In this Issue



Presented as part of the Special Literature Issue

This special issue of Common-place gives us a chance to step back from the earnest defensiveness that has sometimes characterized early American literary history and delight publicly in the strange and wonderful books that are our American legacy.

The Other Charlie Brown

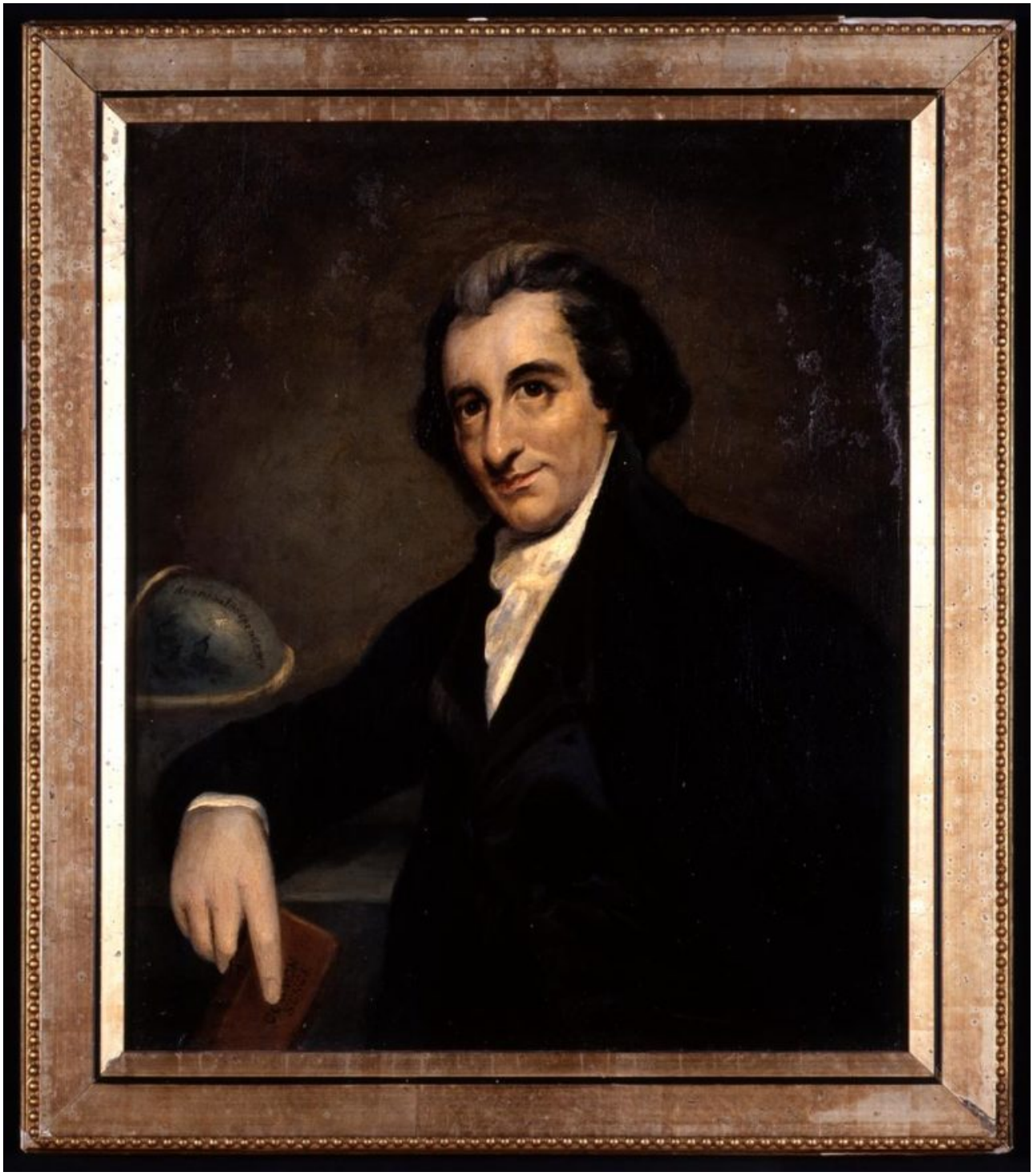


William Penn's Land Treaty with the Delaware Indians, 1683.
From the Painting by Paul Domville.

Presented as part of the Special Literature Issue

What does aligning ourselves with, rather than against, America tell us about us?

Introduction: Making Sense of Thomas Paine



If Paine’s brand of radicalism helped mark the ideological dividing line between Republicans and Federalists in the 1790s and 1800s, his words have more recently been appropriated by politicians from across the political spectrum.

Fancy History: John Fanning Watson’s Relic Box



Narrative histories of action make us exceedingly conscious of the sequence of events over time. But time plays hide and seek in these small fragments.

Reconstructing a Lost Library: George Wythe’s “legacie” to President Thomas Jefferson



Jefferson documented his collection decisions in this manuscript—which books to retain, which ones to give away, and to whom.

