



Editorial

FROM atoms to tectonic plates to the Big Bang, physicists seek to define the forces that produce actions, to discover the laws governing their interactions, and to build realistic models that predict reactions. Historians and literary critics are no less eager to unravel elements of cause and effect, conditions of contingency and kinship. In their various ways and pursuing their distinct topics, the authors writing in the March 2010 issue of *The New England Quarterly* map transatlantic networks of influence, expose roots of resistance, and chart repulsions and affinities.

The Nonseparating Puritans of Massachusetts Bay were indebted to English covenant theologians, but, Ralph Young shows, they offered something of their own in return: a workable model of church polity. With no mother church present in their New World, New Englanders were free—or perhaps, from their perspective, bound—to establish churches *de novo*. To gauge the faithfulness of prospective members and ensure the purity of their congregational bodies, New Englanders formulated the “test of saving grace,” an innovation that was, during the Interregnum, carried back to England. As the English deliberated where the primary authority for church governance should rest, the New England Way exerted its influence on a debate that held crucial significance for the ascendant Puritan community of Cromwellian England.

Writing at the distance of two centuries, Harriet Beecher Stowe was also exploring the sanctity of the body—although that of the individual, more so than the communal, body. In 1853, she traveled to Europe, where she “sipped champagne, attended ‘Romish’ services, and viewed exposed necks and rising bosoms—even full nudes—at the Louvre.” Captivated by Raphael’s and Rubens’s paintings, Stowe carried their depictions

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of a robust and vital Madonna into her representations of three central figures in her novel *The Minister's Wooing*. There, in the unexceptional guise of a marriage plot, Dorothy Baker demonstrates, Stowe embedded radical ideas about sensuality and spirituality, loss and redemption.

In the mid-eighteenth-century Connecticut River Valley, some of the king's children were unduly favored, while the majority felt they had been unfairly denied their just allowance. When the imperial government declared that all colonial white pines in excess of twenty-four inches in diameter—potential ships' masts—were to be reserved to agents of the Crown, it “unwittingly schooled” Connecticut Valley colonists “in the art of resistance.” Not only did that resistance help flame rebellion, Strother Roberts observes; it also influenced how a colony in revolt would set about masting its own warships.

This issue's three features explore how individuals on different sides of the Atlantic, and in one case in different centuries, found their way into relationships, in some cases telling for their very lack of influence. Scholars have long trumpeted the correspondence between Puritan Cotton Mather and German Pietist August Hermann Francke, but in fact the two men were more interested in promoting their own scholarly and philanthropic agendas than in engaging in any substantive intellectual conversation. The art of intellectual conversation was, Oliver Wendell Holmes thought, a much-needed antidote for mid-nineteenth-century America's crass materialism. Born a century after England's greatest conversationalist, Holmes each year read Boswell's life of Samuel Johnson, a hefty volume that significantly influenced his *Autocrat of the Breakfast Table*. Samuel Clemens's personal secretary was convinced that her employer bore a striking resemblance to Friedrich Wilhelm Nietzsche. Clemens vigorously denied any interest in the man, but unbeknownst to him, the German philosopher had declared to his friends, “I love [Mark Twain's] fooleries more than any German clevernesses.”

England, America, Holland, France, Italy, Germany: this is a wide-ranging itinerary for our designedly provincial publication. We hope you enjoy the journey.

—LINDA SMITH RHOADS