed structure a tour de force of his ability to exploit trade connections and obligations throughout the Connecticut River Valley. Other members of the gentry also consumed labor on a regional basis. When Roger Wolcott of Windsor, governor of the Connecticut colony, died in 1767, his executors insisted that his body rest beneath a table stone ordered from Thomas Johnson's Middletown quarry. And, as we might expect, the cost of the monument increased due to the labor required to get it to Windsor:

	[£. s. d.]
To Cash to Thomas Johnson for a Table Stone	6 15 0
To boating the Stone from Middletown	0 10 0
To Carting the Stone from the River	0 3 0
To Cash to Matthew Grant for Setting up the Stone	0 3 5
[Total:	£7 11 5] ³⁰

The domestic environments of the Connecticut River Valley gentry became more impressive as they exploited available labor. As testimonials to such consumption, houses and gravestones were appropriate icons of an underlying moral code that also sanctioned the ownership of black slaves. Indeed, the architectural facades adopted by valley elites bear comparison with those of Southern planters; the more frail and dangerously unequal the social structure, the more architecture moves toward symmetry and control.³¹

The theater of dominance in the Connecticut River Valley also relied on the elaborate doorways that Amelia Miller has studied in detail.³² Like the framing system of Joseph Webb's roof, these doorways (fig. 3) gestured to a world of architectural uniformity at the same time that they admitted individual variations by local woodworkers. These doorways glorified the status of the gentry perhaps more than any other artifact. Probate inventories of known doorway owners indicate a mean estate of nearly £4,500 and \$8,500, both sizable sums. Josiah Dwight, a Springfield merchant whose doorway is now at the Winterthur Museum and whose house is now reconstructed in Deerfield, was worth nearly £9,500 in 1768. Like

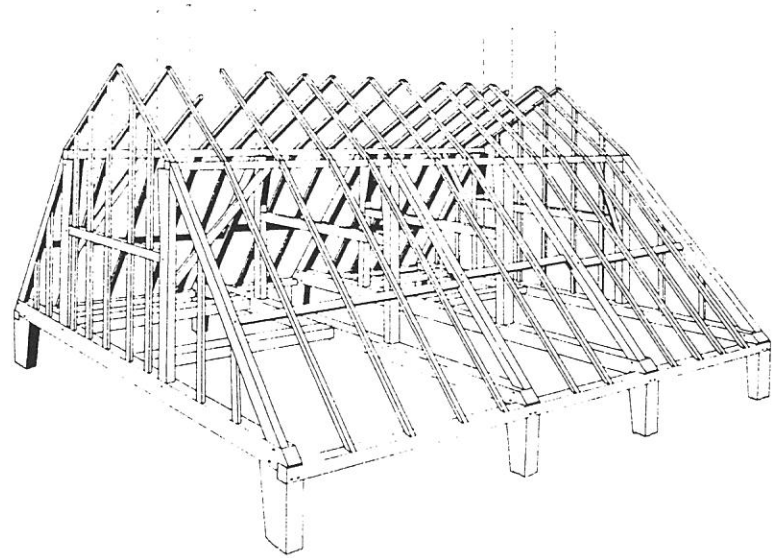


Fig. 2. Roof frame of Joseph Webb's house, made by Judah Wright, 1752. (Drawing by Robert St. George, based on fieldwork by Robert St. George, R. Trent, and Kevin Sweeney, November 1984.)

Fig. 3. Doorway on Elijah Williams's house, Deerfield, Massachusetts, built ca. 1760. (Photograph by Robert St. George, August 1975.)



the gambrel roofs they sometimes accompanied, these doorways invoked authority because their size and workmanship were associated with large public buildings; in New Haven, the "State House" (1763), the first Episcopal church (1753), and the third meetinghouse (1757) all had impressive portals. So did Christ Church (Episcopal) at Stratford (ca. 1744–48) and the second meetinghouses of Bethlehem (1767), Longmeadow (1767), and Northfield (1762).³³

In their large size and indulgent exterior decorations, the houses of the Connecticut River Valley participated, albeit at a distance, in the "ideology of the country house" that had already made a similar impression on the English landscape. In this context, houses like those of Samuel Porter, Josiah Dwight, and Joseph Webb were intended "to break the scale, by an act of will corresponding to their real and systematic exploitation of others." In so doing, they provided "a visible stamping of power, of displayed wealth and command: a social disproportion which was meant to impress and overawe." And, always, this power and command had its roots in the extent to which the gentry could fuse its mercantile interests with its control of increasing agricultural specialization.³⁴

The public display of class prerogative was occasionally complemented by the furnishings inside a local gentry household, objects that comprised one side of a dialectic that existed between the private, inner world of selected acquaintances and the public, outer world of less specific impressions. Without doubt, the gentry relied on local craftsmen to produce their most public artifacts—houses, doors, gravestones—and in so doing fulfilled their moral responsibility to lend visible support to their neighbors, some of whom might even be less successful relatives. They even relied on neighborhood craftsmen for some of their most polite furniture, like the "Cherry Desk & Book Case" worth £3.10.0 owned by Ezekiel Porter of Wethersfield in 1775.³⁵ While they owned locally made objects, the gentry also used their interiors to reveal their interest in the world beyond the familiar faces of their towns. Because at least two-thirds of the River Gods had risen to power as merchants,³⁶ they were in a position to acquire imported objects and participate in levels of the foreign marketplace that their less prosperous neighbors would never know. Throughout the eighteenth century, objects arrived in valley homes from Boston,

Newport, New York, Philadelphia, and London and provided a jarring counterpoint to the wares of local artisans. In the early eighteenth century, Hezekiah Wyllys of Hartford exploited his mercantile ties in New York City to obtain a tankard made by silversmith Bartholomew Schaats (fig. 4). Ebenezer Plummer, Glastonbury's leading mid-eighteenth-century merchant, displayed a printed view of Quebec executed by the prominent Boston engraver Thomas Johnston in 1759 (fig. 5). And the Reverend Eliphalet Williams had a Staffordshire tea service delivered to his East Hartford mansion in the decade before the Revolution (fig. 6). The gentry's simultaneous patronage of local workers and need to identify with their perceived social equals in urban centers of "taste" supports Lewis Mumford's belief that "a genuine regional tradition lives by two principles. One is, cultivate whatever you have, no matter how poor it is; it is at least your own. The other is, seek elsewhere for what you do not possess; absorb whatever is good

Fig. 4. Bartholomew Schaats, tankard, New York City, 1700–1720. Silver, h. 6¾"; w. at base 5". (Photograph by John Giammateo, courtesy of Historic Deerfield, Inc.)





Fig. 5. Thomas Johnston, *Quebec, The Capital of New-France, A Bishoprick, and Seat of the Sovereign Court*, Boston, Massachusetts, 1759. Line engraving; 8" x 9⁵/₁₆". (Photograph by Robert Bitondi, courtesy of The Connecticut Historical Society.)

wherever you may find it; make it your own."³⁷

Like their drive to consume labor as a sign of power, the need to assert an extensive identity based on possessing foreign artifacts separated the gentry from their neighbors. Doorways were fragile membranes separating the outer world of the locally made from the inner world of elite fashion. They were portals through which only the chosen few, the socially elect, could pass. Once securely inside, the fortunate few could enjoy a world supplied with sensual de-

lights, the exotic fruits of merchant capital. In essence, a River God's doorway was a disjunctive icon that enforced divisions of social class through the symbolic invocation of legitimizing religious dogma. The distance separating the River Gods and their local supplicants in this world metaphysically suggested, in a moment of continuity with seventeenth-century thinkers like Edward Taylor of Westfield, the ordained separation of those souls elected for salvation and the reward of heavenly delights (approached through a portal or gate) from those who would never know the bliss of God's kingdom. "Death is the portal to eternity, and carries men over to an unchangeable state," wrote Samuel Willard in 1726.³⁸ Indeed, inheriting the crown of glory in resurrection must

have been the typological basis for the popularity of “crown-topped” doors, “crown-topped” high chests, “crown” looking glasses, and “crown” chairs among the local gentry.

