



Editorial

MARCH marks the beginning of the QUARTERLY's New Year, and our first issue of the year fortuitously centers around the cultural legacies of Harriet Beecher Stowe, Louisa May Alcott, and Ellen Tucker Emerson. Susan Beegel, Susan Williams, and Kate Culkin present us with the ways the legacies of these remarkable women shed unexpected light on nineteenth century culture by examining the contexts beyond the immediacy of their literary work.

Susan Beegel's study of the impact of Harriet Beecher Stowe upon Orr Island, Maine reveals an unanticipated legacy caused by the confluence of her literary celebrity, technological change, and the beginning of nineteenth-century tourism. Accompanied by images of artifacts from Beegel's personal collection, "Yarns Spun to Order: Harriet Beecher Stowe's *The Pearl of Orr's Island* and the Advent of Maine Summer Tourism," reminds us of the commercial markets for romance and nostalgia and of their capacities to alter our memories and shape reality. Having spent two years in Maine with little familiarity with Orr Island, Stowe began writing *The Pearl* after finishing *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. Interrupted by the celebrity and controversies over *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, *The Pearl* was begun on the eve of the Civil War as a weekly serial and completed in 1862. Set in an idyllic Maine on the brink of being overwhelmed by steamships and commercialization, *The Pearl* took obvious liberties with geography and characters. Steamships and commercialization, of course, made possible the changing of Orr Island into what Beegel calls a theme park complete with inns, souvenir shops, invented sites, and archetypal characters given authenticity by *The Pearl*. More a study of the rise and fall of

The New England Quarterly, vol. XCIII, no. 1 (March 2020). © 2020 by The New England Quarterly. All rights reserved. https://doi.org/10.1162/teq_e_00791.

Orr Island tourism than one of Stowe—she may have visited the island no more than once—Beegel treats us to a different, less traumatic, but still significant legacy from her. Harriet Beecher Stowe may not have been the little woman, to paraphrase Abraham Lincoln, who caused the Civil War, but she certainly was the source of Orr Island's moment in Maine's tourist season.

That the role of spinster aunts plays a significant role in Louisa May Alcott's fiction and that she expressed an early and deep concern for financial sufficiency should not surprise us in the least. In its announcement in 1996 of the discovery of Louisa May Alcott's unpublished first novel, *The Inheritance*, the *New York Times* pointed out that because Alcott had died childless, ownership of the manuscript had passed to three brothers who were great-great grandsons of Bronson Alcott. Susan Williams in "Family and Fortune: Louisa May Alcott, *Inheritance*, and the Legacy of Aunts" points out the irony of the *Times* feeling the necessity to explain that Alcott's literary rights to *The Inheritance* had descended through Bronson Alcott, in "a vertical male genealogical lineage that starts with Alcott's father and incorporates two male scholars [who discovered the manuscript in the Houghton Library] through a social network of 'kindness.'" What the *Times* seemed to have missed, according to Williams, was that it was the childless Alcott who had specifically planned for and determined the conveyance of the economic legacy of her work upon her death. Williams uses these two biographical details, her status as an unmarried aunt and the agent of her family's financial security, and an examination of *The Inheritance* and *Little Women* to enrich our understanding not only of the two works of literature but as a window into Alcott's financial and probate knowledge and her understanding of the definitions of nineteenth-century family life. Williams sees in Alcott's work the use of unmarried aunts as liminal figures capable of bridging convention and change and thus as persons of unique economic consequence in a gendered inheritance system. Written when she was eighteen, *The Inheritance* illustrates Alcott's concern about the legal, social, and economic roles of unmarried aunts from an early

age and her sophisticated understanding of nineteenth-century inheritance law. The deliberation of her conveyance of the economic rights to her literary oeuvre to the children of her siblings, Williams argues, enriches our understanding of her ideas about gender and family life in the nineteenth century, her legal acumen, and the careful deliberation and planning she put into the preservation of family and fortune.

In "The Education of Ellen Tucker Emerson" Kate Culkin makes us aware of how Ellen Emerson's education made possible her legacy. Discussions about the Emerson household, Culkin tells us, have left unexplored the impact of domestic life upon the work of Emerson's father Ralph Waldo Emerson. Ellen Emerson's educational journey provides a window into the history of the family especially as to how it prepared her to care for her mother's various illnesses and her father in his later years when his memory began to fail. Although Ellen Emerson dismissed her own intellectual gifts when she assumed management of the Emerson household and became caregiver, secretary, nurse, and accountant for her parents, her education, Culkin argues, reveals and explains a legacy, the significant editorial contributions she made to her father's work, that remains obscured. Recent scholars have noted that Ellen Emerson in helping to conceal her father's memory losses transitioned into editor and collaborator, and Culkin's essay both demonstrates Ellen Emerson's modesty and explains how her education prepared her for the transition into her father's literary guardian and for her gifts to us.

Sharp-eyed readers of our masthead will see that two of the most distinguished members of our boards of directors and of editors have stepped back from active roles with the *QUARTERLY*. In 1981, Professor William Fowler Jr. took the *NEW ENGLAND QUARTERLY* to Northeastern from Bowdoin College and who, with Linda Smith Rhoads, established the practices that guide our daily editorial work and facilitate the production of the journal still. Bill has also served as a personal mentor who not only accepted my first journal article, wrote what I expect must have been a favorable tenure review, and been a source of strength and encouragement in the *QUARTERLY*'s move from

Northeastern to the University of Massachusetts Boston. Even in retirement while usually on some cruise to distant places, he remains a willing and reliable reviewer of manuscripts. Scholars, of course, recognize the monumental contributions Professor Bernard Bailyn has made to the study of early American history. We know him also as a member of our boards of editors and directors since 1961. In those capacities we have learned to appreciate his contributions to the more immediate, practical gifts he brings to the publishing enterprise and most especially in his generosity with his time and his gentle editorial advice and guidance. His support of our endeavors has been deeply appreciated. Historians better than most should understand the inevitability of change even when they regret it. The editorial staff expresses its deepest appreciation for the contributions of Professors Fowler and Bailyn and wish them both well.

In marking the beginning of our ninety-third year, the editors would like to express our thanks to all who make the QUARTERLY possible. We especially want to give thanks to the contributors to our 2019 Annual Appeal who represent a critical source of support. When we reported our preparations for the Annual Appeal to the QUARTERLY's Board of Directors, it was pointed out to us that our donors are remarkably loyal for which we are deeply grateful. We also send our thanks to the many friends this past year who have taken the time to help with evaluating manuscripts, writing book reviews, and providing essential logistical support in many diverse ways. We hope to remain worthy of your continued support.

—Jonathan M. Chu