Encountering and Collecting the Sacred Body Through Relics in Early American Protestant Culture, 1750-1870

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A dissertation presented

by

Christopher Mark Brady Allison

to

The Committee on Higher Degrees in the History of American Civilization

in partial fulfillment of the requirements

for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

in the subject of

History of American Civilization

Harvard University

Cambridge, Massachusetts

April 2017

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation is about the emergence of relics in early American Protestant culture from the middle of the eighteenth century to after the American Civil War. It demonstrates that early Americans immersed in a thoroughly Protestant culture unexpectedly developed relic cultures around vaunted Protestant figures of their collective past. I argue that these Protestant people were acting on a desire to access the embodied presence of individuals who were somehow absent or elusive. Their cultural commitment to the real drove them to the veneration of people's bodies and, in turn, their relics. They were seeking two things in their efforts at capturing the body, first, knowledge, and second, reanimation. The dissertation points to the endurance of relic culture in human, especially religious, life, even in Protestant cultures, who had famously resisted relics. The form of the dissertation is three case studies. The first looks at George Whitefield, the famous English itinerant preacher of the eighteenth century, at the ways people sought his embodied presence before and after death, and the body cult that emerged around his crypt in Newburyport, Massachusetts. The second case study looks at Jane McCrea, a young Presbyterian woman who was killed in July of 1777 by Indians working for British forces during the Revolutionary War. This case study looks at the ways her death was set apart, how she was fashioned into a martyr through poetry and art, and then to the ways the cult around her

memory escalated through pilgrimage to the places of her death around Fort Edward, New York, culminating in relic taking of the tree associated with her death and her actual corpse. The third case study analyzes Elias Hicks, the early nineteenth century schismatic Quaker minister. In the first section, I look at the ways people tried to capture his iconic presence despite Hicks' resistance, worried that recording his ministry or body might invite idolatry. I look at an extreme case where Hicks' admirers cooperated with an eccentric sculptor to exhume Hicks after his funeral in Jericho, Long Island, New York, to take a death mask. All of these case studies follow a similar trajectory, from valuing the body of an iconic historical figure that is somehow elusive to seeking relics of that person as a way of instantiating the real, in order to seek knowledge about these people and to reanimate the memories of those devoted to them.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Writing a dissertation is hard, isolating, and, indeed, lonely. But I have been fortunate to enjoy the support of many in writing this dissertation, who eased the burden, have given me much-needed company along the way, and, in doing so, have sharpened my insights, pointed out my weakness, and cheered me on to the finish line. It is my pleasure to acknowledge their help here.

The origin of this project really lay in finding, and encountering things; things that countered my learned assumptions about Protestant relationships to materiality. In the summer of 2013, after an eventful summer research trip to denominational archives researching a *different* project (about the origins of black antislavery activism in the Early Republic), I told Laurel Thatcher Ulrich about my discovery of George Whitefield's "hand-bone" at the United Methodist Archive in Madison, New Jersey. After excitedly relating to her the many *other* strange things I found during my trip, Laurel put me out of my misery, and said, "Write about the relics…I want to learn about that…you need me on your committee." I very much did, and I am grateful that she encouraged my gut instinct to head toward a new scholarly identity as a scholar of material culture. As those who know Laurel Ulrich can attest, she is one of the most gracious and brilliant historians alive; she also has a mischievous streak, which has encouraged me to follow the evidence towards its logical, albeit sometimes controversial, conclusions. It has been an honor to be one of her last graduate students. Catherine Brekus had advised on the project before she came to Harvard, and it was a thrill to have her come. (She may not have known it, but I actively campaigned during the search for her to come from the University of Chicago to Harvard). I can't imagine a better duo as dissertation committee chairs. Catherine listens, challenges, and encourages, in appropriate measures. Her comprehensive knowledge of

American Religious History has been a boon; she has been a fantastic mentor in both writing, life, and navigating a quirky profession. Both Laurel and Catherine have not been afraid of throwing criticism my way, but also, just as important, telling me what is good. The best advisors are not afraid of the proverbial brake nor the accelerator. I have absorbed the lesson through their example. Jill Lepore's initial enthusiasm egged me on; she always encouraged creativity to consider the most pressing historical issues. She also is a champion of great historical writing. Jennifer Roberts has been a mentor to me as both a teacher and a scholar. Along with Laurel, Jennifer taught me how to teach with things and to respect them as sources, in all their multitudinous complexity, on their own terms. Jennifer also demonstrated a capacity to care deeply about pedagogy, but also, in a very genuine way, multidisciplinarity. When the history of science and art were bearing down on me, she encouraged me to open my arms to these new disciplinary directions. Thanks also to Jane Kamensky, who acted as my outside reader. Her fusion of training as a historian and an art historian allowed for verdant insights.

Others at Harvard who have advised on aspects of this dissertation include, Ethan Lasser, Sara Schechner, Andrew Jewett, Joyce Chaplin, Evelyn Higginbotham, James Simpson, Diana Loren, Dan McKanan, Ann Braude, and most of all, John Stauffer—my first advisor who deserves more thanks than I can relate here.

Other fellow academics that helped with this work include David Starbuck at Plymouth State University, Erik Seeman at the University at Buffalo, Adrian Weimer at Providence College, Heather Curtis at Tufts University, Douglas Winiarski at the University of Richmond, Christopher Phillips at Lafayette College, Patricia Roylance at Syracuse University, David Brewer at the Ohio State University, Lynn Festa at Rutgers University, Sarah Carter and Jon

Prown at the Chipstone Foundation, Elizabeth Jemison at Clemson University, Sally Promey at Yale University, Emily Floyd at Temple and Yale University.

Historians need stuff to work with, and this relies on a series of small armies of people who devote their lives to preserving and making accessible historical objects, manuscripts, and printed things. Special thanks go to the Methodist Library and the General Commission of Archives and History of the United Methodist Church, Drew University, Madison, New Jersey. This is, indeed, my favorite archive, and really the locus of the origins of this project. Mark Shenise is to thank above all. Thanks also to Chris Anderson, Dale Peterson, Frances Lyons, Brian Shetler, Cassie Brand, KwangYu Lee, and Robert Williams (who once entered the room where I was looking at "relics," and exclaimed, "How can you get anything out of this stuff?"). Special thanks go to Old South Presbyterian Church, Newburyport, Massachusetts, and their incredible archive, especially Pastor Rob John and Nancy Stokes. Rob and I were memorably hosted by Dominic Hall, curator of the Warren Anatomical Museum, Harvard Medical School, to see Whitefield's rib in Boston. Dominic has been a wonderful resource for both my teaching and research. Matthew Keagle and Miranda Peters at the Fort Ticonderoga Museum and Archive was a gracious host, and allowed me to publish on the remains of Jane McCrea. Other archives and collections that deserve thanks include, the Old Fort House Museum and the Washington County Historical Society, Fort Edward, NY; New York Library Manuscripts and Special Collections, Albany, NY; Crandall Library, Glens Falls, NY; Massachusetts Historical Society, Boston, MA; American Antiquarian Society, Worcester, MA; Historical Society of Old Newbury, Newburyport, MA; Houghton Library, Harvard Art Museums, Countway Library, and the Peabody Museum of Ethnology and Archaeology, Harvard University; Presbyterian Historical Society, Philadelphia, PA; American Baptist Historical Society, Atlanta, GA; the

British Museum and the Victoria and Albert Museum, London, UK; Congregational Library, Boston, MA; Museum of Methodism, City Road, London, UK; John Rylands Library, University of Manchester, UK; Friends Historical Library, Swarthmore College, Swarthmore, PA; Mother Bethel African Methodist Episcopal Church, Philadelphia, PA; New York State Historical Association, Cooperstown, NY; Fordham University Library Manuscript and Special Collections; Wellcome Library, London, UK.

Portions of this dissertation have been shared at various conferences and workshops. I have presented aspects of this project at the annual meetings of the Organization of American Historians, Society of Early Americanists, Omuhundro Institute of Early American Culture and History, American Society of Eighteenth Century Studies, American Studies Association, and the American Academy of Religion, along with conferences at Harvard Divinity School and Boston University. Special thanks to Sarah Carter, Pink Dandelion, and the countless other commentators.

At Harvard, I have been an active member of the North American Religions Colloquium for the last six years, one of the most vibrant intellectual spaces on campus. Thanks goes especially the faculty, David Neill Hempton, once again, Catherine Brekus, Ann Braude, David Holland, Dan McKanan, Healan Gaston, John Roberts, David Hall, Shitsuyo and my fellow graduate and graduated colleagues, Elizabeth Jemison, Katharine Gerbner, Max Mueller, Brett Grainger, John Bell, Eva Payne, Dierdre Debruyn Rubio, Kip Richardson, Ryan Tobler, Erik Nordbye, Tom Whittaker, Helen Kim, Colin Bossen, Cori Tucker-Price, Sara Georgini, Charisse Barron, and Sonia Hazard, among many others.

I have been a fortunate recipient of financial support for the research herein. The Massey Fund at the Program in American Studies provided a semester of leave to write, and the Charles

Warren Center, the Graduate School of Arts and Sciences, and the History Department's Artemas Ward fund for Early American History all provided summer research support. I enjoyed fellowship support for the American Antiquarian Society's History of the Book Seminar in the Summer of 2013, one of the more formative intellectual experiences of my career. An entire year of dissertation research fellowship support was provided by the Ambassador John L. Loeb Jr. Initiative on the Implications of Religious Freedom, at the Center for American Political Studies, Harvard University. An incredibly productive fellowship was provided by the Graduate School of Arts and Sciences in advance of the dissertation stage, colloquially known as "Prospecting" fellowships (in the mining sense).

I was especially privileged to have a stellar cohort of fellow graduate students in the Program in the History of American Civilization, now renamed American Studies. The program is one of the best in the modern academy for training humanists, for its rigor and discipline, coupled with a built-in, structural impulse to intellectually explore. But it has been such a wonderful experience, most of all, due to my fellow students. Dan Farbman shared an interest in antislavery and reform, and the nineteenth century, that, I hope, helped and encouraged us both. He also endured my, probably, boorish legal questions. Rebecca Scofield was a fantastic conversation partner across all possible regions of academic existence; and a breath of sanity in a sometimes-insane environment. She made us all proud by being the first professor of us all. Of my cohort, I have been closest to John Bell and Carla Cevasco, who have become dear friends and fellow travelers, and truly brilliant scholars. John and Carla, I dare say, have formed the core of an enviable cohort of mutual support, but what we have forged together has not been accidental; we have actively cared for one another, and built a support system that has made us all the richer (and smarter) for it. Thanks also to Evander Price, Charles Peterson, Collier Brown,

Eva Payne, Colin Bossen, Sandy Placido, Theresa McCulla, Brian Goodman, Andrew Block, Marissa Egerstrom, Scott Poulson-Bryant, Amy Fish, Balraj Gill, Laura Nelson, Zachary Nowak, Whitney Robles, Lucie Steinberg, and Bradley Cooper. Special thanks goes to the legendary Arthur Patton-Hock, an ever-present source of support and wisdom.

Before Harvard was Yale, there were many people who shaped my trajectory as a scholar. David Brion Davis was a close mentor, with whom I worked closely, and, in the process gave me an education in the putting together a large-scale project. David Blight was a great teacher, and helped as I made the move to Ph.D. work. Other faculty that helped along the way included Harry Stout, Ken Minkema, Bruce Gordon, Clarence Hardy, and Kathryn Lofton. I had great cohort mates as well, especially Kimberly George, Dan Bell, Bobby Smiley and Benji Rolsky. At Olivet, I am thankful especially to faculty mentors, William Dean, Stephen Lowe, and, most of all, Kevin Twain Lowery.

Communities beyond Harvard have been especially meaningful. The community of Church of the Cross, Boston, has been an anchor, in this work. Mark Booker, the rector, has been a mentor and friend. The community has been a vital intellectual and spiritual community, that formed the bedrock of my support system. Thanks to Jonathan and Rachael Bailes, Chris and Amy Stroup, Clifton and Lindsay Stringer, Jessica and Brian Patton, Ryan and Libbie Ruffing, Corinne and Steven Albro, Susan Holman, Charmie and Gordon Curry, Sam and Edith Abbot, Britany and Jon Yeager, David and Harmony Decosimo, and, most of all, our friends and sometimes housemates, Leah and Ryan Knowles.

Finally, a word about my family. My dissertation is dedicated to the women in my life, namely, my brilliant wife, for whom my love seems to grow every day. It is not an exaggeration nor an empty sentiment that this degree and dissertation would simply be impossible without her,

in a multitude of ways. My two daughters, Ana and Isabella, have shown me the boundaries of my weakness, and the horizons of my potential. And they have also shown me that my greatest joy is to be with them, their mother, and best of all, together. My love for all these women is deep. Thanks to Melinda and Jim Armstead for coming out to cover for me on various research trips, and their willingness to bear the fifteen hours of driving drudgery to visit us in Boston. Their never-ending support has been essential, and, I know, an expression of their love. My siblings and siblings-in-law, Brandon, Sarah, and Justin, helped as they could, along the way. My parents, Sandra and David Allison, have been a constant encouragement. My mother is one of the most gifted linguists I have ever met, and instilled in me a desire for excellence. My father brought my love of the past alive and inculcated an infectious curiosity for all things; our trips to castles and museums on the weekends in Albania has been an enduring spark in my intellectual life, that has led me to seek out the past, and fathom its meaning. My parents gave me the incomparable experience of living in a part of the world in which the power of the past was and is so present, and so troubling. I have been trying to figure out the role of history in people's lives ever since. This dissertation is one effort at understanding.

Dedicated to,

Amanda, my ever-supportive, brilliant and beautiful wife.

Ana and Isabella, my daughters.

In memory of Clarice and Curtis Brady,

my grandparents,

for their love and inculcating a love of learning, academia, and culture.

INTRODUCTION: WHAT IS A RELIC?

> If the distinction between the subject and the object is blurred in my body…, it is also blurred in the thing, which is the pole of my body's operations, the terminus its exploration ends up in, and which is thus woven into the same intentional fabric as my body. When we say that the perceived thing is grasped 'in person' or 'in the flesh'…this has to be taken literally: the flesh of what is perceived, this compact particle which stops exploration, and this optimum which terminates it all reflect my own incarnation and are its counterpart.
>
> Maurice Marleau-Ponty, 1964

What is a relic? The term, in most Western reader's minds, recalls what we now understand as the Catholic cult of the saints, with its elaborate pilgrimage, shrines, and reliquaries. The cult found its material focal point in the human detritus—the relics—of first the martyrs, and then the Saints. The remains of the exceptional Christian, the Saint, was, in these cultures, handled and venerated as veritable "treasures of heaven."[1] But if we take a broader view, we can see that most cultures, especially ones we would call "religious," have had relics. As Steven Hooper has observed, "relics and, especially relic-related behavior, are a fundamental part of religion as a global human practice." This relies on a capacious definition of religion in distinguishing relics as related to "special personages." Thus the locks of hair cut from the head of 1970s rock star and the tears of the Virgin Mary are connected. Both register the presence of special figures for whom exceptional power is ascribed by those devoted to their memory.

Whether the relics are actual fragments of a special body (primary relics), or are derived from or have come into contact with this body (secondary relics), or are an image of that body, all of these objects, Hooper notes, "embody the exceptional, thaumaturgic and talented qualities

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[1] Cynthia J. Hahn et al., *Treasures of Heaven: Saints, Relics, and Devotion in Medieval Europe* (New Haven [Conn.]: Cleveland Museum of Art ;Walters Art Museum ;The British Museum ;Distributed by Yale University Press, 2010).

of the prototype and provide a focus from human engagement with such sources of power." [2] Relics have provided means of crossing stubborn boundaries—life/death, sacred/profane, heaven/earth, past/present—and thus people place these special personages in flow of everyday life through the devotion to and acquisition of relics.[3] This was and is a global, and trans-historical phenomenon. The evidence of this long and ongoing practice is evident across the world.

In the Buddhist world, for example, the devotion to the Buddha's tooth at the *Perahära* festival, in Kandy, Sri Lanka, is one of the largest Buddhist pilgrimage sites in the world. As John Strong has written, in his fantastic book on Buddhist relic culture, "relics in Buddhism are just as numerous and cultically just as important as they are in Roman Catholicism."[4] In the Islamic world there are similar material engagements. At Topkapi Palace, in Istanbul, the historic center of the Ottoman Empire, thousands of people visit to see the "Sacred Trusts:" the bones of John the Baptist, the hair, nails, and footprints of the Prophet Mohammed, Moses' staff, and remains of the Ka'aba from Mecca. Even bread made from the grain that grew next to the Prophet's grave could be a means of devotional mimesis—pilgrims could ingest the nutrition derived from the soil where the prophet was laid to rest.[5] In the Pacific Islands there was a long standing relic culture devoted to ancestors. The British Museum, for example, has many of these

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[2] Steven Hooper, "A Cross-Cultural Theory of Relics: On Understanding Religion, Bodies, Artefacts, Images and Art," *World Art* 4, no. 2 (July 3, 2014): 175, 179. Ann Taves, *Religious Experience Reconsidered: A Building Block Approach to the Study of Religion and Other Special Things* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2009).

[3] Thomas A. Tweed, *Crossing and Dwelling: A Theory of Religion* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2006), 7–13.

[4] John Strong, *Relics of the Buddha*, Buddhisms (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2004).

[5] Finbarr Barry Flood, "Bodies and Becoming: Mimesis, Meditation, and the Ingestion of the Sacred in Christianity and Islam," in *Sensational Religion: Sensory Cultures in Material Practice*, ed. Sally M. Promey (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2014), 581–603. Hooper, "A Cross-Cultural Theory of Relics."

Rurutu (Austral, Pacific Islander) reliquaries, now devoid their relics, which once held the remains of their ancestors. Who urged these Rurutu people to remove the relics from their reliquaries? Rurutu converts to Protestant Christianity removed their relics from the reliquaries devoted to A'a, a deified ancestor, by their own volition in response to their embrace of Protestant Christianity. Ironically, it was Protestant missionaries, in turn, who saved the reliquaries from destruction, and later exhibited them in Britain as objects that registered the global growth of Christianity.[6] In exhibition, the reliquaries functioned as a kind of anti-relic, a material vestige of a relic culture abolished.

Did Protestants have relics? Yes, they did. Despite their well-known opposition to material religion, Protestants had relics, ones that functioned with abundant meaning within their own religious culture. But they were also the most conflicted about relics, and for most of their history actively resisted the human-material form. This dissertation reveals a moment when the resistance to relics, for many contingent reasons, abated (but did not disappear completely).

The clearest expression of the resistance to relics came from non-other than John Calvin, the Franco-Swiss reformer of the sixteenth century. While he is most known for his theological treatise, *The Institutes of the Christian Religion* (1536), his most popular occasional work was on relics, namely his *Treatise on Relics* (*Le traité des reliques*) (1543), which sought to demolish Catholic relic culture through, of all things, the rhetorical strategy of an inventory.[7] In a regularly mocking voice, Calvin listed the many historical problems and inconsistencies of the cult. After cataloguing the superfluity of the fragments of the true cross, Calvin summarized: "In short, if

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[6] Julie (Julie Ann) Adams, *A'a: A Deity from Polynesia*, Object in Focus (London: British Museum Press, 2016). You can see the reliquary here: http://www.britishmuseum.org/whats_on/exhibitions/containing_the_divine.aspx

[7] Philip Benedict, *Christ's Churches Purely Reformed: A Social History of Calvinism* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2002), 91.

we were to collect all these pieces of the true cross exhibited in various parts, they would form a whole ship's cargo." In speaking of St. Ursula's relics, Calvin observed that "she has a whole body at St. Jean d'Angely, and a head into the bargain at Cologne, besides three separate limbs, and various fragments at Mans, Tours, and Bergerat." He concluded that "to have relics is a useless and frivolous thing, which will most probably gradually lead towards idolatry, because they cannot be handled and looked upon without being honoured, and in doing this men will very soon render them the honour which is due to Jesus Christ."[8] Calvin, though this was not his intention, made a very prescient point about the anthropological aspects of relic culture, 1) they could not be collected and handled without being venerated in some way, and, 2) this was a cultural form prone to escalation.

Calvin's comment was an insightful historical point, for this was how the cult of the saints had started in late antique Mediterranean world. First an ardent focus on the bodies of the martyrs, then visiting their graves outside the cities of the ancient world, then handling and encountering their relics (their *memoria*), then the creation of shrines, then the retranslation of these sacred bodies into liturgical space, and then breaking the bodies into pieces to expand their geographical presence. Along the way, a growing sense of miraculousness emanated from the matter, prompting Saint Augustine to memorably ask, "Why can the dead do such great things?"[9] When dealing with the matter of exceptional lives, Calvin argued for a ending a cult that had grown to truly epic proportions in Early Modern Europe. But more than that, Calvin wanted to root it out for good. His method was to question the historicity—or the realness—of the relics

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[8] Jean Calvin, *A Treatise on Relics* (Edinburgh: Johnstone and Hunter, 1854), 218, 233, 273.

[9] Robert Bartlett, Why Can the Dead Do Such Great Things?: Saints and Worshippers from the Martyrs to the Reformation (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2013). On the progression of the cult of the saints, see the classic, Peter Robert Lamont Brown, *The Cult of the Saints: Its Rise and Function in Latin Christianity*, Haskell Lectures on History of Religions (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981).

that had accumulated in the churches, cathedrals, shines, and other holy places across Europe. Relic culture might have been prone to idolatrous escalation, but it was simply embarrassing if the objects were not the real thing.[10]

This insistence on the unmediated real was an enduring undercurrent in Protestant cultures for the centuries to come, and was one of the principal motivating reasons why Protestants began to seek out relics. While Protestants were influenced by Catholics (and by other religions), they were also motivated by a distinguishing Protestant cultural commitment, the search for the real, a version of their perennial search for "true religion."[11]

While Protestant reformers had insisted on a sainthood of all believers rather than a special few, there remained a belief among both laity and leaders that the body could be an index of the soul, and that God had indeed used some special people over others—these persons were recipients of exceptional divine communion or usage. Calvin was viewed as one of these people. He knew this, and because he sensed the ardent devotion of his followers to his person, he requested to be buried in an unmarked grave to prevent devotion towards his corpse. But upon his death in 1564, the crowds swarmed.

Theodore Beza, Calvin's successor in Geneva, wrote in detail about Calvin's final hours and death. Beza looked longingly upon his mentor's body, noting wistfully that Calvin "seemed

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[10] One point Bartlett makes, that Calvin missed, was that a given relic cult did not turn on the historicity of the remains, but rather what they *did*, namely the miraculous effects that emanated from the matter. Bartlett, *Why Can the Dead Do Such Great Things?*, 2013, 33.

[11] As scholars of early American religious life know, the search for "true religion" was a major project of, especially, Puritan writers. One of the most famous expressions of this project is Puritan-evangelical Jonathan Edwards, *A Treatise Concerning Religious Affections* (1746). See, Jonathan Edwards, *Religious Affections*, ed. John E Smith, [Originally published in 1746], vol. 2, Works of Jonathan Edwards (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1959).

rather asleep than dead." [12] "Many," Beza wrote presciently, "desired to see his face again, as if not able to let him alone, either alive or dead." People sought an embodiment of the man they looked up to, and whom they believed had been a special servant of God. Beza himself called Calvin the "greatest light there was in this world for the direction of the church of God." It didn't matter if he was alive or dead: apprehending his body was desired. But to "to prevent all calumnies he was shrouded about eight o'clock in the morning, and at two in the afternoon carried in the customary manner, as he also had ordered, to the common cemetery, called Plainpalais, without any pomp or show whatever, where he lies now, awaiting the resurrection." But "the body," as much as Calvin and his immediate circle tried to tamp down the devotion, "was followed by the greater part of the city and by people of all ranks."[13] He may have been placed in an unmarked grave, but it was marked in people's memories; they followed it to the end. Calvin, Beza, and those who came to follow his corpse to the cemetery tried to balance their concern about devotional excess over sacred bodies with their own desires to access his body.

The lack of division between the body and spirit extended to the Lutherans as well, who, like Calvin, were focused on Luther's body.[14] From the beginning, Luther's body—mediated especially through portrait in paint or print—functioned as an index of his mind and soul. Even if

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[12] Alister E McGrath, A Life of John Calvin: A Study in the Shaping of Western Culture (Oxford, UK: Basil Blackwell, 1990), 195–96; Bernard Cottret, Calvin: A Biography (Grand Rapids, Mich: W.B. Eerdmans, 2000), 259–62.; T. H. L. Parker, John Calvin: A Biography, [Rev. ed.]. (Louisville, Ky.: Westminster John Knox Press, 2007), 185–91. F. Bruce Gordon, Calvin, Reprint edition (New Haven Conn.; London: Yale University Press, 2011).

[13] Quoted in Cottret, Calvin, 262.

[14] As Lyndal Roper has observed, "For Luther, there was no neat division between body and spirit—and this is worth taking very seriously." Not only was the body and spirit entwined in Luther's thought, but "Luther's body, omnipresent in Lutheran visual culture long after his death, was central to the character of Lutheran devotional culture."Lyndal Roper, "Martin Luther's Body: The 'Stout Doctor' and His Biographers," The American Historical Review 115, no. 2 (2010): 354.

Luther's actual bones were largely undisturbed (installed under the pulpit in Wittenberg), his picture became a carrier of his bodily presence, an icon that functioned like a relic of the sainted man. These images became sources of miraculous events. His portraits bled, sweated and cried, they resisted housefires and emerged unscathed. Devotees went to the bed where he died and removed splinters to take home with them. And Luther-affiliated holy trees and springs became places of pilgrimage and healing. As one historian has noted, "There is no doubt we can speak of a Luther-cult in early modern Germany."[15] This cult was healthy well into the nineteenth century. When Harriet Beecher Stowe visited Luther's study in Eisenbach in 1853, she included an illustration coupled with her commentary: "There stands his writing table, a heavy mass of wood; clumsy as the time and its absurdities, rougher now than ever, in its squalid old age, and partly chipped away by relic seekers." Here Stowe noted the material evidence of the desire to collect the material that abutted Luther's exceptional life. [Figure 1]

> Here he sat; here lay his paper; over this table was bent that head whose brain power was the earthquake of Europe. Here he wrote books which he says were rained, hailed, and snowed from the press in every language and tongue. Kings and emperors could not bind the influence from this writing table; and yet here, doubtless, he wrestled, struggled, prayed, and such tears as only he could shed fell upon it. Nothing of all this says the table. It only stands a poor, ungainly relic of the past; the inspiring angel is gone upward.[16]

Stowe was able to imagine Luther's presence over his "ungainly relic" and dutifully noted that the "inspiring angel" was now gone. But over the object Stowe found a way of reanimating her memory of Luther. Through the relic of his presence, she could ruminate on the world Luther made.

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[15] R. W. Scribner, "Incombustible Luther: The Image of the Reformer in Early Modern Germany," *Past & Present*, no. 110 (1986): 68.

[16] Harriet Beecher Stowe, *Sunny Memories of Foreign Lands.* (Boston: Phillips, Sampson, and Company; J.C. Derby, 1854), 365.

As we will see, relics and body cults in the Protestant world were not confined to the objects and places related to European Reformation. They also emerged in British America, and the early United States. This suggests that what Calvin, Luther, and other reformers over the years sought to remove entirely, stubbornly persisted; even if the theology of the role of relics had been toppled, the practice of relics and relic-like behavior could reemerge. Once the militancy abated over this issue, relic culture could float to the surface again, like cultural driftwood. As I will argue in the pages to come, there were three reasons. The first is anthropological: relic culture is and was an enduring human-material form. The second is religious: Christianity was a religious system that invested considerable value in the body and the saints. The third is the material itself: many of the figures in the pages became entangled in their first-hand encounters with the bodies of these iconic individuals that led them to respond in ways they likely didn't expect.

Relics are especially surprising in the overwhelmingly Protestant culture of early America. As Protestant writers went to great lengths to explain the English America was supposed to be a place where the supposed errors of the Old World didn't transfer to the New. Beyond the Pope and transubstantiation, relics were one of the most offensive abuses of the Roman Catholic Church for American Protestant writers. The term "filthy relicks" was a common phrase in anti-Catholic Anglo-American literature—relics were disgusting in a moral, religious, and material sense.[17]

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[17]Richard Hooker, *The Works of that Learned and Judicious Divine Mr. Richard Hooker, containing eight books of the Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity, and Several Other Treatises, to which is prefixed The Life of the Author*, *by Isaac Walton.* Volume 1 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1793), 443. James Root gives a common expression of what made relics "filthy": "But nothing short of being completely *infatuated* by the Devil could ever induce any man, or set of men, in any age or nation, to believe that the Holy Saviour imparted miraculous power to bones, carcasses, and the true cross; that such Holy Fathers might be *zealously* engaged in the pious work of speculation, by peddling their filthy relics for filthy lucre's sake." James Root, *The Horrors of Delirium Tremens* (New York: J. Adams, 1844), 361.

The roots of this repulsion, of course, were English. "They that favour the cause of the reformation," wrote Richard Hooker in his famous *The Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity* (1594), "maintain nothing but the sincerity of the Gospel of Jesus Christ." But all that "withstand them fight for the laws of his sworn enemy, uphold the filthy relicks of Antichrist, and are defenders of that which is popish."[18] Hooker's usage suggests a semantic slippage; relics obviously invoked the material focal point of the Catholic cult of the saints but also anything that was understood as a holdover from Catholicism. This dual meaning, of bodily object and stubborn remainder, would dominate the use of the term in the centuries to come. When John Endicott destroyed an English flag in Salem, Massachusetts, during King Phillip's War in 1637-1638, believing the original design had been based off an ensign gifted by the Pope, John Winthrop defended him not because it was simply an image of a cross (thus too Catholic), but because it was a "superstitious thing, a relique of the anti-Christ."[19] The concept of the relic, even if not always applied to ostensibly religious things, always operated within the discourse of the sacred, canopied by a cloud of potential iconoclasm that sought to remove the errors of the old in favor of the new.

How was the term "relic" understood in the period roughly between 1750 and 1865? In the most basic definition, "relics" were *remains*, material objects that had persisted over time. Noah Webster defined relics as, "That which remains; that which is left after the loss or decay of the rest." The use of the term was thus bound up in the historical, the past. It was the pastness of relics that gave them their primary value. These objects had stubbornly resisted the passage of

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[18] Richard Hooker, *The Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity* (G. Routledge, 1888), 241.

[19] Tracy Fessenden, *Culture and Redemption: Religion, the Secular, and American Literature* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2007), 24.

time and its attendant destruction, or were all that was left of that process. But Webster offered a second follow-up definition as well: "The body of a deceased person; a corpse."[20] Relics were not only the material vestiges of the past, but they had their anthropomorphic reference point in the dead human body. These two definitions—of remains and body (most of all, corpse)—were deeply intertwined. A much more pithy dictionary writer, Samuel Johnson Jr., in his school-oriented dictionary was a bit more economical in his definition: "the remains of bodies &c." [21] So following Johnson's economical lead, this dissertation uses the term relics to refer to the "remains of bodies &c."

The "&c." is probably the most intriguing element in the usage of the term relic, for it could encompass any object that invoked a body—and thereby a person—of the past. And, notably, this definition was reliant on a well-formed Catholic distinction between primary relics—the actual material of the body in question—and secondary relics—material that had come into contact with the body. For example, Theodosia Goss, a New York artist who offered portrait duplication services in her Manhattan studio, appealed in an 1873 advertisements to the "most sacred relics of the household," by which she meant the portraits of dead relatives. "'Secure the shadow, ere the substance perish,'" she told her potential customers. A devout Methodist, Goss implored her potential customers to allow her to capture the bodies of loved one

[20] Noah Webster, An American Dictionary of the English Language, Revised Edition (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1846), 687.

[21] Dr. Samuel Johnson never covered the word, though it appears in the definition of the obscure term "mystagogue"—"One who interprets divine mysteries; also one who keeps church relicks and shews them to strangers." See Samuel Johnson, A Dictionary of the English Language..., vol. 2 (London: printed by W. Strahan, for J. and P. Knaptor; T. and T. Longman; C. Hitch and L. Hawes; A. Millar; and R. and J. Dodsley, 1755), 1344. The American Samuel Johnson (no relation to Dr. Johnson) defined the term in a very bodily way: "the remains of bodies &c. "Samuel Johnson, A School Dictionary..., Early American Imprints. First Series ; No. 30640 (New-Haven: Printed and sold by Edward O'Brien, who holds the copy-right for the states of Connecticut and New-York, 1797), 149.-

for perpetuity, to create a relic. Though a portrait may not be the actual material of a loved one, she offered an object that could convey enduring presence. She reached for a sacralizing adjective to modify a famously religious noun to describe an object that conveyed the bodily image of a deceased loved one. Theodosia Goss might be read as being a sentimentalist for calling dusty old portraits in an attic a "sacred relic," or perhaps she could be seen as entrepreneurial; she was very successful in leveraging photographic technology for her business. But whatever the case, she demonstrated a cultural desire to keep the presence of loved ones present, and a belief in the the ability of objects to do this work. Thus relic was a capacious but specific term that encompassed anything from the past that related to the body of a person. Death masks, portraits, hair lockets, canes, pens, needlework, spectacles, powderhorns, and, indeed, actual human remains were all considered relics. Of course some objects were more body-relics than others; and thus each of my case studies finds its narrative peak with encounters with objects related to an actual historical person's corpse.

Each case study I examine in the following pages centers on a real, material body and corpse and looks at how early Americans sought to create and collect relics. There is a considerable amount of art, especially portraiture, in the pages that follow, and my use of art is largely as a technology of body capture. This is not my own fancy. From the early modern period, there was a long history of portraiture as "memory-medium," an embodiment of a presence that was somehow absent, a "medium of the body that summons the beholder to engage

it."[22] The fact that early Americans used portraiture in this way makes it not surprising that portraits were often called "relics" by early Americans.[23]

As scholars of early American religious culture have observed, there is something arresting about the British American fascination with Catholicism. Even though there were no altars to strip, no saint's cults to uproot, and only a small collective of Catholics in the American colonies, the ardent focus and attention to anything that smelled of Catholicism is striking.[24] Early Colonial British America was a very Protestant place. It was a society defined itself as explicitly Protestant in a positive sense, but also in a negative sense: that is, it was not Catholic.[25] A person walking through the streets of the average early American town in 1750, whether in New England, the Mid-Atlantic, or the South, would have seen Protestant influences everywhere, from the prominence and ubiquity of Protestant churches in the built environment to the reading practices of the citizenry. Despite the fact that Catholics were not numerous in American society until the nineteenth century, early Americans constantly condemned "popery" and "romish" things, despite the fact that Catholics were not a large or common feature in American society until the nineteenth century. In Maryland, the ostensibly Catholic colony, the numbers of

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[22] Hans Belting, *An Anthropology of Images: Picture, Medium, Body*, trans. Thomas Dunlap (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2014), 70–71.

[23] For example, a visitor to Independence Hall in 1859 went to look at the "sacred relics" housed in the building, which were principally "the portraits of so many of those old Patriots hanging around the walls." See, L.T., "The City of Brotherly Love," *Boston Recorder*, November 11, 1859.

[24] Susan Juster, *Sacred Violence in Early America* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2016); David D. Hall, *Worlds of Wonder, Days of Judgment: Popular Religious Belief in Early New England* (New York: Knopf, 1989), 4. An exception that probably proves the rule are the relics and reliquary recently discovered at Jamestown from 1609-1610. See Christopher M.B. Allison, "Jamestown's Relics: Sacred Presence in the English New World," *Conversations: A Journal of the Center for the Study of Material & Visual Cultures of Religion, Yale University*, 2016, http://mavcor.yale.edu/conversations/essays/jamestown-s-relics-sacred-presence-english-new-world.

[25] See Introduction, in Catherine A. Brekus and W. Clark Gilpin, *American Christianities: A History of Dominance and Diversity*, ed. W. Clark Gilpin and Catherine A. Brekus (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2011).

Catholics dwindled from the seventeenth to the nineteenth centuries,[26] and in Massachusetts Bay it was written into law that Catholics were not allowed to reside within the colony, and yet somehow, for figures like John Cotton, "Indians, Jews, and Pagans" could all be condemned for their "Popish ignorance."[27] Perhaps because of the presence of nearby French and Spanish colonies, anything that offended Protestant culture was associated with a Catholic other.[28] Protestantism was one of the central organizing principles of Colonial American society, from Georgia to Massachusetts Bay, from the metropole in London to the periphery of British control on the frontier. And this Protestantism was wrought and maintained regularly through violence.[29] Therefore it was not a passive Protestant culture, but one which was actively and aggressively fashioned, and worried about Catholic threats beyond its borders.

Given this context, it is striking that early Americans in the late colonial and early republic periods not only embraced the concept of the relic but developed body cults around vaunted figures of their past, and applied the term "relic" to the objects that emanated from these cults. For most of the 17th and 18th century the body mattered in death but had a decidedly negative connotation in life. This has led some scholars to assume that Protestant cultures are, in essence, disembodied, favoring text over flesh, spirit over substance, mind over body. From the standpoint of intellectual history there is good reason to believe this, but from the perspective of

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[26] Charles A. Barker, "Maryland Before the Revolution," *The American Historical Review* 46, no. 1 (1940): 1–20, doi:10.2307/1839786.

[27] Quoted in Fessenden, *Culture and Redemption*, 23.

[28] On the geopolitical threat of Catholic power surrounding the British colonies, see Carla Gardina Pestana, *Protestant Empire : Religion and the Making of the British Atlantic World* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2009). On a more personal angle, see Ann M. Little, *The Many Captivities of Esther Wheelwright*, 1 edition (Yale University Press, 2016).

[29] Fessenden, *Culture and Redemption*; Juster, *Sacred Violence in Early America*.

material culture, however, the evidence does not bear this out. Most studies of the role of Protestantism in early American culture focus on textual sources reveal Protestant people—Puritans and Quakers most of all—expressing their strictest positions. But it is imperative that as scholars and readers, we approach early American sources in a broader way that allow the material culture to speak. The Protestant gaze that rejected statuary, illustrated story, and the decoration of church and clergy, turned to people themselves, and inevitably their bodies. The "stripping of the altars," as Eamon Duffy has famously called it, was a selective iconoclasm that sought to bring the imaginative gaze of the Protestant faithful towards to proper—or real—locus of true religion. Sparse material culture concentrated the gaze on people, the gathered saints, the chosen receptacles of the presence of God. The sainthood of all believers, in a way, translated to a relic culture of all believers, but notably shorn of its miraculous connotations. As much as the polemicists of the Protestant Reformation inveighed against the idolatry of the Church in relics, images, vestments, and worship spaces, they remained concentrated on the gathered Saints of God and on their relics. In practice people still elevated certain figures above others as especially saintly. Some individuals in the tradition were more "special" than others, and thus those devoted to their memory sought means to see, touch, and visit their bodies, keep their presence present. The body was the temple of their spiritual power, the architectural habilitation of the Spirit of God; the body was the mediating locus of the relationship of God and people. To return to these exceptional people would inevitably involve a return to their bodies. Though Anglo-American Protestants did not care *more* about the body than their Catholic counterparts, it was all they had left.

By the eighteenth century visual culture in Protestant lands, was characterized by an intense interest in accurate, true-to-nature portraiture, and the pervasive anxiety about the pitfalls

of mediation that might introduce error or pride into bodily representation. God, in the form of the Holy Spirit, communed with people—not in Cathedrals or shrines—but within the architecture of the body. Influenced by Baconian empiricism, early American Protestants,[30] treated the body's felt experience—that is, sensation— as the measure of God's work in the soul. This empirical spirit continued well into the 19th century, when bodily signs became indexes into spiritual states of regeneration (this focus on the body remains a feature of modern Pentecostalism and many other revivalistic traditions).[31]

This is a study of relics in a deeply Protestant society. The value of this study is twofold: it reveals not only that people raised in an intensely Protestant culture had relics, but also that relic culture is a deeply human phenomenon. Even in a society that actively defined itself in word and deed as Protestant, relics emerged. I tackle this topic through a history of a particular place, the North American British Colonies and early United States, in a particular time, approximately 1750-1870, because it is a revealing, rich moment in which relics became a major element of Euro-American collecting, even in a Protestant land. It is also a period in which these objects had abundant and diverse meaning even if they were not necessarily regarded as miraculous. Starting in the mid eighteenth century and largely ending after the Civil War, early Americans approached the material remains related to the body as sites of intense sentimental and epistemic

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[30] Sarah Rivett, *The Science of the Soul in Colonial New England* (Chapel Hill: Published for the Omohundro Institute of Early American History and Culture, Williamsburg, Virginia, by the University of North Carolina Press, 2011), http://nrs.harvard.edu/urn-3:hul.ebookbatch.PMUSE_batch:20170204muse48565.

[31] Ann Taves, *Fits, Trances, & Visions: Experiencing Religion and Explaining Experience from Wesley to James* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1999). This is a theme found throughout this dissertation, that those who believed most robustly in the indwelling of the Holy Spirit—Quakers, evangelicals (evangelical Baptists and Presbyterians, Methodists) were most prone to develop a relic culture. Joseph Leo Koerner, *The Reformation of the Image* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004), 13.

meaning, and they treasured relics as ways of accessing the bodily presence of exceptional people.

My hope is that this project can fire the imaginations of many scholars of the American past to consider the bodies and the objects of the people they study in new and fresh ways. Many of the stories I tell in these pages are known by specialists, but they often function as juicy anecdotes tucked into the epilogues of books because they mystify their authors.[32] I have removed them from their marginal position, and have blown them up to much larger size. The result is a story of people seeking to collect the bodily remains of exceptional people in order to both understand them more deeply and reanimate their presence.

My biggest claim in these pages is that Protestant relics, and their collection and treasure, are objects over which people seek, indeed yearn, for the real, embodied presence of other people who are absent. In the context of eighteenth and nineteenth century America, relics are, specifically, objects of *return*. The reasons why Protestants who approached relics in a renewed and forceful way in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries did not necessarily believe that relics were spiritually powerful or miraculous (though, perhaps unconsciously the miraculous was not far off), but rather they longed to encounter the real matter of history, to return to that history, and to keep it present in their lives through things. The reasons for seeking a return to the past were diverse, but they fell into two overarching categories.

The first is *knowledge*. As many have scholars have well documented, the rise of Lockean, Scottish, and French empiricism was a major intervention in the ways people approached the

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[32] A good example is the recent work on Lincoln's body. Both Richard Wrightman Fox and Martha Hodes excellent books note the interest in Lincoln relics, but don't seem to understand precisely why people are so ardently focused on these relics, or what their cultural function was. Richard Wightman Fox, *Lincoln's Body: A Cultural History* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2015); Martha Elizabeth Hodes, *Mourning Lincoln* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2015), 231–33.

epistemology of matter.[33] As scholars of this period have noted, "Americans held a belief in objects, at least as much as texts, were sources of knowledge and meaning."[34] The origins of this "object-centered epistemology" were in the eighteenth century. Common sense and empiricist philosophy was crucial in not only creating the conditions for the rage for collecting of all kinds but also an invigorated way of finding meaning through and upon the body as the material locus of the human being. As historians of science have shown, the eighteenth century witnessed developments in the physiology of the senses and the early origins of psychiatry, particularly the "marginalized practices" of physiognomy, magnetism, and phrenology.[35] In the 1780s-1790s, physiognomists like Johann Gaspar Lavater, and in the early 19th century, Joseph Gall, Johann Spurzheim, and George Combe popularized the idea that the body's form could be read for insight into the mind, ideas disseminated by the many publications and lectures they spawned. In addition, scholars of the English novel have argued that novelists popularized empiricist and

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[33]The best work on the front is Jessica Riskin, *Science in the Age of Sensibility: The Sentimental Empiricists of the French Enlightenment* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002). Sarah Knott, *Sensibility and the American Revolution* (Chapel Hill: Published for the Omohundro Institute of Early American History and Culture, Williamsburg, Virginia, by the University of North Carolina Press, 2009). On the endurance and merging of sentimental empiricism into romanticism, see Yasmin Solomonescu, *John Thelwall and the Materialist Imagination*, Palgrave Studies in the Enlightenment, Romanticism and Cultures of Print (Houndmills, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014). A broad overview of English empiricism is, Stuart Brown, *Routledge History of Philosophy Volume V: British Empiricism and the Enlightenment*, Routledge History of Philosophy (Florence: Taylor and Francis, 2003). An exploration of the epistemics of terror in the American context can be found in, Paul Hurh, *American Terror: The Feeling of Thinking in Edwards, Poe, and Melville* (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 2015). On first-hand experience in the epistemology of sentimentalism, see John C. O'Neal, *The Authority of Experience: Sensationist Theory in the French Enlightenment* (University Park, Pa.: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1996).

[34] Steven Conn, *Museums and American Intellectual Life, 1876-1926* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1998), 4.

[35] Patricia Fara, "Marginalized Practices," in *The Cambridge History of Science.. Vol. 4, Eighteenth-Century Science*, ed. Roy Porter (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 485–507; Patricia Fara, *Sympathetic Attractions: Magnetic Practices, Beliefs, and Symbolism in Eighteenth-Century England* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1996); Roselyne Rey, *The History of Pain* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1995).

sensational thinking, and used the body as a narrative space for the internal states of characters.[36] The result was that through sentimentalism and developments in the scientific understanding of the body it became an index into the otherwise hidden inner life, either the mind, soul, or affections—the amalgam of the self often referred to as "character." The body became a particularly robust site of knowledge about the human person. Art historians and scholars of death culture have observed similar things. For example, the rage for silhouettes in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries with a desire to create "accurate to nature" representations of people so as to discern and pronounce on their character, and chase away deception.[37] The body as an index into the inner was a development that added an epistemological filter through which all bodily objects were viewed and handled, from skull collecting to sculpture, from portraiture to corpse viewing.[38]

The second reason for the desire for return is reanimation. By engaging the bodily objects of people from the past individuals sought to reanimate the presence of the dead in their own lives. Indeed, by the very act of handling relics, men and women not only animated matter but

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[36] Ann Jessie Van Sant, *Eighteenth-Century Sensibility and the Novel: The Senses in Social Context*, Cambridge Studies in Eighteenth-Century English Literature and Thought ; 14 (Cambridge England; New York, NY, USA: Cambridge University Press, 1993); Janet M. Todd, *Sensibility: An Introduction* (London; New York: Methuen, 1986); G. J. Barker-Benfield, *The Culture of Sensibility: Sex and Society in Eighteenth-Century Britain* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992).

[37] Wendy Bellion, "Heads of State: Profiles and Poltics in Jeffersonian America," in *New Media, 1740-1915*, ed. Lisa Gitelman and Geoffrey B. Pingree, Media in Transition (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2003).

[38] On sculpture, see the excellent Malcolm Baker, *The Marble Index: Roubiliac and Sculptural Portraiture in Eighteenth-Century Britain* (New Haven: Published for the Paul Mellon Centre for Studies in British Art by Yale University Press, 2014). On the viewing of bodies as indexes into spiritual states, see Phyllis Mack, *Heart Religion in the British Enlightenment: Gender and Emotion in Early Methodism* (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008). On viewing the corpse, see Gary Laderman, *The Sacred Remains: American Attitudes Toward Death, 1799-1883* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1996); Philippe Ariès, *The Hour of Our Death* (New York: Vintage Books, 1982). On the silhouette portraiture as insight into personal character, see Wendy Bellion, *Citizen Spectator: Art, Illusion, and Visual Perception in Early National America*, 1st ed. (Chapel Hill: Published for the Omohundro Institute of Early American History and Culture, Williamsburg, Virginia, by the University of North Carolina Press, 2011). On skull collecting, see Ann Fabian, *The Skull Collectors: Race, Science, and America's Unburied Dead* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2010).

also helped activate memories, and the stories associated with the dead. The reasons for engagement in relic culture were diverse. As we will see in the chapters to follow, people sought to be inspired, to satisfy their fantasies, to gain political insight, to have sentimental experiences, and, even, keep their fears alive. Many of those who flocked to collect relics or to access the body of a person they admired sought a sensational encounter to reanimate the presence of someone they revered (or feared) within the somatic space of their own bodies. They were influenced by a certain eighteenth century understanding of the senses, in which first hand encounters could animate the subject—bring it to life. But, inevitably, they were also focused on engaging the past. Relics, as Sampson Reed wrote in 1826 were the means "by which the strongest impression of time is conveyed."[39] Over the decrepit relics of the past, the pas became sensationally accessible.