The eighteenth-century gravestones of the Connecticut River Valley gentry refer frequently to the “portal of death.” The souls of the dead rise through scroll-topped pediments (fig. 7), pass through scroll-topped doorways into Eternity (fig. 8), or cross the thresholds of literal doorways on the way to the next world (figs. 9, 10).³⁹ Entering one’s home through an elaborate ceremonial doorway, like entering the gates of Heaven, was probably seen by the gentry as a divinely sanctioned act of self-glorification designed to inspire the earthly congregation. And to make the metaphor complete, both kinds of doorways enabled elites to pass to an unseen world—one hidden from neighbors of a lesser status, the other invisible to all mortals. Once admitted to this hopefully “unchangeable state,” they would dwell in the house of a River God, or in the house of the Lord. Doorways further intensified the power of disjunction and changing states as they endowed wood with the appearance of other materials. In the Elihu White doorway from Hatfield, for example, yellow pine attains both the rigidity of stone and the delicacy of a grapevine.⁴⁰

As they transcended substance, doorways—like the houses they adorned—also vibrated with symmetry. Like their first-generation ancestors, eighteenth-century people in the Connecticut River Valley be-

Fig. 6. Teapot, Staffordshire, England, 1760–75. Creamware with copper green glaze; h. 4⁵/₈". (Courtesy of Wadsworth Atheneum; bequest of Mrs. Gurdon Trumbull.)

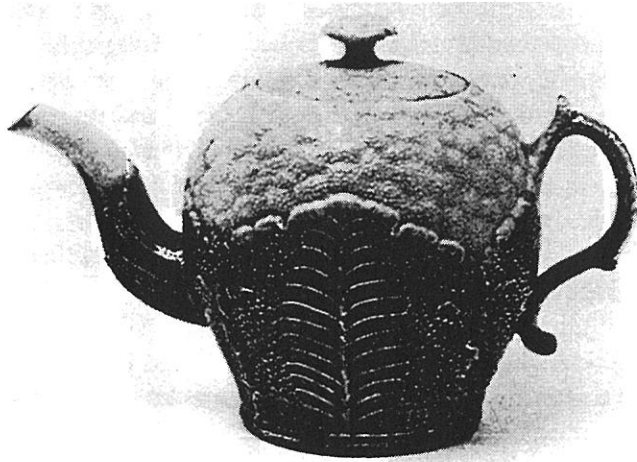


Fig. 7. Detail of Capt. Simon Colton stone, 1796, Longmeadow, Massachusetts. (Photograph by Robert St. George, December 1984.)

Fig. 8. Detail of Martha Welch stone, 1773, Storrs, Connecticut. (Photograph by Robert St. George, December 1984.)



lieved that symmetry invoked God's perfect formation of the human body, and they were aware of the perfect symmetry of their own frames as the "type" of artifactual frames. As Thomas Anburey observed in 1778, Connecticut elites "appear here with much stiffness and reserve: they are formed by symmetry."⁴¹ The bilateral logic of houses, doorways, and gravestones was grounded in an ambivalent admixture of physical and metaphysical meanings and in a tension between the person-ness and thing-ness of everyday objects.⁴²

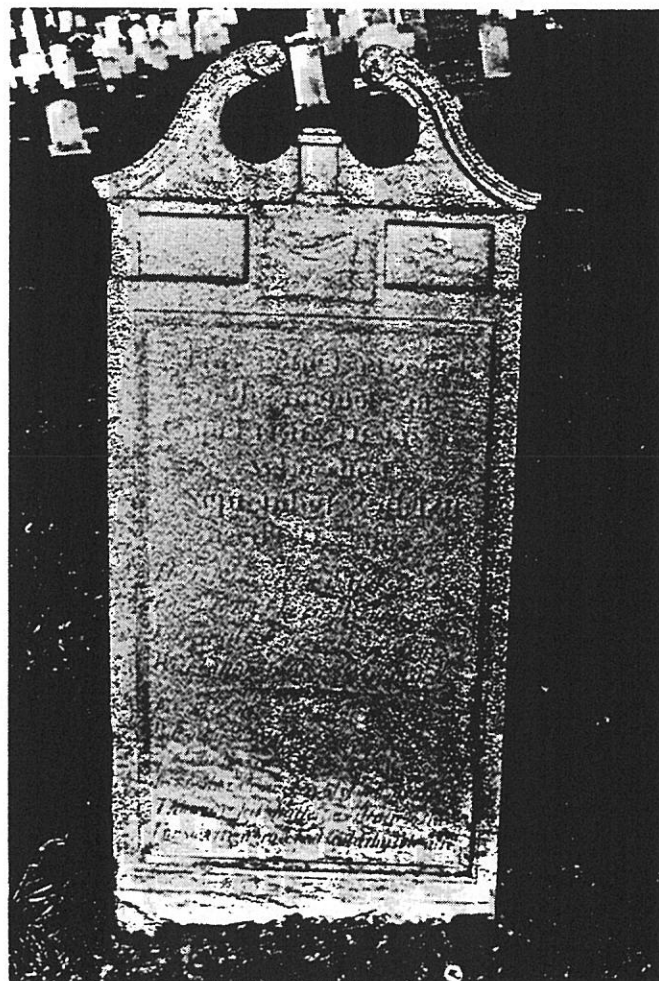
The affective power of doorways and gravestones, as portals marking the entrances to two different houses of deference and belief, derived from tensions on different levels. On one level, their size and cost set them apart from the physical worlds of lesser yeomen and artisans. In short, they were ostentatious performances of social dominance. On another level, they referred to foreign sources but admitted domes-

tic tradition and modification by familiar craftsmen. And they were ambivalent for several reasons. First, they were icons that blurred the clear boundaries of public and private domains. Doors suggested public buildings as they led into private dwellings, while gravestones were private markers in public yards. Second, at the same time that they provided a substantive portal they played with its materiality, making wood resemble stone or flowers, or making stone look like trees and vines. Finally, as their symmetry drew metaphysical connections between the houses and bodies of the gentry and of God, they blurred basic distinctions between objects and subjects. Owning these powers, doorways, houses, and gravestones affectively linked the gentry's aesthetic authority to their economic and political power in local society.⁴³

Fig. 9. Samuel Dwight stone, 1763, Enfield, Connecticut. (Photograph by Robert St. George, December 1984.)



Fig. 10. Elisha Dickinson stone, 1813(?), Hadley, Massachusetts. (Photograph by Robert St. George, 1984.)



Only part of the Connecticut River Valley gentry's longevity in power was due to their assertions of social difference. The rest was due to their success in assuring their poorer neighbors that they had their best interests at heart. Here the elites were being more practical than altruistic, for if we look back, we see a line of popular protest and rebellion against the hegemony of the River Gods as continuous as that inscribed by the sure progress of agrarian capitalism. Such resentment was apparent on a local level as early as 1716, when the Reverend Stephen Williams of Longmeadow worried over his neighbors' criticism of his new mansion. Williams realized that an ostentatious house could easily alienate more of his parishioners than it might inspire: "This morning I heard that my neighbor Brooks is uneasy because of my house being so stately. I have heard of others that speak meanly and reproachfully of me. God forgive them and help me heartily to do it. O Lord, help me to walk inoffensively, so that none may have occasion to speak ill of me; help me, O Lord, to do my duty, and by no means to neglect that, to curry favor with man. Man had better be angry with me than God."⁴⁴ For Williams, as for his many relatives in positions of power, maintaining the landscape of social distance and forgiving the moral infractions of resentful plebeians were part of one's "duty" to God.