Ritualization and Early American Music: Introduction to Common-place 13:2



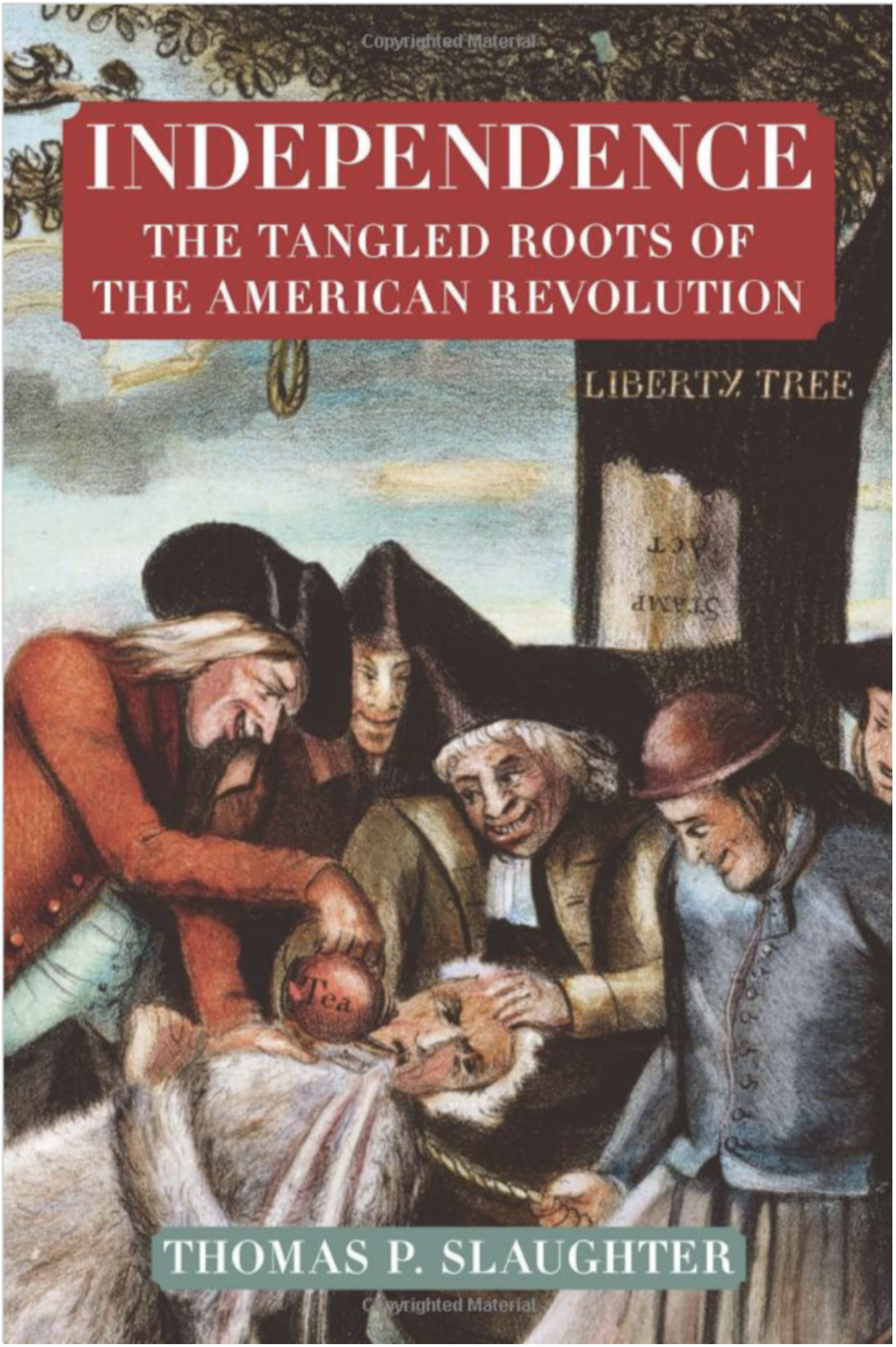
All the essays in this issue treat music that registers quintessentially American processes of cultural change-encounter, innovation, contestation, reconfiguration, transfusion.

Whose Side Are You On? Or, Pitt and the Pendulum

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INDEPENDENCE

THE TANGLED ROOTS OF THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION



THOMAS P. SLAUGHTER

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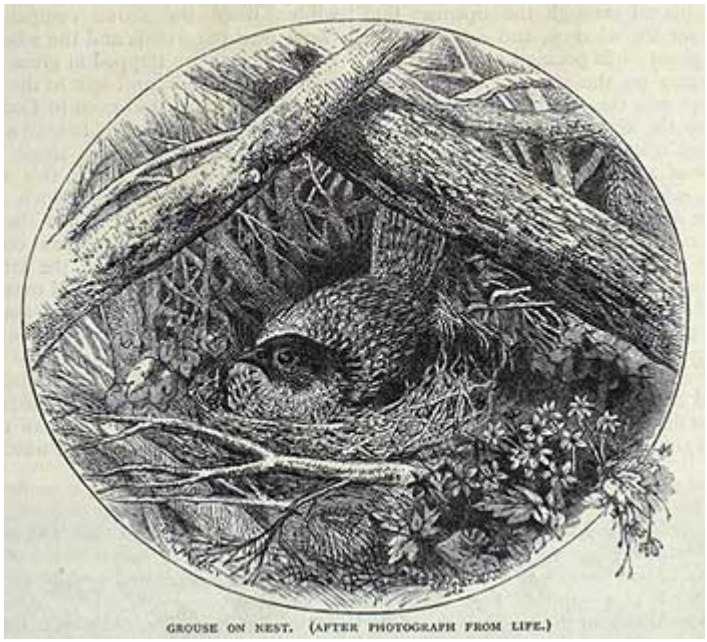
Americans fought righteously, and with their eyes on the main chance. They fought for themselves, for their comrades in arms, for their families, for their communities, and with God on their side.

“Human Fire Fierce Glowing”



The American Revolution helped to form the idea of conscious, willed, systemic, historic change—and thereby the very notion of agency itself.

Photography in Engraving on Wood



Presented as part of the Special Issue: “Revolution in Print: Graphics in Nineteenth-Century America”

Photographs did eventually replace wood engravings in illustration, but before that photography joined and transformed wood engraving so as to favor its claims as a fine art.

Mehetabel Chandler Coit: Finding “Her Book”



My search for Mehetabel’s diary had entailed a good six months of concentrated—and at times seemingly futile—effort. When I finally held it in my hands, however, every moment of that search seemed worthwhile.