



Editorial

ASSEMBLING each issue of the *Quarterly* poses both challenges and opportunities for reflection. The most common challenge is to bring together scholarly essays independently written and submitted into a single issue that lends itself to reflections around a contextual, thematic, or conceptual synthesis. We generally expect failure in this regard: our inventory of accepted articles does not allow us to do this easily; authors, we expect, are keen to see their work move quickly into print, and not every reader wants issues devoted to a single topic. The *Quarterly* is, after all, a journal devoted to history and literature, and I am occasionally reminded by friends of long standing that there are too many or too few essays in the other discipline. The publication of the 2017 Whitehill Prize winning essay, “Repairing the Breach: Puritan Expansion, Commonwealth Formation, and the Origins of the United Colonies, 1630–1643” by Neal Dugre prompted a reflection on the work of a former editor of the *Quarterly*, Perry Miller. Miller attempted to posit a coherent New England mind to provide tools for explaining social change in colonial and early America. Written in the 1961 preface to the paperback edition of *The New England Mind: Colony to Province* (originally published in 1953), Miller expressed his belief in the necessity of comprehending the life of the mind. The posthumous publication *The Life of the Mind: From the Revolution to the Civil War* in 1965 revealed Miller’s “unrepentant” presumption that a coherent set of ideas was essential to understanding the subtleties of social change. Despite the magnitude of his intellectual achievements, Miller would not live to see his work by-passed to a large extent by the rapid explosion of what was

The New England Quarterly, vol. XCI, no. 3 (September 2018). © 2018 by The New England Quarterly. All rights reserved. https://doi.org/10.1162/tnsq_e_00683.

called the New Social History. Ironically the explosion of town studies published in the decade following his death in 1963 initially used his model of declension to explain the dynamics of social change. Those studies and of more detailed analyses of antebellum writers, many of which are to be found in this journal, introduced complexities shaped by inner contradictions and practical exigencies that seemed to render the corpus of Miller's work problematic if not irrelevant.¹ Concurrently, however, Sacvan Bercovitch made the case for the power of Miller's assumption of a synthetic intellect, even if it was most likely mythic in nature, that joined disparate creative and cultural forms in a common conceptualization of experience.² Fortunately, we have essays that complement Dugre's, revisit the themes embedded in *Colony to Province*, *The Life of the Mind*, and Bercovitch's *American Jeremiad*, and raise the question of the extent to which they contribute a critical understanding of a larger contextual or conceptual synthesis.

Our essays use different approaches to the study of the life and letters of New England to demonstrate complexities familiar to recent scholars but in a fashion resonant of Miller and Bercovitch. In part they represent different methods: different periods and topics, political as opposed to intellectual history, and history as opposed to literary or cultural studies. Neal Dugre's Whitehill prize-winning essay is a study of institutional history, of the formation of the United Colonies; Andrew MacDonald's, a very traditional (to this student whose primary training in the early 1970s was lumped together as intellectual and social history) essay on the fissures in late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century New England Calvinism; Mixon Robinson uses church bells and railroads as prisms to unpack abolitionist activity; and Clark Davis, to link Jones Very, Ralph Waldo Emerson, and Melville's *Bartleby the Scrivener*. While each, however, engages the problems of declension, dissent,

¹Arne Delfs, "Anxieties of Influence: Perry Miller and Sacvan Bercovitch" *New England Quarterly* 70 (1997): 609–10.

²Sacvan Bercovitch made the case in his original preface to, *The American Jeremiad, Anniversary Edition* (orig. 1978 rept. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2012), xli. See his assessment of the intervening years in his 2012 preface, especially xix–xx.

and exclusion, they, nonetheless, engage issues of orthodoxy, of defining common, in Bercovitch's terms, agreed-upon myths.³

Neal Dugre's Whitehill prize-winning essay, "Repairing the Breach," examines the origins of the United Colonies. Addressing a neglected topic, Dugre's essay required extensive research in multiple archival collections and brings fresh insights to seventeenth-century New England Puritanism. Dugre sees the United Colonies, previously seen as an institution constructed for intercolonial defense, as a response to the need to sustain orthodoxy once Puritan settlements expanded beyond the political authority of the Massachusetts Bay Company. Drawing upon a wide range of sources covering the four colonies of Massachusetts, Connecticut, Plymouth, and New Haven, Dugre's essay examines the complex negotiations that produced a structure capable of sustaining a collective vision among separate political jurisdictions. Andrew MacDonald's essay, "The Substance of Doctrine," explores the reconfiguration of Calvinism in the early nineteenth century through the study of dissidents' claims to Edwardsean orthodoxy. MacDonald provides a study reminiscent of the model of declension in *Colony to Province* while complementing the *Life of the Mind*. Mixon Robinson uses "Bell, Book, and Locomotive" as vehicles for diving deeper into an examination of the abolitionists who favored immediate emancipation. The use of bell, book, and locomotive for Robinson is exceptionally compelling as means to discern the ways in which immediatism was transmitted both aurally and beyond. In the process, he unearths fissures within the immediatists and, through the examination of the structural burdens placed upon black abolitionists, reveals a kind of declension within the orthodoxy of the movement. Finally, Clark Davis uses a 1938 essay by Yvor Winters as a starting point to consider Ralph Waldo Emerson's reactions to Jones Very's antinomian presumptions of faith and truth. In trying to develop a critique of Very's presumption of the embodiment of the Holy Spirit in himself, Emerson revealed the frustrations of his critical dependence upon the orthodoxy of self-reliance, ones that

³Bercovitch, *American Jeremiad*, xli, 18–20.

mirrored Melville's *Bartleby in the Dead Letter Office*, exposing a more general intellectual declension from a presumptive intellectual coherence.

September marks our usual academic transitions. Sadly, Sarah Black leaves us, graduating as the 2018 outstanding MA student in history at the University of Massachusetts Boston. You can visit Sarah's outstanding capstone project, "'An Extraordinary Look into Ordinary Lives': Uncovering the Dorchester Industrial School for Girls, 1859–1880," which is on display at the Massachusetts Commonwealth Museum through October. We welcome our new graduate assistant, Andrew Lucibella. Congratulations as well, go to Holly Jackson on the occasion of the well-deserved award of tenure and her promotion to associate professor. We wish to thank the Colonial Society of Massachusetts for its sponsorship of the Walter Muir Whitehill Prize and its continued support of the *Quarterly*. Thanks as well, go to Fred Anderson, David Hall, and Mary Beth Norton for their time in judging the large, excellent group of submissions for the Whitehill. We also thank all of those who submitted essays in a very competitive year. Finally, we express our deep gratitude to the many people who support the *Quarterly* in so many ways.

—Jonathan M. Chu