Protestants were particularly drawn to relics because of their belief in a bodily resurrection. They, like their Catholic counterparts, were Christians, of course, and Christianity was religion focused on a crucified and resurrected Christ, a body slain, buried, and reanimated anew.[40] The Bible includes many stories about the importance of relics, from Elijah's mantle in 2 Kings to Paul's healing handkerchiefs in Acts 19.[41] When Protestants read about Thomas's desire to put his hands in the resurrected Christ's hands and side, or the valley of dry bones in Ezekiel 37, they understood that the body could be as a site of knowledge and reanimation.

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[39] Sampson Reed, "Observations on the Growth of the Mind (1826)," in *Transcendentalism: A Reader*, ed. Joel Myerson (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), 34.

[40] For more on this, rather obvious, but sometimes forgotten point, see the introduction to Colleen McDannell, Material Christianity: Religion and Popular Culture in America (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995).

[41] See 2 Kings 2:8-19; Acts 19:12. Matthew 9:20-22.

Protestant beliefs in bodily resurrection were robust in early America.[42] Funeral sermons were the most common place to find expressions of this belief in bodily resurrection. When Samuel Willard delivered a sermon in 1638 at the funeral of John Hull, he explained that the dead body "is not reputed by him [God] as common dust, but they are laid up by his care, kept under his eye, and preserved by his powerful providence, as precious Relicks, till they be brought forth again in the day of Resurrection." Since the saints' "Bodies were made Temples of the Holy Ghost, and Members of Jesus Christ" they are not, "rejected as *worthless things*, but are laid up in God's Cabinet," with more care than people would for "the most estimable jewel; and Hence their Flesh resteth in hope." As Willard noted, "*Believers* can in Faith recommend their dead *Bodies* to the Grave in joyful expectation of an happy return." Neither the "rage of Men and Devils shall never be able to prevent this."[43]

But what if people (or natural disasters or animals) disturbed remains? Would a missing or mangled body be a problem for the eventual resurrection? Although Willard did not answer this, in 1729 Benjamin Colman reassured his congregation, **"**GOD knows where all the dead Bodies of Men are, and to which body every particle of matter belongs, whether of Air, Water or Earth

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[42] Gary Laderman points to the efforts of mortuary professionals in convincing Americans after the Civil War of the meaninglessness of the body, and urging people to focus on the spirit. See, Laderman, *The Sacred Remains*. Drew Faust points to the overwhelming weight of death, in numbers and tragedy, in shifting people away from the ardent sentimentalism of mortuary culture prior to the war. Death far from the home required a renewed negotiation over the rituals that attended death. See Drew Gilpin Faust, *This Republic of Suffering : Death and the American Civil War*, 1st ed. (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2008). Tom Lacquer, who focuses mostly on the English context, suggests more of a chronological decay in the ardent devotion to the dead, that is challenged both by the Reformation and the Enlightenment, but they both take a while to work themselves out. Even when mortuary professionals and intellectuals convince people that the body is nothing, as it were, it stubbornly remains a locus of cultural meaning. See Thomas W. Laqueur, *The Work of the Dead: A Cultural History of Mortal Remains* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2015). American religious historians have seen a cultural shift, in conceptions of the afterlife, with the advent of Spiritualism, a decidedly disembodied religious sensibility. See Ann Braude, *Radical Spirits: Spiritualism and Women's Rights in Nineteenth-Century America*, 2nd ed (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2001).

[43] Samuel Willard, *The High Esteem Which God hath of the Death of his Saints. As it was delivered in a Sermon Preached October 7. 1683. Occasioned by the Death of the Worshipful John Hull, Esq: Who Deceased October 1, 1683* (Boston: Samuel Green for Samuel Sewall, 1683) 10.

into which they are resolved." Furthermore, God knows "ho[w] to gather them all together in an instant of time."[44] Sarah Osborn, the religious writer and mystic of Newport, Rhode Island, imagined God saying to her:

> I kept thee in the hour of death, when Satan would gladly have hurled thy soul into the infernal regions, but he could not pluck thee out of my hands. I sent thy guardian angels to conduct thy precious soul to Abraham's bosom. And I still took care of thy moldering dust while in the grave. Not an atom of it is lost. And now, behold! I have raised it a glorious body, fashioned like my own.[45]

Even if the matter was dispersed, God could bring it back together. Moreover, the body was precious because it had been the temple of the Holy Spirit.

An encounter with the bodily matter of a past life was, at first glance, an absence. Consciousness—or better stated, the soul—did not technically inhere in matter in the Protestant paradigm. One demonstration of this point is Anglican Bishop and hymnologist Thomas Ken's popular devotional tract, *The Retired Christian* (1758), which includes a strange meditation that centers on the corpses of both himself and his mother. Ken's aim was to meditate on death, and he began by noting, that upon his own demise he "will be a dead Corpse, and the Minister will rudely forget my Title of Distinction, and cry, *Earth to Earth, Ashes to Ashes, Dust to Dust.*" In order to be "satisfied of the Truth of this, let us step a little, O my Soul, to yonder Vault, where my kindred lay interred…to take a more sensible View of what I myself must quickly be." Ken decides to "open that Coffin there, whose Inscription tells me that my Mother lies within." But he is met with a shock: "O God! what do I see? Lying Epitaph: is this my Mother? Was I born of

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[44] Benjamin Colman, *The Credibility of the Christian Doctrine of the Resurrection : A Sermon Preached (in Part) at the Publick Lecture in Boston, July 24th 1729. The Thursday after the Funeral of William Welsteed*, Eighteenth Century Collections Online (Boston: Printed for Thomas Hancock, at the Bible and Three Crowns in Ann-Street, 1729), 7.

[45] Sarah Osborn, "Tuesday Morning, May 15, 1753," in *Memoirs of the Life of Mrs. Sarah Osborn: Who Died at Newport, Rhodeisland, on the Second Day of August, 1796. in the Eighty Third Year of Her Age.*, ed. Samuel Hopkins (Worcester, Massachusetts: Leonard Worcester, 1799). Thanks to Catherine Brekus for this source.

this putrid Dust?...instead of pale and ghastly Looks, which I expected, I find no Face at all, nor any thing else but an amazing Object of Grief and Wonder."[46] Yet even though Ken experience the dead material body as a clear absence, he also saw it as an enduring linkage that would lead to eventual presence. Soul and body would again unite. Given the belief in resurrection, relics were objects of presence-*in potentia.* Just as God would "reanimate the dust," as the body was known, the living could reanimate the memories of the dead by engaging with their matter.

While this dissertation is about relics in a Protestant culture, it also contributes to the way we understand Protestantism as a religious movement. Since scholars of early American religion have pointed to the persistence of "folk" belief in early America, we may be tempted to interpret body cults as a flare-up of an older or quietly persistent religious practice from early modern period or the middle ages. But if we describe Protestants' fascination with relics as "popular religion," "primordial Catholicism," or "folk practice," or "magic,"we risk missing the substance of their turn towards an object-centered spiritual engagement by Protestants.[47] Their focus on relics was not an aberration from their more authentic religious identity, even if they were conflicted about relics. But it is also important to note that relics also never had a formal or central devotional role in Protestant communities, they emerged in an *ad hoc* and spontaneous fashion, that often surprised, and sometimes offended, those that surrounded these body cults.

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[46] Thomas Ken, *The Retired Christian, Exercised in Divine Thoughts, and Heavenly Meditations, for the Closet*, Fifth Edition (New York, 1758), 69–71.

[47] David D. Hall, *Worlds of Wonder, Days of Judgment: Popular Religious Belief in Early New England* (New York: Knopf, 1989), 217–18, 238; Jon Butler, "Magic, Astrology, and the Early American Religious Heritage, 1600-1760," *The American Historical Review* 84, no. 2 (April 1, 1979): 341; Robert E. Cray Jr., "Memorialization and Enshrinement: George Whitefield and Popular Religious Culture, 1770-1850," *Journal of the Early Republic* 10, no. 3 (October 1, 1990): 339–61. See also John L. Brooke, *The Refiner's Fire: The Making of Mormon Cosmology, 1644-1844* (Cambridge ;New York: Cambridge University Press, 1994); Richard L. Bushman, *Joseph Smith: Rough Stone Rolling*, 1st ed. (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2005); Taves, *Fits, Trances, & Visions*.

Though scholars have often written about the material manifestations of Buddhist, Hindu, Catholic, and Eastern Orthodox religious life to understand their traditions. They have assumed that Protestants, with their commitment to text, their seemingly disembodied piety, and their strict interpretation of the Hebrew Bible's injunction against "graven images" and worry about idolatry, have not given objects the same spiritual value. According to Max Weber, Protestant retreat from the material world at the same time as they became famous for their epic acquisitiveness. They went out of their way to remove anything that got in the way of faith alone: hammers in hand, they smashed the statues, "strip[ed] the altars," and uprooted the fetish of the religions that preceded them, accumulating material goods but giving them little meaning.[48] Yet if one descends into the vaults of American Protestant denominational archives, the plot tangibly thickens. Although these archives contain the material we expect—letters, denominational minutes, hymnals, diaries, memoirs, periodicals, bibles, and more—most denominational repositories also house uncatalogued oddities that sit there, asking for explanation. [Figure 2] This dissertation is not an exhaustive attempt to explain the role of objects in Protestant cultures, but it is an effort in uncovering the ways early American people sought knowledge and reanimation in the bodily matter of the past.

[48] Protestantism as the "spirit of capitalism" refers, of course to the highly influential work of Max Weber, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, ed. Talcott Parsons (Courier Dover Publications, 2003); Eamon Duffy, *The Stripping of the Altars: Traditional Religion in England, C. 1400-C. 1580* (New Haven, Conn. ; Yale University Press, 1992); James Simpson, *Under the Hammer: Iconoclasm in the Anglo-American Tradition*, vol. 2009, Clarendon Lectures in English ; (Oxford ;New York: Oxford University Press, 2010). On the fate of the image in the aftermath of the Reformation, see the superb Koerner, *The Reformation of the Image*. On the troubled relationship of Protestants and materiality (especially as it relates to money) see Simon Schama, *The Embarrassment of Riches: An Interpretation of Dutch Culture in the Golden Age*, 1st ed. (New York: Knopf :Distributed by Random House, 1987). And in America how mercantile success fused with divine favor among Puritan merchants, see Mark R. Valeri, *Heavenly Merchandize: How Religion Shaped Commerce in Puritan America* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2010).

My examination of relics has been influenced by a small but influential group of scholars who have questioned longstanding assumptions about Protestants' cultural relationship to images and materiality. David Morgan, for example, has argued for the centrality of the image in nineteenth-century Protestant devotional life in America at a time of a growing mass print culture when images and text reinforced one another. More than most, Morgan has considered how material manifestations of belief have constituted--rather than merely illustrated--the lived content of religion. Other influential scholars include Tracy Fessenden, who has has shown the distinction made between the "living word" and the "dead image" in seventeenth-century American Protestant culture, especially in confronting non-Protestant religions,[49] and Colleen McDannell, who has offered a broad survey of Christian material engagement showing the ways that objects could affirm denominational affiliations within Protestantism. Similarly, Jon Butler and Gretchen Bugeln have pointed to the material sacralization of the American landscape, with its brightly painted meetinghouses, elegant Anglican churches, rising steeples, tolling bells, and crowded cityscapes,[50] and Sally Promey has argued that Puritans "framed" their self-reflection with all sorts of material objects and images.[51]

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[49] Fessenden, *Culture and Redemption*.

[50] Jon Butler, *Becoming America: The Revolution Before 1776* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2000), 192–95. Gretchen Townsend Buggeln, *Temples of Grace: The Material Transformation of Connecticut's Churches, 1790-1840* (Hanover, Conn.: University Press of New England, 2003).

[51] David Morgan, *Protestants & Pictures: Religion, Visual Culture and the Age of Amersican Mass Production* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999); David Morgan, "Introduction" in *Religion and Material Culture: The Matter of Belief* (London ;New York: Routledge, 2010); Colleen McDannell, *Material Christianity: Religion and Popular Culture in America* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995); Sally M. Promey, "Seeing the Self 'in Frame': Early New England Material Practice and Puritan Piety," *Material Religion* 1, no. 1 (March 2005): 10–46. Particularly good on Puritan material culture with attention to its literary angle is Joanne van der Woude, "Puritan Scrabble: Games of Grief in Early New England, *Common-place*, 11:4, July 2011. http://www.common-place.org/vol-11/no-04/van-der-woude/

In contrast to those who have argued that the spiritual self sits at the center, *framed* by visual and material culture, this dissertation asserts that objects—no less bodies—did not sit comfortably on the frame of American Protestant life. They were often the focal point of engagement with the sacred past.

I focus on the body cults of three people who were seen as exceptional—or, better stated, iconic—for some reason in the eighteenth and nineteenth century: George Whitefield (1714-1770), the famous transatlantic evangelical preacher, Jane McCrea (1752-1777), the Revolutionary War martyr, and Elias Hicks (1748-1830), the Quaker mystic and schismatic itinerant preacher. I focus on these figures not only because people collected relics of famous people, but also because their body cults generated significant collective cultural energy in American life beyond the family, and this makes them historically accessible and meaningful for larger constituencies, leaving behind significant matter over which the phenomenon can be studied deeply.

All three were Protestant, and all were individuals for whom the written word somehow failed to adequately convey their presence or significance. Whitefield was painfully aware that the power of his sermons fell flat in print. Jane McCrea's story was so muddled that in order to activate her political power people needed to envision and later collect her body to convince themselves that she was real, and, by extension, so was her political impact. Elias Hicks resisted the written transcription of his ad hoc sermons, which made the capture of "his Light"—in body and sermon—all the more valuable, and all the more elusive. Because the word failed to convey their presence, their admirers sought access to their bodies.

Despite their occasional bouts of iconoclasm, disdain for non-Christian material religion, and perennial anti-Catholicism, American *Protestants had relics*—and actively collected and revered them as a means of animating and explaining their past.

CHAPTER 1: THE PREACHER: CAPTURING GEORGE WHITEFIELD'S EMBODIED PRESENCE IN LIFE AND DEATH

Ah! lovely appearance of Death!
No sight upon earth is so fair;
Not all the gay pageants that breathe
Can with a dead body compare.

With solem delight I survey
The corpse, when the spirit is fled;
In love with the beautiful clay,
And longing to lie in its stead….

Of evil incapable thou,
Whose relicts with envy I see;
No longer in misery now,
No longer a sinner like me.[1]

In late November of 1769, George Whitefield was stuck on a ship in the slack wind off the coast of South Carolina. He watched with "mortification" as other ships sailed successfully into the harbor at Charleston. But his ship was grounded on one side by a sand bar, while the other was floating lithely next to "five fathom currentless hole." Nothing bothered Whitefield more than standing still. He thought evil was afoot: "Surely Satan foresees some signal good attending this voyage," he wrote to a friend in London.[52] Whitefield was just about to begin his seventh trip to the Americas. He was more suited for the back of a horse than the deck of a ship—not one of the trips across the Atlantic had been good. Though seasickness had been better this time, his overall health was poorer, despite the healthy face he put on in letters to correspondents in Britain.[53] His travelling companion, Cornelius Winter, worried about the great man: "remarkable languor and lowness" would overcome him, incapacitating him from doing

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[52] Letters reprinted in George Whitefield, *The Works of the Reverend George Whitefield, M.a. Late of Pembroke-College, Oxford, and Chaplain to the Rt. Hon. the Countess of Huntingdon...*, vol. 3 (London, 1771), 408.

[53] Whitefield, *Works*, V:34.

anything. He had gained significant weight; he wasn't happy about it: "a corpulent body…it breaks in upon me like an armed man," he wrote. His friend, and sometimes rival, John Wesley was shocked at seeing Whitefield before he left. An "old, old man," Wesley wrote. Whitefield admitted the toll. At the age of fifty he was effectively worn out, "God knows how long I am to drag this crazy load along…I am sick of myself, sick of the world, sick of the Church and am panting daily after the full enjoyment of my God."[54] But his letters to his supporters after his arrival in America suppressed his physical problems: "I was never better, at this season of the year, in bodily health;" he wrote a female correspondent in England, and "never more comfortable in my soul." But another traveling companion confessed that after his evocative, tearful, sweaty sermons, Whitefield would more often than not turn and vomit "a vast discharge from the stomach, usually with a considerable quantity of blood."[55] His famous handkerchiefs, that he used to mop up tears and sweat, in his arm-raised, feet-stomping exhortations, were now speckled with the tell-tale red, pink, and brown of a body breaking down. But once Whitefield stepped on land and the crowds swelled, there was no slowing down: "all must give way to Gospel ranging: Divine employ!"[56]

This chapter is about the attempts to capture and possess George Whitefield's body before and immediately after his death in September of 1770. The argument hinges on ideas of presence and animation, both, I argue, were sought through bodily things.[57] The efforts to access George

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[54] Quoted in Thomas S. Kidd, *George Whitefield: America's Spiritual Founding Father* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2014), 224–25.

[55] William Jay, *Memoirs of the Life and Character of the Late Rev. Cornelius Winter*, 1st American ed. (New York: Samuel Whiting & Co., 1811).

[56] Whitefield, *Whitefield Works*, 3:412.

[57] My use of the concept of presence is informed by Alfred Gell, *Art and Agency: An Anthropological Theory* (Oxford ;New York: Clarendon Press, 1998). Animation is a riff on the discussion of agency in material culture

Whitefield's body was a way of animating or sustaining his presence in the world, and this effort both preceded and followed his death. Whitefield presented a particular problem for late 18th century Protestant evangelicals. For unlike so many that came before, Whitefield did not come alive through print; the power of his presence was flattened in the written word. As most scholars of Whitefield have observed, his written remains have been ineffective in capturing the impact of his life; instead they have relied less on his written sermons and more on people's impressions of seeing Whitefield. I will use the idea of *animating presence* in three ways to argue this point, each part larger than the last. First, I use the concept to simply observe that when Whitefield showed up the religious world around him came alive. This mattered to the way he was handled after his death, which the latter half of this chapter and the next will take up. When Whitefield showed up, to use Benjamin Franklin's memorable phrase, "it seem'd as if all the *World* were growing *Religious.* So that one could not walk thro' the Town in an Evening without Hearing Psalms sung in different Families of every Street."[58] Whereas many scholars have focused on his dramatic performativity, his use of the tools of emergent capitalist advertising in print, and his leading role in a vast evangelical network, I want to highlight the simple importance of Whitefield showing up. His bodily presence, in a dizzying number of places across the Atlantic World, was necessary to activate all this skill, energy, and networking

studies, important in this respect (from *many* different angles) is Bruno Latour, *Reassembling the Social: An Introduction to Actor-Network-Theory* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005); Bill Brown, "Reification, Reanimation, and the American Uncanny," *Critical Inquiry* 32, no. 2 (January 1, 2006): 175–207; Jane Bennett, *Vibrant Matter: A Political Ecology of Things* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2010); Diana H. Coole and Samantha Frost, "Introduction," in *New Materialisms: Ontology, Agency, and Politics* (Durham [NC] ;London: Duke University Press, 2010).

[58] Benjamin Franklin, *Benjamin Franklin's Autobiography: An Authoritative Text,* eds. J. A. Leo Lemay & P. M. Zall (W. W. Norton & Co.,1986).~

he worked so hard to develop.[59] But what about when he left? People reached out in as many ways they could to reanimate his powerful presence and to freeze his ever-moving body through things.

I use the term body cult to describe the activity around his grave—the major focus of the next chapter—but not saints cult. This is intentional. The emphasis is on the body, not as Whitefield as a saint per se.[60] He was surely elevated among the throng of countless saints, as we will see, but I don't think the devotional activity around his body really is captured by the set of proscribed practices aimed at intercession, or the numinous power emanating from the remnants of a saints' life (that are active in the world, somehow with God, but also potent enough to interfere in human affairs, answering supplications, playing tricks on people, a portal through which heaven's power leaks through to the temporal world, etc.).[61] However, I do believe that Whitefield did occupy a position, in Protestant belief and practice, as one of the, in Peter Brown's terms, the "very special dead."[62] Conscious Protestant concerns with conflating the material and spiritual checked the progress of the cult.

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[59] The three most important and influential biographies that exhibit these themes respectively are Harry S. Stout, *The Divine Dramatist: George Whitefield and the Rise of Modern Evangelism*, Library of Religious Biography (Grand Rapids, Mich.: W.B. Eerdmans, 1991); Frank Lambert, *"Pedlar in Divinity": George Whitefield and the Transatlantic Revivals, 1737-1770* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1994); Kidd, *George Whitefield: America's Spiritual Founding Father*.

[60] Thinking about Protestant saints has been done by Catherine A. Brekus in her epilogue to *Sarah Osborn's World: The Rise of Evangelical Christianity in Early America*, New Directions in Narrative History. (New Haven [Conn.]: Yale University Press, 2013).

[61] In sorting out the differences between Whitefield's cult and the emergent cult of the martyrs, then saints, I have been indebted to the wonderful survey of Robert Bartlett, *Why Can the Dead Do Such Great Things?: Saints and Worshippers from the Martyrs to the Reformation* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2013, 2013), 1–91. In terms of thinking through the comparative origins of the emergence of the cult of the saints, I have benefited from the work of Brown, *The Cult of the Saints*, 36–58. On the power of material encounter, I've been influenced by Miller, *The Corporeal Imagination*.

[62] Brown, *The Cult of the Saints*, 69–85.

Death March

In some ways we can understand Whitefield's final tour in 1769-1770 as a death march. He intended his final act to be his college, an idea that he had long pursued—a material remnant of his career—but now was close to becoming a reality. [63] He wanted to convert his famous orphanage, Bethesda, on the outskirts of Savannah, Georgia into a college akin to Harvard, Yale, Princeton, or the University of Pennsylvania. This was the major reason he travelled to America.[64] Whitefield even toyed with the idea of staying at Bethesda, retire there, happy to have a material manifestation of his career. "Everything here exceeds my most sanguine expectations," he wrote, "I am almost tempted to say, 'It is good for us to be here.'" But he relented to his old habits. Despite the happiness, "I have my old plan in view," he wrote a friend from Philadelphia, "to travel in these northern parts all summer, and return late in the fall to Georgia."[65] He couldn't stay still. "O this pilgrim way of life ! To me it is life indeed," he wrote an admirer in England, "No nestling, no nestling my dear Mr. B___n, [66] on this side eternity. This is not our rest."[67] No stability, material or otherwise, for a man on the move.

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[63] Instead of starting a college from scratch, he hoped to adjoin it to his famous orphanage, Bethesda, ten miles south of Savannah Georgia. But his coziness with the dissenters in England and America had soured the Anglican hierarchy on the plan, and he had been denied a royal charter in London.[63] But he persisted. He hoped to gain a charter from the Colonial Council of Georgia, a strategy that had been successful for the College of New Jersey.

[64] In some ways this was familiar territory. He had supported the formation of the University of Pennsylvania and the College of New Jersey. And tried to put his orthodox Calvinist stamp on the curriculum of Harvard College (despite his pamphlet war with President Edward Holyoke) by replenishing their library with "puritanical books" after a devastating fire in 1764. But in these instances he was a crucial supporter, not a founder – valued for his popularity, name recognition, moral heft, Oxford credentials, and most of all, fundraising ability.

[65] *Works*, III: 422.

[66] This may have been written to Mr. Boulton. Gillies was ruthless in his management of the Whitefield archive, and struck out the adressees names (and other content in the letters) with abandon, (and fear of libel). Mr. Boulton will appear elsewhere in this chapter, in particular his desire for a "token" of George Whitefield, which was answered with an arm-bone in a box.

[67] Whitefield, *Whitefield Works*, 3:415.

Whitefield had attracted large crowds throughout the north that prevented *any* rest and the toll on his body was considerable, thus making it a more conspicuous aspect of his final tour than others. His friends wrote over and over again that "his journey is attended with more power than ever before."[68] But his body often compelled rest. He traveled a wide circuit around Philadelphia, Albany, and Boston over the summer of 1770. He hurried to try to catch an Indian conference held by the Oneida, but missed it. A bit crestfallen, he pushed northward trying to reach Canada before winter. But his body kept giving out, requiring days of recuperation. The heat didn't help. And the desire of the crowds to hear him were overwhelming. Those who saw him were in awe of the effect of his presence. After seeing his ability to attract massive, penitent crowds around Philadelphia in June of 1770, one German Moravian called Whitefield, "*die Säge*"—the saw—a tool of God to cut through gnarled, twisted hearts.[69] One Concord Massachusetts man, looking back, observed that the "Preaching of Whitfield…tended to keep alive and increase these religious feelings."[70] When Whitefield was about, religious sentiment ran high.

Once people had seen Whitefield, they sought ways to relive the power of his preaching. The effect of his presence could be reanimated through printed word or image, though once those who remembered seeing Whitefield in the flesh died, the printed word—especially his sermons—became less and less important. One man from the town of Plymouth, England wrote Whitefield in 1748 to tell him how decided to take up a career as an exhorter, or lay preacher.

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[68] Whitefield, *Works,* 4:~

[69] George Whitefield Letter, Timothy Horsfield Papers, American Philosophical Society. Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.

[70] Lemuel Shattuck, *A History of the Town of Concord, Middlesex County, Massachusetts: From Its Earliest Settlement to 1832 : And of the Adjoining Towns, Bedford, Acton, Lincoln, and Carlisle, Containing Various Notices of County and State History Not Before Published* (Boston: Russell, Odiorne, and Company, 1835), 167.

He "sat about reading one of Mr. Whitefield's sermons as usual, but before I had scarce ended one page, the Lord opened my mouth to speak of my own experience, and just what he gave me I delivered to my people; so that our Savior's glory seemed to break forth, and his power to be manifested among them." The content of the sermon was not mentioned; it didn't matter. The fact that it was a printed artifact of the great preacher was germane—it became a conduit of this man's transformation into a preacher. Even if not physically present, Whitefield could be *present* through his printed sermon, and inspire the man to take up the life of preaching. It animated the man to follow the same vocation as Whitefield.

I could use lots of example how his actual bodily presence was necessary to animate his textual groundwork. But more intriguing, and less known, is the way the objects of his person functioned. They reveal how necessary *things* were for efforts at renanimation. A favorite example is a portrait painted by Joseph Badger, painted in Boston around 1745, 25 years before his death. This portrait is interesting for our concerns, not only for its appartitional quality--his transparent fingers, the effusion of white, the rigidity of the body—but also for the history of its creation. It was commissioned not by Whitefield, but by an admirer, Mrs. Warters (we don't know her first name) of Charlestown, Massachusetts. [Figure 2] This was an anomaly in 18th century Anglo-American portraiture. As Paul Stati, Margaret Lovell, and Jules Prown have shown us—portraiture in this period, in display and commission, was a family affair.[71] But Mrs. Warters broke the mold by seeking to freeze the ever-moving Whitefield in her domestic space. The body erect, tenderly touching the breast (indexing Whitefield as a man of feeling), his face

[71] Paul Staiti, "Character and Class," in *John Singleton Copley in America*, ed. Carrie Rebora Barratt (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1995), 53–77; Margaretta M. Lovell, *Art in a Season of Revolution: Painters, Artisans, and Patrons in Early America*, Early American Studies (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2005); Jules David Prown, *John Singleton Copley.*, The Ailsa Mellon Bruce Studies in American Art, v. 1 (Cambridge, Published for the National Gallery of Art, Washington Harvard University Press, 1966).

illuminated, presented a vision of his ever-moving presence made stable. The only analog in the period was portraits of saints on the European continent. Was Whitefield Mrs. Warters' Saint? He was at least a focus of her admiration. Whatever the relationship, she installed the man her home, and life. In oil on canvas, he could perpetually *be there* for her; with him on the wall she could relive the precious moments of private instruction, his ardent prayers, his aura. A ghostly presence for sure, but a presence none the less. Here Mrs. Warthers literally animated Whitefield to freeze the "grand itinerant" on her wall.

One of Whitefield's once-lost letter books is another example. [Figure 3] It was rediscovered in 1952, and its history is suggestive of the ways any remnant of Whitefield became a treasured object. We know his handkerchiefs and images were saved, but the letter book shows they ways even a bound book could act as a relic of his presence. The content is not especially interesting, besides the fact that the letters covered a previously missing gap in Whitefield's archive. But it was not the content that was important, but rather the fact that it was an artifact of Whitefield's presence in a particular place that seems to have motivated various families to keep it over two centuries. It contains ninety-two of Whitefield's letters, written during his third tour of the American Colonies from November 1745 to July of 1746, the same tour in which Mrs. Warters commissioned the Badger portrait. Rebekah McKay of Wilmington Delaware inherited the book, a descendent of Thomas Read, the minister of Old Drawyers Church in the late eighteenth century, near Odessa, Delaware,. But it is Thomas Read's wife who has her name inscribed on the first letter in the book. John Christie, the 20th century Presbyterian archivist who announced the discovery of the book, suggested that the Reads received the book from the Bayard family, both of whom were converted under Whitefield in Delaware, and where Whitefield had lodged while in the area. Later, in their old stone house, they designated a

"Whitefield" room in honor of his stay with them. Thomas Read was not the minister of the church until 1769, so it appears that the Bayards gifted the book to the Reads. When the call went out by John Gillies to send every bit of Whitefield's archive to him in Scotland after Whitefield's death in 1770, it is unlikely that the Reads or the Bayards were ignorant of the call, being tightly connected to the transatlantic networks of evangelical Presbyterianism. More likely is that they kept the book because it was their relic of Whitefield's presence in the area. It was probably inadvertently left at the Bayard home, and they didn't return it to its owner.[72] As it was gifted around the community from one admirer to another (other people have their names inscribed on the front and back of the book), these admirers of Whitefield animated Whitefield's erstwhile presence in that area of Delaware, and thereby tacitly relating an origin story of evangelical revivalism in their community.[73]

Of course, Whitefield was not confined to the American colonies, neither were the objects used to commemorate his presence. One of the oddest is a series of bust figurines made from horse vertebrae, it seems, in England. [Figure 4] Although one has been correctly attributed to John Wesley, the other is more likely related to Whitefield because of the hair and arm gestures (John Wesley wore his natural hair and it did not turn white until late in life; he did not wear a wig like Whitefield). The history is murky with these objects, but the archivists believe that in the rage for likenesses of these preachers, local artisans sought to capitalize on fervor for Whitefield, and used the available material to make bust figurines to sell to his admirers. (In the

[72] John W. Christie, "Newly Discovered Letters of George Whitefield, 1745—46," *Journal of the Presbyterian Historical Society (1943-1961)* 32, no. 2 (1954): 69–71.

[73] George Whitefield, *Letter Book*, 1745-1746, H2 W586l, Presbyterian Historical Society, Philadelphia, PA.

nineteenth century, these objects were supposedly doused with beer in local pubs, thinking they were of John Wesley, to mock his role in inspiring the British temperance movement).[74]

The most commonplace way of capturing and possessing Whitefield's bodily presence was through engraved print portraits. They were a ubiquity in English print shops. A satirical mezzotint from 1774 parodies this rage for images of Whitefield. [Figure 5] It depicts four individuals in a print shop, with the various prints covering the wall. The focal point is a finely dressed woman, pointing with her fan to a print portrait of George Whitefield on the wall, modeled after the 1768 mezzotint copy of a now lost Nathaniel Hone oil portrait, probably the most widely distributed vision of Whitefield.[75] The woman seems to be selecting her purchase, and relating her choice to her male partner who defers to her decision, smiling somewhat devilishly, facing away from the wall of printed bodies. The satire here was to poke fun at the rage for images of Whitefield, especially by women. Despite having an abysmal love life, Whitefield, from the beginning, was criticized for his particular sway over women. His theatrical, performative sermons were understood by detractors to be particularly seducing, akin to the power of Whitefield's contemporary, the famed actor, David Garrick.[76] This power over women was visualized as well, in another portrait of Whitefield, which had a similarly popular print life. In the original portrait and in the print, Whitefield's face looks, with a three quarter

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[74] Mark Woods, "Pro-Alcohol Revelers Soaked John Wesley Figurines in Ale," *Christianity Today*, October 15, 2014, https://www.christiantoday.com/article/pro.alcohol.revelers.soaked.john.wesley.figurines.in.ale/41705.htm; Donald H. Ryan, *Sidney Lawson Collection*, [Catalogue] (Manchester, UK: Methodist Archives and Research Center, John Rylands Library, University of Manchester, Unknown), 47.

[75] For the mezzotint that the print used for the wall scene, see John Greenwood, *George Whitefield,* c. 1768. Mezzotint. 13 7/8 in. x 10 in. (354 mm x 255 mm) plate size; 14 1/8 in. x 10 1/4 in. (360 mm x 259 mm) paper size. National Portrait Gallery (UK). http://www.npg.org.uk/collections/search/portraitLarge/mw39102/George-Whitefield

[76]On Whitefield's power over women, see Kidd, *George Whitefield: America's Spiritual Founding Father*, 77. On seducing commonalities with Garrick, see Stout, *The Divine Dramatist*.

turn of his head, over an imaginary crowd inside a church, his eyes are characteristically crossed. Whitefield's hands are stretched out before him, alighting over a respectably and fashionably dressed woman seated below him, with an upturned, admiring face. You can almost see the strings of Whitefield's puppet mastery over the woman. [Figure 6]

As we have seen, there were many material ways that people tried to access the presence of Whitefield. In the next section, we turn to Whitefield's death and the attempts to capture his body and the memory of his presence.

Death March Ends

Right before Whitefield's death, the final leg of his itenerancy was from Albany to greater Boston. And it offered an odd foreshadowing of what was to come. Whitefield not only spoke about death extensively, but even made a practice of pointing out places he would like to be buried. He even oversaw the death of others. "Thousands attended" an execution of an infamous horse stealer near Albany. Whitefield by "a very peculiar providence" came through the town. The condemned man had been trying to get Whitefield's attention, having sent him "several letters, hearing I was in the country." Whitefield preached at a nearby tree, and the Sherriff allowed the condemned to hear his sermon. "Solemn. Solemn!" Whitefield wrote. Whitefield was able "to walk with the man to the gallows," "An instructive walk," Whitefield commented. "I went up with him into the cart," and with his "heart softened" the criminal rose and implored the spectators to live better lives than him. Whitefield spoke afterwards, clamoring on top of the coffin, giving a "word in season." Whitefield prayed, "gave the blessing." The man hung; Whitefield moved on. [77] Whitefield, like so many instances during this last turn, showed up and hearts softened in his wake, even criminals. Before he turned northward, he heard of the death of

[77] Whitefield, *Whitefield Works*, 3:425.

Howell Davies, an important Welsh evangelical. "God sanctify it! Surely my turn will come by and by." He had always relished the idea of death, but it was always coupled with an intense pace that seemed to invite death. In 1747 he had quit his evangelistic tour of the American colonies so he wouldn't be accused of "murdering" himself. His body, Whitefield observed, "was weak and crazy," but after "a short fermentation in the grave," it will be fashioned like unto Christ's glorious body."[78]

His turn to die would come. And it came after a particularly difficulty day that started on Saturday, September 29th, 1770 in Portsmouth, New Hampshire. He began the morning with a sermon. As he finished, eyewitnesses noted how he almost collapsed getting on his horse, but he stubbornly insisted on moving on. At midday he stopped in Exeter, New Hampshire, where he preached in a field that now adjoins Phillips Exeter Academy. His friends noticed the heavy heaving of his chest, the labored breathing, and suggested he was "more fit to go to bed than to preach." No. Whitefield prayed aloud: "Lord, if I have not yet finished my course, let me go and speak for Thee once more in the fields, seal thy truth, and come home and die." The subsequent sermon was rough. His face was "bloated, his voice was hoarse, his enunciation heavy," noted an observer. "Sentence after sentence was thrown off in rough, disjointed portions, without much regard to point or beauty." But then came the turn, "his mind kindled, and his lion-like voice roared to the extremities of the audience." As he was lifted on top of his horse, to head to Newburyport to recuperate, one observer remembered his departed words: "I soon shall be in a world where time, age, pain, and sorrow are unknown. My body fails, my spirit expands,"

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[78] Quoted in Kidd, *George Whitefield: America's Spiritual Founding Father*, 200.

An old New England ally, friend and admirer, Jonathan Parsons, met him in Exeter, to accompany him to Newburyport where he was to preach the following morning.[79] They rode along the Merrimac River, and could soon see the spires of Newburyport's churches mingled with masts of ships at dock, many back from Asian ports. Next to the Presbyterian meeting house, with its rooster weathervane, on the south western edge of town, was Parsons' home. Whitefield's companion, Richard Smith, arrived late to the Parsons' home and found Whitefield taking an early dinner with the Parsons family, hoping to heave his exhausted body into bed. But as he finished dinner, a crowd was gathering outside the door, and were soon knocking, asking to hear something from the great preacher, hoping for a close encounter. He relented, despite his exhaustion, and, according to the story, stood on the oak landing of Parsons' staircase, candle in hand, and preached. When the candle ran out, he climbed the stairs and fell into bed.[80]

It was a hard night. He was up at two o'clock, drank a glass of cider, and told his companion, Richard Smith, that "I cannot breath." Though he thought a "good pulpit sweat" would sort it out in the morning, followed by a three day ride. But at five in the morning he was up again, manically running to the windows of his room, pushing them wider, gasping for air. Smith woke Parsons, who was horrified and ran to get a doctor. In the meantime, Whitefield told Smith bluntly, "I am dying." Whitefield's eyes stared straight ahead, his bottom lip inverted with his "inward breaths." They offered him wine, they bundled him up in his cloak. Smith rubbed his temples, wiped the phlegm from his mouth, held his wrists. But Whitefield's limbs

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[79] Parsons was hand-selected, by Whitefield, to be minister of the First Presbyterian Meeting House in Newburyport. Parsons was trained in the New Light circles of Jonathan Edwards and his allies in Connecticut, and worked in Old Saybrook as a Congregationalist minister. Presbyterianism was a rare kind of church in Congregationalist Massachusetts, but according to Parsons it was Whitefield who insisted on the Presbyterian church government.

[80] Later in the 19th century, one travel writer lamented that the oak landing had not been saved. Quoted in Elmer T. Clark, *An Album of Methodist History* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1952) 142.

were growing cold in Smith's hands. When the doctor arrived, he checked Whitefield's pulse, and declared Whitefield a "dead man." Parsons was indignant: "I do not believe it, you must do something doctor." Nothing was to be done. His last breath was at six o'clock. The men continued for an hour to rub his legs, hands, and feet with warm cloths, bathing him "with spirits for some time." But for all the willing and rubbing, his body would not respond. They moved him to the warm bed, propped him up, put more spirits under his nose, and kept rubbing the body. At seven o'clock, the men were weary, the realization set in, and the veil of grief descended. They gave up.[81]

Messengers helped spread the word of what had happened. Benjamin Randall, a later leader of the Free Will Baptists, heard the news from his window at noon on the same day in Portsmouth, New Hampshire. It was in the Boston papers the next day.[82] Messengers across New

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[81] Parsons and Smith's accounts were printed in John Gillies, *Memoirs of the Life of the Reverend George Whitefield, M.A. Late Chaplain to the Right Honorable the Countess of Huntingdon: : In Which Every Circumstance Worthy of Notice, Both in His Private and Public Character, Is Recorded--Faithfully Selected from His Original Papers, Journals and Letters--Illustrated by a Variety of Interesting Anecdotes, from the Best Authorties [sic]--with a Particular Account of His Death and Funeral; and Extracts from the Sermons Which Were Preached on That Occasion.* (New-Haven: Printed for Andrus & Starr, Hartford, J. Barber, printer, 1812), 271–274. The literature on Whitefield is rife with hagiography—and this is part of my point, that Atlantic Protestants wrought a sophisticated and elevated sainthood around George Whitefield. But in reconstructing the past, this is, of course, a problem. Smith, and another Whitefield companion, Cornelius Winter admired Whitefield greatly, but their testimony is more tempered, mostly because they had to live (better described, *serve*) Whitefield during his last trip to the New World. Whitefield was difficult. He could fly into a rage over the improper laying out of his gloves, he could fall into deep bouts of depression, he could turn suicidal (though this seems less on his last tour). He required pretty extensive nursing care—as he pushed himself to his breaking point. Thus Winter and Smith's accounts don't have the same nostalgia, or glow, as many others accounts. Furthermore, the scene that Smith describes isn't exactly the idyllic "good death" of evangelical lore; it is chaotic, messy, and even gruesome. Whitefield reads as almost mad, obsessive character (and I think Smith thought he was out of his mind). There are no moments of ecstatic proclamations of seeing Jesus as the veil is lifted between life and death, or peaceful countenances, hymn singing, professions of faith, perfect last words. Whitefield struggles with death, and death wins. This became an embarrassment for Parsons in particular, who complained that Smith had been improper in the vividness of his description of the death scene.

[82] "Boston, October 1, 1770," *Essex Gazette*, October 2, 1770. Here it was reported that "a Number of Gentlemen set out from hence early this Morning for Newbury-Port, in order to make the necessary Preperation for conveying the Corps of the Rev. Mr. WHITEFIELD to this Town [Boston], where he is to be interred, agreeable to his own Request." Where he wanted to be buried was pretty unclear. With at least four locations jockeying for the body. By October 11 the Boston announcement had been published in the Philadelphia newspapers, "Last Evening…," *Pennsylvania Gazette*, October 11, 1770.

England spread the news from horseback: "Whitefield is Dead! Whitefield is Dead!" And so those who sought to view and possess the corpse converged on sleepy, maritime Newburyport.

As word of Whitefield's death spread around Newburyport, the local ministers of "all persuasions" came to the house. Whitefield had intended to preach in the morning so there were crowds around Old South hoping to see the grand itinerant. But instead there was a corpse. The local ministers stood in Parson's home in the presence of the body, staring at it, and reminiscing about Whitefield's effect. And they insisted that his last tour, "was attended with more power than any other, and that all opposition fell before him." They prayed for his Tabernacles in London, and the Chapels, and more generally for "America and England's loss." They parted with a single prayer, that "God would scatter his gifts and drop his mantle among them."[83] Though they prayed this prayer, none of them sought to possess his literal mantle—his clerical gowns (at least, not yet).[84] Instead of the customary shroud, Whitefield would be buried with the gowns he had lived in.[85]

Whitefield had a bad habit of telling different people different places where he wanted to be buried. And this created a conflict, with at least five groups jockeying for the body, from "friends" in Boston (in Boston he even picked out a tomb for himself a month earlier), to the legislature of Georgia, to the nobility of England. Some "respectable gentlemen" from South Church in Boston rode to Newburyport the day after his death to collect the body, convinced that he would want to be buried with "his friends," by which they seemed to mean his circle of

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[83] Gillies, *Memoirs of the Life of the Reverend George Whitefield, M.A. Late Chaplain to the Right Honorable the Countess of Huntingdon*.

[84] 2 Kings 2:1-15

[85] This is despite the fact that he willed them to Richard Smith. Smith gave up his claim to the famous clothes for Parsons to bury the man in the manner in which he had occupied his pulpit.

admirers in Boston (evidently trumped Whitefield's friends in Newburyport. Jonathan Parsons resisted their request; when they objected that nobody had ever heard of Newburyport, thus not a fitting place for the body of someone *everyone* knew, Parsons retorted: "They shall know it." The citizens of Portsmouth promised a tomb "hew'd out of a rock," alluding to the tomb Joseph of Aramathea provided for the corpse of Jesus. Even Georgia's legislature made a claim to the corpse, allocating funds for the purpose of collecting the body and interring it next to Whitefield's renowned orphanage. Although late to the party, British admirers also attempted to bring the body to Wales or England. But by accident of history, Parsons exerted the most control. With support of the town and the elders and deacons of the church, Parsons fenced off all the suitors. They "took the whole care of the burial upon themselves," including the preparation of "the vault." Parsons successfully deposited Whitefield's body in a brick-lined crypt, directly beneath the pulpit he himself climbed every Sunday to deliver his sermons.[86] Whitefield, as Thomas Kidd writes, "frankly hoped to die in the pulpit."[87] Here Parsons installed him in one. I should signal how odd this was. It is the only instance I have been able to find of a person buried under a pulpit in early America. The Presbyterian meetinghouse in 1770 was constructed in traditional meetinghouse format, with the pulpit installed on the eastern, long side of the church, and the door opposite it. The pulpit was raised high, with a sounding board. Plenty of room for a body. Parsons clearly broke dissenting Protestant tradition by installing the, so-called "greatest preacher since the apostles," just below the floorboards of his pulpit. But in some ways he affirmed it. In a religious space oriented around the preaching of the Word, why not install the

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[86] Joseph Belcher, *George Whitefield: A Biography, with Special Reference to His Labors in America* (New York: American Tract Society, 1857), 437–40; Luke Tyerman, *The Life of the Rev. George Whitefield*, vol. 2 (London,: Hodder and Stoughton, 1876), 601.

[87] Kidd, *George Whitefield: America's Spiritual Founding Father*, 200.

best preacher below the apparatus of preaching? In constructing the crypt, Parsons had notably left space in the crypt for *his* body as well, to sit quietly next to Whitefield until the end of all things. All in all, material proximity to Whitefield was important—as evidenced through Parsons defiant, unique practice.

The funeral was big. Daniel Rogers wrote in his almanac that he "was sent for to attend his [Whitefield's] Funeral," on the first of October, set to be held the next day. Rogers recorded that Whitefield was "interred in Mr. Parson's Meeting House." "I prayed," he wrote briefly, "a hymn was sung…an Oration." Nothing special, except for the crowds. The "vast Assembly," Rogers wrote, "Some thot 5 Thous[an]d People."[88] Richard Smith elaborated a bit more on what Whitefield had meant to Rogers; he remembered that Rogers had "made a very affecting prayer, and openly confessed that, under God, he owed his conversion to the labours of that dear Man of God, whose precious remains now lay before them." Rogers didn't mention the body in his sparse almanac, but Smith noted that, upon looking at the corpse, he cried out: "'O my father, my father!' then stopt and wept as though his heart would break, and the people weeping all through the place. The he recovered and finished his prayer, and sat down and wept." After a funeral sermon by "Rev. Mr. Jewet," who exhorted his listeners to "follow his [Whitefield's] blessed example," the "corpse was then put into the vault, and all concluded with a short prayer, and dismission of the people, who wept through the streets to their respective places of abode."[89]

In November of 1770, Whitefield's English admirers heard of his death. And his acting widow, the Countess of Huntington, failing to acquire his body, soon fast-tracked the

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[88] Daniel Rogers, Almanac of Rev. Daniel Rogers [1770], Chicago History Museum Special Collections, p. 10. Thanks to Doug Winiarksi for sharing this source.

