



## Editorial

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UPHEAVAL, crisis, and revolution are common to all civilizations. The particular ways in which they become manifest and are resolved, however, help define a nation's unique character. In tracing the thought and actions of Ralph Waldo Emerson, Joseph Smith, and John Brown, Evan Carton sets out to test his hypothesis that “the seemingly divergent cultural icons of the American scholar, prophet, and revolutionary . . . share a common milieu and moment of origin in the social, spiritual, and epistemological ferment of the early nineteenth century.” In short, Carton posits that when articulating their concerns and enthusiasms, these three representative men drew upon a common idiom—one percolating out of the episodically evolving American experience of Protestantism, revolution, and republicanism—even as they differed in their understanding of its source, effects, and the purposes it was meant to serve. The tumult these activists both suffered and provoked remains evident today in America's fractured, and fractious, public discourse.

In the nineteenth century, fault lines were obvious even in a project so apparently resolute and delimited as abolitionism. In a significant act of recovery, Julie Roy Jeffrey has examined one of the many rifts in the movement, that between the Boston Female Anti-Slavery Society (BFAS) and the Massachusetts Female Emancipation Society (MFES). Although scholars have long seen the BFAS, dominated as it was by elite women of liberal religious views, as the more active and dedicated of the two organizations, Jeffrey musters considerable evidence to show that the middle-class evangelical women of the MFES did not, as supposed, drift off into religiously motivated missionary and reform causes but pursued all avenues available to them—

including prayers and politics, marketing and moral suasion—to proselytize the antislavery cause. In so doing, it could be argued, the conservatives proved themselves more radical than the liberals, a finding that, ultimately, exposes the inadequacy of terms that still dominate our national lexicon.

In the third of this issue's major essays, Mary Babson Fuhrer destroys another reigning assumption of American history: that the neighboring Massachusetts towns of Lexington and Concord, fused as they are in our cultural memory of the Revolution, were all but identical in fact. Analyzing Lexington's pre-war social, demographic, political, religious, and ideological characteristics as against those of Concord, so comprehensively set forth by Robert Gross in *The Minutemen and Their World*, Fuhrer demonstrates that such was not the case. The comparison, as she notes, illuminates not only the "communities' radically different responses" to the escalating imperial crisis but also the "commonalities," the "shared motivations," that "prompted the inhabitants of both towns, when finally pressed, to take up arms against the forces of their king."

Unfortunately I am left with scant space to enumerate the riches contained in this issue's memoranda and documents and essay review. William La Moy adds significantly to our knowledge of the inner workings of the Oneida Community, yet one more manifestation of the turmoil (sociosexual, in this instance) that pervaded the middle decades of the nineteenth century. Amber Moulton shares a letter detailing one African American's euphoria, which was subsequently dashed, in the aftermath of the Civil War. Paul Lewis looks at those same decades through the dramatically differing perspectives, what he calls the "dueling poetics," of Henry Wadsworth Longfellow and Edgar Allan Poe. Finally, Diana Korzenik reviews a recent exhibit of the work of Anna Mary Robertson ("Grandma") Moses to show how American "primitivism" was elevated and marketed as an alternative to the war-contaminated wares of Nazi-era Europe. Much as the topics it pursues, the inaugural issue of *NEQ*'s eighty-fifth volume is both unified and diverse. As such, it offers readers a robust opportunity to explore the nineteenth-century contours of the ongoing American experience.

—LINDA SMITH RHOADS