Opposition to gentry authority found a voice on the provincial level as well. Early in 1766, known River Gods from Hampshire County were among those indicted by radicals for having supported the Stamp Act. "They are justly to be accounted *enemies of the country*," claimed the insurgents. "Whosoever contributes to enslave posterity, and bring a lasting ruin on his country, his name shall descend, with all the marks of infamy, to the latest times." In 1770 Israel Williams of Hatfield, having refused to join other Massachusetts merchants in a boycott of English goods, was derided as one of "those Persons . . . that preferred their little private Advantage to the common Interest of all the Colonies . . . who with a design to enrich themselves, basely took Advantage of the generous self denial of their Fellow Citizens for the common Good." And after the Consolidation Act of 1781 imposed an excise tax on Massachusetts residents to rebuild the post-Revolutionary economy—an event that led to the prosecution of hapless debtors, massive migrations of insolvent farmers to New York state and the Western Reserve, and to Shays' Re-

bellion—one Hampshire County village protested the government. Their diction appropriately recalled Winthrop's advice that rulers should not "eat up the poor": "Honoured sirs are not these imprisonments and fleerings away of our good inhabitants very injurious to the credit or honour of the Commonwealth: will not people in the neighboring states say of this state: altho the [people of] Massachusetts boast of their fine constitution their government is such that it *devours their inhabitants*."⁴⁵

Indeed, the surviving artifacts suggest that, along with a theater of dominance, the River Gods built a self-interested "ideology of community" in three ways. First, as we have already seen, they actively patronized local artisans and relied on their skills rather than importing urban craftsmen whose understanding of neoclassical style and architectural theory may have been more "correct." In addition, they chose to actively participate in the perpetuation of a range of "socially open" forms that typically correspond to a closed, hierarchically ordered social structure. Such socially open forms include common field agriculture, central-chimney, hall-and-parlor houses, and room usage that retained the hall as the center of domestic functions in the public front of the house (fig. 11). In short, socially open forms give the impression of social integration and "community" values. This is one reason why the seventeenth-century style persisted in the Connecticut River Valley into the second half of the eighteenth century.

Nucleated villages surrounded by common fields, for example, survived in some places until the mid-eighteenth century (Deerfield and Northfield), even though they had given way to dispersed settlement and enclosed fields in eastern Massachusetts and coastal Connecticut by the early 1660s. These eighteenth-century towns, whether inland or on the banks of the river, were still conceived of as a series of concentric social rings. The meetinghouse stood at the symbolic center, surrounded by the houses of the gentry and more prosperous yeomen on the large house lots along the town's main street. On smaller lots tucked in side streets stood the small, one-and-one-half story cottages of lesser farmers, beyond which the fields extended in neat progression. When one of John Adams's hosts in the Connecticut River Valley in 1771 boasted "there was not such another Street in America as this at Weathersfield excepting



Fig. 11. House on Route 116, Amherst, Massachusetts, ca. 1770. (Photograph by Robert St. George, August 1979.)

one at Hadley," he was describing the promenade of mansions that defined the secular center of such towns. These houses, according to one New England settler in 1634, were "orderly placed to enjoye comfortable comunion" and to assert the authority of the "rich and mighty" upon whose shoulders the weight of leadership pressed. Cotton Mather saw in such order the "Sacred Geography of God's Kingdom."⁴⁶

Domestic houses in the Connecticut River Valley retained index features of seventeenth-century form and style until the third quarter of the eighteenth century. Many members of the gentry continued to live in houses of the same form as those of their yeomen neighbors; a hall and a parlor were separated by a large central chimney, while a shed enclosing the working kitchen and service rooms ran across the rear of the house. Bracketed jetties and angular lean-tos articulated internal divisions of space, making the social use of the house legible from the street. Inside, people furnished their houses in similar ways as

well. Despite a marked rise during the 1730s and 1740s in the amount and range of interior furniture used, gentry and yeomen alike followed established seventeenth-century practices, such as displaying plate on cupboards, through the late 1730s. While the houses of the wealthy were larger and more ornate than those of farmers, they still gestured toward consensus in terms of how space was organized and used. Visitors to Connecticut River Valley towns must have had a reaction similar to that of Thomas Anbury, who, after passing through Enfield and Suffield in 1778, recalled that "I could not help remarking that the houses are all after the same plan."⁴⁷

Yet their use of similar forms does not only suggest that the gentry shared the values of those beneath them. Equally, it suggests that they realized that these forms were necessary linkages of identification that might help to ensure deference. In other words, the gentry seem to have manipulated "traditional" images to their own advantage. Here, too, the River Gods could have cited the precedent of John Winthrop and other gentlemen, who at first built on a humble scale, "in order not to discourage poorer la-

boring people whom they brought over in numbers from [the] fatherland."⁴⁸

Beginning in the late 1740s some merchants and magistrates began building houses with a radically different plan. With four rooms arranged symmetrically around a central hall or passageway, these "Georgian" houses effectively cast aside the importance of identification, or the assertion of feigned commonality, as a basis of deference. In opting out of consensual forms, these houses may seem to show a new confidence on the part of the gentry, but they also betray their owners' fear that their social position was weakening. Displays of social distance followed by acts of calculated generosity no longer alone ensured that the gentry's will would be done. As they witnessed the rise of "modern" attitudes toward privacy and individualism, these houses also announced the loosening of the River Gods' hold on local society.⁴⁹

The final way that the Connecticut River Valley gentry preserved the image of corporate communalism to their own advantage was through gifts, chief among which were silver objects donated to the local congregation, itself the single most powerful symbol of consensus. In performing these calculated acts of largesse, members of the gentry were perpetuating a tradition with seventeenth-century roots. "These great acts of generosity," wrote Marcel Mauss in his classic study *The Gift*, "are not free from self interest. . . . Between vassals and chiefs, between vassals and their henchmen, the hierarchy is established by means of these gifts. To give is to show one's superiority, to show that one is something more and higher. . . . To accept without reimbursing or repaying more is to face subordination, to become a client and subservient."⁵⁰ Thus, when Gov. Roger Wolcott donated in 1756 a pair of silver beakers to the First Church of East Windsor, he did so knowing that the inscription bearing his initials would be quickly recognized and that the congregation, unable to repay him, would not only be subservient but grateful for his benevolent gesture. Individuals like Jonathan Allen, a deacon of the First Church of Middletown for forty years who willed £10 for the purchase of "a Suitable Cup or Vessel for the Communion Table," were, among other things, anxious to have people remember them as benevolent and continue paying homage to their heirs.⁵¹

The fact that local elites were concerned to secure

for their descendants the deferential prerogative they had enjoyed suggests that while some leaders may not have sufficiently felt that peculiar mixture of confidence and fear needed to build Georgian houses, they nonetheless must have worried that their days in power were numbered. By the early 1770s some of the River Gods had suffered dramatic economic losses, due in part to their failure to amass sufficient capital to free them from a reliance on Boston merchants. In addition, many of the wealthiest elites had much of their estates either in land or else outstanding in "notes of hand" on which they charged interest, and thus lacked the freedom that liquid assets afforded. Of Fisher Gay's total estate of £5,222, some £2,286 (44 percent) were due in such notes; £4,288 (58.7 percent) of Alexander Allyn's Windsor estate, worth a total of £7,307, were similarly tied up.⁵²

Caught between visions of grandeur and grim financial realities, some local aristocrats built houses complete on the outside but left partially unfinished inside. Looking at the large houses near Enfield late in 1778, Anburey noticed that "most of them were only one half finished, the other half having only the rough timbers that support the building . . . but as the houses are entirely compleat on the outside, and the windows all glazed, they have the appearance of being finished, but on entering a house, you cannot help lamenting that the owner was unable to complete it." When their houses were furnished, not all were as impressive as a passerby might have guessed. Visiting Dr. Eliot Rawson in Middletown in 1771, Adams remarked that his house was "handsome without, but neither clean nor elegant within."⁵³

As they sensed themselves losing power, individual elites reacted by spending additional cash on the outward trappings of wealth, hollow though they often were. If the appearance of elaborate doorways between 1750 and 1780 can be read as a sign of perceived social insecurity, their distribution suggests that such anxieties were most pronounced in the northern valley towns of Deerfield, Hatfield, and Northampton (table 1), where the need of the Porters, Williamses, Hawleys, and Partridges to assert a fading aristocratic legacy was the greatest and where the social structure was the frailest.⁵⁴ Because control of land and mercantile activity easily assured his authority, Samuel Porter had no need of an elaborate doorway by 1722. If anything, such ostentation might have needlessly polarized public opinion and under-