[89] Quoted in Arnold A. Dallimore, *George Whitefield: The Life and Times of the Great Evangelist of Hte Eighteenth-Century Revival*, vol. 2 (Westchester, IL: Cornerstone Books, 1980), 510.

publications of his *Works,* which would appear from 1770 through 1773 in 7 volumes, (sometimes catalogued as 8, if you count his editor John Gillies' memoir of the man). What better way to honor a Protestant career than to print it? Within two years, Selina and John Gillies had gathered the corpus (except that letter book hidden in Delaware), the pulpy remnants of Whitefield's life, and had them out to the printer where they could be mass produced with the help of type, press, muscle, and paper, adorned with gilded tooling, and French style, fine leather binding. We can view the project as a container, like a collective urn, holding the papery parts of his life. For me this is a natural Protestant response. How does one enshrine a Protestant divine? You *print them*. Yet, I have been increasingly convinced (after looking at lots of editions of this series) that nobody read the volumes—here the principal use of *the book* is displaced. I think Gillies, the editor, knew this. The point of the work was collection of appropriate Protestant fragments, not read religious wisdom. As we have already noted, Whitefield reads flat in print. His power was in his performative, bodily presence. And sure enough, Whitefield's *Works*, in fact, would never be reprinted—his print legacy would be dominated by memoir and biography, not his actual words. This suggest that resurrecting genres—memoir, biography, history—were most appropriate for apprehending the man.[90]

The intent of the *Works* project was clear. It was a "monument," wrote Gillies in the introductory advertisement. Stacked up together, the collective volumes were a mass-produced monument in book form. But the intent of the project was not just monumental. Gillies noted that the aim "was to exhibit a plain and undisguised *View* [emphasis mine] of the worthy Author,

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[90] Richard Owen Roberts, *Whitefield in Print : A Bibliographic Record of Works By, For, and against George Whitefield: With Annotations, Biographical, and Historical Notices, and Bibliographies of His Associates and Contemporaries : The Whole Forming a Literary History of the Great Eighteenth-Century Revival* (Wheaton, Ill: R. O. Roberts, 1988).

in all Parts of his public Service, as well as in his private Retirements, and inward Trials; faithfully shewing the Whole of that *living Temple,* which was sacred to God, and happily instructing Mankind in the Ways of Godliness and eternal Life."[91] In short, it was his body, his temple, his *corpus,* intended to be *viewed*. Thus, Whitefield's *Works* is better understood as a mortuary assemblage not as a series of books. When you opened the first volume, it was like opening a coffin. There he was, laid in state, a copper engraving of his body at death. In addition, he was ghostily transferred onto the title page. Though it was surely not intentional, his ghostly presence superimposed upon the print was suggestive. Here Whitefield's body and words had to merge in order to bring him back. [Figure 7]

Whitefield was memorialized in vast bolts of black cloth, inky broadsides, long sermons, original hymns, long processionals, acrostics, and polished elegiac poems.[92] Cornelius Winter, a companion that Whitefield had left in Georgia, had a front row seat to the mourning in Georgia. "You have no conception of the effect of Mr. Whitefield's death upon the inhabitants of the province of Georgia," he wrote in his memoirs. "All the black cloth in the stores was bought up," the parish church enveloped in dark drapery, "the pulpits and desks of the church, the branches, the organ loft, the pews of the governor and council, were covered with black."[93] The color of the drapery was complimented by the two-tone dynamism of print, it was here where Whitefield was laid in state, for most. And here the process of canonizing the Protestant saint was well afoot. The most successful of the elegists was an enslaved African woman in Boston, "Phyllis."

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[91] *Works*, Vol. I: p. vii. [Emphasis original].

[92] Acrostic citation: Perronet, Edward. 1771. *A Moral ode for the year 1771 With a copy of verses upon the diversity of spiritual gifts. : To which is added (by permission of the author) an acrostic on the memory of the late Rev. Mr. George Whitefield. ; [One line from I. Peter] ; Price three pence[.]*. United States: s.n.

[93] Jay, *Memoirs of the Life and Character of the Late Rev. Cornelius Winter*, 79–81.

Her elegy transported the image of Whitefield's corpse into bookstores throughout the colonies, and in London as well, for her poem was regularly accompanied with a woodcut engraving of Whitefield laid in state, "dress'd as he was laid out & buried."[94]

"HAIL happy Saint on thy immortal throne!" began Wheatley, and in the poem she sought out to lyrically resurrect Whitefield for her readers. "Thy lessons in unequal'd accents flow'd! / While emulation in each bosom glow'd; /Thou didst, in strains of eloquence refin'd, / Inflame the soul and captivate the mind." Wheatley expressed her condolences to Whitefield's de facto widow, the Countess of Huntingdon, and his de facto children, the orphans at Bethesda:

> Great COUNTESS ! we Americans revere
> Thy name, and thus condole thy grief sincere :
> We mourn with thee, that Tomb obscurely plac'd.
> In which thy Chaplain undisturb'd doth rest
> New-England sure, doth feel the Orphan's smart ;
> Reveals the true sensations of his heart :
> Since this fair Sun, withdraws his golden rays,
> No more to brighten these distressed days !
> His lovely Tabernacle, sees no more
> A WHITEFIELD landing on the British shore :

Wheatley finished the poem by lifting up Whitefield for her reader's imaginative eyes. And tells Americans what they can do in response to his death. Referring to his future resurrection, and metaphorical apotheosis, she told her readers, "Then let us view him on yon azure skies : / Let every mind with this lov'd object rise." Here Wheatley invited her readers to join his resurrection in mind. Although, "No more can he exert his lab'ring breath, / Seiz'd by the cruel messenger of death," Americans could respond.

> What can his dear AMERICA return ?
> But a drop a tear upon his happy urn,

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[94] There were five editions of Wheatley's elegy printed in the Colonies, with an additional edition printed in London. See Peter Charles Hoffer, *When Benjamin Franklin Met the Reverend Whitefield: Enlightenment, Revival, and the Power of the Printed Word*, Witness to History (Baltimore, Md.: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2011).

Thou tomb, shall safe retain they sacred trust,
Till life divine re-animate his dust.[95]

As we will see in the next chapter, his tomb nor his follower's deserved the "sacred trust" Wheatley affords to them. But many would follow her injunction and drop tears over his coffin. (We don't know if she ever made the trip herself.) Another elegy, written in England, was explicit in its intent. It was not "to give a history of Rev. Mr. Whitefield's life," wrote John Fellows, "but only to hold him up to view in the great character of a Preacher of the everlasting Gospel; a character in which he appears great to all the world, and will shine in future ages with distinguished lustre and glory in the annals of the church of God." Fellows understood his attempt as like a portrait, "In this single point of light, he [Fellows] hath attempted to draw the portrait of this great person at full length." Fellows hoped to "hit the likeness" for the "admiration" of "his noble character" for "the encouragement of his friends."[96] Like Wheatley, Fellows emphasized that Whitefield was one of "such instruments of [God's] glory," a "British Samuel," and saint. In verse, Fellows fleshed out his portrait: "how lovely was the face / We oft have seen with transport! Oh, how bright / The eye that beam'd compassion for the woes / Of hapless sinners! Oh, how strong, how clear, / And sweet the voice, that we hear no more!."[97] One writer from Portsmouth, noted that he had "Reason to think" that Whitefield "was sanctified

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[95] Phillis Wheatley, *An Elegiac Poem. On the Death of That Celebrated Divine, and Eminent Servant of Jesus Christ, the Reverend and Learned George Whitefield : Who Made His Exit from This Transitory State, to Dwell in the Celestial Realms of Bliss, on Sunday, 30th of September 1770 ... at Newbury-Port, near Boston, New-England. ... By Phillis, a Servant Girl, of 17 Years of Age, Belonging to Mr. J. Wheatley, of Boston:--She Has Been but 9 Years in This Country from Africa.* (Newport, RI: Boston, printed: Newport, Rhode-Island, re-printed and sold by S.Southwick, in Queen-Street, 1770?, 1770).

[96] John Fellows, *The Bromsgrove Elegy, in Blank Verse, on the Death of the Reverend George Whitefield ... : In Which Are Represented, the Subjects of His Ministry; His Manner of Preaching; the Success of His Labours; His Excellent Moral Character; and Death, at Newbury in New England, September 30, 1770.* (London,: Printed for J. Gurney and J. Robinson, 1771), iii–iv.

[97] Ibid., 7.

throughout, the Image of God was restored upon him, and Christ Jesus formed in him."[98] For this writer, Whitefield had become a veritable Saint.

One print literally lay his body in front of American mourners, as I mentioned briefly before, and it was often attached to Wheatley's poem, thus providing a woodcut corpse over which to mourn.[99] [Figure 9] The woodcut was, in essence, a means of laying Whitefield in state for American admirers, and the text provided guidance on how to apprehend the body. Between the print shops of John Boyles and Ezekiel Russell in Boston, George Whitefield's wood block body shuttled back and forth between the presses, used to adorn multiple elegiac texts. Besides Wheatley's poem, the second text most likely to accompany Whitefield's woodcut corpse was a hymn penned by Charles Wesley, though the broadside declared that it was "made by the Rev. George Whitefield, with designs to be sung at his own funeral—Adapted to the Savannah Tune." It would prove to be the most popular funeral hymn from the mid eighteenth century through the mid nineteenth century, disseminated most widely in John Wesley's various collections of hymns.

> Ah! lovely appearance of Death!
>
> No sight upon earth is so fair;
> Not all the gay pageants that breathe
> Can with a dead body compare.
>
> With solem delight I survey
> The corpse, when the spirit is fled;
> In love with the beautiful clay,
> And longing to lie in its stead….
>
> Of evil incapable thou,
> Whose relicts with envy I see;

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[98] Daniel and Robert Fowle (Firm), *The Character and Death of the Late Rev. George Whitefield* (Portsmouth, N.H.: Printed and sold by D. and R. Fowle, 1770).

[99] Phillis Wheatley, *An Elegiac Poem.*

No longer in misery now,
No longer a sinner like me.[100]

While many of these poets told mourners how to feel and act around the body, others spent more time relating the importance of his body in life. Ebenezer Pemberton, in his funeral sermon, reminded his readers that Whitefield's transition to death was common to all: "The Spirits of just Men, while upon Earth, reside in Tabernacles of Clay, which must shortly be resolved into their original Dust."[101] That being said, Pemberton recognized Whitefield as exceptional: "Posterity will view MR. WHITEFIELD, in many Respects, as one of the most extraordinary Characters of the present Age." And his exceptionality centered on his body in the pulpit: "When in the pulpit, every Eye was fixed on his expressive Countenance; every Ear was charmed with his melodious Voice ; all sorts of Persons were captivated with the Propriety and Beauty of his Address."[102] Pemberton continued,

I have not, my Brethren, drawn an imaginary Portrait, but described a Character exhibited in real Life. I have not mentioned his natural Abilities, which were vastly above the common Standard: I have not spoken of the Improvements he made in human Learning, in one of the most celebrated Universities in the World [Oxford] : I consider him principally in the Light of a Christian, and a *Minister* of Jesus Christ, in which he shone with superior Lustre, as a Star of the first magnitude.[103]

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[100] Charles Wesley, *A Funeral Hymn Made by the Rev. George Whitefield* (Boston[?], 1770). Houghton Library, Harvard University, Cambridge, MA.

[101] Ebenezer Pemberton and Phillis Wheatley, *Heaven the Residence of the Saints: A Sermon Occasioned by the Sudden, and Much Lamented Death of the Rev. George Whitefield, A.M. Chaplain to the Right-Honourable the Countess of Huntington, Delivered at the Thursday Lecture in Boston, in America, Oct. 11, 1770* (reprinted for E. and C. Dilly in the Poultry, 1771).

[102] Ibid., 19.

[103] Ibid., 25.

Once the broadsides had been blown away into the corners of American towns and cities, and the elegies had been tucked neatly under other piles of paper, there was a series of lingering questions about Whitefield. Not everyone was asking them, but those who had felt the sway of his influence kept posing them. What had Whitefield been in life? Why had he been so powerful? In the next section, we will see the ways people sought to answer some of these questions over his grave in Newburyport, and their attempts to reanimate his presence in the world through material encounters with his corpse. As one writer who visited the tomb noted in 1868, "How diffusive, invincible, and immortal, is the influence of a great and good man!" Looking at his corpse, the visitor concluded, "He may die, but his influence never."[104] The fact that Whitefield was buried, not in a graveyard, but in a crypt *inside* a church, below a pulpit, created the material possibilities for the body cult that sprung up around his body. Here one of the religious greats of the Atlantic world had fallen on New England soil. The next chapter will take up the visits to the crypt and the body cult that swarmed, and collected, over Whitefield's corpse.

[104] H. W, "Influence of Whitefield.," *New York Observer and Chronicle (1833-1912)*, July 16, 1868.

CHAPTER 2: THE SAINT: GEORGE WHITEFIELD'S BODY CULT, 1770-1850.

Let every mind wish this lov'd object rise,
Thou tomb, shall safe retain thy sacred trust,
Till life divine re-animates the dust.

-Phyllis Wheatley, 1770

In September of 1837, Jonathan Stearns, the minister of Old South Presbyterian Church in Newburyport, Massachusetts, received a package. Beneath the tightly wrapped paper and twine, was a long, narrow, finely varnished wooden box. Stearns could open the box by sliding the top along the runners, to reveal the mysterious contents within. What he found inside was shocking. Inside was a long, slender, yellowed bone. He knew right away what he was looking at, but a note helped confirm his thoughts. The note stated that it was the "main arm bone of George Whitefield," from the collection of a Whitefield admirer in England. Stearns was elated. He knew the bone, and perhaps many others, were missing. One had been circulating among Whitefield admirers in England, creating controversy and rumors in its wake. And he was very aware that a "thief" in the late 1820s was probably responsible. One correspondent wrote to the *British Standard*, "It will surprise and grieve not a few on both sides of the Atlantic when I tell them the bones of Whitefield are not entire. Part of his *right arm* was sent to this country. I hope it is not here still." One person who had been shown the bone in London suggested that the American ambassador get involved and demand for its return. But Stearns received the bone without a fight, thanks to a grieving family trying to dispose of the strange possessions of a deceased patriarch. Stearns quickly organized a ceremony to commemorate such a momentous event. He staged an elaborate procession of two thousand people, it was reported, to walk triumphantly through the streets of sleepy Newburyport to restore the bone of the "greatest preacher to have ever lived." And so the separated bone was placed back into Whitefield's open

casket in the brick-lined, beehive crypt under the pulpit Stearns climbed every Sunday to deliver his sermons.[105]

This chapter is about death and the material remains it leaves behind, and how the relics of a vaunted Protestant figure were handled, moved, and encountered among a group not usually associated with material religious expression.[106] The argument hinges on ideas of presence and animation, both were sought and realized in diverse ways through encountering Whitefield's relics.[107] The efforts to access George Whitefield's body was a way of animating or sustaining his presence in the world, but also interrogating it. What had made Whitefield so great? And what had Whitefield wrought? Whitefield's name, more than any other, was the proverbial hook that late eighteenth and early nineteenth century Americans hung the historical phenomenon later known as the Great Awakening. But Whitefield presented a particular problem for late 18th and early 19th century Protestants. Unlike so many Protestant divines that came before, Whitefield did not come alive through print. Even Whitefield himself complained about how print flattened him. From the 18th century to the present, most who studied his life admitted that Whitefield's textual content was pretty conventional evangelical fare. Print was important, but its popularity waned as those who had seen him in life, in the flesh, passed.[108] So if print did not keep his

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[105] J. B. (Joseph Beaumont) Wakeley, *Anecdotes of the Rev. George Whitefield, M.A* (London : Hodder and Stoughton, 1872), 388–89, http://archive.org/details/anecdotesofwhite00wakeuoft. "Whitefield Procession," *New York Observer,* August 26, 1837. "Whitefield's body," *British Standard*, October 14, 1842.

[106] My emphasis on the senses and materiality is informed by Sally M. Promey, ed., "Introduction," in *Sensational Religion: Sensory Cultures in Material Practice* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2014, 2014); Morgan, *Religion and Material Culture*.

[107] My use of the concept of presence is informed by Gell, *Art and Agency*. Animation is a riff on the discussion of agency in material culture studies, important in this respect (from *many* different angles) is Latour, *Reassembling the Social*; Brown, "Reification, Reanimation, and the American Uncanny"; Bennett, *Vibrant Matter*; Coole and Frost, "Introduction."

[108] As many scholars have noted, especially Frank Lambert, print was key to Whitefield's success. But it is clear that the effectiveness of using print was dependent upon actually seeing Whitefield. It was a common complaint that his printed sermons did not do the preacher justice. But, as Lambert shows, the printed sermons and semi-

memory alive, could his body? In this particular chapter, I use the concept of *animating presence* to speak, specifically not of Whitefield as subject, but Whitefield as object, an object whose presence animated those around him. His devotees descended again and again to the crypt in Newburyport to be in the presence of his corpse, to gain unmediated access to the material detritus of an exemplary life. What they consciously sought in doing this was probably rather opaque to themselves. As it is probably opaque to the busloads of Southern Baptists who still visit the grave to weep, pray for revival, and *remember* his life in close proximity to his remains. This impulse starts early, indeed, from the very beginning.

I use the term body cult to describe the activity around Whitefield's grave—the major focus of this chapter—but I don't use saint's cult. This is intentional. This story is about Whitefield's body, his relics, and other *memoria,* not Whitefield as living presence who interceded on behalf of those devoted to him.[109] He was surely elevated among the throng of the Protestant sainthood of all believers; he was a Protestant exemplar hard to match in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. But the devotional activity around his body really is improvisational, a response to the loss of an exemplary life, and a processing of what that life may still mean for those who still had some living to do. While Whitefield's body cult was not codified into a series of proscribed practices aimed at intercession, nor did people report miracles emanating from his tomb, nor did they think his remains were somehow a portal through which

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private letters Whitefield disseminated around the Atlantic world *did* function as an effective promotional scheme. Lambert, *Pedlar in Divinity*, 15–18, 64–85~. From looking at his bibliographic record after his death, the importance of his bodily presence, and the memory of it, becomes even clearer. Collections of his sermons continued to be printed in America into the 1790s, in a period when people who had seen him in life were still alive, and could join their memories of apprehending the man with his words. But after the 1790s, the print about Whitefield turned toward more resurrecting genres, such as memoir and biography, and to a lesser extent hymns and poetry about or attributed to Whitefield. See Roberts, *Whitefield in Print*.

[109] Thinking about Protestant saints has been done by Brekus, *Sarah Osborn's World*, 337–39.

heaven's power leaked into the temporal world,[110] they did seek to both understand and be in close proximity to his power. His presence was palpable in that crypt. The devoted visitors may have said to themselves that he was away, far from this body, but in their imaginations he was very much there. Whitefield did occupy a position, in Protestant belief and practice, as one of the, in Peter Brown's terms, the "very special dead."[111] He had been the tool of God. And people wanted to understand how that tool worked, to assess and reform themselves next to it, and to touch the tool that God had undeniably touched. As we will see, not all of the visits were honorific. Some visitors just wanted to see the body of a dead famous person. Among the devout, conscious Protestant concerns with conflating the material with the spiritual checked the cult. As I will explore at the end of the chapter, the boundaries were real. Visitors knew their engagement with the relics of Protestant divines invited "Papist" accusations. But for many similar cultural reasons that led to the emergence of the cult of the saints in the late antique Mediterranean, the Protestants who created his tomb, descended to the vault, and encountered Whitefield's bodily detritus were animating his remains to a point that his absence became presence. It surprised them. And they wanted it.

I begin the chapter by looking briefly at some of the ideas related to encountering bodies that visitors brought down with them to the tomb. These ways of encountering clearly shaped the encounters, but I will also show how encountering the body entangled visitors in ways they did not expect. The next section looks at how preexisting ideas about encountering corpses collided with actual, sensory encounters. I follow various visitors on their encounters with the

[110] In sorting out the differences between Whitefield's cult and the emergent cult of the martyrs, then saints, I have been indebted to the wonderful survey of Bartlett, *Why Can the Dead Do Such Great Things?*, 2013, 1–91. In terms of thinking through the comparative origins of the emergence of the cult of the saints, I have benefited from the work of Brown, *The Cult of the Saints*, 36–58. On the power of material encounter, Miller, *The Corporeal Imagination*.

[111] Brown, *The Cult of the Saints*, 69–85.

corpse in a roughly chronological manner. Here I hope to convey the experience of descending to the crypt, encountering the body, and coming up for air. The final section looks at how Phrenology began to animate visits to the tomb, and how Whitefield's corpse became a place where the Enlightenment cult of genius and that of a Protestant saint could find harmony. Furthermore, through casting his skull, Boston Phrenologists were able to offer a transatlantic scientific community a type specimen, over which they could begin to ask a myriad of questions about religion and the material mind. I conclude with a poetic reflection by John Greenleaf Whittier on the meaning of the body cult, which assures his audience that no boundaries were crossed in the devotional energy that swirled around the tomb, but holds out the power of his presence in the community.

Preexisting Ideas

There were two major guiding discourses that shaped the encounter with Whitefield's corpse. One is about decay, the other is about preservation.

There was a long standing evangelical, but broadly Protestant interest in bodily decay as an object lesson of, what Methodist itinerant Jesse Lee called, the "the fearful change which the king of terrors makes upon the most perfect forms."[112] Lee made this broad observation after encountering Whitefield's corpse in 1791. Lee's reference is not to the devil as the "king of terrors," but rather death itself—whose terrible work was wrought over good people and bad. Sin was a process that affected all human beings, so the Augustinian tradition taught, and it sped up rapidly after death. St. Paul reminded Christians in Romans 6:23 that the "wages of sin is death," and for many late eighteenth century Christians to view the ravages of death and decay upon the body was to empirically observe the process of sin's material effects on humanity, to

[112] Jesse Lee 1758-1816., *Memoir of the Rev. Jesse Lee. with Extracts from His Journals.*, ed. Minton Thrift ed (New York,: Published by N. Bangs and T. Mason, for the Methodist Episcopal Church, 1823), 153.

see the wages tangibly paid out. (It was also understood in the period that morally deficient people—criminals and the like—decayed at higher rates.) This was not quite *momento mori*—remember death, so as to prepare for it—but more—*custodite mortem*—observe death, to know that sin was not an abstraction but real.

Jesse Lee, we should notice, referenced human bodies as "the most perfect forms." Here Lee embraces an anthropology that asserts the superiority of the human form, and makes the common enlightenment move that asserts a fundamental goodness in design by a benevolent Creator. Unlike his Massachusetts Puritan forbears, Lee doesn't see human beings—body, mind, and soul—as fundamentally foul. Sin polluted God's perfect form, and had been doing so for time immemorial. Over Whitefield's corpse the sin that has infected the human was made materially manifest in mold, insects, and desiccated bone. In this way of looking, the decay tells Lee that Whitefield, although a saint, is indeed a human being—subject to the same forces. But Lee also looks at Whitefield's body with a tacit addendum. For if the "wages of sin is death," Paul follows up his famous passage, "the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ Our Lord." The more macabre, the more death exhibited its disintegrating effects upon the material body, the more instructive the decaying corpse became in demonstrating the empirical truth of sin. The leap of faith was to believe that Whitefield was somewhere else enjoying "eternal life."

This leads us to the second discourse that shaped encounters with Whitefield's body. The emphasis here was on preservation. This was an enduring set of beliefs about bodily decay as an index of moral worth. As we mentioned briefly above, the morally deficient were understood to decay at higher rates. This was most discussed among criminals. The historical roots would seem deep in the late antique and early medieval cult of the saints. But I won't presume to sketch a history of how we got from there to the 18th century; it might only be indirectly related.

But suffice it to say that Americans, in the period of Whitefield's death, often expected and reported on relative decomposition of bodies as indices of moral stature. Commenting on the rapid decomposition of criminals' corpses was commonplace, their dissolute morals gave no resistance to the destructive force of death. Whereas the virtuous person's body, even if their soul was absent, put up more of a fight. Here we see the not-yet-complete disassociation between subject and object, human and thing.[113] This led many Americans to check up on, and inquire about the status of decay of their loved ones and public figures they revered. It led others to experiment in artificial means of preserving their loved ones—perhaps they didn't want to find out the what may happen.[114] In short, viewing the decomposition of a corpse could be epistemic.[115] We see both of these discourses overlapping in the descents to the crypt. But it is also clear that encountering Whitefield's body superimposed itself upon the subjectivity of his

[113] This has been famously discussed by Bruno Latour, *We Have Never Been Modern* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1993); A more detailed discussion is found in Lorraine Daston 1951- and Katharine Park 1950-, *Wonders and the Order of Nature, 1150-1750* (New York :Cambridge, Mass.: Zone Books ;Distributed by the MIT Press, 1998), 329–68.

[114] On the association of preserved corpses with virtue, see Jolene Zigarovich, "Preserved Remains: Embalming Practices in Eighteenth-Century England," *Eighteenth-Century Life* 33, no. 3 (2009): 65–104. On the early modern period, see Sarah Tarlow, *Ritual, Belief, and the Dead Body in Early Modern Britain and Ireland* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 129. For a period source, see J. (James) Kirkpatrick, *Some Reflections on the Causes and Circumstances, That May Retard or Prevent the Putrefaction of Dead Bodies...*, Francis A. Countway Library of Medicine--Medical Heritage Library Digitization Project (London: Printed for AMillar, 1751). Other work that considers the connection between virtue and bodily preservation are, Mitch Rose, "Secular Materialism: a Critique of Earthly Theory," *Journal of Material Culture* 16 (2): 107-29, esp. 118-9. Nigel Llewellyn, *The Art of Death: Visual Culture in the English Death Ritual, C. 1500-C. 1800* (London: Published in association with the Victoria and Albert Musuem by Reaktion Books, 1991), 46–47, 101–2. Louis P. Nelson, *The Beauty of Holiness: Anglicanism & Architecture in Colonial South Carolina*, Richard Hampton Jenrette Series in Architecture & the Decorative Arts (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2008), 292. On interest in experimentation with the preservation of bodies, as a means of demonstrating virtue, see Charles Willson Peale, *The Selected Papers of Charles Willson Peale and His Family*, ed. Lillian B. Miller, Sidney Hart, and Toby A. Appel (New Haven Conn: Published for the National Portrait Gallery, Smithsonian Institution, by Yale University Press, 1983), Volume II: 945-8.

[115] Emerson is just one example of someone in the period who felt compelled to investigate the decay of a corpse. Robert D. Richardson, *Emerson: The Mind on Fire: A Biography* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995). In the English context, there has been a good amount of work on this phenomenon. See note 114.

visitors, entangling them in ways they did not expect, its presence acting on the visitors, compelling response, touch, questions, and most intriguing of all, relic taking.

I also want to flag a theme, important elsewhere in the dissertation, which is the importance of subterranean space. The fact that visitors had to descend underground to handle the material fragments of the body gave the encounter additional epistemic and affective value. It relates to a broader cultural value given to hidden, subterranean objects as surprising sources of discovery. Often this below-groundness was literal, but also metaphorical, for it could also encompass things found in attics, or hidden in other spaces (walls, hidden compartments, etc.). Any worry about provenance or trickery was obviated, as it was understood that these things had a direct, unmediated link from the past. Even if decayed, these objects always carried with them an aura of the miraculous, as they had skirted the natural tendency towards destruction and loss, and had surprisingly been unearthed.[116] For 18th and 19th century people, these things qualified for the category of relics.[117] To descend to Whitefield's crypt was to descend into the past. I also want to highlight the importance of touch, so essential for so many of the encounters. Here touch became the centerpiece of bodily encounter, lending epistemic and affective value to the descents to the crypt. Vision was not enough. The body drew touching hands.

Descents and Ascents

The first documented visit to the grave is usually told as that of Benedict Arnold and David Morgan, in the foggy September of 1775 on their way to attack the British strongholds in

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[116] "Interesting Relic," *Daily National Journal*, December 30, 1824; "Singular Organic Relic," *Daily National Journal*, July 18, 1828; "A Revolutionary Relic," *United States Telegraph*, August 20, 1827. A literary example of the importance of hidden objects as a guarantor of provenance and historical truth (that haunts the present) is Nathaniel Hawthorne, *Mosses from an Old Manse* (New York: George P. Putnam, 1851), 1–28.

[117] Teresa Barnett, *Sacred Relics: Pieces of the Past in Nineteenth-Century America* (Chicago ;London: The University of Chicago Press, 2013).

Quebec. But it really isn't a story about them; they just happened to be the most famous people there.[118] The story is really Samuel Spring's,[119] a chaplain with Arnold and Morgan's battalion, and a well-connected rising star in New England's evangelical networks.[120] The troops were delayed in Newburyport due to fog. So as they waited for clearer skies, the troops gathered around Old South to hear a sermon by their chaplain. The troops filled the box pews, and left their weapons in the aisles, and the local citizens looked on from the balcony. Spring delivered an impressive sermon, without notes. And the presence of Whitefield, below his feet, clearly

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[118] Arnold and Morgan were the commanders of the troops there, and were in Newburyport as the eastern segment of a two prong invasion of the British stronghold in Quebec. They marched from Cambridge to set sail from Newburyport in order to avoid the remarkably efficient British naval patrols. Newburyport's capable seaport, its support for the revolutionary cause, and its marginality compared to other Massachusetts seaports made it a prime candidate for organizing the assault. Once they got to Newburyport a thick fog delayed the troops from sailing northward to the mouth of Kinnebec river. The mass of troops that descended on Newburyport was trying on the local community. Most of the troops camped on a nearby field in Newbury. But the officers had comfortable accommodations in Newburyport. John J. (John James) Currier, *The History of Newburyport, Massachusetts, 1764-1905*, Facsimile of the 1906 edition with a new foreword by D'Arcy G. Van Bokkelen. (Somersworth: New Hampshire Pub. Co., 1977); Justin H. Smith, *Arnold's March from Cambridge to Quebec, a Critical Study; Together with a Reprint of Arnold's Journal* (New York, Putnam, 1903), 62, 286 n23. Arnold's journal reprinted in Smith begins in late September, after they had left Newburyport.

[119] Samuel Spring would eventually return to Newburyport as the minister of the North Congregationalist Church, a position he was offered as a result of the sermon he preached over Whitefield's body in the presence of the battalion in Old South. In fact, with an ailing Parsons, both the "Federal Street Church" [Old South] and the North Congregationalist church were courting him. It is not surprising that he gushed over preaching over Whitefield's body. Spring, through the determination of his mother, had received an education that qualified him to go to college. For his New Light family the choice was clear. He went to the College of New Jersey during the tenure of John Witherspoon. He was classmates with James Madison and Aaron Burr, and did his advanced study with Samuel Hopkins in Newport, Rhode Island; in fact, he married Hannah Hopkins, Samuel's daughter in 1779. He was a founder of Andover Theological Seminary, and had been involved in the early discussions that led to the founding of the ABCFM. He was also remembered as being "by nature an autocrat, in the best sense of that term." John Quincy Adams, for one, complained about his rigidity. But more sympathetic admirers noted that it was the "majesty of power was the overshadowing thought in his mind." In fact, it had been at college where he experienced his conversion, supposedly in the midst of a discourse on the "Copernican system of philosophy, when it was said he was so overwhelmed by his apprehension of the power and majesty of God, as displayed in creation, that he burst into tears." William Anderson McGinly, *A Record of Proceedings in the North Congregational Church, Newburyport, January 24, 1868: On the Occasion of Its One Hundredth Anniversary, Consisting of a Discourse, Addresses, and Letters* (Newburyport [Mass.]: George W. Clark, 1868), 18–19.

[120] There is reason to suspect portions of the account. It was a remembrance collected in the 19th century, inflected with elements of Gothic literature (i.e. clanging chains). But Headley, the editor of the volume about the Chaplains of the Revolutionary War, did quote from a source that seems directly from Spring. And these quoted portions are pretty unemotional, unlike the disdainful asides Headley heaps upon Arnold. Spring places the villain and the hero (Morgan) acting together with him, with no value judgement, doing the same relic collecting. But Spring does place himself at the center of the narrative preaching. This makes sense because it was an important moment in his subsequent career.

affected him, for as he descended from the pulpit he gushed over preaching "*over the grave of Whitfield*."[121] Proximity was not enough. "Some one," at that point requested a "visit to Whitfield's tomb." So the sexton was found, the key procured, and the group descended into the crypt. The coffin was in good preservation; but "the officers induced the sexton to take off the lid of the coffin." The body "had nearly all returned to dust" (maybe).[122] But the elements of the body most preserved was his "collar and wristbands." So they were "taken and carefully cut in little pieces, and divided among them." Headley, the editor of the book of memoirs in which this story was printed, took the memory as a chance to imagine (and embellish) the scene "The chaplain, with the haughty Arnold, the chivalrous Morgan, and group of officers, gathered in the dark vault around the tomb of Whitfield, formed a scene worthy of a painter. The clank of steel had a strange sound around the sainted sleeper, while the hallowed atmosphere filled all hearts with solemn awe and reverence."

It seems clear that Headley took some liberties with the sparse report of Spring's, but his focus on the odd quiet of the tomb, and "hallowed atmosphere" was not foreign to the visits. Crypt visits were meditative and sacred—set apart from the world above. The minimal

[121] Spring was a classmate of James Madison at the College of New Jersey, a bastion of New Light sentiment. He was clearly a bit star struck preaching over the tomb; Old South would have been the most revolutionary sympathizing congregation in Newburyport, but it was clear that Spring was attracted to Old South because of the body under the pulpit.

[122] Joel Tyler Headley, *The Chaplains and Clergy of the Revolution* (New York: Scribner, 1861), 93. I doubt Spring's only time to the crypt was this one; I think he is confusing later memories. His description of the body around this moment sounds more like 19th century reports. The invocation of "dust" is common, not only for actual observable dust, but also the deep theological link between dust and death. God created human beings out of dust, and to dust they were to return. See Genesis 3:19: "In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou return unto the ground; for out of it wast thou taken: for dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return." Ecclesiastes 3:20 is a riff on this original Genesis passage: "All go unto one place; all are of the dust, and all turn to dust again." In Christian and some Jewish interpretation, reanimation of dust was linked to the resurrection of the dead, working from passages from Daniel 12:2, "And many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame *and* everlasting contempt." Also Isaiah 26:19, "Thy dead *men* shall live, *together with* my dead body shall they arise. Awake and sing, ye that dwell in dust: for thy dew *is as* the dew of herbs, and the earth shall cast out the dead." In short, dust was a weighted term.

soundscape was crucial for the encounter, prompting hushed tones, punctuated with harsh intrusions of clanking locks, chains, and the creaks of prying open a coffin. And, often, they were attended with uncanny experiences—like most encounters with bodily things. At once a person, and yet not a person, these kinds of objects troubled the boundaries between death and life, person and object, animate and inanimate. This was amplified by the Christian idea of the resurrection of the dead, in which Whitefield, even if just bones and "dust" would be back to the very spot of his burial, resurrected with a new body, emerging from his subterranean crypt. The result was strange, intense, and memorable encounters, and they were often activated by touch.

All of these issues come to bear in a letter by a "J. Brown" to the *Christian's Magazine* in 1790, an English periodical that circulated among the networks surrounding the Countess of Huntingdon.[123] Brown wrote to the magazine after encountering the body with more questions than answers. Brown was from Epping, a small town on the northeast outskirts of London, but he was married to a Newburyporter. So he was in the seaside town in the summer of 1784 to visit his wife's relatives. While in town he "heard of the unaccountable fact of Whitefield's body being entire," that is, intact. So one morning at "about ten o'clock," Brown went with his wife and "other friends" to see for himself. Provided with a candle and a lantern, Brown "descended down into the tomb" and was lead to "dear Whitefield's coffin," which was opened "down to his breast." The impact was immediate; "I never felt so over a corpse. His body was perfect," by which he seems to mean whole. What Brown saw drew him in, entangling him in a flurry of feelings and questions. He touched the corpse. "I felt the cheeks, his breast, &c. the skin immediately rose after ; even his lips were not consumed, nor his nose." Furthermore, "He did

[123] This source has been used as it was quoted in Luke Tyerman's massive two volume biography of Whitefield. But Tyerman actually didn't quote the original, but rather reworded it, which he indicates by prefacing the passage, "to the following effect." The result is a much more chaste report of the body, without any of the reaction or troubling questions Brown brought back up from the tomb. Tyerman, *The Life of the Rev. George Whitefield*, 2:679.

not look frightful at all." The "skin was considerably discoloured, blackish," which Brown attributed to "dust and age." To round out the senses, he commented on the smell, "it must be thought the corpse could not have any." And then finally, the clothes, which he had been so famously laid out in: "his gown was not much impaired, neither was his wig : (it is well known he was in his coffin, as he was in his pulpit)," he reminded his readers. The encounter was enhanced by the possibility of an immediate comparison, which was done with Jonathan Parsons body, who had died five years before: "I turned myself to look at Mr. Parsons, but there was only a promiscuous shew of bones, clean and dry." He sensed his reader's incredulity, for he stopped to note, "I do but give you matter of fact." And "I am well assured the body of Mr. Whitefield was not embalmed; he particularly ordered it should not."[124]

Brown was flummoxed with the encounter, and here we see his veneration of Whitefield and his enlightenment empiricism colliding.[125] "I confess, to account for the above upon natural principles nonpluses me," he wrote. Brown knew of other remarkable preservations in "snow, and in dry gravelly earth." But the access to "air, or the least touch, had destroyed them." But Whitefield's body was exposed to copious amount of air and touch, as his "body is opened to every curious visitor." His final explanation for it was that there was something in the mortar of the freshly constructed crypt that worked on the body for the six years the tomb was sealed. But even this was "but a fancy of mine," he wrote.[126] Many others "have not been backward to say, 'God miraculously preserves Whitefield's body.' I hardly know what to say to this—I will not

[124] J. Brown, "'To the Editor of the Christian's Magazine.' July 1790.," in *The Christian's Magazine, or Gospel Repository*, ed. T. Priestly, vol. Volume 1, 3 vols. (London [England], 1790), 273–75.

[125] Ibid.

[126] Ibid., 274.

say God does not preternaturally preserve it."[127] Of course, the Bible was instructive on framing what he saw, for Brown noted that Whitefield "was favored and distinguished in our day as Enoch was in his; and if God did not honour his body with a translation, he may with a preservation." He finishes his letter by asking for readers "thoughts concerning the above."[128] The letter, so honest and inquiring, never received a direct answer. But the visits would continue.

It is always a tricky to make any diagnosis of why Whitefield was amazingly preserved nearly two and a half centuries later—especially since the tomb is now sealed. But the evidence points to adipocere, a phenomenon where the body is preserved by the transformation of the soft tissue into a soapy or waxy substance (made possible through the breakdown of body fat). "Grave wax," as it was commonly known, was being studied in the period of Whitefield's death.[129] But it is only possible under certain circumstances. The corpse has to have a critical

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[127] On the long negotiation between divisions of the natural, preternatural, and miraculous, see Lorraine Daston, "Marvelous Facts and Miraculous Evidence in Early Modern Europe," in *Questions of Evidence : Proof, Practice, and Persuasion across the Disciplines*, ed. James Chandler, Arnold Ira Davidson, and Harry D. Harootunian (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994); Daston and Park, *Wonders and the Order of Nature, 1150-1750*, 329–64. Unable to come up with a natural solution, but uncomfortable with a supernatural one, Brown settles for a preternatural preservation, that God had somehow worked in his body in life in such a way that he honors the moral material of Whitefield with preservation. The older definition of preternatural, most clearly articulated by Thomas Aquinas, was something that was exceptional to the patterns (*not* yet "laws") of nature, of which the ultimate cause was created. The miraculous could also be exceptional to the patterns of nature, but the ultimate cause was divine, that is, uncreated.

[128] Brown, "'To the Editor of the Christian's Magazine.' July 1790."

[129] Michel-Augustin or Thouret, *Rapport sur les exhumations du cimetière et de l'église des Saints Innocents : lu dans la séance de la Société Royale de Médecine, tenue au Louvre le 3 Mars 1789* (Paris: De l'imprimerie de Ph-Denys Pierres, 1789); George Smith Gibbes, *A Few Observations on the Component Parts of Animal Matters; and on Their Conversion into a Substance Resembling Spermaceti* (Bath: W. Meyler, 1796); Thomas Henry, *Experiments and Observations on the Following Subjects : 1. On the Preparation, Calcination, and Medicinal Uses of Magnesia Alba : 2. On the Solvent Qualities of Calcined Magnesia : 3. On the Variety in the Solvent Powers of Quick-Lime, When Used in Different Qualities : 4. On Various Absorbents, as Promoting or Retarding Putrefaction : 5. On the Comparative Antiseptic Powers of Vegetable Infusions Prepared with Lime, & C. : 6. On the Sweetening Properties of Fixed Air*, Francis A. Countway Library of Medicine--Medical Heritage Library Digitization Project (London: Joseph Johnson, 1773).

mass of fat on the body for it to happen (which Whitefield did at death), and the body has to have a relatively stable atmosphere (which it did for the six years the body was sealed before Samuel Spring and company barged in). Warm air (possible in late September) has been understood to contribute to the process. And Brown's description of the body aligns with a description of an adipocerous corpse. The fresh mortar from the quickly constructed crypt could also help the preservation (Brown was perceptive in making this link), for quick lime, used to make mortar in the period, has also been connected to adipocere.[130] The subsequent visits to the tomb would have broken down the integrity of the corpse however, not only because of the bursts of fresh air they brought down with them but also the handling. The 19th century biographer of Whitefield, Luke Tyerman, made a connection to an early account of adipocere, but didn't really know what to call it, and the source falsely attributed it to "nitre."[131] Thus he thought Whitefield was naturally mummified. Subsequent biographers have been suspicious to believe the early accounts of his preservation, as it reads like a very Catholic reading of saintly bodily integrity. But it is possible that Parson's freshly mortared and sealed crypt, along with Whitefield's obesity, may have created the material conditions for his amazing preservation.

Jesse Lee, the "pioneer" of Methodism in New England, included a visit to Whitefield's tomb in 1790. Lee had faced considerable resistance to his preaching in northern New England during his tour of 1790, opposition to what he called his "benevolent designs." Few pulpits

[130] Marc S. Micozzi, *Postmortem Change in Human and Animal Remains: A Systematic Approach* (Springfield, Ill, USA: CCThomas, 1991), 11.

[131] Tyerman wrote that Whitefield's body was preserved, "owing to vast quantities of nitre with which the earth there abounds." Tyerman, *The Life of the Rev. George Whitefield*. 603. The "nitre" he is speaking of is now called natron, which is naturally-occuring hydrated sodium carbonate, which was known in the period to preserve bodies from the work on mummies in Egypt. But this isn't what is happening in Newburyport, for one because it is not naturally occurring there (it only naturally occurs in three places in the world, all three in Egypt), and this kind of preservation would require direct contact (possible in soil, but not in a crypt). Micozzi, *Postmortem Change in Human and Animal Remains*, 1991, 27.

opened up to him, so he was forced to preach outside, in courthouses, or private homes. In this respect, very similar to Whitefield's early tours of the region. Worried letters circulated among New England's Calvinist ministers that "a preacher of the Wesleyan part" had crossed the Connecticut river" and was preaching at the rate of four places per day. When he got to Newburyport, Lee went directly to the Presbyterian minister of Old South, John Murray, to ask if he could occupy his pulpit (which, of course, was over the tomb of Whitefield). But when Murray found out "he belonged to Mr. Wesley's party, he very politely offered to treat Mr. Lee as a gentleman, and as a Christian, but not as a preacher, viz. that he could not let him preach in his pulpit." Murray had been the recipient of some of the worried letters, and stood firm in denying Lee his pulpit. Despite the rejection, Lee was able, after a lot of "trouble" to preach in the courthouse in Newburyport. But after his sermon, Lee returned to Murray, where he was joined with the local Baptist minister, and they "all agreed to go to the meetinghouse and take a view of the remains of Mr. George Whitefield, which had been sleeping in silence for over twenty years." Candle in hand, they descended to the "dreary mansion, which contains the mortal part of one of the greatest missionaries that ever lived." They found his "ears, hair, and a part of his nose had fallen off," though his face remained "nearly in the common shape, though much contracted, and appeared quite destitute of moisture, and very hard." But his teeth were white, and intact, though his chest had started to part, and the flesh was blackened. Despite all of this, "any persons who once knew him, might discover some traces of his former likeness." Lee "contented himself by bringing away a small relic of the gown in which he was buried ; and prayed that he might be endued with the same zeal which once inspired the breast of its wearer." Here Lee, facing tough opposition among Massachusetts' Calvinist clergy, found a little bit of courage over the body of Whitefield. In the presence of this corpse, relic in hand, Lee prayed

that God would animate him with the same fervor of "one of the greatest missionaries to ever live."[132] He probably didn't consciously think that the power he sought would transfer with the relic, but he insisted on taking it nonetheless. It was a fragment that had touched the man he admired, but it was also a fragment that symbolized one of the greatest preachers of his time, a model he was doggedly trying to imitate.

The desire to somehow capture the passion of Whitefield through material contact and relic taking was mirrored by the tomb visit of Abel Stevens sometime in the 1830s. Stevens was one of the most important historians of 19th century American Methodism, and was a crucial (antislavery) voice in the 1844 Methodist schism. Stevens held a particular fondness for "relics" of Methodism. For example, he kept fragments of "sacred" places from his travels in England, such as flowers from Susanna Wesley's garden, or fragments of wood from trees under which John Wesley preached. His most ambitious collecting project was a giant scrapbook, supposedly once owned by Napoleon to catalogue the faces of his officers at the battle of Waterloo. But Stevens ripped out all of the images of these Frenchmen, and in their place he pasted every depiction he could find of the male and female leaders of early Methodism—most of all, John Wesley.[133] His material orientation was also directed at the objects of his own life. He wrote evocatively of his saddlebags, the way he displayed them in his home, and the things they had experienced together during their exhausting work of itinerating the American interior. He insisted that upon his death, he wished to be buried with them, tucked under his head as a

[132] Lee, *Memoir of the Rev. Jesse Lee. with Extracts from His Journals.*, 154–57.

[133] *Able Stevens Scrapbook*, n.d.

pillow.[134] Just as Whitefield was buried as he was clothed in the pulpit, Stevens wished to be buried as if he was sleeping outside after a trying day on his "wilderness circuit."[135]

Stevens wrote in the genre of memoir, but seems to embellish most on the edges of his narrative. For example, after being led to the new beehive crypt that held the bodies after the sanctuary was reoriented in 1829, he set the eerie scene: "Our footsteps and our subdued voices called forth a faint and trembling echo, and even this tomb of glorified saints seemed instinct with the gloom and dread of death, reminding us of the doom of the fall." But after this he falls into more detailed memories, after all, he writes, "the visit will always be memorable to me." He describes the body (now bare bones laid on a bed of black mold), but instead of plucking off clothing (which was probably all gone by now) he picks up Whitefield's skull and "examines it with intense interest." As he held the skull "in silence," it triggered a flurry of thoughts, as if he had pressed a button that triggered his mind to race "over the history of the 'seraphic man.'" It was a history that rushed past with questions attached. "What thoughts of grandeur and power had emanated from that abode of the mind, and stirred with emotions the souls of hundreds of thousands—emotions which will quicken their immortality!" Reading his account closely, an interest beyond religious emulation animates Steven's story (which will become clearer later on). Stevens is also looking at his skull for insights into character—a tell-tale sign of an older Physiognomy, but a more contemporary, Phrenology.[136] Here the interest was to intuit the source

[134] Abel Stevens, *Sketches & Incidents, Or, A Budget from the Saddlebags of a Superannuated Itinerant*, ed. Abel Stevens George Peck (Lane & Scott, 1849), 2–8~, http://archive.org/details/sketchesinciden00stevgoog.

[135] Stevens, *Sketches & Incidents, Or, A Budget from the Saddlebags of a Superannuated Itinerant*.

[136] Phrenology, despite having a serious "religion problem," as I will note later, had a vibrant (though not hegemonic) following among American evangelicals. On the use of evangelical print of Protestant portraiture for phrenological reading, see Morgan, *Protestants & Pictures*. It is also touched on in a more "ghostly" way in, John Lardas Modern, *Secularism in Antebellum America: With Reference to Ghosts, Protestant Subcultures, Machines, and Their Metaphors ; Featuring Discussions of Mass Media, Moby-Dick, Spirituality, Phrenology, Anthropology,*

of genius from close examination of faces, but, best of all, skulls. So Stevens "started, and endeavored to solve, a thousand inquiries respecting the attributes of [Whitefield's] character, and the means of his wonderful power." What had made Whitefield so powerful? After encountering the skull in the tomb, he came up for air with more questions than answers. And like many interested in matching skulls to lives, he had to turn toward Whitefield's biography.[137]

Stevens then conducted a study of Whitefield's life, to address his questions. He notes how the people who attended his sermons were "slain by the scores," how the emotion that attended his words "fled as swift as lightning from one end of the auditory to the other." "You might have seen thousands bathed in tears, some at the same time wringing their hands, others almost swooning, and others crying out and moaning over a pierced savior." And he quotes first-hand accounts of how Whitefield "preached like a lion," and how the cool headed "Scotch divines, unaccustomed to such scenes, wrote a pamphlet to prove they were diabolical." But where does Stevens attribute Whitefield's power, the source of which he held in his hands in that dingy tomb in Newburyport? It was God's blessing, Whitefield's ardent feeling, his training in oratory, and a natural "genius," he concluded. Whitefield was possessed with a "prevalence of mighty feelings, the result of divine grace and natural sensibility, that chiefly constituted his eloquence," Stevens explained. "He *felt,* and the speaker who feels will make his hearers feel, whatever be his other deficiencies." But Whitefield was also practiced in "practical elements of his art." As much as he studied the "art of eloquence, he was not artificial," he clarified. He was an oratorical "genius," who offered practical lessons for modern-day preachers, Stevens argued. "The great mistake of modern oratory, especially in the pulpit, is, that we have confounded it

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Sing Sing State Penitentiary, and Sex with the New Motive Power, Religion and Postmodernism. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2011).

