



Editorial

One of the joys of editing the *New England Quarterly* is the opportunity to visit with old friends. This issue brings together old friends and introduces me to a new one and, in the process, affirming anew the value of the interdisciplinary scholarship for which the *Quarterly* is aptly suited. At the *Quarterly*, the editors are especially interested in essays which look at traditional subjects from new perspectives that help us see simultaneously more deeply and broadly. We find these kinds of essays to be especially innovative and creative as they extend our scholarly vision while reconnecting us to the familiar. The four essays in this issue do exactly that: they ask us, in light of different perspectives and new insights and methods, to revisit our intellectual habits of mind. Lydia Willsky-Ciollo, Geoffrey Kirsch, and Colin Nicolson provide new views of old friends Henry David Thoreau, Ralph Waldo Emerson, Daniel Webster, John Adams, and Jonathan Sewall while Steve Gowler introduces us to a new acquaintance, William Goodell, who intellectually connects radical abolitionism to Jonathan Edwards and Stephen Hopkins. The span of essays, interestingly enough, have different methodological approaches and illustrate the multiple and rich ways one can examine cultural discourse in the scholarship of late eighteenth- and nineteenth-century America.

Lydia Willsky-Ciollo looks at old friend Thoreau and his ambivalent interaction with Native Americans in his search to restore lost attributes of wilderness, that is, natural divinity, into society. While the necessity to reconcile wilderness and society in American literature and history has a long scholarly tradition, Willsky-Ciollo details the ways in which Thoreau attempted to

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assimilate wilderness into his world through his experiences with native companions, with study and in a reimagining of Indian myth. In compiling his notes on Indians, Thoreau's intent was not to write about them as other scholars have suggested but to develop a practical theology for his notions of settled community. Most critical, she discovers, was the problematic nature of Thoreau's attempt to integrate lessons he learned from two Penobscot friends that, even as he romanticized the wilderness, he believed in the inevitability of their cultural decline because of "their fixed habits of stagnation."

Blending intellectual and political history, Geoffrey Kirsch connects Transcendentalism with politics in antebellum Massachusetts through Ralph Waldo Emerson's assessment of Daniel Webster. While the link of the two is usually framed in terms of the Emerson's radicalization over Webster's apostasy during the Compromise of 1850, Kirsch provides a more complicated story of Emerson's praise, disappointment, and posthumous vindication after Harper's Ferry and the Civil War. Attracted to him after the famous debates with Robert Y. Hayne in 1830, Emerson saw Webster after his defense of the constitution as the personification of Transcendentalists' higher law concepts. In doing so Webster embodied the qualities of self-reliance and of the poet, qualities to which he so clearly subscribed. In Emerson's eyes, Webster's fall from grace with the Compromise of 1850 was for failing to live up to the promise of America. Despite his disappointment in Webster, Emerson, Kirsch argues, came to see his posthumous redemption after the Civil War with its purging of the evil of slavery and the ratification of the transcendent, virtuous republic.

Introducing us to a new friend, Steve Gowler tells the story of William Goodell, a much overlooked but important figure, to connect eighteenth-century religious thought with nineteenth-century abolitionists seeking immediate emancipation. Where previous scholars saw abolitionists' connections to eighteenth-century religion as limited—that the theology seemed impractical or inapplicable—Gowler's Goodell, much neglected by scholars, found unshakeable justification for his advocacy of the movement in the orthodoxy originating with Jonathan Edwards

and passed on through Samuel Hopkins and the New Divinity. Goodell's intellectual foundation in the application of the New Divinity in antebellum America, argues Gowler, provided a practical theology that sustained Goodell and the radical abolitionists in their assault on slavery and other social ills.

Interesting for both content and methods, our Memoranda and Documents essay, "A Case of Identity: *Massachusettsensis* and John Adams," reopens the question of the authorship of the *Massachusettsensis* letters in an unusual, for the *Quarterly*, essay in two respects: it is a multi-authored (a phenomenon more commonly found in our social science counterparts) and uses techniques not customarily found among historians, Colin Nicolson and his colleagues, Owen Dudley Edwards, Jamie MacPherson, and Kirsten Nicolson use stylometric analysis, methods used in linguistics to attribute authorship, and close textual analysis to pierce the veil of anonymity in determining the contributions of Jonathan Sewall to the letters. By establishing the role of Sewall as a major contributor as well as Daniel Leonard, the essay makes possible an understanding of how Sewall's personal and professional friendship with John Adams also affected the *Novanglus* responses. Sewall's participation in writing the letters provides Nicolson et al. not only the opportunity to develop a new perspective on the nature of friendship and on John Adams—the "attentive friend, attuned to the personal tragedy behind the Revolution, and whose radicalization turned on discourse with Sewall"—but to recast the context and thus significance of the *Massachusettsensis-Novanglus* exchange.

With this issue we also direct your attention to a new online feature: occasional papers devoted to teaching. We intend this to be a forum for discussions on the use of the long essay and learned journals in teaching and hope it will be especially useful to Advanced Placement and university teachers. When we first envisioned the feature, our conversations revolved around discussions of historiography and competing modes of literary analysis; however, we were presented with an opportunity to present what we unanimously agreed should be our inaugural contribution, "Restless Lady: The Life and Writings of Frances Parkinson Keyes." Accessible on our website,

<https://newenglandquarterly.org/>, “Restless Lady” is a biography written by the members of the social history seminar of University of Vermont professor Melanie Gustafson. Accompanying the essay is a brief description by Professor Gustafson of how she structured the course. Keyes was the wife of a New Hampshire governor and senator but, more important, was a political journalist and a prolific novelist whose papers were housed at the University of Vermont. Our goal with this column is to demonstrate how local and regional history and literary culture provides instructional exercises that enhance students’ historical and literary analytical and critical thinking skills. At this stage, we remain extremely flexible with regard to subsequent subjects and the form and structure of future submissions. We invite comments and diverse contributions for future inclusion.

Finally, with this issue, we again encourage submissions to the 2018 Colonial Society of Massachusetts Whitehill Prize competition. More specific information about the competition may be found on a later page in this issue. The editorial staff joins me in thanking our readers, authors, book reviewers, and contributors to the *Quarterly* during 2018, especially the Colonial Society, and wishing all the best for the holiday season and the New Year. We are eternally grateful for the depth of support we have received from those who share our affection for the history and literature of New England as we produce each issue.

—Jonathan M. Chu