Table 1. Connecticut River Valley Towns Having at Least Four Doorways, 1755–1780

Town*	Doorway Type				Total
	Scroll-top	Triangular-top	Segmental-top	Flat-top	
Massachusetts					
Deerfield	3	2	6	—	11
Hatfield	6	2	2	1	11
Hadley	2	1	3	—	6
Northampton	1	8	3	—	12
Springfield	1	4	2	—	7
Westfield	2	1	3	—	6
Longmeadow	1	3	1	—	5
Connecticut					
Enfield	—	—	5	1	6
Suffield	4	—	—	—	4
Windsor	—	2	4	—	6
S. Windsor	3	5	—	—	8
Hartford	2	2	1	—	5
E. Hartford	1	1	2	—	4
Farmington	1	—	5	—	6
Wethersfield	4	1	2	—	7
Glastonbury	1	2	1	—	4
Middletown	2	1	1	—	4
New Haven	3	1	3	—	7
Saybrook	—	—	4	—	4
Total	37	36	48	2	123

Source: Amelia F. Miller, *Connecticut River Valley Doorways: An Eighteenth-Century Flowering* (Boston, 1983), 20, 66, 86, 90. Incorporation dates as they existed for Massachusetts towns in 1780 have been followed, as given in Frederic W. Cook, *Historical Data Relating to Counties, Cities, and Towns in Massachusetts* (Boston, 1948). The total of 123 doors here represents 55.9% of the 220 doors listed by Miller.

*Towns are listed from north to south, geographically.

cut the communal image he needed to exploit. Porter perhaps knew of plebeian disdain for the Reverend Stephen Williams's mansion in Longmeadow and wanted to avoid any similar grumblings. Porter's son Eleazer, who died in 1757, did not need a doorway either. Yet by the early 1760s, his grandson Eleazer, Jr., must have felt sufficiently unsure of his aristocratic lineage to erect an impressive scroll-topped doorway on the house.⁵⁵

Living in their strangely low-key interiors behind increasingly false images of authority, elites of the 1760s and 1770s had good reason to be paranoid that others were gradually usurping their control. After all, as they sought to separate themselves from the plebeians beneath them, they effectively put more liquid capital into the hands of those on whose skills they relied for markers of social difference. As a re-

sult, artisans had more work and prospered like never before. By 1768 a tailor, a shoemaker, and a joiner had placed elaborate doorways on their own houses, blurring distinctions of status and threatening outright the "natural order" of the River Gods' society.⁵⁶

The third quarter of the eighteenth century marked a point at which, in being prisoners of one another, elites and artisans were oddly equal in controlling different kinds of power on which the other relied. Since the seventeenth century, the gentry had depended on artisans for the houses, doorways, and furniture they needed to perpetuate their commanding presence on the land. And artisans had always depended on the gentry for the cash resources they needed to expand their markets and diversify into new industries. But in the Connecticut River Valley this relationship had not approached equality before

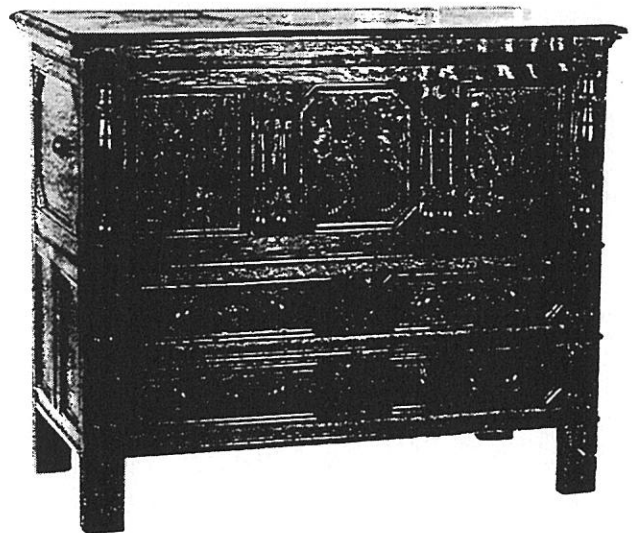
the mid-eighteenth century. The balance of different powers and interdependent resources that occurred in the valley between 1750 and 1780 lay at the heart of regional consciousness. For here was a distinctive social phenomenon without precedent in local memory; the aesthetic economy controlled by skilled workers and the money economy controlled by the gentry had reached a point of precarious, interlocking equilibrium.

In this brief "interregnum" between the fall of a secure aristocracy and the rise of defined social classes neither group could exist without the other. Local arts flourished during this "interlude of release" as artisans fulfilled the demands of patrons eager to have variation for the social advantages it implied.⁵⁷ Between 1750 and 1780 workmen in the Connecticut River Valley produced a series of extremely energetic artifacts for a weakened aristocracy whose habitual control of local affairs blinded them from fully realizing that their brand of power could no longer logically endure. These same artisans made equally energetic objects for ambitious individuals eager to rise despite the dominant presence of the established River God clans.

Deriving from such tension, the artifacts of regional consciousness themselves assert a conflict of values. On one hand, the gentry used houses, doorways, furniture, and gravestones as a means to create a theater of dominance and the stage for a coercive image of community that functioned to their own advantage. Yet on the other hand, these objects freely indulged the idiosyncratic skills of specific artisans. Details like molding profiles, carved rosettes, and tobacco-leaf capitals were the signatures of known workers—men like John Steele, Oliver Easton, and Parmenas King—whose reputations soon obtained for them contracts throughout the valley.⁵⁸ During the interregnum decades from 1750 to 1780, valley artisans for the first time realized that their skills were a base for power, which, if safeguarded, they could use for social purposes. By August 1792, for example, the "Cabinet-Makers" of Hartford formally convened "for the purposes of regulating the prices of our work." After agreeing "in the principle of dealing in CASH," the members resolved that they would "strictly conform to the prices which are or shall be affixed to our work; a deviation therefrom, shall be deemed a forfeiture of *word and honour*."⁵⁹ The house-joiners of Hatfield organized four years later.

Ultimately, the artifacts of regional consciousness in the Connecticut River Valley owe their power to a series of social relations that emerged in the local transition from agrarian to industrial capitalism. Selected artifacts embody a sense of genuine community among artisans that led, when challenged, to a greater sense of occupational solidarity in the closing years of the eighteenth century. Of course, this was built on a solid base of kinship ties that had linked craftsmen together since the settlement of the region. Nowhere are the linkages between distinct artisans more directly revealed, nowhere is communication through migration and diffusion more emphatically declared, than in the so-called "sunflower" and "Hadley" chests (figs. 12, 13). In these joinery traditions, the earliest phases of which date as far back as the 1670s, similar construction details and decorative motifs appear in towns as far distant from one another as Middletown, Enfield, Northampton, and Deerfield. As these objects suggest, the ties created by apprenticeship and patronage throughout the valley resulted both in a shared vision of appropriate design and, ironically, in the uneven distribution of affective power in local society. The emphasis on the values of one's "*word and honour*" in the

Fig. 12. "Sunflower-type" chest with drawers, attributed to Peter Blin, Wethersfield, Connecticut, ca. 1675–1700. Red oak, yellow pine, and white pine; h. 39½"; w. 43¾"; d. 19¾". (Photograph by Robert Bitondi, courtesy of The Connecticut Historical Society.)