[137] It seems clear to me that he is using John Gillies' *Memoir* (1773) for his character study.

with poetry."[138] If only modern preachers could be animated with the feelings that drove Whitefield, then perhaps the awakenings would never go away.

In 1825, a delegation of Congregationalists from England embarked on a wide visit to New England to build ties with their American brothers and sisters (though few women make it into the book). And their interest in the material remnants of America's religious past was evident throughout. They were always pointing out material vestiges of the "Pilgrim Fathers." Plymouth rock is a good example. Andrew Reed, the main narrator of the visit from the English Congregational Union, wrote of his "feverish desire" to see "the rock—the rock!"[139] He could hardly focus on anything else. His American companion from Plymouth, however, tried to tamp down his expectations. And sure enough, when Reed saw the sorry rock, he described it as in the "most unpoetical predicament imaginable." Reed suggested that the denizens of Plymouth could do more to enshrine the spot, yet it still meant something to Reed. He stood on it, and "trembled," and said he knew of "no spot more sacred on earth, except the one spot where the Holy One suffered."

But Whitefield's grave would impress Reed far more. Like many other grave visits, this one was a group affair. It is clear that by the 19th century it had become conventional for visiting sympathetic religious figures passing through Newburyport to visit Whitefield's corpse. And sure enough, the elders of Old South met Reed and his delegation on the porch before the pulpit to take them to the tomb. Reed noted that he had often "stood in [Whitefield's] pulpits; seen his books, his rings, and chairs." But "never before" had he looked "on part of his very self." This wasn't a secondary relic that had brushed up against the man. This was the real thing. The skull

[138] Stevens, *Sketches & Incidents, Or, A Budget from the Saddlebags of a Superannuated Itinerant*, 119–30.

[139] Andrew Reed and James Matheson, *A Narrative of the Visit to the American Churches by the Deputation from the Congregational Union of England and Wales* (New-York: Harper, 1835), 93.

was "perfect, clean, and fair." And he held it in his hand, "as is the custom." Words were sparse, but his "thought and feeling were busy." After returning above ground, Reed insisted that they conduct "an exercise of worship." So the men "collected over the grave of the eloquent, the devoted, and seraphic man, and gave expression to the sentiments that possessed us, by solemn psalmody and fervent prayer." The men noted that it "was not an ordinary service to any of us." Once again, handling and being in the presence of the remains became an animating force for the group, giving way to prayers, worship, and singing.

Reed did leave with a particular criticism: "More care should be taken to preserve these remains, and less freedom used in the exhibition of them." He sensed a line had been crossed in the well-worn paths to the grave. He was not alone. Many visitors were beginning to question how appropriate the energy around the tomb was. As the 19th century wore on the visits became less reverential and more curious.[140] The most articulate screed against what was happening in the basement of Old South was by north shore native Nathaniel Peabody Rodgers. Rodgers was the radical abolitionist newspaper editor of the *Herald of Freedom*, based in Concord, New Hampshire, and close friends with John Greenleaf Whittier and Henry David Thoreau. He could be characterized as a kind of transcendentalist Garrison. His prose was soaring in its description of nature, but biting in its description of people, especially if they did anything but their best for the "poor laborer" or slave. He was a devout Christian, but shared Garrison's disdain for churches, as either complicit in their silence over slavery, or as havens for proslavery sentiment. But for some reason he decided to tour Newburyport's meetinghouses anyways in a visit to the town in early September of 1841. He called the church buildings "godly pagodas…all shut as close as a clam-shell, or a miser's money-box, against the plea of perishing humanity." Rodgers'

[140] Cray, "Memorialization and Enshrinement," 359–60.

God was out-of-doors. Indoors was simply human contrivance, "hollow," the worship performed within nothing short of "heartless formalities performed there by ghostly superstition, and by orthodox gentility." When he visited Old South his ire was first directed at the cenotaph, funded by wealthy Newburyporter William Bartlett. He admitted that it was beautiful, but chaffed that such a thing would be erected at such an expense for the "memory of a pro-slavery divine." He read of Whitefield's achievements on the cenotaph, but wondered if in "all his voyages, and sermons" he ever "lead a single human soul to real repentance of sin, and reformation of *character* and *life."* Whitefield very well "might have excited thousands to be *religious*." But did he affect real change? The short answer was, "probably not." He then turned to the pulpit. He was told that Whitefield wanted to be buried there. "If he did, it was a weak ambition," he averred. His chances for "Paradise would not, I think, be enhanced by it." But what his burial under the pulpit *had* done was "win him the worship of many a devotee, who, in after-days, would seek entrance there, through faithful attendance in that temple of idolatry." Would he enter the temple? "I did not want to," he wrote at first, "but thought, as I was so nigh, it might be hardly tasteful to omit doing what others had gone pilgrimage to accomplish." So down he went. Whitefield's coffin was laid across the other two, with the lid of the coffin raised. He looked in, and felt the need to touch the "forehead bone." "It was cold enough," he reported. Did he expect it to be warm? [Figure 10]

> I would not indulge in any of the weak and unwarrantable associations common to such sights. Bones and ashes lay before me. They once belonged to fellow-men. They were therefore objects of more interest than if they had belonged to cattle…Vanity had sought that place for its bones, and vain superstition and idolatry had put them there. They were but bones now,--and the place was unfit for the stay of any bones that had consciousness annexed to them, and so I turned away from gazing, and sought the wholesome air above as speedily as possible, and the abodes of the *living*, the humbles of whom interests me far more than dead clergy. Some of Whitefield's bones were missing. Some

> eminently pious visitor had purloined them, and conveyed them away,--as amulets, perhaps, or tokens to show at the gates of Elysium.[141]

Rogers was shown the house where Whitefield had died. But he said the "very next house to the meeting-house was distinguished for an event far more interesting to humanity, than all that pertains to priests and their temples." For it was the house where William Lloyd Garrison was born. "I would have gladly sought admission to it," Rogers wrote, "to see where the Liberator passed his days of infancy and childhood." But "it was getting late."[142]

Rogers wrote with disdain, mockery, and disgust over the tomb and the surrounding body cult. But he was also drawn in. And though he claimed that Garrison's birth home interested him most, it didn't compel him to walk the few steps and knock on the door to ask for a tour. But the tomb below *did* draw him in, and entangled him in a matrix of practice and belief that he took every opportunity to name as idolatrous. But he was in it nonetheless, touching the white, bony forehead of Whitefield in the flickering dark.

It must be said that the body cult was highly destructive—in such a way that *did* violate contemporary broad Protestant ideas of the body and the bodily resurrection to come. Severing the skull from the spinal cord for meditation was unfortunate. (But it was never stolen, as some famous people's were). And taking the gown, bands, and collar for relics was odd, but it wouldn't get in the way of Whitefield's reanimation at the end of all time. But taking the bones? This was a collecting of a different kind. If Whitefield was to return to his corpse upon the return of Christ, as so many of his admirers believed, why did they remove his bones? These

[141] Nathaniel Peabody Rogers, *A Collection from the Miscellaneous Writings of Nathaniel Peabody Rogers.*, 2nd ed. (Manchester, NH: W. H. Fisk, 1849), 156–57.

[142] Ibid., 157. It is an odd coincidence that Garrison grew up right next to the church that Whitefield was buried in.

questions are particularly well directed at the incident of "Mr. Bolton" and his bone in a box, a story introduced at the beginning of this chapter.

Mr. Bolton was an English evangelical, known for being a "collector of curiosities," and a particular admirer of Whitefield. In fact, he may have been a correspondent of Whitefield's in the final years. He asked a friend who was visiting the Newburyport area if he could bring back a "small momento of the great preacher to add to his collection." So in due time a parcel arrived at his home in England. [Figure 11] Within the box, "to his horror," was the "main bone of the right arm of Mr. Whitefield, obtained from the vault in which he was buried." The most intriguing part of the story is that instead of sending it back right away, Bolton held on to the bone. In fact, it wasn't even a secret. One biographer of Whitefield saw the bone in England.

> A visitor in London invited me to see a curiosity, feeling sure to *gratify* me. He mistook my taste. I went, and he place on the table a long, narrow box, defying me to guess the contents. I said, 'It contains the right arm of George Whitefield, and I could *name* the thief and the receiver.'[143]

Upon Bolton's death it seems the family became ashamed of the bizarre family relic, and so they sent it back to the congregation in Newburyport. The box and the note attesting its authenticity are extant. As the opening anecdote to this chapter noted, the sitting minister, Jonathan Stearns, was elated. In 1837 the bone came back to Newburyport, along with a note attesting its provenance. And so a procession, reported at "two thousand" processed through the seaside town to place the arm bone back on Whitefield's body.[144]

At this point I should address the tomb encounters of all those who didn't leave records behind. And these are best documented in the gradual loss of bones, teeth, gown, wristbands,

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[143] J. B. (Joseph Beaumont) Wakeley and J. B. (Joseph Beaumont) Wakeley, *Anecdotes of the Rev. George Whitefield, M.A* (London : Hodder and Stoughton, 1872), 388, http://archive.org/details/anecdotesofwhite00wakeuoft.

[144] Ibid., 389.

and collar—in the iterative accounts of the body. But we have objects too. One of the most intriguing is at Drew University, a bone fragment given to the Methodist library through the collection of John Street Methodist Church in New York City. [Figure 12] The history of transmission goes cold there. There are a lot of reasons why an object like this would skirt analysis. It was illegal, for one.[145] But moving into the 20th century, this kind of relic collecting became even odder than it already was. But from the object itself we can learn some things about its collector. For one, the collector seems to have associated Whitefield most with Methodism—giving the fragment to the John Street Museum. The 19th century sources evince a divide between evangelical Methodists and Calvinists over which tradition Whitefield represented. The former lamented the divide with Wesley (and Whitefield's unrepentant Calvinism), but held up his role at the founding of Methodism and his preacher-on-horse itinerating of the Atlantic world. Calvinists, for their part, lifted up Whitefield for his revivalism, but also for his uncompromising commitment to divine election in the face of growing Arminian sentiment. The donor who possessed the fragment, chose the Methodist side for the donation. The fragment is, according to forensic experts, from the hand region, either the wrist or the hand. As Whitefield was buried with his arms along his sides, and typically displayed with the upper half of his body exposed, this suggests a reaching down into the coffin to obtain the relic. So the collecting was done below the field of vision, that is, in a way that skirted observation of the supervising sexton. Finally, the bone is untreated. Almost all osteological specimens in the 19th century were boiled, bleached, and labeled in paint. In bone form, human remains can get confusing. So direct labeling on the specimen was absolutely necessary to maintain provenance—especially if marshalled for study. Boiling and bleaching simply cleaned up the specimen, removing

[145] Edward Mussey Hartwell, "The Study of Anatomy, Historically and Legally Considered," *Journal of the American Social Science Association*, 11:13, 66-68.

inevitable mold and tissue remnants. But this bone demonstrates none of these conventions. This suggests a different relationship with the fragment. The collector had no need to identify the object among others (suggesting there wasn't a confusing array of bones in their collection), but also didn't feel compelled to clean the specimen from its detritus. These issues of material analysis become clearer, when we consider one of the best documented encounters with the corpse from the perspective of Boston Phrenologists.

The Religious Genius

In the 1830s, another cult following was emerging in New England that would soon find their way to Whitefield's body. This was Phrenology. Phrenological interest in America was directly related to the speaking tour of Johann Gaspar Spurzheim in 1832 and 1833. Much like Whitefield, Spurzheim was on the hunt for converts when he came to America in 1832. In fact, Spurzheim described phrenology as a set of "doctrines," and those who became convinced called themselves "converts," and the social implications of phrenology were cast as "good news" that would bring about a utopian transformation. Through a wide itinerancy throughout New England and the mid Atlantic—Spurzheim, like Whitefield, was met with large, adoring, and *paying* crowds. Even though Whitefield didn't have the same thirst for money like Spurzheim, they shared a dogged determination to reach as many people as possible, and satisfy the thirst of the masses to access their fame. This is what killed them both. A treatable "typhus fever" turned fatal when Spurzheim refused to slow down, accept "active medical treatment," and recuperate. Instead he continued to lecture, accepting all the invitations he could, and travel. But soon he was physically incapacitated, unable to leave his apartment and increasingly incoherent.[146] He

[146] Spurzheim's autopsy was attended by Oliver Wendell Holmes and John Collins Warren, and so we have a good physiological record of the state of his body. See "Death of Dr. Spurzheim," *Boston Medical and Surgical Journal*, November 14, 1832. "Remains of Dr. Spurzheim," *Boston Medical and Surgical Journal*, November 21, 1832. His symptoms were consistent with modern medical understanding of the course of typhoid fever, a bacterial infection

died in Boston, out of his mind, in the presence of his new admirers. Spurzheim provided the Boston Phrenological Society with its very first skull specimen—his *own* (which you can see at the Warren Anatomical Museum). Multiple "busts" were made as well, cast from his face.

Phrenologists across the Atlantic world were interested in the poles of human existence—genius on the one hand, and criminality and insanity on the other. From a transatlantic perspective, America offered lots of chances to study the insane and the criminal. One aspiring Phrenological society in Hartford Connecticut, tried to convince the Boston society to support the fledgling society by highlighting Hartford's ideal location for Phrenological endeavors due to its proximity to the state prison and insane asylum.[147] But genius? In America that was a problem, not only because of the dearth of people accepted as geniuses in Europe, but also because disturbing non-criminal remains was patently illegal. There were the Founding Fathers, most notably Benjamin Franklin—who could command international esteem. But more or less these corpses were untouched. Phrenologists used the extensive portraiture and sculpture of these men to pronounce on their genius. When Spurzheim died, the Boston phrenologists had a genius fall into their lap—and eagerly took advantage of the opportunity—performing an autopsy, analyzing the corpse, taking specimens (like his heart and lungs), and finally depositing the headless, heartless corpse in a Roman revival tomb at Mount Auburn Cemetery. The Boston Phrenological Society would a few months later dispatch their young skull caster, Nathan

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contracted through poor sanitation of food—normally because the food was exposed to animal feces. His contemporaries thought the disease was "contracted by occasional exposure to the cold night air after being much heated at his lectures." Whereas the subsequent autopsy marveled at the size of his brain—one of the symptoms of typhoid fever is encephalitis—swelling of the brain. This gave the impression, not only of a large brain, but one pressed tight against the skull wall—confirming a central claim of Phrenologists of the direct relationship of the skull to the shape of the brain. Typhoid Fever information per "Typhus Fever," *Up To Date.* Accessed November 21, 2014, Countway Medical Library, Harvard Medical School.

[147] Amariah Brigham, "Amariah Brigham to Nahum Capen," July 11, 1833, Countway Library of Medicine Special Collections.

Shurtleff, north to Newburyport to cast the skull of another kind of genius, with an even wider, albeit historical, Atlantic appeal—George Whitefield.

Shurtleff had spent most of his casting career chasing the heads of condemned New England criminals, and making unsavory trips to insane asylums.[148] And when he was dispatched by the committee in the summer of 1833 to head to Newburyport to cast the skull—he had been given a task more momentous than any of his previous work. And he acted like it. He kept close notes of the encounter with the body, since the Boston phrenologists anticipated that the provenance of the cast would be questioned by their English counterparts. At the "porch" of the pulpit of the church (the landing before the stairs up to the pulpit), he found a small, two foot square trapdoor, which opened up to a space three feet below to where brick-lined crypt lay, normally locked behind a metal door. There he found three coffins, all painted red. On the right was the first pastor—Jonathan Parsons, in the middle George Whitefield, and on the left Rev. Joseph Prince. The lids were designed so that upon opening one could see the "upper third part of the relics," and on the inside of the lid, painted in black letters, were the name, and the age and day of death of each person. Whitefield's coffin read: "REV. GEORGE WHITEFIELD DIED SEPT. 30TH, 1770, AGED 56 YEARS." Shurtleff noted that Parsons and Whitefield were in "a very good state of preservation," but Prince was "rather worse." His, "first object was to ascertain the authenticity of the bones and other remains, said to have been once his," and one of the reasons was that when he opened Whitefield' casket, he could immediately see that the body had been disturbed. Not only had the "skull…been robbed of every tooth, probably by visitors, for relics," he said, but the skull was also "lying at the head of the coffin in a manner which indicated at once that it had been removed." So with some forensic investigation, he matched the nature of

[148] Nathaniel Bradstreet Shurtleff, "Nathaniel Shurtleff to Nahum Capen," September 4, 1833, Countway Library of Medicine Special Collections.

the mold and decomposed skin on the skull with the rest of the body, as well as matched the spine to where it had been severed on the skull, and he concluded, he stated, that the "surfaces were found to agree perfectly."[149] It was Whitefield. So Shurtleff, hunched over in the three foot space, carefully scrapped off the mold and decomposed soft tissue from the skull, washed it, prepared his plaster, pushed it tight around the head, and waited in the quiet for it to set.[150] He never mentioned this in his subsequent report to the Phrenological Society, but Shurtleff, perhaps when he was waiting for the plaster to dry, or when his companion from the church left him alone, reached down into the coffin, where the lid occluded the view, and plucked off Whitefield's right, seventh rib. This would be his relic. Or would it be someone else's? [Figure 14]

The rib, like the Drew bone fragment, was (and is) unwashed, and untreated. But the context is different. The rib immediately fell into the collection of the Boston Phrenological Society, whose collection was bought in 1849 by John Collins Warren, the dean of Harvard Medical School and a founder of Massachusetts General Hospital. It is hard to know why Shurtleff gave the rib to the society, as it is of no phrenological value whatsoever. And it was treated differently than the rest of the osteological collection of the society. Once again, it was neither boiled nor bleached. But the labeling method is also suggestive. Instead of painting the label and number directly on the rib, some unknown individual took some fine leather (similar to

[149] Nathaniel Bradstreet Shurtleff, "Nathaniel B. Shurtleff to William B. Fowle, Friday, August 2, 1833," in *Scientific Tracts and Family Lyceum, Designed for Instruction and Entertainment, and Adapted to Schools, Lyceums and Families*, ed. Jerome V. C. Smith, vol. 1 (Boston: Allen and Ticknor, 1834), 362–65.-

[150] Shurtleff, "Nathaniel B. Shurtleff to William B. Fowle, Friday, August 2, 1833." We know a lot about Shurtleff's method because he wrote skull casting manuals. Nathaniel Bradstreet Shurtleff, *A Description of the Method of Moulding and Casting Heads, Masks, Medallions, Etc.* (Boston: Marsh, Capen & Lyon, 1833). I've begun to work with casting, following Shurtleff's manual. The inspiration for doing this comes from, Pamela H. Smith, "In the Workshop of History: Making, Writing, and Meaning," *West 86th* 19, no. 1 (March 1, 2012): 4–31, doi:10.1086/665680.

the kind used to bind books), wrote the label in ink, and hand sewed it tight around the rib. This way of handling the bone fragment suggests a more sacred treatment, but also a collectivity of scientists whose interests were synchronizing with Whitefield's other grave visitors.

The society hoped to surprise, test, and impress their European Phrenological brethren with the cast of Whitefield's skull. When they sent a copy to the London Phrenological Society, they asked for a blind review. If the English Phrenologists could give an accurate reading of Whitefield without knowing his identity, then Phrenology had been vindicated by "nature."[151] There is no record of what the English phrenologists wrote to the Boston group—but given the silence, there is reason to think that the blind review failed.[152] But the Boston Phrenologists had already performed their own preemptive Phrenological reading, which they related to the church:

Perhaps it will interest you to know that those of us who have studied the character of Whitefield, and compared it with his skull, find so great a coincidence that our belief in Phrenology is much strengthened. By placing the skull in a natural position, & drawing a vertical line from the orifice of the car to the top of the head, you will find, what you rarely find in the head of a great and good man, that the larger part of the brain falls behind the ear. This indicates more feeling than intellect; and is not this the key to his wonderful power over others?[153]

After all of these years, Whitefield was still making converts.

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[151] William B. Fowle, "William B. Fowle to Moses Pettingill, Paul Stinsen & John Cushing Esq., Committee of the First Presbyterian Church, Newburyport," January 5, 1834, Old South Presbyterian Church Newburyport Archive.

[152] The reasons for thinking this is that the Boston Phrenologists printed every single positive vindication of Phrenology they could get their hands on, and they were extremely prolific printers. And they didn't print anything about the English response. We do know, however, that the English phrenologists did question the cast—which suggests that their reading of the skull didn't align with their understanding of Whitefield as a person. And that a paper was read by William Fowle on the London and Edinburgh opinions of the Whitefield cast. Nahum Capen, *Annals of Phrenology* (Marsh, Capen & Lyon., 1835), 505.

[153] Fowle, "William B. Fowle to Moses Pettingill, Paul Stinsen & John Cushing Esq., Committee of the First Presbyterian Church, Newburyport."

In thanks to the Old South Presbyterian Church, William Fowle, the President of the Boston Phrenological Society sent a messenger up to Newburyport with a letter in his pocket, and two objects in his bags. The first was a promised copy of the skull cast, finely painted in gratitude to the church. This made the cast more attractive, realistic, durable, and easy to clean. But they had also cast another thank-you object, and that was a Bible. We don't have any records about the decision to cast the Good Book. But Fowle, and the Church, probably didn't need an explanation. The Newburyport church had been giving access for the curious devotees of Whitefield's memory to pour over his body—raise the skull, collect relics, weep, pray, and meditate. And all of this devotional energy was patently, to put it in period parlance, "Papist." And the rest was, in so many people's opinion, transgressive. And even if they didn't acknowledge it in church documents—they knew it. In part because local Newburyport residents were reminding them. But the church persisted in supporting the cult. When the church space was reoriented in 1829, the church insisted on reinstalling Whitefield in a new brick-lined crypt underneath the new pulpit. And they paid for multiple, new mahogany coffins to be made for Whitefield's body (even when Mahogany was becoming cost-prohibitive for coffin making), to uphold the material of his original genteel burial. But unlike the original, the subsequent coffins were made with convenient hinges to assist the viewing, and at one point, a glass viewing window. A gas light was even installed in the 1830s.[154] Whitefield was a very special dead

[154] Coffin receipts are dated, "1793 March 16," "December 18th, 1816." Old South Archive. Old South Presbyterian Church Newburyport, MA. Jonathan F. (Jonathan French) Stearns 1808-1889., *A Historical Discourse, Commemorative of the Organization of the First Presbyterian Church, in Newburyport: Delivered at the First Centennial Celebration, Jan. 7, 1846* (Newburyport [Mass.]: John G. Tilton, 1846), 23~. The class viewing window probably was devised in a ca. 1840 coffin, after Bolton's bone was returned to the body, and security concerns were raised. See Jonathan French Stearns, *Centennial Commemoration on the Death of George Whitefield in the Old South Church, Newburyport, Massachusetts*, n.d. Whereas mahogany had been used to make coffins in the 18th century for genteel bodies, it became cost prohibitive in the 19th century as mahogany forests were decimated by the demand for the fine wood. Jennifer L. Anderson, *Mahogany : The Costs of Luxury in Early America* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 2012), 89.

person. His presence underneath the pulpit seemed to transform nearly everything he had touched in the church, and as a result, these object were made his own. The 18th century pulpit and the Geneva Bible chained to it became "Whitefield's," the church even kept the chair he died in, and the rings from his hands. These secondary relics were exhibited on special occasions, to mark the man who had made the place. And so the material conditions of the cult were sustained, making access not only easier, but modern. Despite the complaints and the aspersions, and the anxieties they engendered, the church forged ahead in nurturing the cult that surrounded their church. [Figure 13]

The gift of the cast skull and the Bible were pendant compositions—made of the same plaster, painted with the same paint. And by casting them together as a gift, the Boston phrenologists were not only being gracious but also joining a gap—between them and the devout of the church. The church had been sustaining a body cult, but had endured accusations of idolatry and fetishism. And Phrenologists had spent decades trying to convince Christians that their approach to the material mind didn't violate the special status of human beings as created in God's image. Devotion has its anxieties. It is a practice of directed affect that is scaffolded by ideas—the ideas and emotions are sometimes at odds. And seeing the Bible with the skull together could calm the anxieties of both parties. The pendant castings were the ultimate objects of devotion, the Bible for Protestant devotion, and the skull for the Phrenologists—brought together in common material, paint, and color. Both promised truth and knowledge. In the crypt the readability of the cast Bible and the skull was displaced. In the crypt it was about material encounter—not *reading*. It was about the body, and the knowledge it affords. They were supposed to apprehend the sculpted Bible—the centerpiece of all Protestant piety—and the copy of the skull of the holy man *together*. The *true* body, where "nature" would vindicate

Phrenology, and the *true Word,* and the word alone—the rallying cry of the Reformation—*sola scriptura*—through which God was revealed, and called sinners. But the dual compositions also effaced the destruction required to produce them. Shurtleff had to prepare the skull according to casting protocol, which meant removing any detritus besides the pure bone. And in order to make a cast Bible, they had to pour plaster over the Holy book—ruining it in the process.[155] But the objects begged to be displayed together, and when they were, skull on top of Bible, a coherence was cast. The cult of genius, activated through the methodology of science, could live in harmony with the practice of piety, directed at a Protestant saint's corpse. This harmony was trotted out in the subsequent years as Phrenologists across the world began to purchase copies of the cast for their collections. Here the cast of George Whitefield was hawked in the "miscellaneous" crania category, next to Robert Burns and Pepe the Pirate. [Figure 15] And this common core of casts allowed Phrenologists from across the world to exchange ideas over a common core of bodies and pronounce on the mind. Whitefield became the token religious offering, a type specimen of religiosity.

Most phrenologists were Protestants, it should be noted, and in Whitefield they had the perfect specimen over which to ask a multitude of questions about religion and the mind, especially as it related to the awakenings. [Figure 16] For example, what Phrenological "organs" were involved in religious belief? Was it one, or many? The answer was many.[156] Could Phrenology answer why some individuals were religious, some irreligious, and account for those

[155] It is clear the cast was made from a real book, but it isn't certain that it was a Bible. They etched "Holy Bible" into the plaster after the casting. At any rate, casting books is *very* destructive to them—rendering them useless. (I've done this). See note 150.

[156] The organs commonly associated with religious belief were veneration, ideality, benevolence, conscientiousness, hope, and accountability, sometimes also attachment—an organ understood to be larger in women, explaining why they bonded so readily with their children, and why there were more religious than men. "Lectures on Phrenology," *The American Quarterly Register* (Perkins & Marvin, 1835), 148. On women and attachment, see Silas Jones, *Practical Phrenology* (Russell, Shattuck, & Williams, 1836).

who wavered? Could it explain degrees of piety? Could an exceptionally religious person be intuited from shape of their head? The emerging literature had answers, in the affirmative, for all of these questions. But most professional Phrenologists weren't evangelical, so they often picked up Whitefield's skull cast looking for an answer to another religious question—could they find the source of historical "enthusiasm" by reading the lines of Whitefield's mind—the progenitor of modern religious excess? Did the bumps on his skull have any relationship to the bodily ecstasies that had followed in his wake? His incredible ability to paint the world religious was not complicated, they concluded. Look at the skull. His religious regions bulged with answers.[157]

Conclusion

Sometime in the early 1870s, John Greenleaf Whittier was commissioned to write a poem about Newburyport for Henry Wadsworth Longfellow's massive *Poems of Places* project. Whittier was a North Shore native, and was clearly familiar with the body cult. And so for his poem about Newburyport, he chose to write about Whitefield, "The Preacher." The poem begins by setting the maritime scene, of "The ghostly sails that out at sea / Flapped their white wings of mystery," bounded by "glimmering beaches" and "low wooded capes." But Whittier soon turns his reader's gaze to the "The steeples with their veering vanes!"

> Over gray roofs, a shaft of fire;
> What is it, pray?" "The Whitefield Church!
> Walled about by its basement stones,
> There rest the marvellous prophet's bones."
> Then as our homeward way we walked,
> Of the great preacher's life we talked;
> And through the mystery of our theme
> The outward glory seemed to stream,

[157] A few sources, among many, that address some of these questions are, Joseph Bunney, *Christian Phrenology: A Guide to Self-Knowledge*, Second Edition (London? A. Drewett and Co., 1839); Nathaniel Bradstreet Shurtleff, *An Epitome of Phrenology : Being an Outline of the Science as Taught by Gall, Spurzheim and Combe: To Accompany a Chart Delineated according to This System, or the Marked Bust Approved by Dr. Spurzheim.* (Boston: Marsh, Capen & Lyon, 1835).

And in imagining Whitefield's life, Whittier remembers how Whitefield's presence was so powerful in calling out sin, he "touched the shadows of our blame / With tongues of Penecostal flame" (evoking the arrival of the Holy Spirit in Acts in the New Testament). But that was the past. Now, "Under the church of Federal Street / Under the tread of its Sabbath feet / Walled about by its basement stones, Lie the marvelous preacher's bones." Don't worry, Whittier assures his reader, "No saintly honors to them are shown / No sign or miracle have they known." But even if Whittier assures his readers that Whitefield's corpse is inert, and that Protestant boundaries had not been crossed, he allows that Whitefield's presence in Newburyport is still active. The corpse's prototype haunts the town with his message, "His voice of warning yet eloquent," reminding travelers of the folly of fashion and of trade. His life in comparison was one of "pure intent," Whittier observes. What of yours? He asks. A hundred years after he died in Newburyport, his presence was still palpable, even for Whittier, animating lives to meditate on Whitfield's life, to face their own sin, and live better. "Precious beyond the world's renown / His memory hallows the ancient town!" [158] But it was not his memory that made Newburyport sacred, it was the body. Otherwise the memories of Whitefield would have evaporated as quickly as a morning Merrimac River fog.

[158] Henry Wadsworth Longfellow and John Greenleaf Whittier, eds., "New England: Newburyport, Mass. The Preacher," in *Poems of Places: America. New England*, vol. XXV–XXIX (Boston: Houghton, Osgood, 1879).

CHAPTER 3: THE VICTIM: JANE MCCREA'S ELUSIVE BODY MADE SACRED, 1777-1852

> A long-hair'd scalp adorns that heavenly head;
> And comes the sacred spoil from friend or foe,
> No marks distinguish and no man can know.
> With calculating pause and demon grin.
> They seize her hands and thro her face divine
> Drive the descending ax."
>
> Joel Barlow, 1805

In 1781, the French Major General François Jean Chastellux travelled to Fort Edward, New York to see the sights of the Revolutionary war in the upper Hudson Valley. Chastellux had fought in the war, and was particularly drawn to one place, Fort Edward. Although Fort Edward was "so spoken of in Europe," when Chastellux arrived he found it nothing much more than a "wretched palisade." The reason why this rough settlement had become the talk of Europe was primarily because of the death of one woman, Jane McCrea, who was famously killed, scalped, and her corpse abandoned just outside Fort Edward. She had been accidentally killed by Ottawa warriors fighting for a British invading force seeking to split the colonies in two in the summer of 1777. The war was still under way in the summer 1781—but Fort Edward was far from the action. As Chastellux made his way along the banks of the Hudson to Fort Edward, a guide pointed out to him the home "of the Unfortunate *Miss Mac Rea*." If the "whigs were superstitious," Chastellux averred, "they would attribute this event," her death at British contracted Indian fighters, "to divine vengeance." The reason he gave was that "the parents of Miss Mac Rea were Whigs," but she had reneged on "the sentiments with which they had inspired her" after becoming involved with "an English officer at New-York," leading her to espouse the "interests of England."[159] For Chastellux, the story of of Jane McCrea was tragic,

[159] François Jean Chastellux, *Travels in North-America, in the Years 1780, 1781, and 1782* (London: G.G. J. and J. Robinson, 1787), 417–20.

worthy of the "theater" or an "elegy." He blamed her fiancé David Jones, who had induced Jane to forsake her "virtue and patriotism." Reflecting on her death, he was led to "deplore the miseries of war."[160] Writing a few years after her death, Chasstelux was already setting Jane McCrea in a sacred frame, elevating her singular death to explain a large, complicated conflict, in which religious ideas helped make her death sensible. He found meaning in the death, that he suggested might have a divine purpose for the "superstitious."

Many historians in the past two and a half hundred years have written about Jane McCrea.[161] In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, writers used her death to explain British Lieutenant-General John Burgoyne's defeat at the battle of Saratoga by Continental forces, an important victory which led to the subsequent Continental alliance with the French.[162] In contrast, modern historians have been reluctant to afford causational value to a story dripping with Anglo-American sentimentalism.[163] Perhaps believing that a romanticized death could turn

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[160] Ibid., 419–20.

[161] David Ramsay, *The History of the American Revolution* (Philadelphia : Printed and sold by R. Aitken & son, 1789), 37; Mercy Otis Warren, *History of the Rise, Progress, and Termination of the American Revolution. Interspersed with Biographical, Political and Moral Observations*, vol. 2 (Boston: Printed by Manning and Loring, For E. Larkin, No. 47, Cornhill, 1805), 25; George Bancroft, *History of the United States of America, from the Discovery of the Continent [to 1789]*, Thoroughly Revised Edition (Boston: Little, Brown, and Company, 1879), Vol. V, pp. 579–580. A thorough bibliography of histories of Jane McCrea was published in James Austin Holden, "Influence of Death of Jane McCrea on Burgoyne Campaign," *Proceedings of the New York State Historical Association* 12 (January 1, 1913): 297–310.

[162] Three modern examples might suffice, Robert Middlekauf's massive history of the American Revolution for the venerable Oxford History of the United States doesn't mention McCrea at all, even in the context of the Battle of Saratoga and the events leading up to the alliance with France. The same goes for Maya Jassanoff's excellent history of Loyalists in the greater Atlantic world (McCrea's loyalist family dispersed back to the British Isles to fine governmental positions). Alan Taylor's equally wonderful history of the "divided ground" of borderlands New York also doesn't take up Jane either, despite a concern with the tension that scalping and Indian killings created in the region.

[163] Two modern histories are the exception. Namias's *White Captives* looks at Jane through the lens of captivity narratives and sentimental fiction as a commentary on perils of female choice outside the bounds of patriarchal authority in the late 18th century. Ketchum's *Saratoga* is a "popular" military history, but he exhaustively read soldiers manuscript diaries and gives Jane's story considerable weight. June Namias, *White Captives: Gender and Ethnicity on the American Frontier* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1993); Richard M. Ketchum, *Saratoga: Turning Point of America's Revolutionary War*, 1st ed. (New York: H. Holt, 1997). Jay Fliegelman also gives Jane McCrea's death considerable causational effect, but he is most interested in the story's role in uncovering

the tide of war seemed far-fetched for these writers. But it was the sentimentalism that gave her story power. Although the details of her story were elusive, those who employed it were sure of several things. She was innocent. She was killed. And her death saved her people. A woman associated with the "tory" cause through her impending marriage was betrayed. Her er brutal death and scalping condemned imperial sovereignty that was charged with her protection, and with remarkable rapidity and economy inspired a vast numbers of people to question British conduct of the war. Her martyrdom [inspired? gave birth to? enlivened?] an emergent body politic.

The Scotch-Irish Protestant immigrants who settled in the Hudson Valley were well educated in the politics of martyrdom; they inculcated a robust culture that allowed for Jane McCrea, an otherwise ordinary Scots-Irish Presbyterian woman on the outskirts of English settlement, to be elevated as a martyr to the community. Therefore, her singular bodily death was set apart from the many deaths during Burgoyne's campaign, her (unwilling) sacrifice lifted up. In so many ways her death was not special. People, indeed women, were being killed by advancing Indian and British fighters throughout Hudson valley during Burgoyne's military campaign of 1777. In fact, the day before her death an entire family was killed, scalped, and left in the open, in nearby Argyle—men, women and children. But her death, the singular death, became a fragment that explained a whole; a death with a sparse eulogy that demanded to be

attitudes concerning patriarchal parenthood (or the dereliction thereof) than the story itself. Jay Fliegelman, *Prodigals and Pilgrims: The American Revolution Against Patriarchal Authority, 1750-1800* (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1982), 136–40. Unlike these historians, however, I don't think the story is exclusively a narrative about women staying under the control of their parents because, at the time, Jane McCrea had none, and period sources don't blame her brother, who would have been her acting patriarch. The story is amazingly flexible, but, as you will see, I think it is more about politics, sexual intrigue, and war with Indians in the middle ground. Fairfax Downey, the military historian, noted that the image of Jane McCrea's scalp "in the minds of men was one of the most compelling stimulants to recruiting the American army had ever known." Fairfax Downey, *Indian Wars of the U.s. Army, 1776-1865.* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1963), 11. In other words, that relic of sorts, was powerful indeed.

filled in. In the space between fact and unknowing, imaginations roamed, which soon turned to mechanisms to raise her body to the sight of readers and viewers alike. For it was her victimized body that did the political work, enabled by sacralizing mechanisms understood by a broadly Protestant Anglo-American public. In the eighteenth- and nineteenth-centuries her body was visualized through the visual tradition of martyrdom imagery, and later, ironically, Counter-Reformation devotional painting. In poetry and image, Jane McCrea was made into an amalgam of the Virgin Mary, Christ, and, more broadly, a female martyred saint.

Protestant Migrants on the Edge of Indian Country

Jane McCrea was almost immediately marked as a Protestant body by those close to her death, and across the Atlantic World. The reasons were due to both her biography and her community along the banks of the Hudson River north of Albany. Many of the people who settled in the Fort Edward area had been connected to the region through French and Indian War; they were predominately Scots-Irish veterans who were granted land, and brought their families with them. These veterans, who fought on the British side, had been at the forefront of Catholic power and Protestant power colliding, the French and Catholic-influenced Indians, versus, in that region, Scots-Irish Protestants. Jane McCrea was a recent transplant. She was born and raised in New Jersey, in the home of a Scottish mother and a father born in Ulster County, New York to a family of, once again, Scots-Irish immigrants. James McCrea, Jane's father, chose the ministry, and soon moved to New Jersey where he trained under Gilbert Tennet at the "Log College," the center of "new side" Presbyterianism. He was called to Lamington, New Jersey to serve a growing Scots-Irish Presbyterian émigré community seeking to escape the strictures of British mercantile policy, the Anglican establishment, and native Irish reprisal in Ulster. Jane's mother

died when Jane was a year old; her father remarried an Irish woman in his Protestant congregation.

Later recollections embellished scenes in New Jersey, where Jane would peruse her father's library of divinity between her prayers, active in the local congregations.[164] When Jane McCrea's father died in 1769, she moved northward to New York, first to Albany, and then Fort Edward, living in the household of her brother John. Her adopted home was new, and rough, but full of familiar faces. People from her community in New Jersey moved together to the area, a gathering of Scottish and Scots Irish people intermingled with Huguenot settlers—a collectivity of Protestant migrants from around the Atlantic world. Jane had met a young man named David Jones in Lamington, where they both grew up. As the families moved northward, the connection persisted. Jane and David Jones seemed to be moving towards marriage. Then the war came.[165] Her fiancé went to Canada to be commissioned as an officer in the army sent in 1777 to divide the American Colonies, headed by Lieutenant-General John Burgoyne. Most of the men in Jane McCrea's family, however, were sympathetic to the Continental side. Her brother John, in whose household she lived, became a Colonel in the Continental force in the region under General Horatio Gates, and her brothers Samuel and Stephen fought as both a soldier and a field surgeon. Her brothers Creighton and Robert followed David Jones north and fought with the Queens Rangers under British command.[166] While her community was united in the sense of being

[164] Austin H. Holden, "Holden Jane McCrea Scrapbook" n.d., Folklife Center, Crandall Public Library, Glens Falls, New York. A.M. McD[onald], "Jane McCrea," *New York Evangelist,* May 6, 1897.

[165] Henry Race, "A Historical Sketch of Miss Jane McCrea," in *Proceedings of the New Jersey Historical Society*, vol. IX, Nos. 1 and 2, Second Series (Newark, NJ, 1886), 96–98. Race pulled all of the local New Jersey genealogical records to reconstruct Jane's early life as much as possible, including scouring the Presbyterian records. Jane's parents location of birth and her probably birth date were found using records digitized on Ancestry.com. On the ethnicity of the settlers in the towns around Fort Edward—particularly from Ulster—see R. J. Dickson, *Ulster Emigration to Colonial America, 1718-1775* (Belfast: Ulster Historical Foundation, 1988, 1988).

[166] Race, "A Historical Sketch of Miss Jane McCrea," 99.

predominately Protestant migrants, it was surely divided over the war. It was understood that the "loyalist" Indians of the Six Nations, the Mohawk, Seneca, Onondaga and Cayuga, would join (the Tuscarora and the Oneida sided with the Continental side). But Burgoyne's "secret" weapon would appeal to Indian nations from north of Lake Ontario, the *pays d'en haut*—the Fox, Mississauga, Chippewa, and Ottawa—nations who had historically opposed the British, but also had been known as Catholic. After the war, when Burgoyne was summoned to parliament to explain his later surrender, this connection was made directly. Not only had the British treasury paid for settler's scalps, but also the tomahawks and knives used to remove them. But even more shocking to one bishop in the House of Lords was that they had also paid for the purchase of crucifixes for the Indians of the *pays d'en haut*. A "shocking assemblage!"—he exclaimed.[167] The military contracted a French agent St. Luc de la Corne, who had 66 years of experience leading these fighters for the French against the British.[168] The problem was that Burgoyne had next to no control of the Indian fighters—most of all the Ottawa. Burgoyne paid for scalps, and even more for prisoners. But most of the fighters were there, not to defeat the "parricides of the state," as Burgoyne stated it, but to loot settlements and collect scalps. For the predominately young Ottawa men who came south, they sought objects of value that would help them rise at home, especially textiles, weapons, silver, and scalps. In a matriarchal society, admission to the households of Ottawa women was dependent on being able to secure valuable

[167] Dialogue reprinted in Benson John Lossing, *The Pictorial Field-Book of the Revolution: Or, Illustrations, by Pen and Pencil, of the History, Biography, Scenery, Relics, and Traditions of the War for Independence*, vol. I (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1860), 84–85.

[168] Ketchum, *Saratoga*, 95–98. A purely military reading of the campaign can be found in Robert Middlekauff, *The Glorious Cause: The American Revolution, 1763-1789*, Rev. and expanded ed., Oxford History of the United States ; v. 3 (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), 373–85.

goods and demonstrate prowess as a warrior.[169] For these men there was no loyalty to the Crown, just opportunity.

There was one, seemingly authentic, letter from David Jones to Jane, written from Fort Ticonderoga after the British seizure of the fort. "Through God's mercy," wrote Jones, "I escaped destruction, and am now well." Jones wrote that the "rebels cannot recover from the blow yt [sic] has been struck, and no doubt the war will no soon end. Such should be the prayer of all of us." Jones hopes that he is remembered by Jane "as formerly," and assures "Dear Jenny," that he has not forgotten her, "though there is much to distract in these days." In the days to come he tells her that they will march to Fort Edward, and although he heard that the "people on the river" are evacuating to Albany, he hopes Jane will not go with her brother John, but instead stay at "Mrs. McNeils."[170] Jane did this. Her brother, John, evacuated the rest of his family to Albany, while Jane went to stay with Sarah McNeil, a wealthy Scottish widow in the area. McNeil was a well-known sympathizer with the advancing British force. Her cousin, Simon Fraser, was a senior officer in Burgoyne's advancing force, and it was an open secret that she had been sending him information on Continental militia movements. Her home should have been a safe haven. After all, Burgoyne had stipulated that,"Aged men, women, children, and prisoners," were to be "held sacred from the knife or hatchet, even in time of actual conflict." [171]

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[169] Andrew J. Blackbird, *History of the Ottawa and Chippewa Indians of Michigan* (Ypsilantian job printing house, 1887), 81.

[170] There were a few manuscript letters found in the 19th century, one appears to be manufactured from a memory of a manuscript version. The second appears authentic. Race, "A Historical Sketch of Miss Jane McCrea," 99–100. The two letter's authenticity is discussed at length in William H. Hill, ed., *Addenda: Part Two. Old Fort Edward Before 1800* (Fort Edward, N.Y.: Honeywood Press, 1957), 25–27. Robert O. Bascom, *The Fort Edward Book, Containing Some Historical Sketches, with Illustrations, and Family Records.* (Fort Edward, NY: J.D. Keating, 1903), 67. Bascom notes that although the first letter seems to be manufactured, there were young men in the community who had delivered letters from Jones to McCrea during the period. Hill's notes in the *Addenda* corroborated the second letter, which I quote from above and had been printed in 19th century newspapers. Given the rage for finding any relic of Jane, it is not surprising that a letter was found, and that one had been manufactured from supposed memory.

The first raiding parties advanced on picket guard a mile north of Fort Edward and killed nine of the militia. When reinforcements came to relieve them, they were shocked to find naked, mutilated, and dismembered bodies—their scalps removed from their bodies for payment and relics of triumph to take back to Canada. Nearby a local farmer, John Allen, was in his field harvesting wheat when another raiding party shot, killed and dismembered him, his children, and an enslaved woman who was helping with the children. The evidence of the initial raid was marked in fragmented bodies. Lieutenant Van Vechten, the commanding officer of the picket guard, was killed and scalped with other members of his picket guard on a hill half a mile from Fort Edward, after which the remnants of the scared militia retreated to the dilapidated ruins of Fort Edward. Some Indian fighters were sent expressly to retrieve Jane and Sarah McNeil from their home amidst this chaos.[172] On Saturday, July 26, 1777, Jane and Sarah McNeil were in Sarah's wood-planked home waiting for British forces to come to them, along with an African woman named Betty (McNeil's slave) and her young son. They heard the raiding party coming, and tried to hide in the cellar—Betty and her son hid upstairs (which saved their lives). As the Indians approached the house McNeil and McCrea were seen descending to the cellar, and were promptly drug out by the hair. The Indian fighters looted the house, taking a silver mirror with them, clothes, and McNeil's horse. McNeil was too heavy to lift up on the horse, so Jane McCrea was put on top. At some point the group of Indians who captured the two women were separated. McNeil was taken successfully into the British camp, where she arrived nearly naked, a combination of her clothes being taken as loot by the raiding party and torn by the dense brush

[171] "Substance of the Speech of Lieutenant-General Burgoyne to the Indians in Congress, at the Camp upon the River Bouquet, June 21, 1777, and Their Answer," *Gentleman's Magazine* 48 (b 1778): 122–23.

[172] Ketchum, *Saratoga*.

on her way to the British encampment. Indian parties returned en masse, parading the scalps they collected, and piling them up for payment.[173]

As for Jane McCrea, there were a few purported eyewitnesses who saw what had happened. And yet even among these persons, her body, and the manner of its death, was elusive. One was Albert Baker, a local farmer who, after evacuating his family tried to return to his farm to check on things. He claimed he saw Jane shot from a horse from the ramparts of Fort Edward, almost a half mile away, which is quite distant. He also noted that he saw her corpse once it was retrieved. But the closest to the action was Samuel Standish, (a descendent of Miles Standish). Standish had been part of Van Vechten's picket guard, but had been badly wounded, and was left by a nearby spring until the Indians could bring him as a prisoner to the British camp to collect their reward. It was there that Standish saw Jane coming up a hill with a group of Indians. There they intersected with another group, it seems, of Ottawa fighters. An argument ensued and escalated, with the warriors fighting over who would bring Jane into camp and collect the reward. One of the Ottawa turned and shot Jane in the chest to end the fight, immediately scalped her, and lifted her scalp in the air.[174]

Burgoyne heard of what had happened that night. Period sources claimed that a set of Regulars witnessed the killing, so this is probably how the word got back to him—but the particulars were, once again, elusive. Burgoyne immediately wrote to Simon Fraser to assemble the Indian warriors: "The news I have just received of the savages having scalped a young lady, their prisoner, fills me with horror." McNeil and Jones supposedly recognized Jane's scalp as it

[173] Hill, *Addenda: Part Two. Old Fort Edward Before 1800*, 15–20.

