



Editorial

ONE of the pleasures of assembling the March issue of the *New England Quarterly* was to learn to “read” differently. I pause here to ask for absolution from an early English teacher who commanded his young charges to purge tendentious quotation marks from their essays; however, as what follows indicates, there seems to be no alternative to conveying how imaginatively our authors have examined their respective sources. Dependent as literary scholars and historians are upon the analysis of text, all of our essays caution against being too narrow and literal and ask us to contextualize our understandings in the broadest sense of “reading.”

In what must be the most illustrated essay in the *Quarterly*'s history, Steffi Dippold makes us look not at the words on the page but at the fleurons, the decorative flourishes on the title pages of books. In her richly textured essay, Dippold presents the layered symbolism of the fleurons that graced the pages of the *Wampanoag Bible* printed at the Harvard College press in 1663 and the wider contexts in which they were intended to be “read.” Published to facilitate conversions among Indigenous peoples, the *Wampanoag Bible* translated both Old and New Testaments into Wôpanâak and had as a sponsor the London Society for the Propagation of the Gospel. As Dippold tells us, it was the membership of the London Society to whom copies were sent and the decorative flourishes directed. Adam Sonstegard directs our attention to an illustrated edition of Sarah Orne Jewett's *Deephaven* and, like Dippold, uses an examination of the illustrations to develop a deeper, richer, layered understanding of Boston Marriage in nineteenth-century New England. Challenging the reading of *Deephaven* as a lesser,

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puerile work, Sonstegard's analysis of the illustrations reveals a more tolerant, heterogeneous community that crosses conventional social boundaries. Interestingly, both essays clearly have a modern currency: Sonstegard, the way in which the visual art can lead the modern reader back into the passions and emotions of the text and arrive at both past meanings and contemporary relevance; Dippold, the way in which the text of the *Wampanoag Bible* now helps to revive Wôpanâak, the language of the Wampanoag peoples of southeastern New England.

While our other two essays are less visual in method, they demand that we question the obvious. Demanding we question the obvious in Hannah Foster's *The Boarding House*, Yvette Piggush uses the irony of the narrative to reveal the gendered nature of wit and humor in the early republic and exposes a subversive, indirect language of feminine manners and accommodation. Wit becomes the vehicle that instructs young women in manners and politeness. Taught to use it deftly throughout the novel, young women learned to "offer an alternative model of public critique" that exposed the follies of consumerism, misogyny, and self-righteous vanity. Also cautioning against superficial appearances, Mark Gallagher connects Irving's satirical *Sleepy Hollow* to Concord and Herman Melville's "The Apple-Tree Table" to poke fun at spiritualists and Transcendentalists. The nexus of the connection rests upon antebellum interest in spirits: Irving's headless horseman, Gallagher suggests, resonates with Concord's *Sleepy Hollow Cemetery*. Melville's refashioning of an old New England folk tale provides the connection through antebellum New England's obsession with spirits through an ironic treatment of a story about a haunted table—haunted because of the noises that emanated from it. The explanation for the noises was a bug whose egg had been deposited in the tree before the table had been fashioned and who finally ate its way through it. The connection Gallagher forges allows us to see the irony in the gentle chiding Melville provides for spiritualist and Transcendentalist alike.

At a moment in which pundits note the decline in the study of the humanities, each of our essays, I am pleased to note,

confirms the importance of reaching beyond the limits of the obvious: Dippold and Sonstegard, that text to be analyzed are not always words; Gallagher and Piggush, that meanings are conferred by contexts that require knowledge beyond the limits of the four corners of documents.

We want to draw your special attention to our website: <https://newenglandquarterly.org>. The shift of the *Quarterly* website from Northeastern to the University of Massachusetts Boston did not go as smoothly as we thought. Unfortunately, we left in our wake two orphaned websites; much as we have tried, we are unable to find anyone who has the authority or knowledge to turn the sites off. Our advisors have said that ultimately use will make our current site the default; but until that occurs, finding us will be difficult unless you use the above address. As an incentive to encourage the use of the website, we have initiated our new Innovations in Teaching column with an essay by Professor Melanie Gustafson's social history seminar at the University of Vermont. It is a remarkable accomplishment, and we encourage our readers not only to look at it but to consider submitting other candidates for posting.

As we begin our fifth year with the *Quarterly* at the University of Massachusetts Boston, we continue to be gratified by the support of our friends, many of whose names appear elsewhere as contributors to the 2018 Annual Fund. Support has come in many other forms: our many book reviewers, authors, and readers, suggestions for essays and issues, and the many persons and institutions who provide anonymous, in-kind contributions. Thank you all.

—Jonathan M. Chu