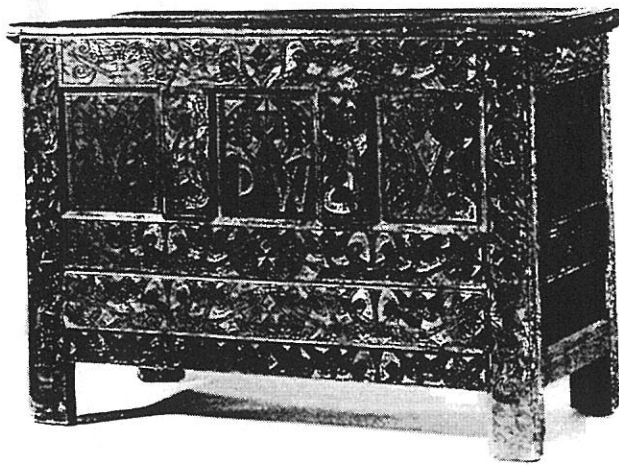


Fig. 13. "Hadley-type" chest with drawers, vicinity of Springfield, Massachusetts, ca. 1690-1710. White oak, yellow pine, and beech; h. 34"; w. 49½"; d. 19". (Courtesy of the Henry Francis duPont Winterthur Museum.)

Hartford agreement shows that the commonality among artisans was firmly rooted in the "traditional" moral code plebeians had cherished in the face of the River Gods.

At the same time, the artifacts owe their energy to local elites retreating in the face of ideological pluralism. Rather than demonstrating a rise to power, Georgian houses, doorways, and gravestones suggest that the steady *withdrawal* of the gentry began as early as the 1740s. As the eighteenth century became the nineteenth, the wealthy took control of newly formed philanthropic, educational, and charitable organizations while cherishing memories of lost authority. In this role, for example, they established a theater in Hartford (fig. 14), which they conceived of as "a school of morality" that they hoped "will be a great source of instruction . . . to those who visit it."⁶⁰ Along with town libraries, literary clubs, museums, and dancing academies, the new theater was a form of education—an "engine of cultural acceleration (or estrangement)"⁶¹—on which their continued assertion of social exclusivity depended.

By 1800 the Connecticut River Valley already afforded a painful vista of urban wealth and rural poverty, factory owners and millworkers, and dirt poor farmers trying to buck the arrival of fast-talking businessmen in slick suits selling a new brand of agrarian reform. A Hartford newspaper editor had even ad-

[19th NIGHT.]

NEW THEATRE, HARTFORD.

On Monday Evening August 22d, will be presented a DRAMATIC PIECE in 4 Acts, called,

A School for Soldiers; OR THE DESERTER.

<p>Major Bellamy, Capt. Valentine, Colonel Valentine, Mr. Hector, Frederick, And, Bellamy,</p> <p>Mrs. Mildmay, And, Clara Mildmay,</p>	<p>Mr. Hodgkinson. Mr. Jefferson. Mr. Tyler. Mr. Johnson. Mr. Woods. Mr. Cleveland. Mrs. Tyler. Mrs. Cleveland.</p>
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In Act 4th, A Military Procession to the

EXECUTION OF THE DESERTER.

To which will be added, A COMEDY, in 5 Acts, called

Catherine & Petruchio, OR, A Cure for a Scold.

Alter'd by Garrick, from Shakspeare's Taming of the Shrew.

<p>Petruchio, Baptista, Hortensia, Taylor, Mulle Master, Biondello, Pedro, And, Grumio,</p> <p>Bianca, Curtis, And, Catherine,</p>	<p>Mr. Hodgkinson. Mr. Johnson. Mr. Cleveland. Mr. Leonard. Mr. Woods. Mr. Munro. Mr. Lee. Mr. Jefferson. Mrs. Cleveland. Mrs. Brett. Mrs. Johnson.</p>
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TICKETS and places for the Boxes to be had at the THEATRE of Mr. GILL, Box-Office keeper. Also Tickets of the Theatre will supply themselves with Tickets.
The Doors will be opened at half past six and the Performance commence precisely at half past Seven.
Ladies and Gentlemen are requested to send their servants by Seven at farthest, to keep places in the Boxes.
Boxes, One Dollar—Two, Three Quarters, and Gallery, Half a Dollar.
No Money returned, nor any person admitted behind the Scenes.
Young Gentlemen up to 14 years of age, and young Ladies up to 12, will be admitted to any part of the House at 75¢.
* Notices of Performance will be Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays.
* Ladies and Gentlemen of East-Hartford, East-Windsor, Glastenbury, &c. are respectfully informed the Theatre is to attend regularly every Evening after the Performance is finished.

VIVAT REPUBLICA.

Fig. 14. Theater broadside, attributed to Hudson & Goodwin, printers, Hartford, Connecticut, 1796. Ink on paper; 17¾" × 9¾". (Photograph by Robert Bitondi, courtesy of The Connecticut Historical Society.)

mitted the previous year that society was "composed of men of all *classes*."⁶² Into such complexity rode Timothy Dwight in 1815. Himself a River God's descendant, the fact that he could still warm to the belief that the "inhabitants of this valley may be said . . . to possess a common character" demonstrates his inherited inability to give up the nostalgic belief that these people were all one, big, happy family living under imagined parental guidance.⁶³ In taking it on

himself to assess the "character" of these "inhabitants" as a whole, Dwight confirmed the gentry's retreat to moral judgment as a means of asserting superiority.

By 1800 the frail regional culture held together by the multiple tensions of a fading aristocratic social order had all but vanished. In its wake were poor farmers, aggressive businessmen, new ranks of industrial workers and management, and a few old River Gods trying to preserve their divinity. Because his perception of social affinities in the Connecticut River Valley was born of trenchant nostalgia, Timothy Dwight described a consensus that not only never existed but by 1815 was blatant in its absence.

Notes

This essay is for David Dangremond, whose enthusiasm as a teacher first sparked my interest in eighteenth-century Connecticut River Valley culture. Helpful suggestions have come in conversations with Robert F. Trent, Henry Glassie, John Brooke, Alice Gray Read, and David D. Hall, and from the works of E. P. Thompson, Raymond Williams, Peter Burke, and, in particular, from Kevin M. Sweeney's work on eighteenth-century society and material culture in the Connecticut River Valley.

1. Inventory of Samuel Porter of Hadley, Hampshire County Probate Records, box 177, no. 25 (1722), Probate Court of Hampshire County (hereafter HCPR), Northampton, Mass. Porter's position in the economic hierarchy of the region is based on evidence for Hartford County in Jackson Turner Main, "The Distribution of Property in Colonial Connecticut," in *The Human Dimensions of Nation Making: Essays on Colonial and Revolutionary America*, ed. James Kirby Martin (Madison, Wis., 1976), 68, table 4. On the origins and spread of consumer revolutions, see Joan Thirsk, *Economic Policy and Projects: The Development of a Consumer Society in Early Modern England* (Oxford, 1978), and Chandra Mukerji, *From Graven Images: Patterns of Modern Materialism* (New York, 1983), 30–130.

2. Howard W. Odum and Harry Estill Moore, "The Implications and Meanings of Regionalism," in *American Regionalism: A Cultural-Historical Approach to National Integration*, ed. Odum and Moore (New York, 1938), 29–34. For further discussion of the meaning of "region" in American scholarship, see Vernon Carstensen, "The Development and Application of Regional-Sectional Concepts, 1900–1950," in *Regionalism in America*, ed. Merrill Jensen (Madison, Wis., 1951), 99–118.

3. Fred Kniffen, "Folk Housing: Key to Diffusion," *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 55, no. 4 (1965): 568–69, 577; Henry H. Glassie, *Pattern in the Mate-*

rial Folk Culture of the Eastern United States (Philadelphia, 1968), 34–39. Glassie adds that although his own work was modeled after Kniffen's, he feels their conclusions differ; Glassie states (p. 34n) that Kniffen may have underestimated the influence of the Tidewater area on inland Southern culture. Glassie's maps (pp. 37–39) should be compared with those in Kniffen, "Folk Housing: Key to Diffusion," 560, 570, 572, 573, and with those in Hans Kurath, *A Word Geography of the Eastern United States* (Ann Arbor, Mich., 1949), figs. 2, 3; see also the comments in Glassie, "Eighteenth-Century Cultural Process in Delaware Valley Folk Building," *Winterthur Portfolio* 7 (1972): 31–32. Regions are analytically useful because of their historical integrity, a point made by Louis Wirth: "The regional idea owes its scientific vitality to the fact that it offers a naturalistic and empirically verifiable theory for the interpretation of history. It affords a check on other competing theories in that it keeps the investigator's feet planted on the solid ground of the physical conditions of existence" ("The Limits of Regionalism," in *Regionalism in America*, ed. Jensen, 381).