[174] Holden, "Influence of Death of Jane McCrea on Burgoyne Campaign," 266; Race, "A Historical Sketch of Miss Jane McCrea," 101–2; From Sparks' Life of Arnold, "Miscellaneous: The Tragical Death of Jane McCrea," *Jeffersonian*, July 6, 1835; Bascom, *The Fort Edward Book, Containing Some Historical Sketches, with Illustrations, and Family Records.*, 51–52.

was piled up for compensation. Fraser assembled the warriors, but soon realized that Burgoyne sought to execute the murderer. Fraser, and St. Luc, the chief communicator with the Indian fighters, worried that executing the purportedly "young" Ottawa fighter responsible would led to mass defections back to Canada, including the raiding of settlements all the way home. Burgoyne had a choice to make. Execute McCrea's killer and lose allies he could not control, or pardon the warrior and keep the tenuous alliance intact. The military decision prevailed. But it was a mistake. The Indian fighters were eager to return to their villages anyways to help with the fall harvest. And a couple weeks later most of his fighters had returned to Canada.[175]

Setting Jane McCrea Apart

Word of the massacres began to spread, and nearly every report focused on Jane McCrea. And here the process of *setting apart* her story from the many began. An early letter mentioned a laundry list of deaths, predominately in military terms: "Lieut. Van Vechten, was most inhumanely butchered and scalped. Two sarjeants and two privates were likewise killed and scalped, of the latter had both his hands cut off." But Jane took the narrative center: "They took a young woman, Janey McCrea, by name, out of a house at Fort Edward, carried her about a half a mile into the bushes, and there killed and scalped her in cold blood."[176] Another written from Albany worked in a similar way, noting that the "Indians daily scalp men, women, and children," but focused on the moment when "Miss McCrea was butchered and scalped." The early letters also stressed that a large number of British Regulars were but a "little distance, spectators to the Horrid act," but did nothing.[177] One letter from Snook-kill, written the day after Jane's death,

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[175] Ketchum, *Saratoga*; Bascom, *The Fort Edward Book, Containing Some Historical Sketches, with Illustrations, and Family Records.*; Holden, "Influence of Death of Jane McCrea on Burgoyne Campaign."

[176] "Extract of a Letter from Moses's Creek, July 26," *Virginia Gazette*, August 15, 1777.

[177] "Extract of a Letter from Albany, August 4," *The Maryland Journal And Baltimore Advertiser*, August 19, 1777. "Philadelphia, August 14," *Virginia Gazette*, August 29, 1777.

spoke of the killing of unarmed people, including the scalping of people while still alive. But recognized that a listing of atrocities "would take too much time to enumerate every action of this kind," so the author settled on "One instance which happened yesterday, during the skirmish, may serve for the whole"—Jane. He told her story, and noted how "The unfortunate maid's corpse was brought here last night," where a few women "dressed and prepared" the body for burial. [178]

Meanwhile, as most diaries attest, the "divided ground" of the greater Hudson valley, previously split between Loyalist and rebel sympathizers, turned decisively to the Continental side. Prior to Jane McCrea's death the correspondence between the Continental leaders was one of desperation. Burgoyne was advancing, but rashly. Phillip Livingston wrote to Congress to tell them that the situation "Northward is, by most recent accounts, so critical and alarming, and our army so weak and dispirited, that it is thought unsafe to rely altogether on New England troops to oppose Generally Burgoyne's disruption and rapid progress." So he pleaded for a detachment from "one of the divisions of the Southern troops to march to the Relief of our invaded state," while trying to call "as many of the militia of New England, New Jersey, and Pennsylvania" as possible to "expell [sic] the enemy."[179] Horatio Gates wrote Governor Clinton that Burgoyne was apparently willing to "risk all, upon one rash stroke," therefore it was the "indispensable duty of all concerned, to exert themselves in reinforcing this Army, without a moment's delay."[180] By October 2nd, 1777, one soldier confirmed that the call, which had gone largely

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[178] "Extract of a Letter from a Gentleman at Snook-Kill, Dated July 27, 1777," n.d.

[179] Phillip Livingston to Governor Clinton and Representative in Continental Congress, August 8, 1777, Fort Ticoderoga Museum Manuscript Collection, Folder 2003.

[180] General Horatio Gates to Governor Clinton, Camp at Behmisses Heights, September 17, 1777. Fort Ticonderoga Museum Manuscript Collection, Folder 2004.

unheeded before Jane McCrea's death, was now working. He wrote his wife in haste that the "Militia are coming in very fast."[181] Captain Rufus Lincoln observed that once "Mrs. McCrea and many other peasable inhabitance were Crualy murdered by the Indianes," it "aded much to the number of the American Army as the Inhabitance Rather Chused to turn out and oppose them than be Cruely Murdered With their famelys and all that was dear to them." Another American officer confirmed that McCrea's death, "a young Lady of Beauty & Family" had helped surge the militias fighting for the Continental side. One officer thought that the majority of the locals were resolved to "submit to the terms of the Victor [Burgoyne]," but after the massacres of Jane "are now determined to a Man to disregard his promises." [182] McCrea's story, which focused on her slain body, a fragmentary one, no doubt, explained more and more for the settlers. Whereas the other massacres were dizzying laundry list of diverse kinds of dismemberment, scalp taking, and killing—Jane McCrea had a story, and it focused on her mutilated body. If a young, beautiful, about-to-be-married loyalist woman couldn't be protected then nothing was safe. The short history afterward is that Continental militia in the region did surge—a combination of volunteers and a reinforcement from Virginia from General Washington. Burgoyne's Indian fighters largely deserted back to Canada (along with many of his Canadian volunteers). And the Continental army defeated Burgoyne at the Battle of Saratoga, which has been understood by many to have been a turning point in the war, most importantly because it opened up an alliance between the Continental Congress and the French.[183]

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[181] Nathaniel Bacheller to his wife [Susanna Bacheller], Scattacook, near Bennington, October 2, 1777. Fort Ticonderoga Museum Manuscript Collection, Folder 2006.

[182] Quoted in Ketchum 276. Once again, Ketchum did an exhaustive reading of the extant diaries of soldiers in the region.

[183] Holden was a meticulous historian, and pulled nearly every possible source surrounding Burgoyne's campaign to argue for the impact of Jane's death on his defeat. See Holden, "Influence of Death of Jane McCrea on Burgoyne Campaign."

As for Burgoyne, Jane McCrea would haunt him, her elusive body—of which he may have only seen the scalp—ever present when he returned. Back in England, he had to endure a series of highly publicized hearings in Parliament. Jane McCrea was raised every time, reanimated to indict his failure in the colonies. And he had to explain again and again, why he hadn't executed her killer. Not only had he not protected her, but he hadn't provided her justice. Jane's story was in the papers, as were the other reports from soldiers, but before Burgoyne made it back to London, Edmund Burke brought her story within the walls of Parliament, using Jane as a key rhetorical device in declaiming British conduct of the war on the floor of the House of Commons in February of 1778. Burke, like so many of his contemporaries didn't blame the Indians. They were understood as forces of nature.[184] The blame went to Burgoyne and the King's "Cabinet" for thinking one could control the "wild beasts of the forest." He noted that those who remained at their farms and houses (and didn't evacuate to Albany) were the ones "best affected to the King's government." And yet they were the ones most massacred. Horace Walpole observed that Burke grew serious when he "painted in very strong colours the horrid story of Miss Mac Ray, murdered by the savages on the day of her marriage with an officer of the King's troops." Walpole noted that he drew "iron tears down" many member's cheeks, especially Isaac Barré (the Irish born son of Huguenot refugees had a particular soft spot for Protestant emigres). Burke went to the body, and activated her martyrdom. With her "hair dressed for other purposes," namely marriage, it was "torn from her head to decorate the infernal habitation of cruelty and barbarism and there left a naked and (foul scale) her body a mangled ghastly spectacle of blood and horror." Burke made it explicitly religious, painting a common picture of unjust murder by

[184] On the prevalence of this view of Indians among the English see, Karen Ordahl Kupperman, *Indians and English: Facing Off in Early America* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2000).

alluding to the death of Abel, by envisioning blood falling to the ground, crying to heaven "through a hundred mouths to that whose image was defaced." "Is it to be wondered" Burke asked, why a "general insurrection rose to exterminate [the savages]."[185]

Could this have been done with a man's body? The female body seemed especially capable of doing this political work, especially in the midst of war where women were supposed to be "sacred from the knife," as Burgoyne had stated. By envisioning Jane McCrea's beauty and innocence—defaced through her bloody, naked body—Burke invoked a series of uncomfortable, but powerful visions. There was not only her impending marriage, consummation and motherhood denied, but also the pathos and sexual intrigue of an innocent woman beyond a protecting man's grasp, left naked to cruel and barbarous savages. It was well-chosen rhetoric, that leaned on the paternalistic responsibilities of Burke's fellow male parliamentarians (and the reading public) and, perhaps more subtly, their sexual imaginations. What Burke "painted" in the spoken word in the House of Commons was subsequently visualized in a variety of media. The sparse reports from the war that were reprinted in newspapers across the Atlantic world, filtered through people's imaginations, and soon entered nearly every genre that could be used to relate her story and raise her slain body before the eyes of sympathetic people across the Atlantic. This was an effort to *reanimate* her story, through the depiction of her body. This need to visualize in story and image Jane McCrea's bodily fate, was a well-worn cultural move, prevalent in both the Protestant and Catholic world, for this was how to make a martyr, and direct the political power martyrdom through the channels of affect.

One of the first attempts to explicitly visualize Jane McCrea's death was the "Closet," an anonymous satirical cartoon published in London in 1778. The print is made up of six major

[185] Edmund Burke, *The Writings and Speeches of Edmund Burke*, ed. Warren M. Elofson and Todd, William B., vol. III (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), 358–64.

panels, all of which relate a vignette regarding the recent British troubles in America. The vignettes are divided by a space that acts as the Atlantic Ocean, and depicts military and supply ships heading to the colonies, with text bubbles announcing their respective destinations, "Quebec hoy," "Boston hoy," "Chelsea hoy." On the far right the devil whispers into Lord Bute's ear (oddly like anti-Catholic images that featured the devil whispering to the Pope) who then convincingly tells the rest of the intimates of George III, who are congregated in his "private closet," to "Be Bloody, Bold, and Resolute. Be_FIRM_fear nothing!" Was there a subtle point being made that the nefarious influence of Catholic power had shifted to the Protestant empire? The left hand vignettes relate, in chronological order, the events leading to Burgoyne's surrender to Horatio Gates. Jane McCrea's killing is the first, the second depicts a colonist being roasted on a spit by Indians, the third shows Burgoyne and his army marching to surrender to Gates, and the final vignette shows a Scottish solider and other mercenaries fleeing. [Figure 17] Jane's image depicts an outdoor wedding overrun by Indians. [Figure 18] Her husband is held down, about to be scalped. She is depicted kneeling in prayer, dressed in her wedding dress, with her name printed next to her, "McRae." Right before she is killed she exclaims, "O horrid!" and with a bit of dark, droll humor asks, "is this the Marriage Ceremony?"[186] In the background a town identified as "Esopus" (Kingston, New York) burns, the flames most prominently rising above the roof of an Anglican style church. The composition of the cartoon, however, was reliant on a long tradition of martyrdom prints, made most prominent in the Protestant World through the eponymous *Fox's Book of Martyrs.* The savagely

[186] Bute (Invt.), Germaine (Ext.), and Mansfield (Sculp.), *The Closet*, Aquatint with etching, January 28, 1778, PC 1 - 5470 (A size) [P&P], British Museum. Jane's name also was featured in other cartoons, usually indicating the impending destruction of those responsible for her death (namely, British officials). See Anonymous, *The Birth-Day Ode*, June 1779, Prints & Drawings, British Museum; *The Bull Over-Drove: Or the Drivers in Danger*, etching on paper, 1780, Prints & Drawings, British Museum.

depicted attacker assaulting the pious victim, narrated a story of devout innocence overwhelmed by savage violence. Despite the satirical angle, this was a martyrdom image.

Jane McCrea's story was a story that compelled visualization—in particular at the very moment of its victimization. Contemporary body theory posited that sensational encounter was key to building bonds of sympathy, thus it is no surprise that those who wanted to raise up Jane McCrea's story so it could be seen. [187] The elements of the story were most poignant when seen—a sensate impression that acted upon the feeling organs of the body and entangled one in sympathetic bonds with another. The problem, of course, was that no one knew what Jane McCrea looked like, but, in this initial stage, people were satisfied with visualizing Jane McCrea as a generic young Anglo-American bride-to-be.

A poem written by American Case Wheeler about "The Tragical Death of Miss JANE MCCREA" published only a year after her death followed this lead, by focusing on both the gore, the bodies, but Jane McCrea's body as the thwarted but bloody bride. He first envisioned a "bloody scene" of old men, women, and babies. "*Bare* lies an aged man, roll'd in his gore. / And from his hoary head his scalp is tore : *There* lies a woman dead, all gashed her face. / A sucking babe, just drop'd her embrace :" But the rest of the poem centers on Jane McCrea, and the fixation on her body is evident.

> As I advance'd along, before me lay,
> A lady richly dres'd, her name McCrea *:*
> Stretch'd on the ground, and struggling there with death,
> She cannot live, she must resign her breath.
> The cursed *Indian* knife, the cruel blade,
> Had cut her scalp, they'd tore it from her head ;

[187] The best work on sentimentalism has been done by literature scholars in service of tracing the origins of the novel. But on their way they have explained the role of sentilmentalism in philosophy (with a particular emphasis on empiricism of John Locke) physics (Newton), literature (Richardson, Mackenzie), ethics (Hume, Smith) and medicine. Van Sant, *Eighteenth-Century Sensibility and the Novel*; Todd, *Sensibility*; Barker-Benfield, *The Culture of Sensibility*.

The blood is gushing forth from all her veins,
Is this that blooming fair? is this *McCrea*?
This was appointed [ill.] her nuptial day.
Instead of smiles, and a most brilliant bride,
Her face brimmed with blood, her raiment died:
Instead of pleasure and transporting joy,
There's naught but dying groanes and bitter fight:
I'm overwhelmed with grief, alas! I faint:
It is too much for language to paint.[188]

As we will see, language would soon be supplemented with images. Wheeler finished the poem by invoking McCrea's father, the minister. If he had been alive to see the scene a "flood of tears down from his eyes would flow; / O'er his dear child, touch'd with her fatal woe." Her torture needed a witness, so Wheeler resurrects her father, he "now attempts to speak…" A minister who once prayed for "Britain's king, and all the royal seed" from his "sacred desk," now stares at her mangled corpse, and wonders if this was "my *Jenny* roll'd in blood, I see! / Whom I caress'd, and dandel'd on my knee!" Indians do the killing, but, once again, they are not to blame. The real blame is with the "cruel Britons" from whom the "tom'hawk and the murdering knife were sent," Objects of death whose provenance lent blame.[189] Here Jane's dead father comes back from the grave to stare upon the tortured, naked body of his daughter—a male Mary crumpled in grief over the tortured body of a female Christ. Here readers, through their "sensibility" were able to experience the terror and grief of Jane's death in their very selves.[190]

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[188] Case Wheeler, *Poems, Occasioned by Several Circumstances and Occurrencies [Sic], in the Present Grand Struggle of America for Liberty.*, Second Edition, revised and corrected (New Haven: Printed by Thomas and Samuel Green, 1778), 18–19. Not blaming Indians was a common theme in the reception of Jane's story. Frenchman Michel Hilliard, who was actually in the vicinity of Fort Edward when Jane died, wrote "These simple people did not love cruelty for its own sake but for the reward offered by the Europeans. It is not, then, upon them that our horror for the crimes should fall but upon the nations that provoked them, nations that dare to call themselves civilized." Michel René Hilliard d'Auberteuil, *Miss McCrea (1784); A Novel of the American Revolution.*, A facsimile reproduction, together with a translation from the French by Eric La Guardia, and with an introd. by Lewis Leary. (Gainesville, Fla, Scholar's Facsimiles & Reprints, 1958), 58.

[189] Wheeler, *Poems, Occasioned by Several Circumstances and Occurrencies [Sic], in the Present Grand Struggle of America for Liberty.*

[190] Ibid.

This was a potent political move. Through the renanimation of her slain body, people far and wide could bind themselves in sympathy to Jane McCrea.

Jane's story as a *cause célèbre* pushed up recruitment numbers in the Hudson Valley and elicited tears from people across the Atlantic world—collectively binding them to her fate. But her story also could be marshalled to explain the conflict as a whole and, from a Protestant perspective, shift the centuries old lines of religion and war. In the telling (at least in the eighteenth century), Indians were not the villains—they were tools. The Spanish had used them. The French had used them. And now the British did in a big way, despite their previous pride of using Indian nations as only minor allies. Lord Suffolk, during the midst of Burgoyne's trials, defended the King's ministers for employing Indians to fight by stating that it was "perfectly justifiable to use all the means that God and nature have put into our hands." But the extensive use of Indians in the New World was most recently associated with the French, and British voices had declaimed their use for this very reason as evidence of moral bankruptcy typical of Catholicism.[191]

Criticism leveled at the Crown centered on its descent to barbarism, away from progress, and away from divinity, and, inevitably, associating them with the sordid ventures of Catholic powers in the New World, most of all, the Spanish. Her innocent, maimed corpse indicted the empire's ability to sustain the health and liberty of its citizens, and uphold the cause of Protestant religion.[192] People deliberately marked her as a Presbyterian woman and a minister's daughter to compound the indictment. With Jane's death, a Protestant Empire was now in the business of

[191] On the religious stakes of the French and Indian War, and the association of using Indians as an indictment of "Papist" moral degenerancy, see Pestana, *Protestant Empire*, 184.

[192] Paul W. Kahn, *Sacred Violence: Torture, Terror, and Sovereignty*, Law, Meaning, and Violence (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 2008); Paul W. Kahn, *Out of Eden : Adam and Eve and the Problem of Evil* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007).

killing Protestants with the tools of Catholic power. Should we be surprised that those who opposed the British strategy in North America sought to raise her death up to view, give her body a sacred aura, and infuse the tragedy of her death with political meaning?

The Politics of the Martyred Female Body

The focus on the maimed and disrobed female body had a strong preexisting resonance in the polemical visual culture across the Atlantic world of the American crisis as well. The colonies were regularly represented as maimed in young female bodies, rebellious through their exposed breasts, American through Indian headdresses and tattoos (and more exposed breasts), and broken and wronged through their dismemberment or violence. The earliest depiction was created by Benjamin Franklin, who handed out his image of "The Colonies Reduced" to members of Parliament during his trip to London in 1767 to protest the Stamp Act. [Figure 19] But Franklin, through the printed image, leveraged a strong tradition of martyrdom imagery that focused on bodily disruption. Here the body depicted was the empire, a bad looking woman in her ripped shift sits next to symbols of British imperial power, including mastless ships—signaling the death of British naval and commercial power. Strewn about the woman are her limbs depicting the four major American colonial groups, severed from a metropolitan torso. Franklin's message was clear: this was the fate of the body politic if oppressive taxation continued—mastless ships in harbor, a dismembered woman in a desolate wilderness, a former empire on its way to death. The setting of a broken, desolate wilderness, was reflective of the Golgotha tradition in sacred visual art, leafless trees, maimed bodies, on the outskirts of civilization.

Franklin's visual repretoire was repeated by a Dutch or French engraver a year later, that picked up the same theme—but the artist made the woman more naked, styled her hair, put her in

chains, and gave her a look more determined than deathly. By depicting a sailor and laying the woman on a desolate beach, the artist drew out the nautical message more strongly. [Figure 20] The "Able Doctor, or America Swallowing the Bitter Draught" separated the colonies out as a singular, exposed woman. As a Spanish and French observer look on, and Britannia looks away, Lord North forces tea down the woman's throat, while Lord Mansfield holds down her arms, and Lord Sandwich holds her feet and peers up her dress. Entering this visual field, Jane's story became real-life instantiation of an established polemical tradition of using the maimed, naked female body to indict the British Empire as corrupt, or doomed by its treatment of the body politic. [Figure 21]

After the war ended, the American revolutionary generation began to tell the story of what had transpired, and they pointed to McCrea's death as being particularly efficacious in the defeat of the British during the Burgoyne campaign. David Ramsay, writing closest to the conflict wrote that the "indiscriminate barbarities" did not lead the "inhabitants to court British protection," rather it had a "contrary effect…Among other instances, the murder of Miss McCrea excited a universal horror," in major part because of her gender. A "young lady, in the innocence of youth, and the bloom of beauty—the daughter of a steady loyalist, and engaged to be married to a British officer, was on the very day of her intended nuptials, massacred by the savage auxiliaries, attached to the British army." The effect was to "inflame the populace," and most of all, to "blacken the royal cause."[193] This is what martyrs were supposed to do in the long history of Christian martyrdom, they were the seeds of the mobilization of the church and the indictment of pagan magistrates. Mercy Otis Warren used Jane's story as the narrative peak of a litany of problems that Burgoyne dealt with during the campaign. And she focused on the

[193] Ramsay, *The History of the American Revolution*, 36–38.

lack of protection given to Jane, which led so many of the locals to "draw off in disgust," for it was not in the "power of the most humane of the British officers, to protect the innocent from the barbarity of their savage friends." So Jane's Indian escorts "made the blooming beauty, shivering in the distress of innocence, youth, and despair, the victim of their fury." Here again Warren emphasized her helplessness, the violence against her, and perhaps tacitly her rape (which there is no evidence occurred). But also Warren animated her body—"the blooming beauty, shivering"—at the moment before her victimization. "The helpless maid was butchered and scalped," Warren concluded, "her bleeding corpse left in the woods, to excite the tear of every beholder."[194] Even in this early recounting, her body became an object of directed affect—something that animated the beholder, exciting their tears.

Poetry was again and again a second visionary device used to reanimate Jane McCrea's death. In the aftermath of the Revolution, there was an effort to throw the history of the conflict into epic verse—a form not short on visionary power. The first was John Daly Burk, an Irish émigré who seemed to encounter "tyranny" almost everywhere he went, from Ireland to Wales to Haiti to the American colonies. His poem would draw from the "fertile soil" of the recent American (not French) Revolution. Looking for a patron, he wrote Thomas Jefferson in 1801 describing his project. For "a Specimen," he sent Jefferson "the well known Story of Miss MacRae." In order to keep the realism intact, he promised he would only embellish in the "descriptive part," the rest would be drawn "from facts alone." Burk hoped "the execution of which you will judge of my Ability to paint the pathetic." In verse, the pathos of Jane McCrea's death could take form. No classical tale "could approach within many degrees of the tenderness

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[194] Warren, *History of the Rise, Progress, and Termination of the American Revolution. Interspersed with Biographical, Political and Moral Observations*, 2:25–27.

of this pathetic Story, *if told* with Simplicity," he wrote Jefferson.[195] The poem like the picture would not only embody the pathos of Jane's story, and bind people through the emotion it elicited to consecrate the revolution. It had to simple, clear, focused; Jane's singular slain body helped, and indeed seemed to invoke centuries of Christian devotional literature—Protestant and Catholic—that fixated on the wounds of the exemplary Christ and his martyrs.[196] It is unclear what Jefferson thought of the piece Burk sent him, but it seems the project was abandoned. Others were more successful. The most famous epic poem would be written by another associate of Jefferson, Joel Barlow.

Barlow had begun his efforts early to recount the history of the emergent United States in a poem in nine books called the *Vision of Columbus,* published in Hartford 1787. The poem placed America at the cutting edge of a historical trajectory toward perfection and future greatness.[197] For the next two decades he revised the text, which he planned to turn into the *Columbiad,* an expansion and revision of the original project. He wrote and revised most of it in Paris, while acting as a quasi-diplomat for American interests in France.[198] Barlow aimed to match the political success of the American Revolution with a showcase of American artistic ability. The poem would be written by Barlow, an American, illustrated by American artists, and

[195] John Daly Burk, "To Thomas Jefferson from John Daly Burk," June 19, 1801, Vol. 34, 1 May-31 July 1801, The Papers of Thomas Jefferson. "To Thomas Jefferson from John Daly Burk, [before 19 June 1801]," Founders Online, National Archives (http://founders.archives.gov/documents/Jefferson/01-34-02-0304 [last update: 2015-09-29]). Source: The Papers of Thomas Jefferson, vol. 34, 1 May–31 July 1801, ed. Barbara B. Oberg. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007, pp. 385–389.

[196] On corporeal blood imagery in Protestant devotional literature, see Mack, *Heart Religion in the British Enlightenment*.

[197] Joel Barlow, *The Vision of Columbus; a Poem in Nine Books.*, 2d ed. (Hartford: Printed by Hudson and Goodwin, for the author, 1787).

[198] Joel Barlow, "The Columbiad [Rough Drafts and Revisions]" (France, circa 1802), Joel Barlow Papers, Houghton Library, Harvard University.

printed on American presses—an American production on all fronts.[199] The *Columbiad* had only one entirely new section, book six, which climaxed with the murder of "Lucinda," Barlow's literary name for Jane McCrea.[200] Robert Fulton, an American friend of Barlow's, was the first artist, and attempted to follow Barlow's visualization of Lucinda,

> She starts, with eyes upturned and fleeting breath,
> In their raised axes views her instant death,
> Spreads her white hands to heaven in frantic prayers,
> Then runs to grasp their knees and crouches there.
> Here hair, half lost along the shrubs she pass'd,
> Rolls in loose tangles round her lovely waist;
> Her kerchief torn betrays the globes of snow
> That heave responsive to her weight of woe.
> Does all this eloquence suspend the knife:
> Does no superior bribe contest her life?
> There does: the scalps by British gold are paid;
> A long-hair'd scalp adorns that heavenly head;
> And comes the sacred spoil from friend or foe,
> No marks distinguish and no man can know.
> With calculating pause and demon grin,
> They seized her hands and thro her face divine
> Drive the descending ax.[201]

Fulton's initial drawing of "Lucinda" is now lost, but when Barlow first saw Fulton's depiction of the scene he exclaimed that it was "best thing I ever saw." And the response was a familiar one, inculcated by the Anglo-American cult of the Man of Feeling: "I can't look upon it without tears." Barlow's artist friends were not so enthusiastic. Vivant Denon, Director of the Musée Napoléon in Paris liked the composition, but panned the drawing. Benjamin West, during a brief

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[199] Joel Barlow, "Subjects for Painting Taken from the Columbiad" n.d., Joel Barlow Papers, Houghton Library, Harvard University.

[200] Barlow, "The Columbiad [Rough Drafts and Revisions]." Giving Jane the name Lucinda, invoked a lot of unsavory classical references usually dealing with raped women.

[201] Joel Barlow, *The Columbiad: A Poem.*, Early American Imprints. Second Series ; No. 12083 (Philadelphia: Printed by Fry and Kammerer for Cand AConrad and CoPhiladelphia; Conrad, Lucas and Co: Baltimore, Philadelphia:, 1807).

stay in Paris in 1802 was harsher. Fulton was crushed by the reviews, and gave up being an artist and spent the rest of his life trying to engineer and implement steam boats in America. Fulton suggested that the commission for the illustrations be given to John Vanderlyn, a friend from the Tammany Society in New York, and a promising portrait artist who was in Paris furthering his education in the French Neoclassical style of painting.[202] There he would be exposed to the heights of Counter Reformation sacred painting and the best in classical sculpture at the Louvre, which would transform the way he approached the elusive Jane McCrea.

John Vanderlyn Visualizes Jane McCrea

Vanderlyn was born in Kingston New York, the very town that burned in the background of the depiction of Jane McCrea's death in the 1778 "The Closet" cartoon; he would not have been ignorant of the story. Whereas the story of Jane's death was a transnational phenomenon when it occurred, as the decades moved on those who took up her story were increasingly tied to the locality of her death, such as James Fennimore Cooper and Vanderlyn. When Vanderlyn arrived in Paris, his major ambition was to leave portraiture behind and become a history painter, the apex of painterly ambition—hoping to follow the successful footsteps of John Singleton Copley and Benjamin West. But Vanderlyn, although admiring of both West and Copley, turned to Paris instead of London for his training. When he arrived in Paris in 1803, Napoleon was gathering some of the best art of the continent and sending it to Paris. Vanderlyn spent his mornings in the galleries of the Louvre making copies of the best paintings, scaled down for ease of shipping, to be hung at the National Academy in New York. He spent his afternoons painting Jane McCrea. He became obsessed with the picture—which compounded his financial distress.

[202] William Townsend Oedel, "John Vanderlyn: French Neoclassicism and the Search for an American Art" (Ph.D., University of Delaware, 1981), 210–17. Louise Hunt Averill, "John Vanderlyn, American Painter (1775-1852)" (Ph.D., Yale University, 1949).

But when the painting was displayed at the Salon in September of 1804 it was a success—he won the first European award given to an American for a painting of an American subject.[203] Vanderlyn's *Death of Jane McCrea* (1804) is best understood as an American story refracted through the galleries of the Louvre, especially centuries of continental sacred art and classical sculpture, which Vanderlyn spent so much of his time selecting, copying, and casting for the Academy in New York. [Figure 22] In the painting, he leveraged the visual devices of Baroque martyrdom painting and classical sculpture. He initially called the painting "The Mohawks." The bodies of the two "Mohawks" are clearly modeled on classical sculpture; their herculean, gladiator physiques appear as dark, chiseled marble. Vanderlyn, at the same time he was composing the painting had been busy casting copies of marbles sculpture, especially Bourgese's *Gladiator*, to be sent back to the National Academy. Also evident were the devices of Baroque painting, particularly Counter Reformation sacred painting, which Vanderlyn adored. In this tradition, several techniques of lighting and action were deployed to heighten the drama of the painting, and infuse it with sacred energy. Given the subject matter of violence, the clear tradition was baroque depictions of the Christ's crucifixion and the martyrdom of the saints. Vanderlyn also drew upon his American experiences, especially in rendering the Mohawk men. Famed for their large, intimidating size and toned bodies (often described as "herculean" by the English).[204] Vanderlyn made this explicit in the rippled bodies of the two warriors. In their physiognomy, Vanderlyn strikes a balance between Benjamin West's noble savage in the *Death*

[203] Averill, "John Vanderlyn, American Painter (1775-1852)"; Oedel, "John Vanderlyn," 1981.

[204] Rev O. M. Spencer, *Narrative of O. M. Spencer; Comprising an Account of His Captivity among the Mohawk Indians in North America. Revised from the Original Papers, by the Author of "Moral and Scientific Dialogues." [With an Introduction by P. K.]* (London: J. Mason, 1836), 161. According to John Galt, Benjamin West exclaimed upon seeing the Apollo Belvidere in Rome 1760, "My God, how like it is to a young Mohawk warrior!" John Galt, *The Life, Studies, and Works of Benjamin West, Esq., President of the Royal Academy of London,* (London: Printed for Cadell and Davies, 1820), 103–6.

of General Wolfe (1770), and the "demon grin" of Barlow's poem. But his composition shines most in his painstaking (and accurate) rendering of the Indians' clothing, that may have been from personal experience of encounteringMohawk as a young man. But more directly, the clothing and accessories, may have been influenced by the Indian "relics" of the Tammany Society in New York—a club with a fondness for not only dressing up as Indians but also collecting Indian artifacts.[205]

As for or Jane McCrea, Vanderlyn depicts her as the Virgin Mary, signaled by her tell-tale blue dress, a device that invokes both Jane's virginity and her innocence. The style of the dress adds to the period realism, making a direct connection to middle-class Anglo-American wedding dress attire, a saque, petticoat, sometimes lace ruffles—in colored silk to allow for future, non-wedding use. [Figure 23] The dresses were typically cut low (a "deep pointed stomacher," with the bosom covered with a kerchief (which in Vanderlyn's painting has come undone, exposing half of her right breast and nipple).[206] One art historian has argued that the pink sash invokes her genitals—furthering a narrative of both motherhood and consummation denied.[207] Her upward fearful face sees not Christ on the cross, in the typical rendition of the lamentation, but rather her attacker. Her posture is cruciform, but truncated by her resistance—a perpendicular line that contrasts with the rest of the painting's use of diagonal lines. Kneeling on one knee, left arm

[205] Salvatore Mondello, *The Private Papers of John Vanderlyn (1775-1852) American Portrait Painter*, Studies in American History (Lewiston, N.Y.) ; v. 3 (Lewiston, NY, USA: Edwin Mellen Press, 1990); Oedel, "John Vanderlyn," 1981.

[206] Linda Baumgarten and Colonial Williamsburg Foundation., *What Clothes Reveal: The Language of Clothing in Colonial and Federal America: The Colonial Williamsburg Collection*, Williamsburg Decorative Arts Series (Williamsburg, Va. :New Haven: Colonial Williamsburg Foundation ;In association with Yale University Press, 2002), 140–44.

[207] Rena N. Coen, "David's 'Sabine Women' in the Wild West," *Great Plains Quarterly* 2, no. 2 (April 1, 1982): 67–76.

outstretched, with an open, grasping hand as if to receive a descending nail. Jane's arms are muscular, and flex in resistance to her attackers. Her kneeling posture seems influenced by depictions of Christ carrying his cross (a Rubens painting Vanderlyn copied in Antwerp has a similar composition). Here Vanderylyn used many of devices of martyrdom imagery in both the Protestant and Catholic worlds. The depth of field is frieze like, invoking a mortuary theme by adopting the style of classical sarcophaguses. But it also works as a stage—invoking the *tableau vivant* of French theater, used both to depict erotic scenes and sacred narrative (especially the nativity, an additional stylistic connection to Mary). The main attacker's posture in relation to Jane is similar to *The Death of St. Peter Martyr* by Titian (which Vanderlyn loved and copied for the National Academy), which emphasized the martyr succumbing to the superseding strength of his persecutor signaled by a turned muscular back about to lay the blow. Also like Vanderlyn's painting, Titian indexes their comparative moral states by a juxtaposition of their respective skin tones, most prominent as they intersect to form a tilting downwards cross, alluding to the tradition of Peter upside-down crucifixion. Titian further invokes Peter's cross with a central tree and Peter's tilted cruciform posture. Vanderlyn similarly, but more subtly, depicts the outline of a single tree, invoking the pine tree under which Jane was supposedly killed and drawing in another crucifixion reference to his painting (In the King James translation of Acts 5:30, Peter condemns the High Council for the death of Jesus "whom ye slew and hanged on a tree.") Vanderlyn also seems to use similar devices of light from Titian; in the latter's painting, cherubs beam down divine favor onto Peter's face, holding laurels ready to crown his martyrdom. The use of dramatic chiaroscuro is a technique directly lifted from the Baroque masters, but in this respect Vanderlyn admired Caravaggio and Correggio most of all. Caravaggio used the device to segment bodies in his paintings, invoking, according to a recent

study, the relics of the sacred bodies he depicts.[208] Perhaps the use of the technique is used on her right hand to invoke the severing of hands that characterized the victims of Fort Edward, while also nudging at McCrea's impending mutilation. The technique can also be seen in Jane's hair, which is pulled back by both the Mohawk warrior and the pressure of Jane's resisting arm—waiting only for the knife to segment it from her head into dark oblivion. Her face beams whiter than white, fearfully looking at her attacker—but almost through him—like a spotlight of divine light, invoking God's favor at her impending martyrdom, a common device of Baroque martyrdom painting.[209] In the distance, Vanderlyn paints her lover too far and too late to save her. Painting in 1804 in the midst of British impressment of American sailors and blocking of American trade with France, Vanderlyn made a subtle but powerful political statement by dressing David Jones in the Continental blue of an American officer rather than the iconic British red.[210] By doing so he shifted a key narrative point. Heretofore Jane McCrea was always a loyalist by association with Jones, the British officer. By depicting Jones as a Continental officer, Vanderlyn followed the lines of association to transform Jane from a loyalist into a fully American subject—knitting her into the modern story of the American republic. Here her body is

[208] Todd Olson, *Caravaggio's Pitiful Relics* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2014).

[209] I have been assisted in identifying what Vanderlyn copied by Oedel, "John Vanderlyn," 1981. The reading of the painting through the lens of sacred art is my own based on reviewing his papers in Mondello, *The Private Papers of John Vanderlyn (1775-1852) American Portrait Painter*., to assess his taste in art and what he saw, admired, and copied. "The Martyrdom of St. Peter" was signaled as a possible influence by Oedel, but he and most other art historians who have written about "The Death of Jane McCrea" have assumed that Vanderlyn, being trained in the "neoclassical tradition" would look principally to classical scenes or allegory by baroque masters for inspiration, and have varied widely in the paintings they believe to be influential on the composition or painting. See Coen, "David's 'Sabine Women' in the Wild West"; Samuel Y. Edgerton, Jr., "The Murder of Jane McCrea: The Tragedy of an American Tableau d'Histoire," *The Art Bulletin* 47, no. 4 (December 1, 1965): 481–92, doi:10.2307/3048306; David M. Lubin, "'Ariadne' and the Indians: Vanderlyn's Neoclassical Princess, Racial Seduction, and the Melodrama of Abandonment," *Smithsonian Studies in American Art* 3, no. 2 (April 1, 1989): 3–21.

[210] William Oedel, "John Vanderlyn: French Neoclassicism and the Search for an American Art" (ProQuest, UMI Dissertations Publishing, 1981).

restrained and about to be killed by the agents of an empire that remains unrepentantly malevolent, besetting the American body politic anew. But most of all she is a true vision of an American martyr, a kind of Mary-Christ-Martyr, an otherwise elusive body made suddenly present, indeed iconic.

Vanderlyn's painting was an unparalleled success, and exhibited his best efforts to become a history painter; but it did not catapult him into a future of history painting. In part, because the painting made him no money; he was beholden to portraiture and copies of masterworks to survive until he returned to America. Barlow had wanted a painting that could be quickly transformed into an engraving for the printed editions of his poem; he did not want an exhibition piece. Thus when Vanderlyn sought the full exhibition amount for the painting, Barlow politely told him that he would only pay him a fraction of what he asked.[211] Since Vanderlyn had become stuck on the Jane McCrea painting, and had not completed any of the other scenes for *The Columbiad*, he was fired. A British engraver, Robert Smirke, was hired on—thus ending Barlow's hope that the project would be an all-American affair. Vanderlyn's painting went to hang in the galleries of the National Academy in New York City for the next four decades until its dissolution, and Smirke (and his wife Mary) would make their own version of "The Murder of Lucinda," a mawkish rendition of Vanderlyn's original. [Figure 24] But the Smirkes did carry on many of the devices of sacred art that Vanderlyn employed, and other artists would follow. The cruciform composition and visual devices of martyrdom would become even more pronounced in subsequent images, but Jane McCrea's resistance would disappear. The Smirkes' "Lucinda" hangs from her cross, helpless, her lover mimics her gesture in the distance, equally helpless (but closer). Her tree is more pronounced, its shape mimicking the lines of her outstretched hands.

[211] Joel Barlow, "To John Vanderlyn," December 20, 1804, Joel Barlow Papers, Houghton Library, Harvard University.

Asher Durand, another New York native, made a copy of Vanderlyn's painting sometime in the 1830s. And made his own original rendition of the "Murder of Jane McCrea" in oil on panel. In his picture Jane McCrea's tree dominates the visual space, alluding to her coming sacrificial death. Jane is depicted in white, fulling clothed, on a rearing horse facing an Indian warrior of less-than-Herculean stature. John Trumbull, likewise, did preliminary sketches on a Jane McCrea painting. The tree, however, disappears (perhaps because he was unfamiliar with the lore of McCrea's tree). But the bodies are especially prominent. Indeed, bodies are all he depicts. As a formally trained artist, Trumbull focused on the underlying architecture of the bodies he portrays. And accordingly, he depicts McCrea, largely unclothed, surrounded by three Indian warriors, equally unclothed. McCrea stretches out her arms on her proverbial cross, and the three Indian men subdue her, and one hoists a sword or dagger above her body—aimed provocatively at her womb. Here her cross is not a tree, but three men, intent on her death, but also intent, it seems from the composition, on ending her reproductive potential. As Susan Klepp has observed, women's greatest political power was their reproductive, and instructive potential.[212] These Indians, on the margins of the American experience, seek to obliterate this woman's most potent power in Trumbull's study. The Marian image is slain before our eyes. [Figure 25]

But the most distributed image of Jane in the 19th century that would build upon all these themes is an 1837 Nathan Currier lithograph, "The Murder of Miss Jane Mc Crea A.D. 1777." [Figure 26] Here Jane McCrea looks directly to heaven, in full cruciform posture, on a hill, with her tree prominently in the background. Hand painted in Currier and Ives workshop, the extant copies show not a drop of color on her body, emphasized by the pale pink of her dress, and the dark brown of the grasping Indian's hand.

[212] Susan E. Klepp, *Revolutionary Conceptions: Women, Fertility, and Family Limitation in America, 1760-1820* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2009).

In this chapter, we have seen how Jane McCrea's death—in particular her body—was set apart and elevated as a martyr. Her body mattered not only in speeches and poems, but also in visual culture, for her maimed dead body was the site and source of the political power of her death, an object over which sympathetic people could become emotionally invested in the revolutionary moment. In the next chapter, we will look at the body cult that emerged from this context, that sought to discover and access the real in the midst of the creation of an American myth. The impulses were the same. People wanted to reanimate Jane McCrea through material encounter and pilgrimage, to emote over the material vestiges of her life: her multiple graves, her tree, the water from her spring, and, finally her bones. This was principally achieved through material relics of Jane McCrea's body where it had been slain. They also sought to answer questions to fill in the imaginative spaces they had built up around Jane McCrea's memory, to find the real Jane McCrea among the ruins of the revolution, a visceral conduct point to connect to an otherwise elusive subject.

CHAPTER 4: THE MARTYR: JANE MCCREA'S MATERIAL REMAINS

On Saratoga's battle plains,
Where low the British standard lay,
The murdered maiden's gory stains,
In British blood were washed away.
The glory of that triumph day
Avenged the death of Jane McCrea.

Lura Anna Boies, 1860

In April of 1822 a "solemn procession" wove through the streets of the small upstate New York town of Fort Edward. The weather was bad. But the crowd was "large and respectable" nonetheless. Having traveled from neighboring counties to attend, they congregated not for a funeral, but a reburial.[213] The body in question was that of Jane McCrea, a local woman who was killed and scalped by Indians fighting with the British army during the Revolutionary war forty five years before.[214] She had previously been buried with another soldier, Lieutenant Van Vechten, three miles south of Fort Edward. Van Vechten was killed and scalped the same day as her; their bodies had been collected by local militiamen, cleaned and prepared by some local women, and buried on a retreat to Albany. Visitors described the place as isolated, "a lonely place on the bank of a little stream that flows into the Hudson."[215] There the two victims lay until "old Sol Emmons ran his plow over" Van Vechten's bones.[216] Van Vechten supposedly was reburied, but it went unnoticed. But Jane's reburial became an elaborate event. She was "disinterred by the young gentlemen of Fort Edward for the praiseworthy purpose of depositing

[213] Hill, *Addenda: Part Two. Old Fort Edward Before 1800*, 23. This source is a printing of manuscript records, interviews, and a scrapbook of newspaper clippings compiled by Robert Bascom, a local historian who was both very careful, and obsessed with the Jane McCrea story. Bascom's tireless collection of sources is a major source of this chapter.

[214] From Sparks' Life of Arnold, "Miscellaneous: The Tragical Death of Jane McCrea."

[215] Race, "A Historical Sketch of Miss Jane McCrea," 102.

[216] Hill, *Addenda: Part Two. Old Fort Edward Before 1800*, 33.

[her remains] in the public cemetery." "A procession of young men and maidens followed the relics, and wept in silence when the earth was again closed over them, thus exhibiting an honorable proof of sensibility and of respect for the dead." [217] The "exercises on the occasion were interesting and impressive," a local newspaper reported. Some of McCrea's family was on hand. Her family were Scots-Irish Presbyterians, but Fort Edward only had a Methodist church, so a Presbyterian minister from nearby Ballston was brought in to say the prayer, and another from Albany, the "Reverend Dr. Cummings," to deliver the sermon. Cummings chose Micah 2:10 as his text: "Arise ye, and depart; for this is not your rest: because it is polluted, it shall destroy you, even with a sore destruction." Cummings used this ominous (and eerily relevant) passage to assure the assembly that Jane McCrea's spirit was with God, that although her life was destroyed by forces beyond her, her remains would be safe until Christ's return. He reiterated that her gruesome death had been salvific—steeling the resolve of her community to fight the "tyranny" of a British "invasion" that dared to contract with "savages."[218] In short, Jane's death both condemned and saved, an event where "youth and innocence were sacrificed" for the good of all.[219]

But before the prayers and processions, the tears and the sermon, some local officials wanted to see the corpse. They were looking for answers to two burning questions that had emerged from decades of telling and retelling McCrea's tragic story. The first question was if she died from a tomahawk or a gunshot. The answer would settle a decades-long debate if she

[217] From Sparks' Life of Arnold, "Miscellaneous: The Tragical Death of Jane McCrea."

[218] Hill, *Addenda: Part Two. Old Fort Edward Before 1800*. Bascom, a local historian, transcribed portions of the original manuscript of the sermon from, what appears, the New York State Library in Albany. But I have been unable to find it.

[219] From Sparks' Life of Arnold, "Miscellaneous: The Tragical Death of Jane McCrea."

had been accidently killed by American troops, or killed directly by Indians (thus indicting the British). After examining the skull, the justice of the peace concluded that she had in fact been tomahawked.[220] The local aged veterans of the Revolutionary conflict could breathe a sigh of relief. The second question was the color of her hair. This might seem strange, but this was a source of endless speculation. Her famed beauty in the countless stories, poems, and pictures was indexed through her supposedly long, flowing hair, described in every hue possible—violently juxtaposed by her scalping. The justice reported that her skull not only evinced "agreeable aspects" but that remnants of her famous hair were still attached, and they were red. Here, in the most macabre way, the justice satisfied the imaginative needs of countless people who sought to apprehend the real Jane McCrea, to know her correctly, beautiful, with long, flowing hair.

This chapter shows how the elevation of Jane McCrea into the realm of sacred was, ultimately, not enough for the imaginative needs of those devoted to her memory. It tracks the ways individuals sought relics in order to find the real Jane McCrea amid a flurry of contradictory storytelling around the death. Through the telling and retelling of her story through sacred discourse, people found the significance of her death for themselves. But in this selective telling the dread of myth became overwhelming. Who was the real Jane McCrea?

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[220] Hamperl and Laughlin note that scalping left marks on the skull that often were confused with axe wounds. The process of scalping was swift and usually damaged the skull bone. The examination might not have been as conclusive as reported. H. Hamperl and W. S. Laughlin, "Osteological Consequences of Scalping," *Human Biology* 31, no. 1 (February 1, 1959): 80–89. The best work on scalping in America is over a hundred years old, and written entirely in German. Georg Friederici, *Skalpieren Und Ähnliche Kriegsgebräuche in Amerika* (Braunschweig; Druck von Friedrich Vieweg und Sohn, 1906). In 1907 the Smithsonian translated an excerpt which is helpful, but misses the finer elements of the social function of scalps and their collection, including their religious meaning, among various Indian people groups. See Georg Friederici, "Scalping in America," in *Smithsonian Institution Annual Report...June 30, 1906* (Washington D.C., 1907). On the historiography of scalping see the classic James Axtell and William C. Sturtevant, "The Unkindest Cut, or Who Invented Scalping," *The William and Mary Quarterly*, Third Series, 37, no. 3 (July 1, 1980): 451–72. The conversation now seems mostly confined to archaeological journals of varying repute, where the discussion has been tied up with debates over NAGPRA. For example, see E. J. Neiburger, "The Antiquity of Scalping," *Central States Archaeological Journal* 47, no. 1 (January 1, 2000): 30–31.

