



Editorial

IN this issue of the QUARTERLY, we are pleased to present the winner of the 2020 Whitehill Prize essay, “Lost Years Recovered: John Peters and Phillis Wheatley Peters in Middleton” by Professor Cornelia H. Dayton of the University of Connecticut. As her title indicates, Professor Dayton, through a deep, careful analysis of a series of protracted lawsuits over an inheritance, has recovered a critical moment in the lives of Phillis Wheatley and her husband John Peters. In the process, she reveals a number of significant things about Peters, the precarious social status of Blacks in New England, even those possessed of economic and cultural assets, and about Wheatley during a period of her life previously hidden from historians and literary scholars.

Professor Dayton also inadvertently identified the thematic thread that runs consistently through this issue. When preparing her essay for publication, I happened to mention that Professor David D. Hall’s essay, “Author, Author, *A Short Story of the Rise, reign, and ruine of the Late Antinomians, Familists, and Libertines* (1644) Reappraised,” would also appear in our September number. Her characterization of my synopsis was that it was another “reveal” essay, a story for which the documentation existed but needed a unique set of skills and insights to be exposed for us by a scholar. Professor Hall’s essay is possible because of the confluence of his early, authoritative work on the Antinomian controversy and his more recent interests in the history of the book. In asking who “wrote” the *Short Story*, Hall rejects its attribution to John Winthrop or Thomas Weld for primarily Thomas Shepard among others, but, more significantly, he reveals the complex ways theological issues that,

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as manifested in the events surrounding Anne Hutchinson, filtered into the spiritual life of puritans: of works versus grace, in the limits of dissent, and on perspectives of gender. Hall peels back the process of how the *Short Story* came to be published and by whom to reveal more complex conversations and impels a reconsideration of the transatlantic contexts of authorship, publication, and theological disputation as well as Hutchinson's doctrinal challenges to her judges.

Our remaining two essays also explore insights revealed through looking at the past from different vantage points to illuminate the hidden places of familiar figures and historical phenomena. In "Roger Williams and the Indian Business," Julie F. Fisher demonstrates how the practicalities of Williams's linguistic abilities and his trading with the Indians reveals a more complicated, but understandable, connection between commerce and statecraft. Williams's commerce, Dr. Fisher argues, situated him as an important political intermediary between English settlers and Native people, but she also exposes some troubling questions about his purported sympathies for the latter. It is significant, Fisher notes, that Williams's facility with language and his understanding of Native cultures did not correspond to empathy or preclude participation in the enslavement of Indigenous people. Looking at the movement to reform theaters in Boston and Providence, Sara E. Lampert's "'The Presence of Improper Females': Reforming Theater in Boston and Providence in the 1820s to 1840s" looks at the arrangement of the theater and reveals how the unanticipated consequences of trying to enlarge its audience—to broaden the attraction for the theater to a more genteel, middle class audience and increase its commercial viability—requires an understanding of the arrangement of public space, assumptions about masculinity, the connections of gender and gentility, and the nature of sex work in the early nineteenth century. Overcoming distaste for the theater, Lampert teaches us, was not just a legacy of puritanical bigotry but an attempt to deal with the sex work that took place within the confines of a section, the third tier, of the theater itself. While reform may have brought more genteel audiences into the theater, it had the unanticipated consequence of moving sex work into public places.

Our REVIEW ESSAY also suggests how new meanings might be revealed in familiar texts. As many of our readers know, a mission of the Colonial Society of Massachusetts is to make original documents widely available to scholars and the general public. Peter Messer reviews two recent Colonial Society's publications, volumes 2 and 3 of *The Correspondence of Thomas Hutchinson* covering the years 1767–1770. In “Thomas Hutchinson and Vernacular Constitutionalism,” Messer argues for their utility in documenting Hutchinson's administration of Massachusetts and suggesting how they contribute an understanding of the Revolution from the perspective of the practical problems of effective governance in contrast to ones based upon colonial rights and parliamentary authority. Like the other authors in this number, Messer demonstrates how scholars looking from different viewpoints reveal and document how ordinary people navigated the challenges of the larger forces and abstractions that shaped the minutiae of their daily lives.

Also note our new entry on our Innovations in Teaching feature on our website, <https://nequarterly.org/innovations-in-teaching/>. The author of *The People's Martyr: Thomas Wilson Dorr and his Rhode Island 1842 Rebellion*, Eric Chaput, who teaches at Providence College and the Lawrenceville School, has designed a teaching unit based upon the Providence College Dorr Rebellion website (<http://library.providence.edu/dorr>).

As September marks our transition to the new academic year and, with anticipation, the restoration of normality on campus, we wish Danny O'Hara a fond farewell and congratulations on the completion of his MA. Rebecca Beit-Aharon assumes his post of the senior graduate assistant, and we welcome Amy Lin as our new assistant from the English Department. The editorial staff wishes to express its gratitude to the understanding of authors and supporters of Annual Appeal and the Baily Fund for our occasional delays and lapses in returning emails, securing releases, and acknowledging the receipt of contributions. We hope to do better, especially as we expect to be fully restored to campus and our office in the fall.

—Jonathan M. Chu