4. Kurath, *Handbook of the Linguistic Geography of New England* (Providence, R.I., 1939), 8–10, 18–22; Amelia F. Miller, *Connecticut River Valley Doorways: An Eighteenth-Century Flowering* (Boston 1983); John T. Kirk, *Connecticut Furniture, Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries* (Hartford, Conn., 1967). Furniture patterns are also clarified in Michael K. Brown, "Scalloped-Top Furniture of the Connecticut River Valley," *Antiques* 117 (1980): 1092–99; Kevin M. Sweeney, "Furniture and Furniture Making in Mid-Eighteenth-Century Wethersfield, Connecticut," *Antiques* 125 (1984): 1156–63; and Leigh Keno, "The Windsor-Chair Makers of Northampton, Massachusetts, 1790–1820," *Antiques* 117 (1980): 1100–1108. An important linkage between the diffusionist dialectal work of Kurath and furniture study is suggested in Kirk, *American Chairs: Queen Anne and Chippendale* (New York, 1972), 105–8. Scholarship on gravestones is dominated by Caulfield; see, among others, his "Connecticut Gravestones III [Ebenezer Drake]," *Bulletin of the Connecticut Historical Society* 18, no. 4 (1953): 25–32; "Connecticut Gravestones V [Thomas Johnson / Thomas Johnson II / Thomas Johnson III]," *Bulletin of the Connecticut Historical Society* 21, no. 1 (1956): 1–21; and "Connecticut Gravestones XIV, Part I: William Buckland (1727–1795)," *Bulletin of the Connecticut Historical Society* 41, no. 2 (1976): 33–56.

5. While semiotic approaches to artifact study suggest that objects are empty vessels whose "meanings" are provisionally assigned and shift situationally, some artifacts in all cultures are less context-dependent than others. My own interest here is to discover the values that some artifacts actively assert irrespective of situation. This approach, at once phenomenological and structural, is discussed in Robert Plant Armstrong, *The Affecting Presence: An Essay in Humanistic Anthropology* (Urbana, Ill., 1971), 3–54, and made relevant to American materials in Henry Glassie, "Meaningful Things and Appropriate Myths: The Artifact's Place in American Studies," in this volume.

6. John Demos, *A Little Commonwealth: Family Life in Plymouth Colony* (New York, 1970), 21. The work of E. P. Thompson has helped me worry productively about the methodological difficulties of reconstructing the values and moral configurations of past societies. As artifacts enact cultural values, they address what Thompson sees as a major gap in Marxist theory; see "Interview with E. P. Thompson (1976)," in *Visions of History*, ed. Harry Ablove et al. (New York, 1984), 20. See also the critical comments in Raphael Samuel, "Art, Politics, and Ideology: Editorial Introduction," *History Workshop* 6 (Autumn 1978): 101–6, and Geoff Eley and Keith Neild, "Why Does Social History Ignore Politics?" *Social History* 5, no. 2 (1980): 268–69.

7. Raymond Williams, *Marxism and Literature* (New York, 1977), 132.

8. On social homogeneity, see Marshall E. Dimock's comment that "regionalism results from the growth of a sense of community, in turn dependent upon common traditions, interests and aspirations," quoted in Odum and Moore, "Implications and Meanings of Regionalism," in *American Regionalism*, ed. Odum and Moore, 23; Rupert B. Vance's suggestion that "each region must differ from neighboring regions, but must approximate a mode of homogeneous characteristics if it is to possess identity," in Vance, "The Regional Concept as a Tool for Social Research," in *Regionalism in America*, ed. Jensen, 123; and Michael K. Brown's assertion that the distinctive scalloped-top case furniture of the Connecticut River Valley proves "the homogeneity of the population of the valley" in Brown, "Scalloped-Top Furniture," 1096–97. On consensus as the goal of regional studies, see the comments of Odum and Moore in these two papers: Odum, "The Role of Industry in Regional Development," in *Folk, Region, and Society: Selected Papers of Howard W. Odum*, ed. Katherine Jocher et al. (Chapel Hill, N.C., 1964), 143: "The theme of American regionalism is, after all, essentially that of a great American Nation, the land and the people, in whose continuity and unity of development . . . must be found not only the testing grounds of American democracy but, according to many observers, the hope of American civilization"; and Odum and Moore, "Implications and Meanings of Regionalism," in *American Regionalism*, ed. Odum and Moore, 4: "Regionalism is a symbol of America's geographic as opposed to occupational representation; of popular as opposed to class control" (emphasis added).

9. "Regional consciousness" is E. P. Thompson's term; see his "The Moral Economy of the English Crowd in the Eighteenth Century," *Past and Present* 50 (February 1971): 100; Raymond Williams, *The Country and the City* (New York, 1973), 182. The family ties among the valley gentry are treated selectively in Kevin M. Sweeney, "River Gods in the Making: The Williamses of Western Massachusetts," in *The Bay and the River, 1600–1900*, ed. Peter Benes (Boston, 1982), 101–16, and in Robert Zernsky, *Merchants, Farmers, and River Gods: An Essay in Eighteenth-Century American Politics* (Boston, 1971), 28–76; see also Edward M. Cook, *Fathers of the Towns* (Baltimore, 1976), 177.

10. John Winthrop, "A Model of Christian Charity," in

The Puritans, ed. Perry Miller and Thomas H. Johnson, 2 vols. (New York, 1963), 1:195. See Stephen Innes, *Labor in a New Land: Economy and Society in Seventeenth-Century Springfield* (Princeton, N.J., 1983).

11. Letter from Robert Child to Samuel Hartlib, Dec. 24, 1645, reprinted in G. H. Turnbull, "Robert Child," in *Publications of the Colonial Society of Massachusetts* 38 (1959): 51.

12. *The Acts and Resolves . . . of the Province of Massachusetts Bay*, 21 vols. (Boston, 1869–1922), 1:226 (emphasis added). The extent to which an individual could contribute to the market was an overt basis of taxation and an index of social status; see the March 1669/70 "List of Families in Windsor with Quantity of Grain in Possession of Each," and similar lists for Hartford and Wethersfield in *Wylls Papers*, in *Collections of the Connecticut Historical Society* 21 (1924): 190–97. Good discussions of regional economic history include W. Isard, "Regional Science, The Concept of Region, and Regional Structure," and M. E. Garnsey, "The Dimensions of Regional Science," both in *Papers and Proceedings of the Regional Science Association* 2 (1956): 13–26, 27–39; see also Preston E. James, "Toward a Further Understanding of the Regional Concept," *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 42, no. 3 (1952): 195–222.

13. On the role of merchants in controlling the growth and structure of agrarian capitalism, see E. P. Thompson, "Eighteenth-Century English Society: Class Struggle without Class?" *Social History* 3, no. 2 (1978): 139: "We are habituated to think of capitalism as something that occurs at ground level, at the point of production. In the early eighteenth century wealth was created at this lowly level, but it rose rapidly to higher regions, accumulated in great gobbets, and the real killings were to be made in the distribution, cornering and sale of goods or raw materials (wool, grain, meat, sugar, cloth, tea, tobacco, slaves), in the manipulation of credit, and in the seizure of the offices of State." See also Williams, *The Country and the City*, 60, 104. While clinging to a myth of a "subsistence economy" mediated by progressive merchants, Margaret E. Martin, "Merchants and Trade of the Connecticut River Valley, 1750–1820," *Smith College Studies in History* 24, nos. 1–4 (October 1938–July 1939), ably describes the wealth and range of activities that specific individuals pursued. See also Richard Bushman, *From Puritan to Yankee: Character and the Social Order in Connecticut, 1690–1765* (New York, 1970), 61–64, 114, and Richard B. Sheridan, "The Domestic Economy," in *Colonial British America: Essays in the New History of the Early Modern Era*, ed. Jack P. Greene and J. R. Pole (Baltimore, 1984), 71.