Who was responsible for her death? What did she look like? Was she real after all? The relics that emerged from these sites were not simply souvenirs of travel, but reanimation of a memory forged prior to arriving at Fort Edward. People did not want to see, much less have objects, of the sites of Jane McCrea's death unless she *mattered* to them before they arrived. And the volume of evidence shows that she mattered a great deal to early Americans, indeed, as Jay Fliegelman has noted, Jane McCrea was the young nation's "first folk heroine."[221] But her heroism was death, and here it is more accurate to set her into the cultural space of martyr, but a muddled martyr, for she did not consent to her death at all. Yet casting Jane McCrea as a martyr would have been rather natural for the locals, and by doing so it raised her death to the level of the sacred. As Adrian Weimer has shown, Scots-Irish Protestants had one of the strongest proclivities to martyrdom literature and discourse. Indeed, by focusing on her tragic death it leveraged a longstanding American means of turning persecution into political power.[222] What did she die for? Some said "youth, beauty, and innocence," but all agreed that she somehow died for them. Devotion was in order.

In this chapter, we will first look at the ways that that the invariability of the history of Jane McCrea, and the dread of myth, motivated historians and those devoted to her story to collect any new information they could get. In the second section, we will look at the ways people turned to travel, or pilgrimage, to both know and reanimate the story of Jane McCrea in person, a theme that continues throughout the chapter. In the third section, we will see how this travel to the sites of her story escalated into collecting relics, most of all, the tree under which

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[221] Fliegelman, *Prodigals and Pilgrims*, 137.

[222] Adrian Chastain Weimer, *Martyrs' Mirror: Persecution and Holiness in Early New England* (Oxford ; New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), http://nrs.harvard.edu/urn-3:hul.ebookbatch.GEN_batch:EDZ000005473520160622.

she supposedly died. In the final section, we will see how this intensified even further with relic taking of her body, the original locus of her historical significance. The chapter ends with modern attempts to understand the real Jane McCrea. In all these sections, we will see they ways people tried to put real flesh on a fragmentary skeletal history, and, most of all, how that was best done through relics. Even though Jane McCrea's primary value was political, we will both how necessary the cultural resources of religion were to her elevation, but also see how all this collecting was motivated by a characteristically Protestant desire for the real.

A Fragmentary Tale

As we saw in the last chapter, Jane McCrea's body was repeatedly slain again and again before readers of her story and viewers of her images, and thereby the historical import and the political power of her death was reanimated again and again. But those who wrote of her death soon began to worry that the story was becoming too muddled, too accessible to the whims of any given narrator. Therefore, a massive historical interest in collecting any shard of information arose after about 1800. One would think this zeal for the true story would lead to a definitive breakthrough, but the elusive history fueled both handwringing and obsession that fractured the story all the more. Asa Fitch, the state historian of New York State, looked back over a century of telling and retelling of Jane McCrea's story and surmised that, "Few show signs of serious research."[223] He guessed that most writers had happened upon a contradiction in the tale, and then "proceeded to give the 'final version,' embroidered with his own sentimental statements snatched from the atmosphere."[224] Complaints of the slack methods and overheated sentiments of prior historians is a leitmotif of nearly all recounting of Jane McCrea's history from the

[223] Hill, *Addenda: Part Two. Old Fort Edward Before 1800*, 21.

[224] Ibid.

beginning of the nineteenth century, when the story moved from consensus to contradiction. Lossing observed in the middle of the nineteenth century that the "sad story of the unfortunate girl is so interwoven into our history that it has become a component part; but it is told with so many variation, in essential, and non-essential particulars, that much of the narrative we have is evidently pure fiction."[225] Instead of remedying the flexible use of Jane McCrea's death, it made it palatably worse. Even as subsequent stories attempted to give the "true story" of Jane McCrea, they simultaneously narrated its excessive mythologizing and fanciful treatment; "fact and fancy," wrote local historian Austin Holden, were "so inextricably interwoven." [226] By promising the real but reiterating the dread of myth, they created the fractured histories that most people consumed. It was a compounding problem of production and reproduction, with an acute self-awareness of the problems with previous production.

An underlying problem was that the historical register did not activate the power of Jane McCrea's story—the affective did. The move to paint colorful flesh upon the stark bones of her story was an effort to embody Jane McCrea in order to give her death impact. The visual and literary concentration focused on the moment *before* she was killed, which was problematically (or, perhaps, helpfully) the most inaccessible moment. Only a recourse to the dramatic, poetic, novelistic, or visual could remedy it. What could more knowledge do that Jane's body had not already done? As so many of her admirers believed, she had turned the tide in the events leading up to Saratoga—she had inspired so many to resist British military policy in the colonies. What would another fragment of fact do? As we will see, the facticity of her death was most achieved through her relics, in which people could have confidence that Jane McCrea was not only real,

[225] Lossing, *The Pictorial Field-Book of the Revolution*, I:96–97.

[226] Holden, "Influence of Death of Jane McCrea on Burgoyne Campaign," 257.

but could connect directly to her sacred body. They yearned to return to Jane McCrea, and relic in hand they could do this to reanimate their memories and answer their questions.

It is significant to point out that those who were gathering these facts were predominately men. And it bears saying that I am another male historian who has been drawn into the story of Jane McCrea, though, I hope, not in the same obsessive way.[227] In the best light, these male historians were trying to honor her death through an accurate reconstruction of its events. Perhaps they sought to give her a sense of justice when injustice had been her lot. Perhaps they thought that the elaboration and mythologizing around her death did her further violence. Edward Bascom, one of these historians, noted that there were "zealous adherents" of various versions of the story and they "sometimes lost their temper" in defending their version. This suggests that they, too, had stakes in the story and were emotionally invested in the contours of the plot. But something else happened. Many of these obsessive professional, arm-chair, and amateur historians began to speak of Jane McCrea as if they knew her. They used nicknames instead of her name; "Jennie" was a favorite. Were they putting themselves in David Jones' place, imaginatively? In the worst light, these historians' telling of the story lurched towards gothic sexual fantasy—a young beautiful woman, on her wedding day, dressed for her husband, killed, stripped of her clothes, and mangled by "savages," perhaps sexually assaulted as well (the implication of Indian rape hovers over the story despite no evidence). In whatever case, all the gathering of information pooled around that weekend in July of 1777 when she was killed. Few

[227] I will say, however, that in the modern era most of the historians who write about Jane McCrea are predominately women. The main example is Namias, *White Captives*. Heather Haley, a graduate student at Texas State University, has a forthcoming article on McCrea coming out soon. She graciously shared a draft with me, which is one of the most cogent pieces of writing on the affair. See also Barbara Wells Sarudy's great scholarly blog post about McCrea, "Jane McCrae 1752-1777 Killed during the American Revolution," *18c American Women: Including portraits of women & a look at the artists who painted them*, https://b-womeninamericanhistory18.blogspot.com/2013/02/jane-mccrae-1752-1777-killed-during.html. Accessed January 17, 2013.

writers cared about knowing the real Jane McCrea in life; they didn't track down childhood friends, inquire much into her spiritual life, discover her reading and writing habits, nor dwell on her respectability in the community. There was some interest in her love connection with Jones. But overwhelmingly they obsessed over and wanted to know about the real Jane McCrea in death, or right before death. The research focused on the macabre details of her body at the time of death, this supposedly beautiful young woman. The desire for the real Jane McCrea began with travel to the location of her death, Fort Edward, New York. The principle locations of this pilgrimage was her initial burial spot (and, later, her second, and third), but also the Jane McCrea House, where she waited with Sarah McNeil before the Indians seized her. The center of pilgrimage was the spot where she was killed, on a hill, by a tree and a spring, on the outskirts of town. This was her Golgotha.

Pilgrimage

Prior to 1800 the story of Jane McCrea was told in a relatively stable fashion. But after this moment an imminent desire to sort out the real story of Jane McCrea emerged, once again, principally focused on the details of her massacre, and the best way of accruing this additional information was travel to the landscape of the murder. Pilgrimage to the site of her death was evidently an effort at filling in an imaginative void with the real landscape. Historians and travelers to Fort Edward found willing old inhabitants to give them statements, and they, in turn, triumphantly reported them to the American public—hopefully providing a convincing concoction of "facts" and "local tradition" as to what really happened there in 1777. [228] Jane McCrea successfully dominated Fort Edward's mythology. The travel to the area of Jane McCrea's death happened almost immediately after the Revolution. Her story began to mark the

[228] Bascom, *The Fort Edward Book, Containing Some Historical Sketches, with Illustrations, and Family Records.*, 53.

landscape, and would eventually take over the history of the town—the town was turning into a pilgrimage site. The purpose of the pilgrimage was to materialize a story.

Besides Chastellux's gaffe about Jane's supposedly die-hard Whig parents (the anecdote that began the previous chapter) the early accounts of people who arrived in Fort Edward and talked to the locals were remarkably accurate to what likely happened, with a good awareness of *where* it happened. Even if poets and novelists and politicians began to elaborate from the very beginning to wring the most political advantage possible out of Jane McCrea's story, the locals seemed to have had the story down. The Irish travel writer, explorer, and artist Isaac Weld made an early trip to Fort Edward in 1795. When he arrived the war had long been over; he found the area principally settled by veterans. They told Weld and his company "several interesting particulars relative to several events which happened in this quarter." The landlord of the local tavern had stories of particular note, having "related all the circumstances attending Miss McCrea's death, and pointed out on a hill, not far from the house, the very spot where she was murdered by the Indians, and the place of her internment."[229] Because Fort Edward as a military post was so pitiful, and Jane's story was so enthralling, her story took over the landscape of the town, manifest in her tree, her spring, her house, and her burial place. The Jane McCrea trail was born. Without a body to behold, attending to place was enough (for now). People could walk the steps that Jane walked, tarry near the house where she waited with Sarah McNeil, go to where she had been killed, left in the open, and discovered, and walk down along the banks of the Hudson to see where she was buried.

[229] Isaac Weld, *Travels Through the States of North America, and the Provinces of Upper and Lower Canada During the Years 1795, 1796, and 1797* (London: Printed for JStockdale, 1807), 159–60.

In the 1800s this only grew. In part connected to the beginnings of tourism in the upper Hudson valley, growing numbers of people were disembarking at Fort Edward, either from the train, or by canal packet boat, to go through the locks, to make their way to the lakes north of the area, namely Lake George and Lake Champlain.[230] Wilder and Campbell's popular travel guide, *The Northern Traveller* (1824), narrated Jane McCrea's story with attention to the spots where everything had occurred: "the Indians stopped at the spring which still flows by the way side…[they] bound her to a tree that is yet standing near the spring, and shot her dead with their muskets."[231] Disturnell's *Northern Traveller* (1844) also noticed the place, "The remains of Fort Edward are still to be seen in the very centre of the romantic little village which now bears its name. At a short distance north, the place is shown where Miss Jane McCrea was murdered by Indians. Tradition has accurately preserved the location of that most bloody and melancholy deed."[232] The woman who had excited so many beating hearts and elicted so many tears now had a cult following that meandered through the tragic sites of her life, attended by plucking hands. But it was a cult following that had been greased by an emerging tourism industry made possible through the steamboat, the train, and the canal. The sites of Jane McCrea's death were unique in the travel literature of the region. Most of the tour of the "Northern Parts" of New York lingered on its military and Indian past—battlefields, forts, or places of Indian interest, such as caves or

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[230] Horatio Gates Spafford, *A Pocket Guide for the Tourist and the Traveller Along the Line of the Canals and the Interior Commerce of the State of New York* (New York: T. and J. Swords, 1824), 19, 56. Once the Champlain canal was built, travelers disembarked from their water transport on the Hudson, to take a canal packet through the three locks at Fort Edward to Whitehall on the southernmost tip of Lake Champlain. But disembarking at Fort Edward had been a centuries-old practice, thus earning the enduring name, "the first carrying place," after the portage necessary to move above the rapids, or where fighters had to carry supplies overland to reach the northern lakes.

[231] *The Northern Traveller: Containing the Routes to Niagra, Quebec, and the Springs; with Descriptions of the Principal Scenes, and Useful Hints to Strangers* (New York: Wilder & Campbell, 1825), 133.

[232] John Disturnell, *The Northern Traveller; Containing the Hudson River Guide, and Tour to the Springs, Lake George, and Canada, Passing Through Lake Champlain: With a Description of All the Places on the Route Most Worthy of Notice* (New York: J. Disturnell; Printed by C. Van Benthuysen and Co., 1844), 66–67.

rocks with Mohawk pictographs. There was considerable attention to geology, and the mechanics of the canal system, even the chemical composition of the famous waters of Saratoga Springs. Whereas there were many heroines that emerged from the era of colonial captivities and war in that region of New York, most of the stories of that specific region—the warpath—were of men, battles and the noble-foreignness of Indian life. Jane McCrea stood out among these stories. Her death became *the* notable feature of Fort Edward. As one travel book succinctly noted, Fort Edward was "the spot where Miss M'Crea was murdered."[233] The subsequent travel books would further clarify the material sites. There was the "Jane McCrea House," Jane McCrea's tree, Jane McCrea's Spring, her first burial place, and later, her second and third burial place.

But like the paintings and the poetic renderings of Jane McCrea's story, it was a marking of the landscape that, much like the visual culture, attempted to freeze her life at the moments of her martyrdom. The Jane McCrea House, for example, was actually the site of Sarah McNeil's home; Jane McCrea was only visiting when she was seized from it. No matter, it became hers, because her elusive presence had halted in that definitive spot. (McCrea's home was south at some unknown location in Northumberland, that no one identified, except for the earliest guides, or seems to have wanted to.) Fort Edward was important because it was there, in that small town, where all the important elements of McCrea's story came together—her innocent beauty on her wedding day, the savagery of the Indian, the negligence of the men in her life, the moral bankruptcy of British military policy, the sacred cause of the revolution that her death helped speed. All of these facets of her story had political power, taught lessons, and had material

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[233] Z. Thompson, *Northern Guide: Lake George, Lake Champlain, Montreal and Quebec, Green and White Mountains, and Willoughby Lake, with Maps and Tables of Distances* (Burlington [VT]: S.B. Nichols, 1854), 9.

analogs. Since McCrea and the small settlement had become so fused that there was interest in concentrating the remnants of her life in the small town. It was never spoken, but this seems to be the reason the town translated her remains from her bucolic resting place in the countryside to the center of town in the community cemetery in 1822—they were bringing their native daughter home. By doing so, all the material for a vibrant relic cult was in one place.

McCrea's Tree, Or, Her Cross

The identification of a tree related to Jane McCrea's death occurred early. Once again, *The Northern Traveller* identified a tree they claimed she had been bound to and shot.[234] Spafford's *Pocket Guide* (1824) highlighted the "Pine Tree, where Miss M'Crea was killed, in the Revolutionary War."[235] The objects that are extant in collections of Jane McCrea's tree are difficult to date—they are, obviously, simple tree fragments. The McCrea tree was probably marked as early as the 1790s—though it is difficult to know precisely—and the removal of relics is evident by the arrival of future Yale President Benjamin Silliman in 1819. He was a man who was generally more interested in rocks than history, but when he arrived in Fort Edward in 1819, he dutifully surveyed the derlict fort, and spent most of his time commenting on the Jane McCrea affair. The "place of her murder" was pointed out to him, where "the unhappy young woman was found tomahawked, scalped and (as is said) tied fast to a pine tree just by the spring." Whereas most early accounts noted that she was killed by a large pine tree on a hill, local storytellers elevated the importance of the tree by literally binding Jane to the tree, as if nailing her to her cross, which, as we have seen, was a theme in the images of McCrea. Silliman, for his part,

[234] *The Northern Traveller: Containing the Routes to Niagra, Quebec, and the Springs; with Descriptions of the Principal Scenes, and Useful Hints to Strangers*, 133.

[235] Spafford, *A Pocket Guide for the Tourist and the Traveller Along the Line of the Canals and the Interior Commerce of the State of New York*, 57.

thought the spring was "beautiful." But nothing captured his imagination as much as that "fatal tree." The tree was large and "ancient," worthy of a ship's mast, he claimed. Its trunk "wounded, in many places" from what he claimed were the musket balls of the whites shooting after the Indians. But in reality were probably the evidence of early relic collecting. Some of the musket shot had been "dug out" where people could reach, he claimed, while "others remain in this ancient tree." Since it seems unlikely that this tree was peppered with large amounts of musket shot, Silliaman probably was observing general relic taking of the tree, chunk by chunk—musket balls and more. It was marked, with her name and the date, "1777," as if a gravestone. The top of the tree had been shorn off by a "violent wind." This, along with the gouges in the trunk made the tree, Silliman noted, a "striking emblem of wounded innocence…[a] happy, although painful memorial of the fate of Jenne M'Crea." The violence registered on the tree became not only a narrative but also a pathetic, material window into the story of her death, so much so that he observed that "no traveler passes this spot, without spending a plaintive moment in contemplating the untimely fate of youth and innocence." Here we can see the theme of Jane McCrea as a Virgin Mary-Christ figure. The political import was not far behind, for he narrated the political consequences of her death, how it "electrified the continent, and indeed, the civilized world, producing a universal burst of horror and indignation."[236] In fragment form, these chunks of the tree could likewise narrate her death and dismemberment, in relic form, an ever-repeating monument in multiple, indexing that spot.

In a broad sense, it is important to point at here the iterative, even sacramental, aspect to energy around Jane McCrea. People wanted to tell, and recite the poetry of her story, again and again. They wanted to see her tragic death visualized before them—in painting, engraving, and

[236] Benjamin Silliman, *Remarks Made on a Short Tour, Between Hartford and Quebec in the Autumn of 1819* (New Haven: S. Converse, 1820), 134–37.

lithograph—figured and refigured. And much like sacraments, there needed to be a material and ritual form to the sacrament. They wanted to know her—even in her stubborn unknowability. Lifting up her sacrifice for the consumption of the polity, the hashing and rehashing of the story brought together a constituency through imaginative digestion and material encounter. The question was: what constituency? The answer changed over time. Initially this was very national, of course. This was Silliman's angle; Jane McCrea condemned the British while sacralizing the independence of the United States. But in the nineteenth century the story gradually became a narration of a savagery that had been tamed—British and Indian. And thus it shifted to become a story less about the nation and more about place: Jane, the bride-to-be, trying to give love a go amidst the landscape of war, killed by unruly Indians whom the British protected. Now the boundaries had been lifted, the British had been banished northward, Indian lands could be bought or wrested from them, and northwestern New York could flourish free of the violence that had dominated its past. Now the forts along the great warpath sat derelict and overgrown—American ruins for an American past that had been subdued. On the one hand this vision admitted that the peace had been bought in blood—Jane McCrea's blood in particular—but on the other hand it wiped away all the blood that wasn't Jane McCrea's. No more war, no more redcoats, no more red skinned people resisting white advance—the swords could be beat into ploughshares and cultivate the wild.[237] The ploughshares now dug up the relics of that past. The future was above ground, the past trampled into the soil. Those who wished to remember, to reanimate that history and understand it in a deep way, had to look for the relics that remained.

[237] The culmination of this perspective is found in *Sequi-Centennial: Jane McCrea Massacre, Fort Edward, New York, 1777-1927, Program, Historic Events.* (NP, 1927). The celebration included a musical theatrical performance called, the "Pageant of Progress," which included *tableaux vivantes*, dance numbers, and music themed to progress of civilization in the upper Hudson Valley.

This perspective of civilization overcoming savagery dominated nineteenth and early twentieth century telling of the story, and of course, had an explicit material expression. It was probably most popularized in the context of Jane McCrea through John Benson Lossing's *Pictorial Field-Book of the Revolution*—a book that was part travelogue, art book (it included 1100 wood engravings set into the type), history, and wistful antiquarian manifesto.[238] It was also printed widely in American newspapers, including the section on Jane McCrea.[239] But Lossing, unlike so many of his contemporaries, bemoaned the "progress" of the young United States, for it was trampling the places, and therefore the "incidents which have hallowed them." For Lossing, his book project was an effort to "to embalm those precious things" of the Revolution for the "admiration and reverence of remote posterity."[240] He needed to place objects, sacred objects, before his readers to inculcate their reverence for this history he was intent on making sacred. He wrote the book as history of the Revolution interpolated into a travelogue of his journey through the thirteen original Colonies-turned-States and Canada, with "sketches and descriptions of the scenery and relics as they appear at present." The reader, then, experienced a "history" that "was broken into fragments, arranged in the exhibition, in accordance with the order in which each locality was visited, the fragments individualized as much as possible, yet always maintaining a visible relationship with the whole." Here again we see the connection between the material, the textual, and the visual united in service of conveying the real, as Lossing reiterates in describing his pictoral method: "If a relic of the Revolution was not susceptible of picturesque effect in a drawing, without a departure from

[238] Lossing, *The Pictorial Field-Book of the Revolution*.

[239] "The Story Teller: The True Story of Jane McCrea (From Lossing's Pictorial Field Book of the Revolution)," *New Hampshire Statesman*, August 30, 1851.

[240] Lossing, *The Pictorial Field-Book of the Revolution*, I:vii.

truth, it has been left in its plainness, for my chief object was to illustrate the *subject*, not merely to embellish the *book."* Lossing's method is more akin to John James Audubon than George Bancroft, adopting a naturalist's attitude to the past that was object-centered and field-based.[241] In other words, it was a field museum in a book, but one devoted to history, but moreover the relics of a sacred past. Lossing's immensely popular book can be understood best as a reliquary devoted to civil religion—a narrated container, of what Lossing called, the "scenes and things hallowed to the feelings of every American."[242] Feeling consecrated these things, relics brought the past near and declared, in their decrepit materiality, its pastness (made all the more decrepit-looking through the use of woodcuts)—and thus became sites of feeling intended to spill over into binding patriotic feeling (published at a time—1850-60s when the country was falling apart). Readers could return to this past through the depictions of relics.

Of course, Jane McCrea was a topic of major interest—and when Lossing arrived in Fort Edward he not only interviewed the local aged residents (as he did almost everywhere he went; thus introducing a lot of errors) but drafted four sketches, all of which emphasized the real and the sentimental in appropriate measures. His view of the spring is a gauzy insert into one of the pages. [Figure 27] The perspective is through a cramped circle of foliage, showing the small spring (or two) with other trees in the background—as if peering through dense brush at *the* place where the deed occurred. This technique, like a camera obscura, helped tighten the view on an otherwise forgettable place. In contrast, Lossing's sketch of the Jane McCrea tree is far bigger, more open, and dominates the entire page. [Figure 28] Here we see the singular tree,

[241] On object-centered epistemology see Conn, *Museums and American Intellectual Life, 1876-1926*; On materiality and Audubon's pictorial method in the field, see Jennifer L. Roberts, *Transporting Visions: The Movement of Images in Early America* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2014), 69–115.

[242] Lossing, *The Pictorial Field-Book of the Revolution*, I:ix.

gnarled, leafless, and huge, rising in front and ahead of a forest behind. The vegetation and forest behind is densely illustrated, but cut off by the text, to allow the single tree to rise by itself up the page. The deep grooves from the wood engraving in the middle third of the tree give the sense of a floating cross. The clearing from in front of the tree is counterposed by the dense brush behind it, and framed by the fence row—presenting an absent stage where history had once occurred. But in Lossing's drawing we are also *looking at* people *looking*. Two men by the fence-lined road stand together. One in a straw hat points out the tree with his head turned to his companion, whose face we see in profile, with his cane resting on the fence beam—giving a sense of pause for contemplation together. And here Lossing invites his readers to do the same. Stop and look. This is the tree.

Lossing noted, like so many others, the various versions of the story that had been propagated, elaborated, and embelleshed. Lossing, in fact, after discussing with a relative of Sarah McNeil, decided that the Continental Troops killed McCrea accidently. But in the material realm, and his visual representations of it, he concentrated on the real. "The tree had exhibited unaccountable signs of decadence for several years, and when we visited it, it was sapless and bare," its large "five feet in diameter" trunk is "engraved, in bold letters, Jane M'Crea, 1777," and with the "names of many ambitious visitors." Every storm now "diminishes its size by scattering its decayed twigs." Lossing, for his part, "carefully sketched all its branches," as if every single one was important. The "engraving is a faithful portraiture of the interesting relic," he assured his readers. In just a "few years," Lossing wrote, "this tree, around which history and romance have clustered so many associations, will crumble and pass away forever." He, in his own way, had saved it.

The irony is that the energy that had clustered around the tree was probably the very thing that killed it—an instance where the sacred threatened to destroy the object of devotion. The deep gouges to remove fragments, the etching of the label and the countless names of visitors surely broke through the outer layers of the tree—the phloem, cambium, and xylem—thus preventing water and nutrients from travelling up and down the trunk.[243] In 1852 one correspondent described it as a "leafless and lifeless tree, with no bark on its withered limbs, its surface entirely 'hewn to pieces' by the pen-knives of hundreds who have visited the spot, and endeavored to immortalize their names by cutting deep into its now lifeless trunk."[244] This was not the only natural monument that was disappearing. Even though some visitors gushed about the "fine" spring, and the rest of the landscape, over the years the spring disappeared from view, only visible in the winter when it froze.[245] But even if it was less visible as the years moved on, it significance remained as the place where "the innocent blood of that youthful maiden mingled with its sparkling water."[246] There were relics here too. Vials of glass were filled with the water from the spring. The disappearance of these pendant natural landmarks that had witnesses Jane's death, along with the desire to make place portable drove the relic taking. In the twentieth century the spring along with others on the hill were gathered into reservoir by the local community, to provide "pure soft water" to the community. The local Fort Edward Institute, a

[243] Tree etching has been a well-documented death for trees, therefore a focus of tree advocates in educating the populace on their interaction with trees. On tree carving's biological effects and cultural significance summarized, see Rikard Andersson, Lars Östlund, and Rolf Lundreqvist, "Carved Trees in Grazed Forests in Boreal Sweden—analysis of Remaining Trees, Interpretation of Past Land-Use and Implications for Conservation," *Vegetation History and Archaeobotany* 14, no. 2 (2005): 149–58.

[244] J. S. L, "Jane McCrea.," *Merry's Museum and Parley's Magazine (1852-1857)*, July 1, 1852.

[245] 1882 Newspaper Clipping reprinted in Hill, *Addenda: Part Two. Old Fort Edward Before 1800*, 19.

[246] J. S. L, "Jane McCrea."

college preparatory school was sure to advertise that the young men of the school had at their disposal the water from Jane McCrea's spring.[247]

Jane McCrea's tree ended for good in 1853. Brittle and precariously rooted, the tree was taken down by George Harvey, a Fort Edward resident who had bought the land that encompassed the spring and the derelict pine tree. He had help. It was hauled to Kanes Falls, where a local man sawed it into three inch planks. [248] And then it was taken to Fort Ann to a carpenter, James M. Burdick, who transformed the planks into small boxes and canes, and eventually became the "traveling agent" of George Harvey in their subsequent sale. The advertising of the relic-objects was assisted greatly by a new history of Jane McCrea written by David Wilson, who not only evocatively described the pine tree, but also advertised where people could see and *buy* its remnants: "Specimens have been placed in the Crystal Palace, New York, and attract attention, as well in consequence of the interesting associations connected with them, as of the ingenious mechanism displayed by Mr. James M. Burdick, of Fort Ann, in their manufacture."[249] [Figure 29] After reading through the book, interested readers could take their devotion, newfound or renewed, one step further and buy a relic connected to her death. And they could buy these relic-objects at the most central of locations, the Crystal Palace in New York City, the site of the Exhibition of the Industry of All Nations—a veritable pageant to industrial progress modeled after the Crystal Palace exhibition in London two years earlier.

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[247] "Water Works," *The Herald*, April 26, 1859. in Various, "McCrea Newspaper Stories Vertical File," n.d., 6, Folklife Center, Crandall Public Library, Glens Falls, New York.

[248] The man who cut the tree into planks, Thomas Wilson, remembered it, and wrote his local newspaper to tell of his involvement after an active debate over the provenance of fragments and canes circulating in the community, "Public Opinion: Cut Down Historic Tree," *Glens Falls Daily Times,* February 15, 1912 in Various, "McCrea Newspaper Stories Vertical File."

[249] David Wilson, *The Life of Jane Mccrea: With an Account of Burgoyne's Expedition in 1777* (New York: Baker, Goodwin, 1853), 87.

Despite the exhibition's name and focus, there was considerable room given to non-industrial subjects; the organizing committee went out of its way to tell applicants for space in the building that "Paintings in frames will be exhibited" among other cultural artifacts. Applicants for space needed to simply demonstrate they deserved a spot for the exhibition that would, over its course, attract over a million visitors.[250] Evidently Jane McCrea's relic-objects deserved such a space, for Burdick successfully gained exhibition space to display the canes and boxes.

The advertisement, entitled "An Interesting Relic of the Revolution," at the end of Wilson's *Life* reiterated that a case of canes and boxes could be seen at the Crystal Palace, but if individuals wanted to buy their own they had to walk south of the Palace to Forty First Street (it doesn't say where), or to a local hatter on Broadway, "Leary & Co." in the Astor House—the giant palatial hotel built by John Jacob Astor on the corner of Vesey and Broadway. Relics which were once carved by hand out of a hapless tree in rural New York could now be purchased in canes and boxes at the heart of American gentility. The issue of provenance was addressed directly in the advertisement, which deployed every tool to ensure potential buyers that the canes and boxes came from the real Jane McCrea tree, the real material of her martyrdom. It included an endorsement by George Harvey himself, who certified that he was "the owner of the land on which grew the tree known as the Jane McCrea Tree," and certified the process and chain of possession of the tree's remnants. There may be others "offering Canes for sale, representing them to be made from the renowned Jane McCrea Tree," but these were "counterfeits." How would you know? The advertisement featured a large wood engraving depicting Jane McCrea's death (a simplified rendition of Vanderlyn's painting with the background giving prominence to a singular pine tree). This engraving had a purpose. As the statement by George Harvey noted,

[250] "World's Fair in New-York," *New York Times,* July 17, 1852.

each "article and piece having this engraving on upon it is part of the same tree."[251] In its own strange way, Vanderlyn's painting in iconographic format came to certify the material witnesses of her death—the fragments of the tree—as true.

Apparently, Harvey got a lot of flak from his community for cutting down the tree, which the advertisement explicitly addressed. The sale and refurbishing of the tree into personal objects seems to have been a kind of penance for cutting the tree down. The individual objects sold from five to ten dollars—and likely made Harvey and Burdick a lot of money. Even critics could admire that the "canes are beautiful—ornamented with a picture of the girl on her knees between two contending Indians." But as one local wrote, "the price, (from five to ten dollars) is little in favor of the man who made the Vandal stroke that felled the tree. One of the canes should be given to him, and *well laid on* – so I heard a man say."[252] Another reporter castigated the "avaricious Yankee" responsible.

> [After] coming into possession of the property, with more regard for material results than reverence for venerated revolutionary landmarks, determined to coin in gold the affections of the American people for these souvenirs of their past struggle for independence. So, with a sacreligious hand, he cut down the far-famed tree and manufactured it into canes, which were peddled about the country as Jennie McCrea canes.[253]

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[251] He also narrated the chain of possession "tree died in 1849, was cut down in 1853, and was sent to the shop of J.M. Burdick to be manufactured into Canes and Boxes." And in case someone doubted Harvey's testimony, he solicited endorsements from four former employers and business associates from the Fort Edward area who expressed their "fullest confidence to believe what he says is true." Wilson for his part explicitly mentioned the relics in his history, praising Wilson, *The Life of Jane McCrea*.

[252] "Jane M'Crea's Tree," *Boston Recorder*, September 22, 1853.

[253] "Jennie McCrea: A True Story of the Revolution," *Dubuque Daily Times*, October 29, 1882.

The ubiquity of the Jane-McCrea-tree-derived objects raised suspicions.[254] Looking back, one paper noted that "it was said that enough of the articles mentioned were thus disposed of to consume at least a dozen pine trees the size of the old monarch that stood guard over the Jane McCrea spring."[255] Another noted that when Harvey had exhausted the "genuine article, he utilized the adjacent forest and kept up the supply with a counterfeit."[256]

But what if George Harvey felled the wrong tree? What if the relics were fakes? The area where Jane McCrea was killed was full of pine trees—and springs. From the 1870s onward there was an active, characteristically obsessive, discussion on where the true site had been. Everyone had an aged witness on hand, who had heard from another aged witness about the true location. This came to a head in the early 20th century when one exasperated correspondent to a Glens Falls newspaper painstakingly outlined all the bits of evidence, concluding that the real tree and spring was not the traditional location. "It is too bad to spoil all those relics," he wrote apologetically, "but the truth must be told."[257]

This man's apology for spoiling relics, and his obsessive effort to ascertain the true spot illuminates a central motivation of both the relic seekers and the historians. They both wanted the real. And to emote over a false relic was to be fooled—and enduring Protestant concern since Calvin. Those concerned with the proximity to the truth have no interest in being made fools. Jane McCrea had all the elements of sentimental narrative, but what gave her story its punch and

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[254] Bascom, *The Fort Edward Book, Containing Some Historical Sketches, with Illustrations, and Family Records.*, 56. Bascom noted that "it is no uncommon thing among the old families hereabout to-day, to find in their possession a Jane McCrea cane."

[255] "Canes from a Historic Pine," [Unknown Periodical], ND in Various, "McCrea Newspaper Stories Vertical File," 6. This comment is reminiscent of the quip by John Calvin "if we were to collect all these pieces of the True Cross exhibited in various parts they would form a whole ship's cargo." Calvin, *A Treatise on Relics*, 233.

[256] "Jennie McCrea: A True Story of the Revolution," *Dubuque Daily Times*, October 29, 1882.

[257] "Fort Edward in Olden Time," [Unknown Periodical], June 2, 1882. Various, "McCrea Newspaper Stories Vertical File."

political impact was that she was a real person. And people wanted a piece of it. But pieces were just pieces if they weren't real. With these place relics in their hands, they could, in sight and touch, give weight to a story so variable that it seemed as if it would float away into myth. This is why these relics were so contested; they not only gave their owners material weight but connection to a story that was so ephemeral.

After the tree fell and transformed into personal objects, and the spring no longer bubbled to supply the empty vials of interested visitors, the site of the massacre became less important than the body that had been massacred. The story had been questioned, so had the relics of the place. Where to go next?

Back to the Body

With doubt over the tree and the spring, Jane McCrea's body became the locus of energy, just like it had in the beginning. If the precise location of her death was not certain, the location of her body could be ascertained, as it turns out, in remarkably accurate ways. 1826 was the first reburial. As we saw in the introduction to Chapter 3, this reburial was prompted by "Ol Saul Emmons" running over Jane McCrea and Lieutenant Van Vechten's bones with his plough. But in this early period, after the old farmer ploughed up her bones, most of the energy still clustered around the *place* of Jane McCrea's death. But after the 1830s more and more attention was given to her actual corpse.

This interest in Jane McCrea's corpse coincided with interest in bodily objects of all kinds that farmers were ploughing up out of the ground in the region, including human remains. Some areas around Fort Edward were so littered with skeletons of "a great number of men" that they had not been cultivated.[258] "Almost every year the plow," Lossing noted, "turns up some

[258] Jacob K. Neff, *The Army and Navy of America : Containing a View of the Heroic Adventures, Battles, Naval Engagements, Remarkable Incidents, and Glorious Achievements in the Cause of Freedom, from the Period of the*

curious relics of the past upon [Rogers] island, such as bayonets, tomahawks, buttons, bullets, cannon-balls, coin, arrow-heads, &c." Human remains were among these. Lossing was given a skull by a local doctor, Edward Norton, as a gift. Evincing some phrenological training, Lossing noted that "its form is that of a negro," and that the "remarkably thickness" of the skull was no match for the "the force of a musket-ball" that had punched a hole in the forehead. Despite its "long inhumation, the sutures are perfect," he marveled. The trade in relics, including human relics, was vibrant in the area. One old gentleman of Fort Edward spent his retirement digging up local relics and selling them to the interested. According to a newspaper reporter he would sit on the porch of his house, the door propped open by a "cannon-ball, a relic of the revolution," and have his children bring out "*his* relics" to visitors. He would have each visitor write their name in his guestbook, which a visitor noted was full of "*good company,* as we find the names of some of the most illustrious men from this country and from Europe in it." He was not the only one with a collection, "every family residing on these battle-grounds, and sometimes every member of it, has a budget—as bones, skulls, cannon-balls, grapeshot, musket-balls, fragments of swords, regimental buttons, &c." But this this old man had found some profit in it, for while "digging for skulls" for a visiting phrenologist, he found gold and silver coins intermingled with the skeleton.[259]

But all these relics were, in a sense, faceless. But not Jane McCrea. They knew where she was buried. And any human remains associated with her moved from anonymity to fame. In the 1850s the residents of Fort Edward created a respectable cemetery above the town named

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French and Indian Wars to the Close of the Mexican War; Independent of an Account of Warlike Operations on Land and Sea; Enlivened by a Variety of the Most Interesting Anecdotes and Embellished with Engravings / by Jacob K. Neff (Lancaster, Pa. : John H. Pearsol, 1851), 371, http://archive.org/details/armynavyofameric1851neff.

[259] Ibid.

"Union Cemetery;" this was the third burial place in the town's history. While they left most of the community in the old cemetery where Jane McCrea had been deposited in 1826, it was decided that the three most famous dead people of Fort Edward needed to join the future community of the dead. So, in 1851, Jane McCrea was moved once more. Sarah McNeil was also moved up the hill with her. Duncan Campbell was the third. When the locals reburied Jane McCrea they placed her bones in the same burial space as McNeil—a material recognition of their intertwined stories. And much like the previous burial yard, there was constant chipping of the gravestone so that it was almost impossible to read. Nameless but numerous relic takers who sought stone fragments of Jane McCrea's gravestone to take home for their personal cabinets.

The 1826 reburial was attended by the whole community, the 1851 reburial had far less pomp and seems to have been orchestrated by a local admiring doctor, Edward Norton—who was the same person who gifted the "negro skull" skull to Lossing. Norton was one of the many local, prominent leaders devoted to the Jane McCrea story. He lived in the "Jane McCrea House"—which was actually the site of the former home of loyalist Sarah McNeil, Jane McCrea's friend, where she waited for the advance of the British lines before she and McNeil were seized by Indian fighters. Norton was the first to acquire Jane McCrea's skull, and it begs the question of why he went out of his way to not only live in the space where Jane McCrea waited before her abduction and death, but why did he need the skull as well? Much like the 1826 reburial he probably sought new information. Those obsessed with her story, like Norton, were always on the hunt for one more tidbit of information. While the 1826 magistrate confirmed that the skull appeared "agreeable," and inspected the remnant red hairs attached to the skull, to understand that Jane McCrea was not only pretty but also red-headed. Norton, as a student and purveyor of mid nineteenth century Phrenological science had more tools at his

disposal. He could understand the real Jane McCrea, unpack her character through extended study and measurement. But we don't know what his findings were. Perhaps he wanted to join the spaces, the house where she waited, and her material remains. By bringing back her skull to his office, did he feel like he was undoing a wrong? Reversing the history, allowing Jane McCrea to wait forever for her lover, somehow safe on the shelf of his office? Norton never wrote down his thoughts as far as we know. But locals knew that he had the skull (probably because they had to endure consultations with the local doctor staring at it). And by the late 19th century, perhaps after Norton died, the skull moved to the cabinet of a rich New Yorker who was crucial in developing the tourist industry in Lake George. And from there the trail goes cold.

The stories about the circumstances of the 1851 exhumation varied. One story was of a local "gentleman assigned to guard duty over the remains," who was "decoyed from his post by accomplices of the ghoulish curiosity hunters and that during his absence a portion of the skeleton was removed." The "teeth and ribs are said to be now in the possession of Frank Morgan of Fort Edward, while Dr. Lindendoll is the reputed owner of the tibial bones." And the skull "adorns the cabinet of Mr. Sanford of New York, owner of Long Island in Lake George. Other portions of the skeleton are in the west." [260] Another story was that her remains were removed from the old burial ground and "placed in a shoebox and kept in a barn until a grave could be prepared for them." One night "the box was broken open and nearly all the bones stolen," and distributed among interested parties, the teeth and bones to a local. Her "skull is in New York, and other bones adorns a local doctor's collection."[261]

[260] Hill, *Addenda: Part Two. Old Fort Edward Before 1800*, 22.

[261] [Untitled], *Albany Evening Journal*, March 14, 1917, from Various, "McCrea Newspaper Stories Vertical File," 35. One issue with all these sources is that they work from sources decades after the event, and of which the original is now lost. The original report appeared in the *Glens Falls Ray* inPiecing together the disparate reporting, it seems that Jane McCrea's remains were removed from the grave, and for a short period left in a box in a third space,

Whatever the specific circumstances, the concern for possessing the real Jane McCrea remained. Two period objects can help us see this concern close-up. The first, and earliest, is a sketched outline of Jane McCrea's rib in Volume IV of Rufus Grider's luminous unpublished sketchbooks at the New York State Archives in Albany. Grider was a Moravian from Pennsylvania, who arrived in 1883 to Canajoharie, New York to teach drawing at the local academy. As he became acclimated to the Mohawk Valley, he, very much like Lossing, became enamored with upstate New York's history. He created nine painstakingly illustrated manuscript volumes where he illustrated a veritable museum of the region's history, consisting of detailed illustrations of objects and landscape associated with New York's past. These were objects in personal collections of locals across the region, from tracings of important documents to cannonballs, from detailed ethnographic analysis of Indian objects and language to military garb. He was clear to note that his project was "NOT a History of the Mohawk Valley—but a Collection of PICTURES OLD and NEW & Curious OBJECTS possessed by the inhabitants of this region." And since "Every picture needs an Explanation" each object became an "an OBJECT LESSON of what formerly Existed here."[262] Jane McCrea's section featured an original watercolor of the location of her death painted by Grider himself in the summer of 1887 (including an X where the famous pine tree once stood), a sketch of the "Jane McCrea house at Fort Edward N.Y.," and, most importantly, a painted outline of an original rib of Jane McCrea sent to Grider by "Frank A. Morgan of Fort Edward." [Figure 30]

Jane McCrea's rib isn't the only fragment of human remains to show up in Grider's project-the "THIGH BONES OF KING HENDRICK" were drawn at ½ size a few pages past Jane

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before being deposited in her new grave with Sarah McNeil. While waiting in this third space, the bones seems to have been pilfered—but who was behind it is unclear, but Norton's name is the most consistent.

[262] Rufus Grider, "Albums," vol. 1, n.d., 2.

McCrea's rib, along with a detailed note regarding its provenance. The point of *that* exercise was to show evidence of King Hendrick's giant size even at 84 years of age, "Seven feet in height & weighed 300 pounds."[263] But Jane's rib is not scaled down, but rather traced from the original. In real size, it swings from the margin to the center of the page. And the label proceeds from the object outward. Morgan "furnished the pattern" for Grider, who took over and painted the interior space (with evident knowledge of what human ribs look like).

So with this outline of the fragment of the real Jane McCrea, Grider filled in the outline with earth-tone watercolor, and the space beyond with descriptive words. He narrated the grave robbing by "Ghouls," with a characteristically uneven inventory of what was removed from the body. The effect of the rib in Grider's volume is nothing less than the index of the real. It intrudes upon the page in a macabre intensity that gives Jane McCrea's death an objective power through the bodily fragment, and renders all the views of landscape, houses and powder-horns that Grider illustrated seem limp in comparison. Grider narrates Jane McCrea's story—as he would—but the presence of the rib is the center of the story—giving the tragedy a punishing realness—her body broken before the reader, her death made manifest in the skeletal fragment. In its indexical illustration it pushes the body to the fore, once again, proclaiming it as the space through which her story was given meaning. But also, through the careful tracing of the outline of the rib, conveys to the reader the message of the real. Amid all the varying versions of the story, in the real fragment her story came together.

But tracing a rib is, in the end, not the same as a rib. It is an index of a rib that exists in some unknown collection—it carries the message of the real through the origins of its dimensions, but remains a painted outline on a page. The second object takes up the real more

[263] Rufus Grider, "Albums," vol. 6, 1888, 8.

directly. [Figure 31] The second object entered the collection of the Fort Ticonderoga Museum during the Second World War.[264] It came into the collection through a donation of objects by a ladies' auxiliary of a local amateur archaeology club, the Rogers Rock Club. This makes sense. The custodians of Jane McCrea's memory in the twentieth century were the women who ran the local historical societies.

It is unclear how the Ladies of the Rogers Rock Club used Jane McCrea's rib within their organization. But they seem to be responsible for how the object was preserved, and how the story was told. The rib is glued to a cotton bed set into a small cardboard box, covered by a clear glass covering secured by small nails. A twentieth century label is affixed to the cotton as well, but cut to accommodate the swoop of the rib. The rib is untreated, unlabeled, and yellowed with age, with visible fissures where the osteological integrity is breaking down. The glue keeps the rib close to its label, since, of course, if it were freed from its cotton bedding its "associations" might evaporate. The label writer names the man responsible for taking the rib, and how he got it: "Mr. O.O. Hunter of Fort Edward, who participated in the work [of moving the body], secured one of her ribs, here shown." With recognition that "exhibition of such a relic" needed a "precedent," they related the story of Cotton Mather, who "carried as a relic from Plymouth to his home in Boston, the jawbone of the Indian King Phillip." Yet the circumstances given to explain this transgressive object seem far apart. Mather kept the relic seemingly as an object of triumph (though, this was also probably complicated). Hunter, we can assume, didn't seek McCrea's destruction, in fact, he probably sympathized with it. Therefore, it was sympathy that seems to have driven his relic taking, and sympathy that led the Ladies of Rogers Rock to acquire, preserve, and interpret the rib. For the women who preserved and interpreted the story

[264] Per acquisition records at the Fort Ticonderoga Museum. Thanks to curator Matthew Keagle for looking into this.

of Jane McCrea, even in the strange practice of exhibiting one of her ribs, the point was to place a woman at the center of the drama of the American Revolution, in this case, to offer up Jane McCrea's sacrifice along the commonplace sacrifice of male soldiers. Among all the muskets, powder-horns, derelict forts, and Indian weapons, Jane McCrea's tragic death put a white woman at the turning point of an invasion (if she consented to that sacrifice or not). Through the strange cultural alchemy of sacrifice, Jane McCrea's unjust death became the center of the story, turning the tide through sympathy. What better way to invoke her sacrifice than to show her bodily remains? To show how that it was real, that it happened—objects are good at that.

The coda to this story is rather modern, but gives meaning to these two objects—and to the continuing impulse to locate and know the real Jane McCrea. It is germane to the two aforementioned objects, the rib donated by the Ladies of the Rogers Rock Club and that traced by Frank Morgan for Grider's album, since it demonstrates that these loose bones were most likely the real thing. In 2002, David Starbuck, a cultural anthropologist who had grown up in Washington County, where Fort Edward is located, contacted Mrs. Mary McCrea Deeter, the closest living female descendent of Jane McCrea (her distant niece through her brother John). Mary Deeter, even at age 97, happened to have a passionate interest in her famous ancestor, and agreed to help Starbuck conduct a forensic investigation of what remained of Jane McCrea in her grave at the Union Cemetery in Fort Edward. With a petition signed by Mrs. Deeter, the Superior Court in Washington County agreed to allow an exhumation to begin in the Spring of 2003 (after the ground had thawed).

