



Editorial

WHEN assembling this issue of the QUARTERLY, I reflected on the irony of starting our new year in March. Beginning it on Lady Day, March 25th is, after all, more consistent with New England, England, and Scotland before the New Calendar Act of 1750 and reflects the more visceral feeling of the passage of winter to spring. Central heating, air conditioning, and cable news have, to some extent, smoothed out our sense of seasonal change and altered our indoor social encounters. Jordan E. Taylor in “Now in the Winter of our Dull Content: Seasonality and the Atlantic Communications Frontier in Eighteenth-Century New England” reminds us of that different time when seasons shaped communication and life in New England more explicitly. Taylor examines how winter affected the content of newspapers and provided New Englanders with different rhythms of sociability and connection. Ice-bound harbors and poor roads inhibited the flow of news to publishers of newspapers affecting production and distribution, limiting and altering content, and indicating a not entirely unwelcome milieu of isolation. Technological change, the development of ice-breaker boats, the telegraph, and the transatlantic cable led to the greater social connectivity and integration that Americans saw as progress. Yet, as Taylor suggests, the defeat of winter by better technology and communication also had an adverse impact. As users of email and the internet recognize, constant communication (as electronic umbilical cords) can lead to an omnipresent connectivity and with it, lost opportunities for solitude, reflection, or alternative kinds of sociability.

Taylor’s caution about the adverse consequences of better communication reminds us also of the complexities that

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structural imperatives impose on relationships. By looking at the programs to educate Native people in institutions other than those like Dartmouth and Indian residential schools, Maurice S. Crandall, in “Little Brother to Dartmouth: Thetford Academy, Colonialism, and Dispossession in New England,” opens another window to the processes of settler colonialism. Asking us to look at a different tier of educational institutions, he reminds us that well-intentioned structures frequently have adverse consequences. Despite its good intentions, Thetford Academy, although much smaller than nearby Dartmouth College, was an integral part of both the education of Indigenous people and the processes of dispossession. Established by a Dartmouth graduate and determined to provide educational opportunities for Native people, Thetford’s very founding dispossessed the original Abenaki residents from their homelands. Its alumni, Crandall argues, collectively also had an exponential adverse impact upon Indians. One of its most noteworthy alumni was Justin Morrill whose ideas for subsidizing the establishment of public universities were spread by other Thetford alumni and fueled the expansion of higher education in the West at the expense of Indigenous people.

In our MEMORANDA AND DOCUMENTS, Adam Shoplik and Jeffrey Glover in “James Indian’s ‘Answers’: An Indigenous Freedom Suit in Massachusetts Bay” illustrate further how structures shape the status and treatment of Indigenous people in New England. By the mid-seventeenth century, James Indian, born and enslaved in Virginia, found himself in Massachusetts Bay bound to one of its residents. Shoplik and Glover use the text of a single document, probably a rejoinder to an appeal to the Massachusetts Court of Assistants, to reveal the competing social and institutional structures that shaped the circumstances of enslaved Native people. With this illustrative text, Shoplik and Glover show how questions of social conflict between whites and of judicial process affected James Indian’s petition for his freedom. In the case of the latter, they illustrate especially how legal processes—the determination of the freedom to contract indentured servitude, the definition of

just v. unjust war, and the disposition of rules of evidence—complicated the conditions of enslavement under colonial law.

Readers of our recent REVIEW ESSAYS will have noticed our efforts to give book reviewers a bit more length and latitude. This has resulted in reviews that have been more historiographical or broadly topical than the usual format and thus, we hope, are more interesting. The REVIEW ESSAY of this issue goes even further. Hayden White once commented that the crisis in historical writing stems from its failure to become the objective science envisioned by late nineteenth-century historians and its isolation from imaginative literature. In attempting to bridge the gap that White observed, Thomas N. Layton in *The “Other” Dixwells: Commerce and Conscience in an American Family* uses “personalized vignettes,” his term for imaginative literature, to fill the want of evidence. When the QUARTERLY received this book for review, the editors asked a highly successful writer of historical fiction who spends as much time as any historian researching his novels in the Massachusetts Historical Society, William Martin, the author of *Back Bay, Cape Cod*, among others, to review *The “Other Dixwells”* for us. Martin raises important questions for scholars, who, when faced with fragmentary evidence and tempted by conjecture and feeling, think that they might arrive at a solution by resorting to their literary imagination. Martin, interestingly enough, sees the differences between historians and novelists as a membrane and not a spectrum.

The editors are pleased to announce that Dr. Lydia G. Fash of Simmons College has joined the QUARTERLY as Book Review Editor. Dr. Fash will share the position with Dr. Sara Georgini of the Adams Papers and the Massachusetts Historical Society. We are exceedingly glad to welcome these two new colleagues to our editorial team.

As we reflect on the challenges of the past two years, we are again deeply grateful for our many friends and supporters. Thanks go out to those who take the time to review submissions, write book reviews, or just help us find new reviewers and friends. We appreciate the time they diverted from other

pressing projects. We also are deeply grateful to the Colonial Society of Massachusetts, its president, Robert Allison, Council, and the many members for their support of the QUARTERLY and dedication to the study of early American history and literary culture. Also, to those early respondents to our annual appeal, we send our special appreciation. It is especially easy to presume that the scholarly enterprise particularly in the humanities is an individual or very small cottage industry; however, the editors are quite aware of the contributions made by the extraordinary and broad base of our support, especially in these difficult times. A colleague told me recently that the QUARTERLY represents a long, distinguished tradition; sharing it with so many friends has been a privilege.

—Jonathan M. Chu

Joel Myerson

In Memoriam

The editors of the *New England Quarterly* extend their deepest sympathies to the family and friends of Joel Myerson, Distinguished Professor Emeritus of English Language and Literature at the University of South Carolina. An esteemed teacher and critic, Joel's rich scholarship on Ralph Waldo Emerson and American Transcendentalism was without peer. A keen and discerning editor, he helped to restore the reputation and writings of author Margaret Fuller; established and edited the journal *Studies in the American Renaissance* (1977–1996), and generously shepherded numerous books and exhibits to fruition. Unstinting in his support of the QUARTERLY, Professor Myerson was a valued colleague who always reviewed new work quickly, carefully, and cogently. We acknowledge his many gifts to us and the scholarly enterprise, and we are saddened by his loss.

The Editors