14. In particular, see Sweeney, "River Gods in the Making"; Sweeney, "Mansion People: Kinship, Class, and Architecture in Western Massachusetts in the Mid-Eighteenth Century," *Winterthur Portfolio* 19, no. 4 (1984): 231–55; and Robert H. Taylor, *Western Massachusetts in the Revolution* (Providence, R.I., 1954); Howard Newby, "The Deferential Dialectic," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 17, no. 2 (1975): 149–50; see also J. G. A. Pocock, "The

Classical Theory of Deference," *American Historical Review* 81, no. 3 (1976): 516–23.

15. Inventory, Col. Fisher Gay, Farmington, 1779, Farmington District, file 1051, Connecticut State Library (hereafter CSL), Hartford.

16. Inventory, Ezekiel Porter, Wethersfield, 1775, Hartford District, file 4344, CSL.

17. Inventory, Rev. William Russell, Windsor, 1775, Hartford District, file 4686, CSL.

18. Quoted from Stoddard in the Diary of Rev. Stephen Williams of Longmeadow, Mass., Aug. 10, 1721; see Sweeney, "River Gods in the Making," 104.

19. Sweeney, "River Gods in the Making," 113–14; Joseph Dwight's business dealings are summarized in Zemsky, *Merchants, Farmers, and River Gods*, 54–56.

20. Quoted in Robert Gross, *The Minutemen and Their World* (New York, 1976), 37.

21. Zemsky, *Merchants, Farmers, and River Gods*, 32–33.

22. Quoted in Zemsky, *Merchants, Farmers, and River Gods*, 58. For a summary of how other Massachusetts merchants used political offices and "charitable trusts" and social welfare institutions of their own creation for personal ends, see Peter Dobkin Hall, "Family Structure and Economic Organization: Massachusetts Merchants, 1700–1850," in *Family and Kin in Urban Communities, 1700–1930*, ed. Tamara K. Haraven (New York, 1977), 47–49, 58.

23. Inventory, Samuel Porter, Hadley, 1722, box 117, no. 25, HCPR, quoted in Sweeney, "River Gods in the Making," 114, 115.

24. Inventories, Samuel Porter, Hadley, and Seth Wetmore [Whitmore], Middletown, Middletown District, file 3853, CSL. For period references to individuals being called "landlord," see John Montague Smith, *History of the Town of Sunderland, Massachusetts, 1673–1899* (Greenfield, Mass., 1899), 194, and John H. Lockwood, *Westfield and Its Historic Influences, 1669–1919: The Life of an Early Town* (Springfield, Mass., 1922), 567.

25. See Abbott Lowell Cummings, *The Framed Houses of Massachusetts Bay, 1625–1725* (Cambridge, Mass., 1979), 98, 101–3, 116; Robert Blair St. George, "'Set Thine House in Order': The Domestication of the Yeomanry in Seventeenth-Century New England," in *New England Begins*, ed. Jonathan L. Fairbanks and Robert F. Trent, 2 vols. (Boston, 1982), 2:166–67, 200–201. "Theater of dominance" is Thompson's phrase; see "Eighteenth-Century English Society," 150.

26. See Batty Langley, *The Builder's Jewel; Or, The Youth's Instructor and Workman's Remembrancer . . .* (London, 1746), plates 89, 90, 92, and Francis Price, *The British Carpenter; Or, A Treatise on Carpentry* (London, 1733), plate I–K (B). I am indebted to Robert F. Trent and Kevin M. Sweeney for helping me measure the Webb house roof.

27. Sweeney, "Mansion People," 242.

28. Account book, Joseph Webb, Sr., Wethersfield, 1751–59, 121, Connecticut Historical Society. I am indebted to Kevin M. Sweeney for sharing this reference with me.

29. Account book, Joseph Webb, Sr., 121.

30. Inventory, Roger Wolcott, Windsor, 1767, Hartford District, file 6200, CSL. Sweeney, "Mansion People," 239–40, discusses the similar "region-wide" building campaign of Elisha Williams in 1751–54; these examples suggest that the extensive use of labor was an important social component in the definition of an elite architectural "style."

31. Among the many slaveholders in the Connecticut River Valley, Rev. William Russell of Windsor owned "a Negro Man Named Dan" worth £50, Thomas Seymour of Hartford owned "a Negro Man named Tam" and "One Negro Named Neptune" together valued at £80, and Seth Wetmore of Middletown owned "6 Negroes" valued at £300 (inventories of William Russell, Hartford District, file 4686; Thomas Seymour, Hartford District, file 4808; and Seth Wetmore, Middletown District, file 3853, CSL). See also Gwendolyn Wright, *Building the Dream: A Social History of Housing in America* (Cambridge, Mass., 1981), 46–47.

32. Miller, *Connecticut Valley Doorways*.

33. The average estate values are based on inventories in HCPR and CSL for those individuals who were responsible for erecting doorways as listed in Miller, *Connecticut Valley Doorways*; inventory of Josiah Dwight of Springfield, 1768, box 51, no. 25, HCPR; Miller, *Connecticut Valley Doorways*, 21, 26–27, 36–39, 79; Sweeney, "Mansion People," 248–49.

34. Williams, *The Country and the City*, 106; Williams adds that during the period of eighteenth-century agrarian improvement, "much of the profit of a more modern agriculture went not into productive investment but into that explicit social declaration: a mutually competitive but still uniform exposition, at every turn, of an established and commanding class power." The axis of domestic authority in gentry households defined a one-point physical and social perspective; see Thompson, "Eighteenth-Century English Society," 136: "the great house is at the apex, and all lines of communication run to its dining-room, estate office or kennels." On the transfer of strategies of gentry dominance in general, see Bushman, "American High Style and Vernacular Cultures," in Greene and Pole, *Colonial British America*, 360–67. I argue here that Bushman's proposed "top-down" model of social diffusion was conditioned by the selective adoption of only those features needed to perpetuate a "traditional" aristocratic social order in a specific locale. For introductory comments on reading the landscape with concepts of power in mind, see Edward W. Soja, *The Political Organization of Space*, Commission on College Geography Resource Paper no. 8 (Washington, D.C., 1971).

35. Inventory, Ezekiel Porter, Wethersfield, 1775, Hartford District, file 4344, CSL.

36. See the list of occupations for 35 known River Gods in Sweeney, "Mansion People," 255 (appendix); an abstracted list for Hampshire County is in Sweeney, "River Gods in the Making," 109, table 2.

37. Lewis Mumford, "Orozco in New England," *New Republic* 80 (1934): 235.

38. Samuel Willard, *A Compleat Body of Divinity* (Boston, 1726), 233. The doorway as a disjunctive icon engages directly Erving Goffman's definition of a region as "any

place that is bounded by some degree by barriers to perception" (*Presentation of Self in Everyday Life* [Garden City, N.Y., 1959], 106).

39. Allan I. Ludwig, *Graven Images: New England Stone-carving and Its Symbols, 1650–1815* (Middletown, Conn., 1966), 73 (plate 3a–d), 132 (plate 48a), 169 (plate 77b), 400 (plate 237b, c), 402 (plate 238a). Ludwig discusses the Samuel Dwight stone on pp. 142–43 (plate 56a), 233; related to the Dwight stone is the Gamaliel Ripley stone, 1799, Scotland, Conn., p. 144 (plate 57b). The Martha Welch stone is discussed on pp. 135–36 (plates 50–51), but to a different end than I am using it here. The Dwight and Welch stones memorialize wealthy individuals; Dwight was worth £2,918 at his death in 1763, while Welch, the wife of Rev. Daniel Welch of Storrs, was, as her epitaph notes, "the only daughter of Mr. Moses Cook & Mrs. Deborah Cook of Hartford." Moses Cook's estate totalled £420 in 1778; inventories of Samuel Dwight, Enfield, 1764, Hartford District, file 1792, and of Moses Cook, Hartford, 1778, Hartford District, file 1384, CSL.