So in the early hours of April 9, 2003 the grave was excavated and a box of human bones was discovered. The bones were cleaned, inventoried, measured and photographed. Using a borrowed bone saw from the local hospital, four bone samples were removed in order to get

DNA samples. There was one skull in the box, and a bevy of miscellaneous bones. After sorting through the bones in the box, three femurs were identified—thus two bodies. The skull indicated considerable age, from the ways the bone had grown over the root holes in the mandibles and the closed sutures of the skull bone. The other set of bones indicated a very young woman—though there had been considerable decay (the soil in Fort Edward is rather acidic). The younger woman's skull was missing, as was many of the limb bones, and almost all of the ribs. Using Mrs. Deeter's mitochondrial DNA, they concluded that the younger body was Jane McCrea, and using a McNeil descendent, that the other was Sara McNeil. The bodies had, in fact, been intermingled, in story and in death. And Jane McCrea's body was not entire.[265]

The investigation, since it was so public and contentious, did prompt some intriguing memories from locals. One woman from Schenectady called Starbuck on the phone to relate the memory of seeing Jane McCrea's entire ribcage on display at Fort Ticonderoga in the 1930s, along with the label: "maybe we shouldn't be displaying this"—a seeming constant sentiment despite the perennial urge to display her bones. Another local told Starbuck that his "mother's mother saw a box of Jane McCrea's bones on display at the Washington County Fair in the late 1800s." Lois Feister, a New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historical Preservation archaeologist found an inventory record for "Item #586: Tooth of Miss Jane McCrea" in the collections of Washington's Headquarters in Newburgh, New York, but the object was never counted again in their collections.[266] These objects, especially after the professionalization of museums in the late nineteenth century, had far more vibrant, albeit historically inaccessible, life

[265] David R. Starbuck, "The Scientific Investigation of Jane McCrea," *Journal of the Washington County Historical Society*, 2004, 11–16.

[266] Ibid., 16–17.

outside of collections. The devoted kept them close, and the less-devoted probably forgot. So a significant portion of Jane McCrea's body remains at large to this day.

The story of the display of Jane McCrea's body evinces a dialectical tension between the necessity and excitement of showing the real material remnants of a frustratingly elusive historical person, and the dread that something was not quite right—that treating a person's body in such a way was transgressive, compounding an original violation against the hapless woman. Those who raided the box of Jane McCrea's bones were called "Ghouls," "sacrilegious vandals," and yet seemed willing to be named, willing to be found, and willing to exhibit these objects to the interested. The women of the Rogers Rock Club, like those of the local DAR, were intent on elevating their heroine of the American Revolution, but in writing a label for the rib of Jane McCrea felt the need to demonstrate precedent for something that verged on transgression (and for their example used a historical instance of purposeful transgression). As Thomas Laquer has recently argued, the dead make claims on us, even in our most dismissive moments of the significance of the dead body. The spirit and life may be gone, the body decays, leaving boney remains, but the dead remain in culture—actively compelling action, meaning-making, and contest. Where the dead are buried, that their location is known, and the integrity of that burial is respected, stubbornly matters.[267]

Here we come to the final word on Jane McCrea. In the first chapter on Jane McCrea we saw how various cultural devices were used to elevate her body to the level of the sacred to give it political power, dependent on Protestant Christian understandings of the efficacy of sacrifice and preexisting visual conceptions of the political significance of the female body. It also showed how fragmentary the information surrounding Jane McCrea's death was. So writers,

[267] Laqueur, *The Work of the Dead*.

artists and poets sought to keep the fragmentary facts intact, but elaborate around them—like painting flesh upon bones. Her significance arose from the political significance of the sacrificed body, which taught lessons about the morality of war, British imperial policy, gender, and the perennial impulse to give tragedy transcendent meaning—and compelled visualization to activate that energy. In the second chapter on Jane McCrea, we were able to see efforts to put flesh around that fragmentary record through pilgrimage and relic-taking, first in visiting the landscape of the massacre, second by singling out specific material markers of that landscape through the identification of the Jane McCrea tree and the spring, and finally by returning to Jane McCrea's body—her original plane of significance. Both chapters show us how fragmentary relics of a historically significant person invited violation of social norms in the service of transcendent aims. A recourse to the sacred invited an amalgam of devotion and desecration in material practice—often occurring simultaneously. What drove relic culture in these cases was not the formal presence of the sacred—like in Catholic relic devotion—but rather that it made the sacred *real,* three dimensional, present in time and tangible space. In the efforts to put flesh on the boney fragments of Jane McCrea's story, the ensuing cacophony of romantic elaboration paved the way for the suspicion of the veracity of the story. Relics didn't tell the story, people do. But relics did ground the story in the real, tangible, and significant—and they conveyed crucial messages. The myth of Jane McCrea, her relics, and her political power were best achieved together.

In 1860 a local poet Lura A. Boies published a selection of poems about her native New York under the title, "Rural Rhymes." The poems hop along to a sing-song meter, and try to juxtapose the drama of centuries of war that fell across upstate New York with its current tranquility after the advance of "civilization." One of Boies' first poems is on "Jane M'Crea."

She begins the poem by setting a scene of the end of a beautiful, tranquil summer day along the banks of the Hudson River. The hills and trees are colored in "burnished gold," complemented by the "crimson of the western fires" of the setting sun, which "Glowed redly on Fort Edward's spires." The poet heads quietly to the pine trees that hover over Jane McCrea's grave: "Silent, as if on holy ground, I neared that angel-guarded mound." And there the poet finds a scarred, old man—a relic of the old wars weeping over the buried relics of Jane: "…down his pale and furrowed cheek / The hot tears glistening ran;". The poet asks him to tell McCrea's story, and so he begins with a triumphant framing of the American Revolution, and by doing so summons the "spirit of that warlike age / I feel its fire within me rage, / My bosom heaves, my old heart swells…"—his body animating the story he is about to tell. While all the surrounding country evacuated from the advancing British and Indian force, "Aside, that morn, from all the crowd" Jane McCrea remains in Fort Edward,

> With downcast face and lips apart
> A new joy thrilling in her heart [that of love].
> Around her like a glory fell, the rich veil of her raven hair,
> The fearless spirit, throbbing high
> Lit up her clear, calm, hazel eye,
> And lent the face bowed meekly there,
> A beauty such as angels wear.

She is killed of course, in the same kind of lurid detail, juxtaposing the savagery of the Indian and the white innocence of Jane. The old veteran is imagined to discover her massacred body, her blood staining her white garments, and intermingling with the pure, nearby spring. "The warm bright life-tide's crimson flow, / Dyed deep her graceful garments' snow," (a line mimicking a Charles Wesley hymn about substitutionary atonement). And mingled with the waters clear, / That in the glad light sparkled near." But there is redemption for Jane's death.

> On Saratoga's battle plains,
> Where low the British standard lay,

The murdered maiden's gory stains,
In British blood were washed away.
The glory of that triumph day
Avenged the death of Jane McCrea.[268]

Blood atoning for guilt, glory giving tragedy meaning, amid the fragments.

[268] Lura Anna Boies, *Rural Rhymes* (Saratoga Springs: G.M. Davison, 1860), 17–27.

CHAPTER 5 THE MYSTIC: CAPTURING ELIAS HICKS' ELUSIVE LIGHT, 1800-1831

> About this life, this Personality—neither soldier, nor scientist, nor littérateur—I propose to occupy a few minutes in fragmentary talk, to give some few mélanges, disconnected impressions, statistics, resultant groups, pictures, thoughts of him, or radiating from him.
>
> -Walt Whitman, 1888.

Walt Whitman saw Elias Hicks as a young boy in "Brooklyn City" in the summer of 1829. He remembered his "father coming home toward sunset from his day's work as carpenter, and saying briefly, as he throws down his kindling-blocks with a bounce on the kitchen floor, 'Come, mother, Elias preaches to-night.'" As a "special reward" for good behavior, Whitman wrote, "I was allow'd to go also." Upon arriving at the hall, Whitman remembered that it was a "strange place for religious devotions," for Hicks preached in a "handsome ball-room, on Brooklyn Heights, overlooking New York, and in full sight of that great city." But "Elias preaches anywhere—no respect to buildings—private or public houses, school-rooms, barns, even theatres—any-thing that will accommodate." The ball room in "Morrisons Hotel" was a "large, cheerful, gay-color'd room with glass chandeliers bearing myriads of sparkling pendants, plenty of settees and chars, and a sort of velvet divan running all round the side-walls." Hicks had attracted "many of the fashionables out of curiosity" along with the "principal dignitaries of the town," Navy officers, young people, "richly dress'd women." The opulence of the room and the fashionable crowd was juxtaposed with "a slightly elevated platform at the head of the room, facing the audience," full of "a dozen or more Friends, most of them elderly, grim, and with their broad-brimm'd hats on their heads. Three or four women, too, in their characteristic Quaker costumes and bonnets. All still as the grave."

Then came the moment when Hicks rose to speak, "after a pause and stillness becoming almost painful." The eighty-year old Quaker stood "for a moment or two without a word. A tall, straight figure, neither stout nor very thin, dress'd in drab cloth, clean-shaved face, forehead of great expanse, and large and clear black eyes, long or middling-long white hair…his head still wearing the

broad-brim." Whitman couldn't recall the specifics of his sermons: "I cannot follow the discourse," but he remembered vividly how Hicks looked, sounded, and performed. The way his sermons would swell, becoming "very fervid, and in the midst of its fervor he takes the broad-brim hat from his head, and almost dashing it down with violence on the seat behind, continues with uninterrupted earnestness." He continued to preach with a "pleading, tender, nearly agonizing conviction, and magnetic stream of natural eloquence, before which all minds and natures, all emotions, high or low, gentle or simple, yielded entirely without exception, was [the sermon's] cause, method, and effect." And this effect was indexed by the reactions of his listeners: "Many, very many were in tears."[269]

For Whitman, Hicks was a natural American genius. Of the "sort of nature of persons I have compared to little rills of water, fresh from perennial springs."[270] His life was a "curious quiet yet busy life centred in a little country village on Long Island, and within sound on nights of the mystic surfbeat of the sea," whose genius "running parallel and contemporary with all" the great men of the previous eighty years—"Sir Joshua Reynolds…Kant…Walter Scott…Byron…Robert Burns…Wellington at Waterloo."[271] At that sermon that night in Brooklyn, and "at the many scores and hundreds—even thousands—of his discourses—as at this one—he was very mystical and radical, and had much to say of the "light within."[272] The sermon that night was one of his "old never-remitted appeals to that moral mystical portion of human nature, *the inner light*."[273]

The inner or inward light is and was the signature doctrine of Quakerism. By taking it up so single-mindedly, Hicks argued that nothing "but this inward light and law, as it is heeded and obey'd,

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[269] Walt Whitman, *Complete Poetry and Collected Prose*, ed. Justin Kaplan, Library of America [3] (New York, N.Y.: Literary Classics of the United States, 1982), 1233–34.

[270] Ibid., 1221.

[271] Ibid., 1223.

[272] Ibid., 1234.

[273] Ibid., 1239.

ever did, or ever can, make a true and real Christian and child of God." His call was utopian, anti-doctrinal, and hearkened back to the founding of Quakerism. His "old never-remitted appeal" to the inner light was a call for return, to the simple beginnings of the Quaker faith—and he was a physical specimen of return—eighteenth century clothes, broad-brimmed hat, stark features. He was like a walking, talking, itinerating relic of a past Quakers had left behind. But there he was, clean-shaven, dressed in neat, but dated eighteenth century clothes—pleading for his fellow Friends to return.

This chapter is about the ways Quakers tried to capture Elias Hicks' witness—his Light—before his death, in both sermon and bodily image. I will argue that their efforts were aimed at capturing a figure who was stubbornly elusive. Unlike Whitefield, Hicks resisted being apprehended in any way. And yet, as we will see, Hicks retained a belief that the outer was an index of the inward. So as much as he resisted attempts to capture his sermons and image, worrying that it might invite idolatry, he embraced the idea of materiality—if true to nature—as a means of accessing true spirit, which for Hicks was the essence of being. The chapter begins by giving some context on who Elias Hicks was and his elusive, itinerant presence in Quaker communities in early America. I then turn to the efforts to capture his "witness," in word and image. I finish with the immediate efforts to commemorate his death. The next chapter will deal with how this culture contracted with an eccentric artist to dig Hicks up the night after his death to make a death mask, which I argue would act as a kind of indexical relic, capturing Hicks' body and "character" more than any other thing.

Elias Hicks as Specimen of Quaker Return

Elias Hicks was born on the marshy coast of Long Island on May 30, 1748. He was born into a family of Quakers, but he had drifted from the rigor of the community in his early years, in part, it seems, because of the death of his mother. In the memoir of his own life that he recorded in his posthoumously publish *Journal of the Life and Religious Labours of Elias Hicks* (1832), he pointed to one summer when he was about 13 as a particularly moral low point. He had been sent to live

with his older brother for the summer, and lived, he noted, "almost without any restraint." There was the requisite early American wild behavior: "horse races, card playing, and other vain amusements." In these, he "lost his youthful innocence and became considerably hardened in sin and vanity." As the years went by, the wild living continued, including it seems some "bundling"—the practice of young people spending the nights together in bed. But as his teenage years passed, he was increasingly drawn into nature with his gun and his fishing pole, away from "my vain companions" and their "many excesses." Yet it was on the dancefloor one night where his life changed, what many early Friends called "a day of visitation": "the Lord was graciously near, and as my cry was secretly to him for strength, he enabled me to covenant with him."[274] He left the dance and entered the confines of the local Quaker community, never to leave, he vowed to live within the "hedge," as it was known.

His connection with the Society of Friends was sealed with his marriage to Jemima Seaman in 1771; her family were wealthy farmers, and she was an only child. The new couple moved onto the Jemima's family farm, which they took over six years later after the death of Jemima's parents. This farm, and Jemima's management thereof, would be the economic bedrock of Hick's itinerancy. He began as a "traveling minister" in 1779, chosen by his local meeting to attend to a dispute in Philadelphia, crossing British and Continental lines on his way to the meeting. In a tradition without ordained ministry, ministers were recognized. After 1722 they would be "recorded" by their local meetings, and would maintain the status of minister for the remainder of their lives. These ministers would sit above the elders in the benches at the front of the meeting house, facing the rest. Many ministers, after feeling the call to travel "among Friends," would receive certificates from their local meeting, which would authorize them to itinerate. The local meeting then would take responsibility

[274] Elias Hicks, *Journal of the Life and Religious Labours of Elias Hicks*, ATLA Monograph Preservation Program ATLA Fiche 1990-4292 (New-York: I. T. Hopper, 1832), 5–10; Paul Buckley, *The Essential Elias Hicks* (San Francisco: Inner Light Books, 2013), 2–3.

for the care of the minister's kin and business while they were away. As Pink Dandelion describes the role of the traveling minster: "their activity was often directed to the nurture of the church rather than to mission."[275] But public engagement was common. And Hicks was particularly interested in engaging non Quakers.

Elias Hicks itinerated off and on across the Atlantic seaboard from 1779-1820, without much notice. But in the late 1810s his movement had begun to generate heat. One reason was a general reckoning within the Society which is an extremely complicated historical moment. I will briefly sketch its outlines here. After the Seven Years War, powerful mid-Atlantic Quakers had largely retreated from American public life in areas of the country they had dominated, most of all in Pennsylvania. The watershed moment was the Penn's Creek Massacre, which exposed the Quaker inability to handle French incursions in Pennsylvania during the French and Indian War. Afterwards, Quaker life became increasingly insular.[276] Quaker mercantile activity persisted unabated, especially between the urban Quaker centers of London and Philadelphia, aided by a significant Quaker shipping community.[277] Even if their riches grew, the Quaker movement was in clear demographic decline. The requirement to marry within the Society had led to poor intergenerational transfer of religious and social identity. The fervor to bring in new members had largely disappeared. Quaker historians have called this the "Quietist" period. For those who remained, Quakers had become not just a religious tradition but a people, a kind of ethnicity. Many young people tired of the peculiarity. As Quakers relinquished their political presence, they became increasingly involved in social reform,

[275] Pink Dandelion, *An Introduction to Quakerism* (Cambridge, UK ; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 64.

[276] Sydney E Ahlstrom, *A Religious History of the American People*, Second Edition (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004).

[277] Frederick Barnes Tolles, *Meeting House and Counting House; the Quaker Merchants of Colonial Philadelphia, 1682-1763.*, Norton Library, N211 (New York, Norton, 1963).

most of all, antislavery, and this placed many urban Quakers in close proximity to evangelical reformers in London and Philadelphia. In these contexts, Quaker reformers realized that they were not so different than their evangelical counterparts—especially in terms of activism and felt religious experience. Many Quakers in these circles absorbed evangelical assumptions, and began to place increasing emphasis on the divinity and salvation of Jesus, the Bible, and an interest in regulating Quaker belief within the lines of "Orthodox" Christianity. These urban Quakers wanted to narrate commonality within the broader Christian frame. Their opponents, "reformers," who were mostly rural, poorer, and more inclined towards a lack of any doctrinal restriction, what they saw as "primitive" Quakerism. The reformers saw the evangelicals' efforts as a turn away from the revelatory role of the "inward light" in personal life and local community.

Hicks began increasingly to speak for the reforming side, noting that "Christ was our head, and we need no other." Being associated with the New York Yearly Meeting, he was able to itinerate above the control of the Philadelphia elders, as long as he could obtain certificates (which he did with relative ease). And after 1817 he itinerated increasingly within the Philadelphia orbit, as H. Larry Ingle writes, "there to make his contacts, rally his friends, and, like a sting nettle, irritate the elders."[278] His cousin, the artist Edward Hicks, identified the evangelical-leaning yearly meeting in Philadelphia as, "the radical caus of the great defesincys and departures from primitive purity and perfection."[279] Here Hicks framed the debate, in which his cousin increasingly became the figurehead of the reforming side, as one about the past—primitive, pure, and perfect. What emerged was a conflation between the primitive purity of the apostolic church and the Quaker golden age

[278] H. Larry Ingle, *Quakers in Conflict: The Hicksite Reformation*, 1st ed. (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1986), 77.

[279] Quoted in ibid., 78.

(1650s-1750s). The debate would only heat up in the 1820s, leading to the great schism between the reformers, who became known as "Hicksites" after Elias Hicks, and the "Evangelicals."

And it was Hicks' ideas in particular that became the center of attention. Hicks accused the evangelicals of making an idol of both the Bible, Jesus, and doctrine itself—and for diluting the Quaker witness of plainness. Evangelicals in kind accused Hicks of heresy, an accusation that centered on his views of Christ and the Bible (also the Virgin Birth and the afterlife, but many of these accusations misrepresented him). Hicks' Christology was, as Thomas Hamm writes, "that Jesus was not *born* as the Christ. Instead, he *became* the Christ, the Son of God, because He had been the only human being ever to live in perfect obedience to the Divine Light that was within Him."[280] In terms of the Bible, Hicks affirmed that the scriptures were a constant source of religious inspiration, but their greatest value was that "they have instructed me home to the sure unchangeable foundation, the light within." For Hicks, true Quaker belief was that of continual revelation, derived from the seed of God within the self. Here he diverged from the classic Protestant belief in *sola scriptura:* "Is it possible that men can be guilty of greater idolatry than to esteem and hold the Scriptures as the only rule of faith and practice, by which they place them in the very seat of God and worship them as God?" Here Hicks had turned the Protestant critique of idolatry back upon the foundation of the Reformation itself, and made an argument for the singularity, if not the superiority, of Quakerism in its rejection of any form of mediation. Even Jesus's mediation between humans and God, typically explained in 1 John 2:1 (and elsewhere), was suspect: "there was no external mediator," declared Hicks, "between God and his ☞creature man under the Gospel." What made the Hicksite-evangelical debate even more complicated, as Hamm notes, "was the fact that Hicks was not a systematic, or

[280] Thomas D. Hamm, *The Quakers in America*, Columbia Contemporary American Religion Series (New York: Columbia University Press, 2003), 40–43.

even consistent theologian."[281] He wrote different things to different people, and contradictory reports abounded. He was a hard man to pin down.

If he was difficult to pinpoint as a religious thinker, Hicks was happy to write letters to answer accusations, and did so with an evident awareness that they might end up in print. He wrote his journals with a clear sense that they would be published, though his editors after his death would edit out his mysticism (just as John Woolman's editors had).[282] Letters and journals were accepted, established and traditional means of Quaker memory making, and became essential sources for understanding the collective "witness" of past Friends. But Hicks refused to have his sermons recorded. The reason was that his preaching was a result of the leadings of the Inward Light, and to write them down for preservation violated the very idea of the extemporaneous leadings of the Sprit. This led to a constant problem of people hearing Hicks say something that offended them in Meeting, challenging him in print, and Hicks responding that the accuser had "perverted my words," or that the impulse to shame him in print was "a wicked design to undervalue my reputation as a minister among Friends."[283] Since the bulk of his ministry was extemporaneous preaching, these accusations followed him everywhere. He moved a lot. Even at his old age he travelled as far west as Indiana—crossing the Appalachian Mountains in the winter of 1828—as far north as Canada, as south as North Carolina. People had to see him in life to understand him. They had to see him in life to know what he said. But for many that was not enough.

Capturing Light

[281] Ibid., 40.

[282] Buckley, *The Essential Elias Hicks*.

[283] Elisha Bates, *A View of the Sentiments of Elias Hicks: Respecting Future Rewards and Punishments* (Thomas Kite, 1829), 4.

Despite Hicks' desire to the contrary, there was a project to collect his words and his sermons. Joseph and Edward Parker had hired a stenographer, James M.T. Gould, to follow Elias Hicks around Philadelphia in 1825 to record his sermons. The Parker brothers admitted that Hicks "has had no concern in the publication of these discourses ; and that he declined examining the printed sheets previous to publication." But all in all, the Parker brothers assured their readers, the sermons "will be found mostly correct," since for a "faithful copy [of the sermons], as they were delivered…much care has been used." But they weren't perfect either. The Parker brothers apologized to their readers, "in consequence of an unfavorable position for hearing, occupied by the Stenographer, in very crowded assemblies, together with his want of acquaintance with the voice and manner of the speaker, and his rapid utterance." The stenographer, probably more accustomed to the court house than the meeting house struggled to keep up with the preacher. There was his antiquated speech, the unfamiliarity with the cadence of a Quaker meeting, the crowds stuffed shoulder to shoulder in the small meetinghouses, and the poor acoustics. Hicks' would sit down for periods, remain quiet, and then unpredictably stand up and begin preaching again. Thus, for the purposes of accuracy, asterisks were used in the text to "indicate where sentences or parts of sentences have been lost." Large spaces between paragraphs were used to "show that the speaker here rose again, after having taken his seat." Hicks was an elusive quarry. Gould, the stenographer, followed up with his own note at the beginning of the tract, sounding a bit less optimistic than the publishers, stating that he had "endeavoured to give an impartial copy of the discourses as delivered," but the difficulties of "hearing, and the inconvenience of writing in a crowded gallery, without a benefit of a table" were real.[284] Light was hard to capture.

[284] Ibid., iii–v.

The demand for Hicks' image emerged simultaneously. But this was a demand that could not be satisfied easily. Hicks would not assent to having his image taken for public consumption, and he did not commission his own portrait. This is not surprising given the leitmotif of many of his sermons was idolatry. "Most of the worship in Christendom," he preached in 1825, "is idolatry, dark and blind idolatry; for all outward worship is so, - it is the mere worship of images." Even if one was to summon an "image merely in the imagination, it is an idol." It is a strong line, but it reflected his approach to materiality, as not substance, but index of substance, true substance was Godself. "Oh! that our minds might be enlightened, --that our hearts might be opened, --that we might know the difference between the thing and the thing."[285]

But like the Parker brothers, artists were dispatched to the meeting house to secretly sketch his features anyways. One of the most famous images of Hicks—widely distributed throughout the Quaker network—was originally drawn by famous portraitist Henry Inman in New York, sometime in 1829. [Figure 32] The study for the subsequent oil-on-canvas painting and engraving was sketched surreptitiously in the "public gallery of the meeting house at different times when Elias Hicks was preaching, his presence unknown to the preacher."[286] Another portrait in oil, by Harry Ketchum, recognized as "not a high class work of art," remained in private hands until it was circulated in photograph prints in the late nineteenth century. It too "was painted during the lifetime of the subject [Hicks], without his knowledge,

[285] Quoted in Samuel M. Janney, "The Doctrines of Elias Hicks," in *History of the Religious Society of Friends, from Its Rise to the Year 1828*, vol. 4 (Philadelphia, 1867), 13.

[286] Henry Watson Wilbur, *The Life and Labors of Elias Hicks*, ATLA Monograph Preservation Program ATLA Fiche 1990-5383 (Philadelphia: Friends' General Conference Advancement Committee, 1910), 233–34. The oil portrait is in private hands—a image of it is on the cover of Buckley, *The Essential Elias Hicks*.. The subsequent engraving is sometimes described as being after the painting, but this is incorrect.

from studies made at Friends' Meetings."[287] Prior to this, a successful portrait was drawn, engraved, and sold by "J.W. Steel," whose first composition was "Drawn from memory." [Figure 33]. Steel, a Quaker, advertised his print portrait in newspapers that he knew Quakers read, and in places where there were large numbers of them—Brooklyn, New York; Nantucket and Martha's Vineyard; Rhode Island; and, most of all, in Philadelphia. In the advertisement of his second edition, Steel gave a history of the "miniature engraving." "The picture from which the above print is engraved was first drawn in 1822," he wrote. His 1826 edition declared that it was "Drawn from memory,"[288] But for the subsequent editions he took his sketch to see Hicks in life, "at frequent opportunities corrected in 1824, 26, and 29."[289] Thus Steel advertised his image is an iterative vision of Hick's presence in meeting, a corrected embodied memory. Steel's Hicks was set into a beveled frame, and given the ¾ turn of a traditional portrait sitting. The print is composed on the page as if it is a picture on a wall, providing a concentrated view of the preacher in the meetinghouse, sitting quiet, at rest, on the rear of the minister's bench. The body of Hicks is cut in "busto" form, the ink-filled incisions on the plate evaporating into plain paper where the body should continue, or the background should begin. The view is distant, but registers the broad iconic elements of Hicks ministry—the broad brimmed hat, the antiquated

[287] Henry B. Seaman, "Elias Hicks: His Portrait and Bust at Swarthmore College" LXVIII, no. 29 (Seventh Month 1911): 449–50.

[288] J.W. Steel, *Elias Hicks*, Print, 1826.

[289] "ELIAS HICKS. J.W. Steel's Miniature Engraving of ELIAS HICKS, (Second Edition) Is Now Ready.," *Philadelphia Inquirer*, March 16, 1830.

coat, the high collar, the escaping scraggly hair, the large nose, the penetrating eyes—the walking, talking, relic of the Quaker golden age.

His resistance against the image was because, as one nineteenth century admirer wrote, "any attempt to perpetuate one's likeness was a vain and frivolous thing."[290] The plainness testimony, which Hicks articulated consistently, did not necessarily prohibit portraits. As Diane Johnson has shown many Quakers had portraits made, and worked out their simplicity in diverse and personal ways. Johnson has scanned the disciplines of the Delaware Valley in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries and concludes that "there appear to have been no formal disciplines banning paintings or portraits."[291] Plainness did not necessarily mean asceticism or anti-materialism, as early America Quaker material culture demonstrates clearly. It is probably best understood as a theological concept of removing mediation, distraction, or noise, if you will, so as to apprehend God's simple truth.[292] And this simplicity was best recognized in nature's forms. A large mahogany high chest, as Susan Garfinkel has observed, could be "plain if it exists in silence according to the plainness of God's truth."[293] Mahogany was the work of God, a material truth thereof. The work of the pious furniture artist was to let the Mahogany quietly reveal its inner light, to sing of itself. Thus simple beauty, the hallmark of the more famous Shaker material culture, was the essence of Quaker aesthetics. Quakers observers regularly observed that Hick's oratory embraced this aesthetic, the "simplicity in his style," wrote a

[290] "[On Hicks and Portraiture]," n.d., Friends Historical Library, Swarthmore College.

[291] Diane C. Johnson, "Living in the Light" Quakerism and Colonial Portraiture," in *Quaker Aesthetics: Reflections on a Quaker Ethic in American Design and Consumption*, ed. Emma J. Lapsansky-Werner and Anne A. Verplanck (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2003), 123.

[292] Johnson, "Living in the Light" Quakerism and Colonial Portraiture."

[293] Susan Garfinkel, "Discipline, Discourse and Deviation: The Material Life of Philadelphia Quakers, 1762-1781" (M.A. Thesis, University of Delaware, 1986), 47.

correspondent to the *Upland Union* in 1826, "which is the gift of nature alone, that every one who ever heard Elias Hicks cannot but admire."

Although there was no formal discipline against portraiture—more of a cultural frown—portraiture was a plane of potential enhancement that made it suspect, entangled in a world of worldly goods. "If there were those whom they loved," Clarkson noted that Quakers would *not* honor this love by setting "fleshly images before their eyes." Rather, they would preserve their "best actions in their thoughts, as worthy of imitation…perpetuated rather in loving hearts, and kept alive in the edifying conversation of their descendants." Not in "perishing tablets of canvas, fixed upon the walls of their habitations." Thus "no portraits are to be seen of many of these great and eminent men in the society, who are now mingled with the dust."[294] This was a vision of primitive Quakerism that Hicks sought to renew within the Society, but his adherents would not be satisfied with treasuring his actions in their hearts; they needed a material analog, indeed a "fleshly image."

Hicks reached back into the image-resistant Quaker past to resist the image, but this did not mean he scorned the body. Hicks stated, "what seems to be my mission among my fellow creatures, is to endeavor to lead the mind of my fellow creatures to the substance, and not to the shadow," but his mission had a counterintuitive impulse, since he named "every thing external as nothing but shadow," and yet the shadow remained related, perhaps necessarily so, to the immaterial real.[295] The essence of reality was within, "the Spirit of God, in the spirit of man, both invisible to all the outward comprehension of the creature." [296] He insisted that the soul

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[294] Thomas Clarkson, *A Portraiture of Quakerism*, vol. 2 (New York: no. 111, Water-street, 1806), 82–83.

[295] Elias Hicks, *A Series of Extemporaneous Discourses, Delivered in the Several Meetings of the Society of Friends, in Philadelphia, Germantown, Abington, Byberry, Newton, Falls, and Trenton*, ed. M. T. C. [Marcus Tullius Cicero] Gould (Philadelphia: I. Ashmead & Co. Publishers, 1825), 12–13, http://hdl.handle.net/2027/loc.ark:/13960/t0ks7n22c.

could not be materialized or visualized in any way—"We feel that we have something powerful within us, operating upon this animal machine, but we can form no figure or likeness of it." *But* it could be sensed—"We feel we have it—we feel its power." The Inward Light, therefore, "is as self-evident to us as the operation of the light and heat of the sun in the outward. So it is that the outward is like an index." For Hicks the soul was immaterial substance, and the material world was, at best, an pale reflection of that deeper, more substantial reality, of which God was the eternal substance. "There is no recipient for that revelation but the soul of man." Therefore the body was seen as architecture for the housing of the soul within which God could commune with people: "Man is a tabernacle for the soul, during the day of probation." Therefore, as he stated at so many of his meetings, "There is one thing necessary in this crowded assembly, and that is, for us individually, to endeavor to be still. The importance and seriousness of the occasion upon which we have assembled demand it." A settling of the body allowed the inner light to shine—the only enduring reality present in the person. "Every visible thing must come to an end," Hicks told a congregation in Philadelphia, "and we must know the mortality of it."[297] Hicks, in his approach to materiality, was a true radical, and was iconoclastic in his approach to both images and things. Materiality would fade, the light would remain.

The Quaker love of the silhouette—the shadow—was not unrelated to Hicks' vision of both the body and his rejection of materiality as enduring reality.[298] And it was the only visual form that Hicks assented to. In many ways, it could act as an object lesson in Quaker ideas of

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[296] Ibid.

[297] Ibid., 11.

[298] Anna Cox Brinton, *Quaker Profiles, Pictorial and Biographical,* Pendle Hill Publications: Art History. PH P2 (Wallingford, Pa Pendle Hill Publications 1964, 1964); Wendy Bellion, "Heads of State: Profiles and Politics in Jeffersonian America," in *New Media, 1740-1915*, ed. Lisa Gitelman and Geoffrey B. Pingree (Cambridge, Mass.: The MIT Press, 2003), 31–59.

the body. If materiality was the "shadow" as Hicks insisted, and spirit was the "substance," the form made visible in the silhouette depicted the shadow of the material self, and in its empty space it invoked, but did not depict, the spirit within. The spirit was theoretically (and theologically) undepictable. The negative space, therefore, was the real, the "substance"—substance rendered visible through absence. There are three silhouettes of Hicks. The major one was done by Richard Field, a Friend in Brooklyn who "made it a practice to take these shadow profiles of Friends, when they visited his home." But the use was private, it did not circulate until years later after it was discovered in Field's silhouette book.[299] The silhouette, in its most pure form, is a line of the body in profile. The line could be cut freehand by scissors or knife by an artist, thereby demonstrating their genius in replicating nature. Or it could rely on so-called natural means. Perhaps a complicated apparatus like the physignotrace, which used a mechanical "index" to draw the line.[300] But Field's silhouette in particular was "from a shadow taken from life," a result of light falling across the body, an index of the real presence of a fellow Friend in his home. These were *shadow* profiles, which meant that the artist absented herself from the equation and handing over the drawing to light, thereby letting "nature's pencil," to use Whitman's phrase, do the drawing, if you will, and the artist's role, then, was to trace nature. The artist could reduce (often using architect's tools) the image and cut it out, but the work had been done by tracing where light met shadow. The space within the body became a negative space for

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[299] Richard Field, *Silhouette of Elias Hicks*, Cut Paper, April 1829, Friends Historical Library, Swarthmore College. Gift of Bliss Forbush. Richard Field was a Quaker who lived at 135 Willow Street, in Brooklyn, N.Y. According to the label written by Henry B. Seaman, at the Friends Historical Library at Swarthmore, Field "made it a practice to take there shadow profiles of Friends, when they visited his home.. He[ill.] very expert, - and had a large collection, --of which this was one, - The profile was reduced, and cut out by Richard Field with nice accuracy." See also Henry B. Seaman, "To the Editor," *Friends Intelligencer*, May 1937, Friends Historical Library, Swarthmore College.

[300] Wendy Bellion, "Heads of State: Profiles and Politics in Jeffersonian America."

the presence of the inner light. The inner light did not shine in material things, and the profile taught this. "spirit cannot beget a material body," Hicks insisted. But it shone in people in that aspect of their selves that they could sense but not handle. A dematerialized plane within a material boundary—sensate but immaterial—this was Hicks' anthropology.

But we can also think of the silhouette and its embrace among Quakers, and Hicks himself, in more directly spatial terms. The figural silence inside the line stood waiting to be filled in by the Light. Hicks understood the body in architectural terms, and in this context the best analog was the Quaker meeting house itself, a tabernacle designed to encompass a collectivity of "tabernacles of the spirit." It too, like the silhouette, was a shell that waited to be filled by the bodies of other Friends, like nested containers in which the inner light shone. In the absence of figural, sartorial, or physiognomic detail, the interior space of the silhouette was quiet, like the meeting house should be, like the stillness of the body should be, to allow God to speak, shine. This begs the question: when admiring Quakers looked at Hicks' image, no less his silhouette, did they hear him? See him in the dim light of the meeting house, in profile, quarter turn, straight on? In the image, was there a kind of visual synesthesia? Did they hear his voice? Did they hear his silence? Could they separate his body—his "tabernacle"—from his light? Hicks radically urged them to make this separation, but, as we will see, people could not. Even in their ardent admiration of Hicks, they could not live without his physical form, in word or image.

Hicks Dies.

Shortly after Whitman saw Hicks in Brooklyn in November of 1829, Hicks' wife Jemima passed away. Hicks was devastated. About a month later, he was "seized with a stroke of paralysis" on February 14th, after writing a letter to a Friend in Ohio." He could recognize friends

and family thereafter, and apparently was able to "give them satisfactory evidence that his mind was tranquil and happy, and that he looked forward to blessed immortality." He had foreshadowed the end the previous year; one admirer remembered that in "his meetings with his friends, he expressed a presentiment that his work was nearly completed." Perhaps in recognition of his failing health, his Journals were published in advance of his death—a proper monument to an itinerant Quaker life. When Hicks first died the notices were simple and sparse, as he would have wanted them. "DIED…At his residence, at Jericho, L. I., ELIAS HICKS. He was advanced in years."[301] Traditional Quaker practice saw the funeral as a strictly simple affair, the ideal was to dig a hole, take the body to the grave, cover it, and walk away. An unmarked grave was preferable. If the family insisted on a marker, it was best if it was flat to the ground, and merely noted the name. It is not that Quakers thought the dead were unimportant. But their lives, once again, should be registered in their journals, or letters to other Friends—these were the manuscript vestiges of these past witnesses. The Hicks family followed this traditional Quaker practice, though newspapers reported that "an immense number of people, many of whom came from a great distance to give this last token of respect to one of 'nature's noblemen.'" attended the funeral.[302] Many of the notices recognized him as the "founder" of "his particular code of religion" and that the fall out from the schism "will probably continue for many years after the death of its lamented founder" [303]

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[301] "DIED," *Baltimore Gazette and Daily Advertiser,* February 20, 1830, p. 3. See also "DIED," *Baltimore Patriot and Mercantile Advertiser*, February 22, 1830, p. 3. The advertisements of his death appeared in largely similar format from Virginia to Massachusetts within days. Some letters from Long Island seem to contradict the news, namely that he was sick, "still alive, but in a very feeble state of body." "On Wednesday Last…" *National Gazette and Literary Register* [Philadelphia, PA], February 23, 1830. The time of death was finally confirmed in a Philadelphia paper, "On the 27th ult. at his residence in Jericho, Long Island, the venerable Elias Hicks, in the 82d year of his age, an eminent Minister in the Society of Friends." "Died," *Philadelphia Inquirer*, March 1, 1830, p. 2.

[302] "From the Brooklyn (L.I.) Star," *Evening Post* [New York, NY], March 16, 1830, p. 1.

[303] "Worse and Worse," *Philadelphia Inquirer*, March 3, 1830, p. 2.

But a simple death notice and the publication of his journals would not be enough. A week after his death J.W. Steel emerged again to announce the second edition of his "miniature engraving of ELIAS HICKS." Whereas Steel's previous engraving had been "drawn from memory," this second edition had been "corrected in 1824, 26 and 29, the last time E. H. was in the city, and is considered a very correct resemblance." Steel had to rely on memory for the initial composition, but thereafter took his paper and pen to the meeting house to correct the image of the elusive man from life. What was more, was that it was the last impression of a life now gone. Steel appealed to the desire to capture Hicks as he was on the cusp of death. Steel seems to have recognized that taking image from a man who did not desire it might not be appropriate given his ethos of returning to Quaker simplicity. But he assured his potential customers that the "drawing originated through esteem for that illustrious individual," and that Steel was not alone in that sentiment, "it was thought probable there would be those fond of perpetuating the recollection of his features in their minds." This had been the original source of the print, an image of Hicks in the mind from whence "the print was engraved therefrom." It was "offered to the friends of E.H. of every denomination, as an eternal memento of distinguished excellence and purity"—a material vestige of a man mouldering in the grave, an object veering towards the relic. Excellence and purity cohered in the engraving, and it would be eternally present, embodying elusive memories for a living polity.[304] We will look at a contemporaneous moment where an artist and a collective of admirers would go much further. John Browere and Elias Hicks's lives, practices, and the philosophical systems intersected over Hicks' grave in Jericho, Long Island on a cold night in February 1830. The next chapter will

[304] "Be it Remembered," and "Elias Hicks," *Philadelphia Inquirer*, March 9, 1830, p. 1, 3. Steel, for his trouble, also secured the copyright for the engraving, hoping to stave off pirate copies.

narrate how this came to be, by first looking at the rumors surrounding the bust affair, secondly at the main figures behind the venture, and thirdly at the subsequent court case.

CHAPTER 6: THE CHARACTER: ELIAS HICKS'S CORPSE AND INDEXICAL CAPTURE, 1831-1870

> The facts are simply these: At the death of Elias Hicks, who had been for many years an intimate of my father, I, in common with several others of his friends and relatives, was anxious to procure a portrait bust of this good man, as both a testimony of the respect to his memory, and with a view to hand down his image in connection with his character to posterity
>
> Samuel Clement, 1832.

In the winter of 1831, John Browere, an eccentric Brooklyn sculptor, was in trouble. He was behind on rent, and low on income. One morning in February, he looked outside his window to find his house surrounded by deputized men, their guns aimed at his house. They had reason to come armed. Browere had a reputation for fighting; he styled himself as a kind of American gladiator. One young art student remembered Browere as a "giant in strength," and "in his eccentric humors," he would "strip himself like a boxer, and show us the muscles of the chest, shoulders, and what he called the torso of a fighting gladiator and Hercules in repost; all of which struck our unsophisticated minds as illustrating 'high art.'"[305] He not only loved to brag (and show) people his physique, but was not shy about telling stories of his violent exploits. When the armed men called out to Browere to surrender, he was probably confused, but not surprised. He owed rent; he had enemies, and his grocer has advanced him more than she should. The winter had been hard; his landlord later testified in court that Browere was in "great distress," and owed $120 in back rent. Browere needed a payday, not the weight of the law. But the armed crowd wasn't looking for money, and they did not intend to pay him. They were looking for sculpture, and that he had. With court papers in hand to back their pointed pistols—

[305] Thomas Bangs Thorpe, "Reminiscences of Charles L. Elliott, Artist, Published to Meet the Demand Not Supplied by the Regular Editions of the 'Evening Post,'" *Evening Post*, 1868.

they made their demands for Browere to surrender a series of busts and an originating mold to the sheriff of the local Superior Court. The sculpted busts they sought were of one man—Elias Hicks, an itinerant Quaker preacher who had died the year before at the ripe age of eighty-eight. Hicks was the most famous and controversial Quaker in America in the 1820s.[306]

Upon his death in February of 1830, as we saw in the last chapter, he was both vilified by his opponents and sainted by his admirers. As one nineteenth century reviewer noted, looking back: "His friends and admirers have thought him almost an apostle, while his enemies and opposers seem to regard him as a sort of Lucifer."[307] Despite his death, in Browere's studio Elias Hicks sat lifelike in sculpted busts. The decapitated plaster heads, in their uncanny realism, both defied death and invoked it. One relative of Hicks noted in 1831 that the busts looked "very much like the original [Elias]" but "part of the countenance appears as if taken after death." Other artists agreed—they couldn't tell if "whether the busts produced were taken from a living or dead figure."[308] There was reason for the debate over these objects, for they were, in Marcia Pointon words, "artifacts at the edge"—tipping between life and death, between art and science—and I will add—between the sacred and the profane.[309] Browere's busts of Hicks were based on a death mask, taken the night after Hicks' funeral and burial. Even though Hicks and his family had refused Browere's desire to make the cast of the elderly Quaker, Browere and a

[306] The above narrative has been pieced together from the following sources: "Busts of Elias Hicks. Superior Court," *Nantucket Inquirer*, April 6, 1831, Friends Historical Library, Swarthmore College; "Busts of Elias Hicks," *Evening Post*, May 25, 1831; Samuel E. Clement, "To the Public," *The United States Telegraph*, February 14, 1832.

[307] George W. Burnap, *Review of the Life, Character, and Writings of Elias Hicks [Reprinted from the Christian Examiner for November]* (Cambridge, Mass.: Unknown, 1851), 3.

[308] "Busts of Elias Hicks. Superior Court."

[309] Marcia Pointon, "Casts, Imprints, and the Deathliness of Things: Artifacts at the Edge," *The Art Bulletin* 96, no. 2 (2014): 170–95. On the "uncanny" of sculpted objects in a *very different* context, see Brown, "Reification, Reanimation, and the American Uncanny."

circle of Quaker admirers took the cast anyway—they would have their image if the man or his kin consented to it or not.[310] But why would they go to such great lengths? What did they want to possess? What did they want to know? What did they want to relive?

I will argue that this unexpected bodily capture was intended to reanimate Hicks and preserve him for posterity through objects that negotiated the troubling division between life and death. The information of his self, captured through the impression of his dead body, could live on in a plaster bust. Browere and Hicks' supporters were trying to create an indexical relic of the sainted man, an object directly related to his real body which preserved his corporality for posterity. The functions of that relic would be diverse. To create a bust of the man and install it in the simplicity of Quaker domestic space would not only embody the memories of his "witness," as Quakers called it, but also elevate Hicks to the ranks of the great historical people of their era. For the Quakers that called themselves "Hicksite," Elias Hicks was their undisputed great man.[311] But this relic had epistemic potential as well. In the face cast, with all its promise of truth and fidelity, they saw in the resultant objects conveyers of "character for posterity." Not only was apprehending Hicks key to understanding the witness of his "Inward Light"—but that his inner self—his mind, soul, and moral constitution—could be accessed by the study of the three-dimensional impression of his face.

Armed men threatening violence to obtain the sculpted portraits of a Quaker who spent his life calling war an "abomination in the sight of a pure and holy God" and portraiture "vanity"

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[310] "Moulding a Bust," *Baltimore Gazette and Daily Advertiser*, March 31, 1830.

[311] A similar urge can be found in the busts of John Wesley by Enoch Wood, an English potter from Staffordshire. My work on this, that takes up similar themes, is Christopher Allison, "Holy Man, Holy Head: John Wesley's Busts in the Atlantic World," *Common-Place* 15, no. 3 (Spring 2015), http://www.common-place-archives.org/vol-15/no-03/lessons/#.V0M0A77SQ5w.

is deeply ironic, of course.[312] But it is also revelatory, one of those strange intersections of the American past that can give us insight into the cultural and religious streams that were made visible in a death mask. As historians of material culture often observe, objects are especially effective ways of materializing historical intersections, connecting seemingly disconnected cultural phenomena, thereby deepening our understanding of each.[313] And here we have a particularly evocative intersection. From one direction we have Quakerism, a hyper-Protestant sect that, in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century, was in crisis. The movement had been pushed to the margins of American life, from whence they had become increasingly insular. Despite their active involvement in commerce and social reform, they had given up their efforts for converts, and had forbidden their children from marrying non-Quakers. This social crisis came to a head in the 1820s, a reckoning from which the movement has yet to heal. The figurehead of this division was Elias Hicks. From the other direction, this religious-culture-in-crisis intersected with a budding early national culture that sought to elevate great people, particularly men, through the bust form. These were objects that were understood not only as means of elevating these people but also learning about their character through the study of their face. In Hicks' case, the work was enabled by an eccentric artist, John Browere, through the practice of indexical sculpture.[314] As people sought to capture Elias Hicks' light, they sought

[312] Buckley, *The Essential Elias Hicks*, 104.

[313] Laurel Thatcher Ulrich et al., *Tangible Things: Making History Through Objects* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2015, 2015); Leora Auslander et al., "Ahr Conversation: Historians and the Study of Material Culture," *American Historical Review* 114, no. 5 (2009): 1355–1404.

[314] A key concept of this chapter is the *index*, a notably commonplace concept in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century, as we will see. One of the first to theorize the concept was nineteenth century philosopher Charles Sanders Peirce, who called it a "natural sign." My use of the concept is informed by both Peirce, 18th and 19th century use of the concept, and, notably, Gell, *Art and Agency*. But I take my own riffs on the concept driven by the sources of this chapter. My use of the term in this chapter is to connote a visual sign derived directly from the person or object it represents, "from nature" or "life" as eighteenth and nineteenth century people liked to invoke the concept. Common examples of this concept are: footprints as indexes of feet, and thereby of the people attached to them (Gell called it abduction), or smoke as an index of fire. I use the concept here more in the footprint mode.

indexical methods of capturing his body, going as far to dig him up to make a death mask that could then use the indexical to create the iconic real, a means of instantiating an indexical relic to capture his iconic presence. I begin the chapter by first looking at the rumors that began to circulate after Hicks' death about a post-mortem exhumation. I then turn to the individual behind the venture to cast Hicks, Samuel E. Clements. The second section turns to the sculptor, John Browere, a sculptor of reanimation, whose philosophy and practice harmonized with Quaker aesthetics in its insistence on accuracy to nature. I briefly note Browere's connection to physiognomic science, the knowledge they believed faces could convey, and how Browere's objects navigated the boundaries of life and death. The final section looks at the court case that erupted over the busts, as various factions sought to possess and sell the image of this man to his devotees.