40. Miller, *Connecticut Valley Doorways*, 56–57. Miller adds that buff-colored paint was used to enhance the appearance of rusticated stone on the doorway to Ichabod Camp's Middletown mansion (p. 26).

41. Thomas Anburey, *Travels through the Interior Parts of America*, ed. William Harding Carter, 2 vols. (Boston, 1923), 2:41.

42. Armstrong, *The Powers of Presence: Consciousness, Myth, and Affecting Presence* (Philadelphia, 1981), 5–8, locates one aspect of the aesthetic power of an object in the tension between person-ness and thing-ness.

43. On the crucial relationship of powers "owned" by artifacts to the assertion of values in society, see Armstrong, *The Affecting Presence: Wellspring: On the Myth and Source of Culture* (Berkeley, Calif., 1975); and *The Powers of Presence*; see also Yi-Fu Tuan, "The Significance of the Artifact," *Geographical Journal* 70, no. 4 (1980): 464–65; and Suzanne Preston Blier, "Houses Are Human: Architectural Self-Images of Africa's Tamberma," *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians* 42, no. 4 (1983): 371–82.

44. Quoted from the diary of Rev. Stephen Williams in *Proceedings at the Centennial Celebration of the Incorporation of Longmeadow, October 17th, 1883, with Numerous Historical Appendices and a Town Genealogy* (Longmeadow, Mass., 1884), 34.

45. Quoted in Gross, *The Minutemen and Their World*, 38; *Boston Town Records, 1770–1777*, in *A Report of the Record Commissioners of the City of Boston* (Boston, 1887), 18:16; quoted in John L. Brooke, "Society, Revolution, and the Symbolic Uses of the Dead: An Historical Ethnography of the Massachusetts Near Frontier, 1730–1820" (Ph.D. diss., University of Pennsylvania, 1982), 288 (emphasis added).

46. On the persistence of common fields in the upper valley, see J. H. Temple and George Sheldon, *History of the Town of Northfield, Massachusetts, for 150 Years* (Albany, 1875), 22, 219–20. *Diary and Autobiography of John Adams*, ed. Lyman H. Butterfield, Leonard Faber, and Wen-

dell D. Garrett, 4 vols. (Cambridge, Mass., 1962), 2:28; "Essay on the Laying Out of Towns, &c," *Collections of the Massachusetts Historical Society*, 5th ser., 1 (1871): 479; Cotton Mather, "Triparadisus," ca. 1720 MSS, octavo vol. 49, f. 1, Mather Family Papers, 1613–1819, American Antiquarian Society, Worcester, Mass. I am indebted to David Watters for telling me about this manuscript. On the circular form of common-field villages, see John Barrell, *The Idea of Landscape and the Sense of Place, 1730–1840: An Approach to the Poetry of John Clare* (Cambridge, 1972), 103–6.

47. See the quantitative data from inventories discussed earlier in Kevin M. Sweeney, "Furniture and the Domestic Environment in Wethersfield, Connecticut, 1639–1800," table 1 and table 2; Anburey, *Travels through America*, ed. Carter, 2:152–53.

48. Cornelius v. Tienhoven, "Information Relative to Taking Up Land in New Netherland, in the Form of Colonies or Private Boweries (1650)," in *Remarkable Provinces: 1600–1760*, ed. John Demos (New York, 1972), 48.

49. Here I mean to complicate current theory on the cultural meaning of "Georgianization." Most see in it the emergence of a new set of values supporting individualism, privacy, and control that undercut the collective mentality of the "peasant community"; Henry Glassie, in "Eighteenth-Century Cultural Process in Delaware Valley Folk Building," states that Georgian houses define a landscape in which "there is also the beginning and fulfillment of the dominant style of America, loose, worried, acquisitive individualism," while in pre-Georgian "traditional" houses "there is a lingering sense of the tightness of the English or German peasant with his clustered, corporate modes" (p. 57). Building on this key insight, I suggest the following: agrarian capitalism and radical social inequality based on separate value systems were in fact part of the New England settlement process itself. I maintain here that elites already nurtured these values while strategically identifying their houses with those of their social inferiors. Whether in England, Virginia, Pennsylvania, or New England, "Georgian" houses invariably appeared as the clarity and force of social hierarchy came under direct attack during periods of rapid population growth, shifting exchange relations, and occupational mobility; the fact that merchants rarely "fit" neatly into established categories of social rank accounts for their building such "modern" houses before most others in England (1630–50), Boston (1670–1710), and in the Connecticut River Valley (1740–60). From this point of view, such houses paradoxically represent not only the "beginning . . . of a dominant style" but also the anxious gasps of fading aristocrats whose retreat to self-mystification and "worried" anonymity was their last base of authority.

50. Marcel Mauss, *The Gift: Forms and Functions of Exchange in Archaic Societies*, trans. Ian Cunnison (New York, 1967), 72; see also Newby, "Deferential Dialectic," 161–63.

51. Peter Bohan and Phillip Hammerslough, *Early Connecticut Silver, 1700–1840* (Middletown, Conn., 1970), 40 (plate 17), 114 (plate 90). A few valley elites even had sets of

communion vessels carved on their gravestones, symbolizing at the same time their gifts to the earthly congregation and their hope for communion with God in death; see Ludwig, *Graven Images*, 177 (plate 83), 178 (plate 84a–c), 179 (plate 85a).

52. Sweeney, "River Gods in the Making," 116; inventories of Col. Fisher Gay of Farmington, 1779, Farmington District, file 1051, and of Alexander Allyn, Windsor, 1790, Hartford District, file 77, CSL.

53. Anburey, *Travels through America*, 2:152–53; quoted in Sweeney, "Furniture and the Domestic Environment in Wethersfield," in this volume, p. 287; see the additional instances cited in Sweeney, "Mansion People," 249–50.

54. See Miller, *Connecticut Valley Doorways*, 20, 66, 86, 90.

55. Miller, *Connecticut Valley Doorways*, 50.

56. The tailor: Capt. Nathaniel Talcott of Glastonbury; the shoemaker: Jacob Griswold of Wethersfield; the joiner: Judah Woodruff of Farmington. Woodruff built his house in 1762; see Miller, *Connecticut Valley Doorways*, 24 (no. 7), 129–30.

57. The concepts of "interregnum" and "interlude of release" are explained in a related Latin American context in George A. Kubler, "The Arts: Fine and Plain," in *Perspectives on American Folk Art*, ed. Ian M. G. Quimby and Scott T. Swank (New York, 1980), 237–38. It is precisely this moment of interregnum that is characterized by class consciousness but not an articulated, abstract concept of "class"; see Thompson, "Eighteenth-Century English Society," 151.

58. Miller, *Connecticut Valley Doorways*, 120–30 summarizes the working careers of known doorway makers.

59. The 1792 Hartford agreement is reprinted in Irving W. Lyon, *The Colonial Furniture of New England* (1891; reprint ed., New York, 1977), 267–70.

60. *The Connecticut Courant*, Aug. 10, 1795, quoted in John Warner Barber, *Connecticut Historical Collections* (New Haven, Conn., 1836), 56.

61. Thompson, "Eighteenth-Century English Society," 152.

62. *Hartford Courant*, Dec. 30, 1799, quoted in Barber, *Connecticut Historical Collections*, 58. On the impact of industrialization on one valley town, see Agnes Hannay, *A Chronicle of Industry on the Mill River* (1936; reprint ed., New York, 1977).

63. Dwight, *Travels*, 2:229. Dwight's idealism in hindsight reinforces Thompson's belief that "paternalism as myth or as ideology is nearly always backward looking" ("Eighteenth-Century English Society," 136).