Rumors

On March 30, 1830 news reached the New York papers that "an Italian artist of this city has secretly disinterred the body of Elias Hicks, the celebrated Quaker Preacher, and moulded his bust." The story soon spread across the country with all the elements of gothic intrigue. "It seems," the report stated, "he [the sculptor] had applied to the friends of the deceased to take a moulding previous to his internment, but was refused." But after Elias was buried, the family

There are two aspects to the use of the index in Gell's and my own work that should be disaggregated, the conceptual relationship of the index to "agency," and the material practice of indexical register. For Gell, the agency of living presence is mediated by indexes, that is, material objects that signal the presence of the prototype of the index, aided by the artist, apprehended by recipients. To be specific to this chapter, the agency and living presence of Elias Hicks is mediated by the indexes of his sculpted busts, taken by death mask by Browere, the sculptor, and apprehended by admirers as uncanny, lively, presences of Hicks himself. Art is the technology that allows this process of apprehension to occur. In terms of material practice, there are two methods here that enable especially effective indexes of Hicks. The silhouette, which uses the shadows formed by light as an index of the body. And life and death masks, which uses gravity and the material properties of drying plaster to form a hyper accurate impression of physiognomic features. In both cases the simplicity and accuracy of the media are key to their embrace and admiration by Quakers.

found that the "grave had been disturbed," so the body "was examined," and "some bits of plaster were found adhering to the hair of the deceased." Supposedly the reporter followed up with this "enthusiastic Italian," and the sculptor confessed that he had "been denied the privilege of taking a bust before internment," so "he had adopted this only method of obtaining one." The rumors were that the resulting bust was "a most excellent likeness."[315]

This initial story was full of errors, but also some truth. The sculptor wasn't an "Italian," but John Browere.[316] And he hadn't performed the original death mask in the graveyard—it was his son. And the venture wasn't initiated by Browere, but rather by a gathering of Quaker admirers, led by Brooklyn newspaper man and postmaster Samuel E. Clement, under whom Walt Whitman first apprenticed as a newspaper printer at the age of 12.[317] But the likeness was accurate. And the family did reject Browere's initial efforts to cast the dying man's face. Nonetheless, Browere loved to elaborate on the story. He boasted about inflicting "terrible imprecations upon the heads of those who interrupted him in his artistic work" in exhuming Hicks—suggesting to his audience that the Quaker enclave of Jericho came out in force to stop the work of a muscular artist in a graveyard.[318] That did not happen. But significant details about the bust affair are historically accessible because Samuel Clement was publically shamed for digging up Hicks. Thus it prompted him to describe his motives in detail. The evidence expands because a contract case—Leggett v. Browere—arose between the local merchant

[315] "Moulding a Bust," *Baltimore Patriot & Mercantile Advertiser*, March 30, 1830, p. 2.

[316] This begs the question, did Browere perform as an Italian? I haven't found any sources beyond this rumor to suggest that he did; but it does seem possible—probable even—that his Italian sojourn was a major advertising mechanism for his artistic practice.

[317] David S. Reynolds, *A Historical Guide to Walt Whitman* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), 155.

[318] Thorpe, "Reminiscences of Charles L. Elliott, Artist, Published to Meet the Demand Not Supplied by the Regular Editions of the 'Evening Post,'" 4.

charged with selling the resultant busts, Aaron Leggett, and the artist, Browere, who was responsible with modeling them, in the New York Superior Court.[319] Together these unusually rich sources, along with the extant object of the bust affair, allow us to see how a Quaker divine and a sculptor intersected.

The prime mover of the whole bust affair was Samuel E. Clement, a man deeply connected to Quaker circles through family members of the New York Yearly Meeting, a meeting which followed—more than any other yearly meeting—the Hicksite side.[320] The whole episode flowed from Clement, and it is worth pausing on his life and motivations. Clement's family was originally from Camden, New Jersey—where Samuel was a member of the Haddonville local meeting. He was disowned in 1817 for "intemperate use of strong drink…divers inconsistent practices" and failing to "appear in a suitable disposition of mind to examine the crime." [321] He was read in and out of Meeting in the decades to come. Much like Whitman he seemed attracted to Quaker spirituality, but did not want to live within the Quaker "hedge," the cultural and social boundary that Quakers had erected around their communities in their pursuit of holiness. Hedges protect, of course, but are inevitably prickly. Whitman, for example, pithily stated that he had "seriously debated whether I was not by spiritual bent a Quaker" but concluded: "I was never made to live inside a fence."[322] Clement didn't either. He

[319] I have chosen to narrate the bust affair chronologically in the interests of storytelling. A quick note on sources is due. The most reliable sources are the detailed court reporting that appeared in the *Courier & Enquirer* (reprinted in major Quaker areas in America such as greater Nantucket and Philadelphia) and Samuel Clement's defenses printed in area papers, against the claim that he "amid ribald jests, savagely *cut of his* [Hicks'] *head*." Apparently some local New Yorkers, envious of his appointment as postmaster of Brooklyn, tried to use the Hicks affair to get him fired.
[320] Hinshaw, William Wade, et al., compilers. *Encyclopedia of American Quaker Genealogy*. 6 vols. 1936–1950. Reprint, Baltimore, Maryland: Genealogical Publishing Co., 1991–1994, Vol. 3, p. 72.

[321] Swarthmore College; Swarthmore, Pennsylvania; *Index to Haddonfield Meeting Book of Minutes Volume 6*; Collection: *Quaker Meeting Records*; Call Number: *MR-PH 241, p. 64.*

[322] Quoted in Mitchell Santine Gould, "Walt Whitman's Quaker Paradox," *Quaker History* 96, no. 1 (2007): 2.

assumed public office at a time when Quakers had given up such ambition; he seemed more interested in Whig politics than the proceedings of the Meetinghouse. But he was deeply attracted to Hicks, much like Whitman.[323] Both Clement and Whitman saw a man whose essence was simultaneously modern, in his appeal to reason and the self, and ancient in his appeal to the purity of the primitive Quaker doctrine of the Inward Light and the golden age of Quaker life in America. This was the sweet spot of cradle Quakers who sought the world beyond the hedge but remained attracted to Quaker spirituality.

Clement narrated the reasons for seeking Hick's death mask in 1831 after being effectively accused of cutting off Hicks' head.[324] The accusation of decapitating Hicks was related to New York politics. Many Democrats in the city seethed over Clements appointment as postmaster of Brooklyn, and his political maneuvering against Martin Van Buren. Being passed over, Clement's political enemies wanted to use the bust affair to get him fired. They actually succeeded. In 1832, the *Courier and Enquirer* (a Democrat paper) stated that Clement was "justly removed" from his office, "for shocking the moral sense of that community, by plundering the grave, at the dead of night, and savagely cutting off, amid ribald jests, the head of the late Elias Hicks."[325] The alleged moral failing of decapitating a dead man—and laughing about it—was reason enough to be sacked. But Clement—a knowledgeable manipulator of newspaper print—would not let an accusation appear unanswered: "Suffer me, through the medium of your paper, to present a statement of the facts to the public," he wrote in May of 1831

[323] On the influence of Hickism on Whitman, see Glenn N. Cummings, "Placing the Impalpable: Walt Whitman and Elias Hicks," *Modern Language Studies* 28, no. 2 (1998): 69–86, doi:10.2307/3195300.

[324] "One of the Nineteen...," *Alexandria Gazette*, February 17, 1832, Friends Historical Library, Swarthmore College.

[325] Clement, "To the Public."

in the *Evening Post*, more than a year after the graveyard casting. Clement wrote that the motivation for taking the bust was derived from a "number of friends of the late Elias Hicks, myself among them, were anxious to obtain a bust of him, that we might preserve his image and hand it down to posterity in connection with his character."[326]

Image and character were connected. The future needed to preserve a man like Hicks, Clement argued. He used the same language a year later, after being dismissed from his post.

> The facts are simply these: At the death of Elias Hicks, who had been for many years an intimate of my father, I, in common with several others of his friends and relatives, was anxious to procure a portrait bust of this good man, as both a testimony of the respect to his memory, and with a view to hand down his image in connection with his character to posterity.[327]

Hicks was a man worth handing down, and object was necessary for this work. "For this purpose I engaged this John H.I. Browere, as an artist, to repair with me, to the grave, and obtain, in plaister, a mask of his face." But Browere, "from some cause unknown," was unable to come to the grave, so he "sent his son to accompany me." So with a local man who was in control of the burial ground where "Elias Hicks had been interred," observing "the most sacred respect for the remains of the deceased," Clement and company "obtained the desired mask and employed Browere to make the busts which might be required." Why at night, and in secret? Clement explained that he had consulted a "physician" who suggested that if he took the casting too close to the time of death the resultant object would "have the appearance of death." But if he delayed the casting, Hicks' features "in a few days" would eventually "resume their natural shape." Therefore, "on that account we postponed it."[328]

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[326] Samuel Clement, "To the Editors of the Evening Post," *Evening Post*, June 28, 1831, Friends Historical Library, Swarthmore College.

[327] Clement, "To the Public."

[328] Ibid.

Here Clement was being less honest, it seems in service of rehabilitating his reputation. The period evidence is clear that the immediate family, and Hicks himself, rejected the efforts to cast the man's face. It seems unlikely, furthermore, that the family would consent to a laborious exhumation the evening after his burial, as Clement claimed, just because the face would look more lifelike (there would have been no substantial difference over the hours between the funeral and that night). However the physician probably did tell Clement to wait before taking the mask, but not beyond a day or two. The doctor knew something about posthumous physical change. In the immediate aftermath of death, the cheeks tend to sag and the distorted features of dying can be registered on the face—made even more rigid after *rigor mortis.* Thus immediate casting creates a very deathly look.[329] But when *livor mortis* sets in blemishes, wrinkles and lines tend to smooth, and the cheeks return temporarily to their fullness. The muscles relax, including those of the face, after about thirty six hours after death. This is the ideal death mask casting scenario.[330]

Once again, it was evident in the subsequent court case that neither the immediate family, nor Hicks, consented to the mask: "during his life he would not permit any cast of his countenance to be taken."[331] Other reports noted that the sculptor "had applied to the friends of

[329] This can be seen in immediate death castings, see Moise Kisling, Conrad Moricand, and Jacques Lipchitz, *Death Mask of Amedeo Modigliani*, Plaster and Bronze, n.d., Harvard Art Museum/Fogg Museum, Gift of James Rosenberg. Also in the extant face casts of executed criminals.

[330] Marc S. Micozzi, *Postmortem Change in Human and Animal Remains: A Systematic Approach* (Springfield, Ill, USA: CCThomas, 1991), 37–47; Pekka J. Saukko and Bernard Knight, *Knight's Forensic Pathology*, 3rd ed. (London: Arnold ; New York, 2004), 55–65. On the look of more immediate castings, see Annie N Zadoks-Josephus Jitta, *Ancestral Portraiture in Rome and the Art of the Last Century of the Republic,* Allard Pierson Stichting Universiteit van Amsterdam. Archaeologisch-Historische Bijdragen. I (Amsterdam: N.V. Noord Hollandsche Uitgevers~Mij, 1932), 42–60; Erich S. Gruen, *Culture and National Identity in Republican Rome* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1992), 154–56.

[331] "Busts of Elias Hicks. Superior Court."

the deceased to take a moulding previous to his internment, but was refused."[332] And this was claim of the local inhabitants as well. One woman in the twentieth century recorded a story told to her by her grandmother who lived in Jericho at the time of Hicks death. The grandmother was a young teenage girl at the time of his burial. She noted that after the large funeral, the "next morning some of the neighbors went out to the cemetery to his grave and found it had been disturbed." So "they called the family and other neighbors together and decided to exhume the body." Upon digging up the coffin, "they found his face and the inside of the casket covered with plaster of paris." After investigating further, they found "plaster of paris and old horse blankets under the horse shed. It was quite apparent that someone had taken his body from his grave the night of the funeral and carried it under the horse shed and with the lights screened by the horse blankets had taken a death mask."[333] This memory recorded by a granddaughter was corroborated by period sources, that attested to a horse-blanket covered surreptitious casting, with tell-tale "bits of plaster…found adhering to the hair of the deceased."[334] Clement claimed that they had taken the death mask "with the co-operation of some of his most intimate friends and connexions." But they weren't the *most* intimate. Clement tried to sanctify their

[332] "Moulding a Bust," March 31, 1830.

[333] The story belonged to Mary C. Willets. See "[On Hicks and Portraiture]."

[334] "Moulding a Bust," *American Republican*, March 30, 1830, Friends Historical Library, Swarthmore College. What Willets may have elaborated upon was the addition of the casket. True Quaker burial, in its seventeenth and early eighteenth century form, and beyond, usually proscribed a shroud and nothing else, forgoing the casket. Even a gravestone was pushing beyond the plainness testimony. Clement and Browere's son probably identified Hick's burial easily from the disturbed earth. And Clements would have recognized the body. But as Patricia O'Donnell has shown, caskets were used in Quaker burial in the period, but sought to negotiate the American tendency to use caskets with the Quaker commitment to simplicity. But the use of caskets was mostly in urban, mercantile Quaker circles—the very group of Quakers that Hicks resisted for their materialism. On Quaker mortuary practice see the excellent Patricia C. O'Donnell, "This Side of the Grave : Navigating the Quaker Plainness Testimony in London and Philadelphia in the Eighteenth Century," *Winterthur Portfolio* 49, no. 1 (2015): 29–54, doi:10.1086/681634. On the preponderance of casket use in the Americas (given the ubiquity of lumber) see, Erik R. Seeman, *Death in the New World: Cross-Cultural Encounters, 1492-1800* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2010). On the negotiation of gravestones in Quaker practice see Thomas Clarkson, *A Portraiture of Quakerism*, 2:24–26, 33–35.

transgression by stating that this commissioning circle of Quaker admirers "governing motives were pure as the spirit that made them."[335] Just Friends casting a Friend. But in reality, the casting of Hicks face in the burial yard was secret, conducted by a group of ardent admirers, on level of remove from his immediate family.

This introduces the role of "friends," a term used in the period to denote both kin and intimates, the circle beyond, often including, but not necessarily, the immediate family. "Is there a man among us," Clement asked the public, "possessing the common sensibilities of human nature, who would not take some honorable steps to preserve the image of his friend, after death?"[336] No, he answered. "If there is anything dishonest in the respect which we bear to a distinguished individual, or disgraceful in the sincerity of friendship, then I am ready to admit that this transaction *was* dishonorable, and that I have brought disgrace on my office and profession."[337] Malcolm Baker has written about the role of honorary busts in perpetuating friendship, admiration, on top of the insight into people's character beginning in mid-eighteenth century Britain.[338] And here we see this tradition perpetuated among Quakers in and around New York City in the late 1820s and early 1830s. As one period casting expert wrote, the same man who cast George Whitefield's skull in his crypt in Newburyport,"It is often a gratification to have the masks of our friends."[339]

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[335] Clement, "To the Editors of the Evening Post."

[336] Nathaniel Bradstreet Shurtleff, "Description of the Method of Moulding and Casting Heads, Masks, Medallions, &c. [Pamplet]," in *Annals of Phrenology*, vol. 1 (Boston, 1833).

[337] Clement, "To the Editors of the Evening Post."

[338] Malcolm Baker, *Fame & Friendship : Pope, Roubiliac, and the Portrait Bust* (London: The Rothschild Foundation, 2014, 2014).

[339] Shurtleff, "Description of the Method of Moulding and Casting Heads, Masks, Medallions, &c. [Pamplet]," 451.

This same discourse of bodily view into internal saintliness was perpetuated widely through the fireside poets. In the Quaker context, the best view into this mortuary poetry is in the poetry of John Greenleaf Whittier. In "The Friend's Burial" (1873), Whittier reflected a century or more of the meaning of viewing the dead body. And the poem was so well known by Quaker sources that lines were interspersed throughout Quaker periodicals without attribution. The context of the poem is the Quaker funeral of "my mother's friend," he writes. The Quaker saint is "True, as in life, no poor disguise / Of death with her is seen…The prayerful silence of the soul / Is best befitting her." Here Whittier emphasizes the truthfulness of her unmediated corpse. "O sweet, calm face that seemed to wear / The look of sins forgiven!" God's best "interpreters / Are humble human souls; The Gospel of a life like hers / Is more than books or scrolls.

> From scheme and creed the light goes out
> The saintly face survives;
> The blessed Master none can doubt
> Revealed in holy lives.[340]

Saintliness and piety was precisely how Hick's admirers saw him. His bodily presence indexed his saintly life. He was called by his admirers "priest of the Holy One…blessed of the Lord," even referred to as a kind of "Moses."[341] Another writer wrote that "His enemies…fled at his approach, as a pestilential vapour is dissolved before the glowing rays of the noontide sun."[342] Hicks was a walking beacon of inward light. Even detractors worried that Hicks'

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[340] John Greenleaf Whittier, *The Complete Poetical Works of John Greenleaf Whittier: With Numerous Illustrations* (Boston, MA: Houghton, Mifflin and Company, 1884), 275.

[341] Sarah Seaman, "A Farewell to Elias Hicks: Written on his Departure from Philadelphia in 1822," *Christian Register,* July 1, 1826, p. 4. Attributed to her in the "1830 Memorial to Elias Hicks, *Long Island Forum*, January 1976, p. 31.

[342] "Elias Hicks.," *The Friend; a Religious and Literary Journal (1827-1906)*, May 1, 1830.

followers saw him as a kind of Christ figure. One author wrote in 1828 that his followers in the quarterly meeting of Westbury [Long Island, NY] "add to their antichristian notions a strong personal veneration, nay I may say, idolatry, for Elias Hicks." When it came out later that the busts were being made, this charge of idolatry gained material heft. And the "principal partizans," this correspondent observed, were clustered in "New York city and some other places in the quarterly meeting," many of whom "ought long since to have been disowned from Society." "I know individuals," the author continued, "who have preferred this old man to the apostles, and others, including a minister of some note, who have been blasphemous enough to equal him to the blessed Saviour himself."[343] They had some reason for concern. Hicks in his recorded "extemporaneous discourses," among other places, emphasized a theological anthropology that opened up the notion that other people could approach Christlike divinity. "Man is a compound being. One part is composed of flesh and blood ; the other part of spirit and power of God, it becomes a son of God."[344] Hicks' followers evidently believed that Hicks, at the very least, was a person in whom the Inward Light shone especially brightly—a son of God, as it were, even if they refrained from calling him a new Christ. Whereas his detractors doubted they "shall live to witness to actual apotheosis of Elias Hicks," one admirer, Milton Bard, believed he had; Hicks, the "sage and saint" was vindicated in his bodily death.

> Methinks, blest shade, if bigotry
> Could have but seen thee calmly die,
> It would have own'd thy victory,
> And seen a Heav'n within thy eye.[345]

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[343] "Elias Hicks and the Society of Friends.," *The Friend; a Religious and Literary Journal (1827-1906)*, May 24, 1828.

[344] Hicks, *A Series of Extemporaneous Discourses, Delivered in the Several Meetings of the Society of Friends, in Philadelphia, Germantown, Abington, Byberry, Newton, Falls, and Trenton*, 11.

[345] Milford Bard, "Thoughts on Elias Hicks.," *Casket (1826-1830)*, August 1830. Bard's use of "blessed shade" invokes the beloved form of Quaker visual culture: the silhouette. Here Bard uses the artistic form to comment on Hicks' simultaneous absence and presence. But it also was used to refer to the spectral, as if Bard was addressing

A death mask may not have captured the "Heav'n within" in Hicks' eye, but Clement was one of this circle of Hicks admirers who wanted the bodily image of the man they admired. And Clement planned, he claimed, a capture of the body at a specific interval after death to allow his countenance to be cast in the best light possible—under the advice of a knowing physician. Thus Clement created an indexical relic of the bodily remains of the saintly man in victory, at his perfect rest, after the ravages of death, but before decay could ensue—an intentional moment that could let Hick's light shine the most. Capturing Hicks' face mattered enough to Clement that he was willing to violate the Quaker mortuary values of depositing the body and walking away, along with the wishes of both Hicks and his immediate family. Was it illegal? Probably not. The legal rights of the dead were ambiguous in this period—especially in New York.[346] So with Browere's son, Clement dug the body out of its fresh grave under the cover of night, pulled it out of the ground, and carried the body to the adjoining horse shed. There, under the cover of horse blankets, the middle-aged newspaper man and the sculptor's son lit candles, prepared Browere's

Hicks' extant spirit. On the use of "shades" as ghosts in period poetry, see Matthew Dennis, "Patriotic Remains: Bones of Contention in the Early Republic," in *Mortal Remains: Death in Early America*, ed. Nancy Isenberg and Andrew Burstein (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2003), 136–37.

[346]The precedent for lax protection of the dead is, in major part, Blackstone. The dead largely fell within the realm of property law. Theft, for example, could only be prosecuted if the object stolen had an owner. The "conscious thinking thing," in Locke's terms, that was the human being, was no longer thinking or conscious at death, thus strictly a thing, and things cannot own property. But Blackstone, interestingly, did give property rights to grave objects—in particular clothes—since they, by right, belonged to the family who had willed them to be buried with the deceased, and placed them on the body. Blackstone noted that "stealing a shroud out of a grave; which is the property of those, whoever they were, that buried the deceased : But stealing the corpse itself, which has no owner, (though a matter of great indecency) is no felony, unless some of the grave clothes be stolen with it." This, Blackstone continued, was very "different from the law of the Franks, which seems to have respected both as equal offenses; when it directed, that a person who had dug a corpse out of the ground in order to strip it should be banished from society, and no one suffered to relieve his wants, till the relations of the deceased consented to his readmission." that the dead could have no legal rights because they had no agency. Clement committed all kinds of transgression that night in the Quaker burial ground, but he probably didn't break the law given New York's lax mortuary law. Sir William Blackstone, *Commentaries on the Laws of England: In Four Books* (By Isaiah Thomas, sold at his bookstore in Worcester, and by him in Boston, 1790), 265. Thanks to Ellen Stroud for sharing her insights into mortuary law from the past to the present. A brief mention of the negotiation of government officials, medical professionals, and a resistant public over the rights of the dead is in Laderman, *The Sacred Remains*, 82–84.

special recipe of plaster, greased the dead man's face with oil and tallow, layered the plaster on, and waited for ten minutes until it set. They released the plaster, removed the original mold, but didn't clean Hicks' face (since the family discovered what happened from the tell-tale plaster stuck to his hair). Perhaps they were in a hurry. Perhaps they thought it didn't matter. The object would be remainder of the man that would survive above ground. Clement and his assistant returned the body to the grave with its attendant dirt, hid the blankets, and walked away, a relic of the man in hand, one that would not decompose.

Browere as Sculptor of Reanimation

This lively yet deathly aspect of the plaster mask was related to both the method and the resultant object. David Porter, a veteran of the Barbary wars, and captain of the *Essex* which had patrolled the Pacific to protect American ships and capture British whalers, sat for Browere in September of 1825 in Washington D.C. Porter had just been Court Marshalled for being overly aggressive with Spanish officials in Puerto Rico during his Naval commission to combat piracy in the West Indies. The two men, both admirers of manly violence, bonded right away.[347] Porter wrote a glowing review of Browere's method to Mordecai Noah—the New York newspaper man—which Browere regularly used to convince potential sitters. Porter called Browere's "scientific operation" both "novel and perfect." One reason was that Browere had a secret, closely-guarded recipe for his plaster—now lost—that counteracted many of the historic problems with the life and death masks. Plaster is heavy. Especially among the living it can tend to distort the features, pushing loose skin where it wouldn't otherwise rest. But Browere's plaster was exceptionally light—painted on in thin layers—and thus it overcame the problems of using

[347] David Meschutt, *A Bold Experiment: John Henri Isaac Browere's Life Masks of Prominent Americans* (New York State Historical Association, 1988), 6.

plaster to cast soft surfaces. Porter also assured people in his endorsement that "the effects of the operation none need to apprehend the least danger or inconvenience," for it was "perfectly safe and not disagreeable." Browere would place straws in the nostrils of the sitter, lay their head perpendicular to the floor, place cloth around the edges of the hair line, oil or grease the face, eyebrows, and lashes, and then prepare the plaster and apply it to the face. After twenty minutes of sitting, Browere had a negative mold of the face. Porter wrote that "while the plastic material is applying to the skin, a sensation both harmless and agreeable produces a pleasant glow or heat somewhat similar to that which is felt on entering a warm bath."[348] But others were not so positive or brave. Thomas Jefferson was almost smothered by Browere, his ears nearly removed with the plaster. Jefferson, in the aftermath, wrote James Madison, "I now bid adieu for ever to busts & even portraits." [349] Browere, for his part, would later boast about "nearly strangling Jefferson to death when he took a plaster cast of that immortal statesman's face."[350] Browere's big break was his bust of General Lafayette, taken during the summer of 1825 during the French General's tour of the United States. Browere wisely collected endorsements by people who had seen his bust of the French general. They gushed about the "fac simile of the distinguished original" that Browere was able to create. The captain of the ship that transported Lafayette to the United States in 1824 noted that he had seen other busts of Lafayette, "but nothing of them give any thing of his character. Yours and yours alone had portrayed it – In looking at your

[348] Various, "Certificates Relative to the Busts of General La Fayette Executed in Plaister by John H. I. Browere, Historic Painter and Sculptor in the Cities of New York & Philadelphia, July 1825" July 1825, David Porter to Mordecai M. Noah, September, 18, 1835, John H. I. and A.D.O. Browere Papers, New York State Historical Association Library, Special Collections.

[349] "Thomas Jefferson to James Madison, 18 October 1825," James Madison Papers. Founders Online, National Archives (http://founders.archives.gov/documents/Madison/99-02-02-0554 [last update: 2016-03-28]). Accessed April 13, 2016.

[350] Thorpe, "Reminiscences of Charles L. Elliott, Artist, Published to Meet the Demand Not Supplied by the Regular Editions of the 'Evening Post,'" 4.

Portrait bust of the Gen.[1] I had only to imagine I heard the voice of LaFayette for I saw the man."[351] This kind of visual synesthesia that came over the sea captain appears elsewhere in the endorsements. He painted the Lafayette bust, infusing it with even more realism. As one former customer wrote after visiting "Browere's room," that the "addition of flesh colour, and a scratch upon the head, the beholder would almost suppose the General himself to be before him." This visitor even saw a bust of a friend of his, "Simon Pure," and noted only "if his whiskers were suitably coloured, would appear to laugh in plaister, and offer his jibes and jeers from cold clay lips."[352] In a pre-photographic era, nothing came close to copying life than the cast. Its stunning accuracy took people off guard—and gave an aura and presence that was both amazing and alarming. The resultant busts seemed uncomfortably alive. The original masks made the sitters seem uncomfortably dead.[353]

At the same time, Browere's peers at the American Academy of Arts and the National Academy of Design increasingly questioned if his vaunted "method" of sculpture was, in fact, art at all. What was the theory of aesthetics in Browere's work? He was, it seemed, only copying. One critic quipped that Browere "calls himself a sculptor, though we do not know that he ever used a chisel in his life."[354] This resistance was related to the terrible rapport Browere had developed among his peers through his caustic art criticism, published under his pen-name, "Middle Tint the Second," including the work of the men who directed the two major art

[351] Various, "Certificates Relative to the Busts of General La Fayette Executed in Plaister by John H. I. Browere, Historic Painter and Sculptor in the Cities of New York & Philadelphia, July 1825."

[352] "Browere's Busts," *Statesman*, August 5, 1825, p. 2.

[353] Pointon, "Casts, Imprints, and the Deathliness of Things: Artifacts at the Edge."

[354] "Our townsman, Browere…" *New-York American*, November 11, 1825, p. 4.

institutions, John Trumbull and William Dunlap. As much as people were awed at the lifelikeness of the objects that came out of Browere's studio, their reproducibility and reliance on nature in rendering features undermined the aesthetic theory of sculpture itself. Browere resisted. He saw his genius as that of a tinkerer-inventor, poet, and artist who had ingeniously come up with a hyper-light mixture of plaster of Paris to create the best sculptural method available. But more than that, Browere's argument for his genius really traded not only on a superior *method* of taking the mask, but the bust as a full, three-dimensional object. It is a subtle point, but, as Marcia Pointon has observed, this transition of "…building up of a head to back up the cast face, and sometimes even shoulders or a torso" was the process in which the "indexical becomes iconic."[355] The "working up," as period people called it—the process of building the body around the cast mask—transformed the deathly mask into a lively presence. The mask by itself invoked troubling aspects of absence, and death. But when the body was formed around the cast face from the mold—the addition of seeing eyes, three dimensional body, clothing, hair, gesture, gave three dimensional presence to an otherwise deathly matrix. Browere clearly held onto an aesthetic theory—a radical one to be sure—in which physiognomic accuracy was the epitome of artistic practice. And this stubborn insistence on static copy of facial features as the core of artistic representation of people indicates a thorough influence of physiognomic science which put a premium of physiognomic rest and highly accurate copying of people's bodies as a means of accessing their true, internal nature.

Even if the assumption that the face, head, and bust were indexes of the internal self often went unsaid, it was articulated extensively in physiognomic literature. The preeminent source was the work of Johann Caspar Lavater, a Swiss evangelical minister, poet, theologian, and

[355] Pointon, "Casts, Imprints, and the Deathliness of Things: Artifacts at the Edge," 173.

scientist, whose richly illustrated works were widely illustrated, and whose name was fused with the science.[356] Physiognomy was, in its essence, the science of reading the human form, especially the head, for insight into personal "character." Lavater argued that apprehending the outside of the body could allow—those who studied— to comprehend the inner mind, soul, and moral self. There "must be a certain native analogy," wrote Lavater, "between the external varieties of countenance and form, and the internal varieties of the mind."[357] And more broadly "the exterior, the visible, the superficies of objects, indicate their nature, their properties, and that every outward sign is the symbol of some inherent quality."[358] And so he sought to understand the inner character of "national" difference (race), gender, children, genius, the beautiful, the mentally ill, and the criminal upon the truncated head. At the core of Lavater's body theory was the idea that "frequently repeated change, form, and state of countenance, impresses, at length a durable trait on the soft and flexible parts of the face…even on the bony parts." And the "stronger the change, and the oftener it is repeated, the stronger, deeper, and more indelible is the trait." Here we have an indexical understanding of the relationship of the face to the mind. Since beautiful thoughts and moral affections imparted a pleasing or noble expression to the face, and base thought and immorality the opposite, Lavater observed, "The morally best, the most

[356] Most discussion of physiognomy go to great lengths to call it pseudo-science. But following the move by historians of science in the last twenty years, I retain the word that Lavater used, and many believed him to be doing. As Patricia Fara notes of previous generations who love the pseudo prefix, "Steeped in their own cultural values prizing rationality, historians endorsed modern celebrations of scientific achievement by patronizingly categorizing as pseudosciences belief systems such as astrology and physiognomy that, although now discredited, attracted many respected adherents in the past." Fara, "Marginalized Practices," 487.

[357] Johann Caspar Lavater, *Essays on Physiognomy: For the Promotion of the Knowledge and the Love of Mankind; Written in the German Language by J. C. Lavatar, Abridged from Mr. Holcrofts Translation.*, First American edition. (Boston: Printed for William Spotswood, & David West, 1794), 3, http://nrs.harvard.edu/urn-3:hul.ebookbatch.ECCO_batch:W32049.

[358] Ibid., 8.

beautiful. The morally worst, the most deformed."[359] This explains his garish depictions and descriptions of criminals, and regal visions and rhapsodic discussions of great people; bodily appearance and internal character were fused.[360]

Browere demonstrates the influence of Lavater's physiognomic thinking through his art criticism, which he wrote in the *Morning Courier* in New York City, once again, under the pseudonym "Middle Tint the Second." Physiognomic criticism and lack of adherence to nature's forms were the center of his criticism of his peers. For example, in commenting on Henry Inman's "Portrait of a Lady" exhibited at the third exhibition of the National Academy of Design in 1827, Browere found most offence (he even called it hidden "vice") in the rendering of the physiognomy: a "cold, phlegmatic, idiotic female face, without color or form."[361] [Figure 34] This tell-tale physiognomic wording demonstrated Browere's belief that he could identify not only idiocy and but specifically one of the classic humors on the face.[362]

The popularity of physiognomy was immense, and has been traced by literary historians in period novels, given as a major reason by art historians for the rage for silhouettes in the late

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[359] Johann Caspar Lavater, *Essays on Physiognomy.*, vol. 1, 1789, 180–81.

[360] This assumption affected the visual culture of heads through the phrenological age, and was undone by a Austrian Catholic Anatomist, Josef Hyrtl, whose skull collection of condemned criminals showed the diversity of skull size and shape within a discrete, maligned population. The collection is on display at the Mütter Museum in Philadelphia. See Christine Mitterwenger-Fessl et al., *Der Anatom Joseph Hyrtl, 1810-1894*, 1. Aufl. (Wien: WMaudrich, 1991).

[361] Thomas Seir Cummings, *Historic Annals of the National Academy of Design, New York Drawing Association, Etc: With Occasional Dottings by the Way-Side, from 1825 to the Present Time* (New York: G. W. Childs, 1861), 80–81. Cummings outs Browere as "Middle Tint the Second" in print, but intimates that it was widely known that Browere was behind the caustic remarks, noting his jealousy for not being invited to join the Academy. Cummings writes, "they certainly kept him out—hence his anger—few who knew the gentleman will ask the reason why." The painting Browere denounced is most likely Henry Inman (American, 1801-1846). *Portrait of a Woman*, ca. 1825. Oil on panel, 8 x 6 3/8 in. (20.3 x 16.2 cm). Brooklyn Museum, Lydia Richardson Babbott Fund, 32.1680 https://www.brooklynmuseum.org/opencollection/objects/421/Portrait_of_a_Woman

[362] Ibid. Browere suggested that Inman commit to memory the 27th chapter of Ecclesiasticus (the apocryphal book which prior to 1881 remained in the King James Bible)—a passage of doom toward those who reject the righteous and encourages people to run away from the deceitful, evil people.

eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, and by historians of science as an important precursor to the more medically-derived science of phrenology, and later, the emergence of psychiatry.[363] The first American edition, published in Boston in 1794, declared Lavater's work "so universally known and celebrated, that it is unnecessary to attempt [its] eulogium."[364]

At the core of the illustrations of Lavater's work in all languages and editions was an elevation of two art-forms—the silhouette and the sculpted bust. Lavater thought "sculls" were the best objects of physiognomic study, but access was an issue. There was a specific reason why Lavater privileged silhouettes, skulls, and busts: "I despise deceit," he wrote.[365] [Figure 35] Living faces could look happy when the person was sad, a villain could feign benevolence when they were wretched, a lover could appear enraptured when they were indifferent. But the static face did not deceive. But living bodies were not—and are not—static things. So to study the human being as object required a settling of the body into stillness. This is why Lavater preferred skulls because they were "the most firm, least changeable, and far best defined, part of the human body" and thus were "the foundation of the science of physiognomy."[366] But apart from murder of living people, and exhumation of the dead, there were ways of accessing the unchangeable form of the human head. His preferred method was "shades," or better known as silhouettes or profiles, for they could capture the outline of the body—"it is faithful, for it is the immediate impress of Nature, and bears a character of originality which the most dexterous

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[363] A small sampling will suffice, see Emma Rutherford, *Silhouette: The Art of the Shadow*, First edition (New York: Rizzoli, 2009); Fara, "Marginalized Practices"; Bellion, "Heads of State: Profiles and Poltics in Jeffersonian America."

[364] "Advertisement" Lavater, *Essays on Physiognomy*, A.

[365] Lavater, *Essays on Physiognomy.*, 1789, 1:6.

[366] Johann Caspar Lavater, "Essays on Physiognomy." 2 (1789): 205.9

Artist could not hit."[367] Portrait busts of all kinds were also important—sculptural busts included—most of all in the practice of studying physiognomy. Lavater used them to pronounce on the "genius" of Goethe and Socrates, among many others. But transferring sculpted busts into print was a problem; their value as an art form was in major part their three dimensionality. So they appear in rather odd ways in printed Lavater—often as silhouettes, illustrated on plinths at a three quarter turn, sometime transferred into an etched portrait.[368] Lavater's illustrations even depicts multiple views of a given bust, which elevated the bust as an ideal object, but also the problems in depicting it in print, and the necessity to perambulate to view them. Life and death masks show up as well, and Lavater used them to, once again, rhapsodize over the superiority of the body at stable rest for insight into internal character. Commenting on a life or death mask of a "wise man," Lavater is admiringly amazed at the object: "All here is at rest; no look of the eye, no motion of the lip, yet who can say this lifeless countenance does not speak?"[369] [Figure 36]

Browere's extant work was a a physiognomist's dream. He nearly forced the face into repose by making his sitters lay at rest under plaster for ten minutes or more, a kind of sculptural long-exposure. This rested aspect is a major reason why, even today, life and death masks are hard to distinguish. When Browere enlivened the originating mask by building up the body around it, the rested aspect transferred, even when Browere sculpted eyes and gave the body gesture, through the tilt of the head, angle of the shoulders, angle of the neck. This is one reason why his extant work remains so uncomfortable. Amazing, but undead. His busts are remarkable

[367] Ibid., 176.

[368] Lavater, *Essays on Physiognomy.*, 1789, 1:66, 151, 218, 240.

[369] Lavater, "Essays on Physiognomy.," 1789, 260.

in their ability to copy life, but disconcerting in their invocation of absence and death in the midst of presence and life.

One of Browere's favorite stories, in his career of casting faces, was the casting of the corpse of Elias Hicks. As one young art student of John Quidor remembered, Browere "delighted to make the hair on our heads stand on end with the horrible details connected with his digging up the corpse of Hicks, the Unitarian Quaker, for the sake of securing a mask of the face; and he ended off with terrible imprecations upon the heads of those who interrupted him in his artistic work."[370]

Life and Death in the Face Mask

John Browere's extant work evinces two major forms that would flow from his life and death casting. The first was the bust, which we have already discussed at length. But the other was cast masks, far more simple, and honorific, and relic like. These objects would be positive impressions in the original mold that would be left as masks — not worked up. It is helpful to

isolate three extant plaster casts of this mask form to understand Browere's practice. The first two are very similar. The first is of John Adams, taken on November 22, 1825. The mask was taken from the original mold and registers the highly wrinkled, elderly view of the second President, seemingly missing his right upper teeth below the sunken lips. The vision confirms Washington Allston's observation of Adams "bodily tenement" as more like the "image of a dilapidated castle than that of the habitation of the unbroken mind."[371] It is by no means idealized. But in the workup into a bust Browere gave Adams a firm torso wrapped gracefully in

[370] Thorpe, "Reminiscences of Charles L. Elliott, Artist, Published to Meet the Demand Not Supplied by the Regular Editions of the 'Evening Post,'" 4.

[371] Meschutt, *A Bold Experiment: John Henri Isaac Browere's Life Masks of Prominent Americans*, 22.

a toga—with a piercing, determined gaze. But the mask, that was produced alongside the bust, was manipulated as well. The eyes were opened, and a sclera and iris were registered by deep grooves in the eye. The same mask form was created for Phillip Van Courtland, in mask form to allow for easy delivery to Lafayette in France. Van Courtland was Revolutionary War veteran and New York Politician who served under Lafayette.[372] His eyes are likewise opened. But these were all life masks—marked as such through the open eyes. As for death masks, the only extant object we have is that of James Monroe. [Figure 37] Monroe had been swept up in Browere's attempt to cast the great men of America, but Monroe was unsettled by Jefferson's experience. So he stipulated that Browere could do a casting of his face, but only at death. To signal that it was a death mask, Browere left the eyes shut—his light plaster delicately registered the closed eye lashes. Within this context we now turn to Browere's death mask of Elias Hicks. It is both unique and similar to the other masks he did. It seems that after Browere's son brought the death mask to his father, Browere cast a few of these shorn faces as examples—proof of concept, as it were. There is only one that survives (we will see why later), and it is in the collection of the Friends Historical Library at Swarthmore College.

Seeing the death mask in life is a disconcerting experience.[Figure 38] It is stored in a wooden, rectangular French perfume box—akin to a small coffin. When the archivist places it on the table, its contents are unclear. Tissue paper pokes from the sides. You have to reach down to find the solid thing amid the white paper. If you are unaware what you are gripping and pulling out of the box, it can be startling. It is like holding someone's face in your hands; the absence of a head, and the immediacy of the face is an unexpectedly intimate encounter. It invites a certain kind of posture to apprehend it. Set securely in the hand, you looking downward,

[372] Ibid.

the visage looking up at you. The fidelity is remarkable, and thereby disorienting, given that you are holding a heavy, stone-like piece of plaster. The plaster is painted, lightly varnished, giving it a skin-like appearance. You can see the individual pores in Hick's tell-tale hooked nose, the fine wrinkles on his lips, the creases of the old man's cheeks, the cleft in his chin, individual eyebrow and eyelash hairs. The blank, open eyes are unique. And they break down the illusion of a man and invoke the deathliness of the thing. Blank like death, open like life, the non eyes register the minute details of Hicks' eye, the Lacrimal caruncle, fine edges of the lids, and wisps of eyelash—suggesting the most accurate copy, no intervention from the artist. Were Hick's eyes open in the coffin? Did Clement and Browere's son open them? Did Browere tell them to?

When I placed the face mask back on the tissues paper, next to its box, I felt that I had somehow exhumed Hicks, out of the archive just as he had been pulled out of the ground. [Figure 39] I too was looking at his truncated body, replicating, in a small and garbled way the experience of many of my subjects. I understood the aura of the body-made-object that these many people expressed almost one hundred and ninety years ago. There is the shudder of the encounter coupled with the peace and tranquility of the face at rest. The mask pulls you into intimate consideration, study, even reverence. The use of the nomenclature and discourse of the sacred over this set apart object of a revered man becomes clear. It was not simply a cast of Hicks, it was Hicks, to the point that anything could be—an embodied relic of indexical encounter. Today Hicks is a small accumulation of bones and decomposed matter under a parking lot of a Home Depot on Long Island. But in an archive outside of Philadelphia his body is composed of plaster, startlingly accessible.

Is this what Clement wanted? He wanted the "saint and sage," the walking remnant of the Quaker past to persist, but treasuring his journals, letters, and immaterial memories was not

enough. His powerful preaching, his "searching testimonies," needed an embodiment. "The death mask is awkward," writes Marcia Pointon, "poised between relic and memorial."[373] When turned into a bust the awkwardness somewhat abates, but not completely. The mortuary and memorial are somewhat harmonized by the addition of the cultural patina of historical grandeur through the bust form and the medium of monochromatic sculpture, the great artistic form of the vaunted classical era and modern great people. Here was Hicks, as God had made him, frozen in holy triumph, reading to be worked up into the material form of a great man. Clements and others recognized Hicksites wanted that. They could pay.

Paying for Posterity

Here we get to the final aspect of the Hicks story: profit. Browere cared a lot about registering genius for perpetuity, but he ultimately wanted to make money, allow his income to match the esteem he felt he deserved. But in the immediate term, he wanted to survive. And he was loath to release his sculpture, only in the most tightly controlled exhibition, knowing the reproducibility of casting and fearing piracy. In the home of Quaker Isaac Pierce shortly after the casting, Browere and Clement entered into "articles of partnership," which Pierce testified in court "provided, that Browere should make the busts and Clements sell them." The first run would be for "exhibition with a view of obtaining subscribers, or receiving money from persons who would wish to see it." Clement wanted to go to Philadelphia, the center of the American Quaker world, for the exhibition. Browere refused, "lest other artists should make a copy." But he offered to go with Clement. Clement was offended that Browere didn't have "confidence" in him to protect the exhibition and obtain subscribers honestly. So offended that Clement wanted out of the "concern" after, he claimed, Browere "violated the stipulations of his contract, and a

[373] Pointon, "Casts, Imprints, and the Deathliness of Things: Artifacts at the Edge," 177.

difference arose between him, myself, and two or three other friends of the deceased." Clement was busy, and didn't have time for the bickering. Therefore, "Having assumed the editorship of the Long Island Patriot, a friend, known to the community of New York as a wealthy merchant, and a highly respected member of the society of Friends took charge of the matter."[374] Without Browere knowing it, Clement sold his interest in the venture first to Issac Pierce for $150—the original witness of the contract—who then sold it to Aaron Leggett in December of 1830. Legett was indeed a Quaker, who had his hand in a lot of commercial concerns, from shipping to real estate in New York City.[375] It is unclear the extent to which Leggett revered Hicks; his brother had been a personal correspondent with Hicks (and had printed the letters).[376] Clement directly sold Leggett the 12 busts that were made of Hicks for initial exhibition for $60 in February of 1831, even though the 12 busts remained in Browere's "plaster factory." Clement never transferred the money he received in these sales to Browere.

Leggett, owning on paper both the rights of partnership and the twelve busts, had a problem. He had ownership, but no objects. There was another problem, which came out during the trial from four separate witnesses that Leggett had entered into a separate contract with Browere in March of 1830—in parallel to partnership contracts between Clement, Pierce, and Browere. Leggett's contract stipulated that Browere would create nine or ten busts (the testimony differs slightly) for the sum of $1,000, and $100 "for the original cast signed by Browere," in

[374] Clement, "To the Public."

[375] Legett was involved in trade with Mexico, and one of his ships was sunk by the Mexican Army during the Mexican American War. United States. Congress. House. Committee on Foreign Affairs, *Aaron Leggett. Memorial of Aaron Leggett, of the State of New York, in Relation to Claims on the Republic of Mexico.*, H.doc.269 (Washington: sn, 1842).

[376] Burnap, *Review of the Life, Character, and Writings of Elias Hicks [Reprinted from the Christian Examiner for November]*, 5.

addition a "metal mould was to be procured and given to Leggett in which 500 were to be cast by Browere for an additional sum." And the nine busts were to be complete in three months, around June 15, 1830. As the months went by, however, no objects surfaced. Leggett, a court witness testified, "endeavored to obtain the casts surreptitiously" through Brower's landlord, in addition to trying to convince the landlord to seize the busts to sell at auction in order to pay Browere's back rent. Leggett was relentless; and Browere was resolute. To make things worse, Leggett panicked when he heard from a man on "William-street that it was a bad bargain, that any number of busts could be produced from one original for $5 or 6 each."[377] So this seems to be why he purchased Clement's 12 busts sitting in Browere's studio. He could circumvent his and Browere's original contract by seizing originals—which he then could contract with another plaster caster to make mold and copies at far lower price. Instead of paying out $1,100, plus unknown future fees for the casting from the metal mold, Leggett would only have to pay $210, plus individual casting fees. Browere knew that Leggett was trying to get the busts. And in response multiple witnesses testified that he had threatened to smash them all. Clement likewise confirmed that Browere threatened to "destroy the busts that were being finished."[378]

So a few days after buying the twelve busts from Clement, Leggett, armed with a piece of paper that the 12 busts in Browere's studio were legally his property, went to the New York Superior Court to get a Writ of Replevin. Replevin is a now obsolete practice in which a plaintiff—in this case Leggett— in order to recover personal property goes to court, gives proof of ownership, and lays down security equal to the value of the property. The property is then seized by a marshal or sheriff, and then placed in a safe place until trial. If a subsequent trial

[377] "Busts of Elias Hicks. Superior Court."

[378] Ibid.

rules that the property was in fact the plaintiff's, then it is given to the plaintiff along with the security. If the ruling is in favor of the defendant—in this case, Browere—then the property is returned to the defendant and damages are awarded to the same. Leggett had to make a pronouncement on the value, and so he had his young nephew testify that the busts were worth $60—far less than any of the contracts stated, but clearly informed by the man on "William-street" who told him that the 10 busts could be made for $6 each. It worked.

The local sheriff, with the writ of replevin in hand, along with "sheriff's assistants" surrounded "the house of Browere, armed with pistols" and "forcibly," and successfully "seized the busts." A trial followed, of course. Aaron Leggett hired a rising legal star, Hiram Ketchum, and Browere a less astute "Mr. Western." But the good lawyer did Leggett little good. The multiple contracts for the busts was the least of his trouble. The major issue that emerged in the case was that Browere had been paid nothing, which breached all the contracts. And Browere had not produced any busts to those with whom he contracted, which likewise breached all the contracts. When Clement took the stand, he "admitted in cross-examination that he had never given to Browere any part of the monies received" from his multiple sales of his interest in the bust speculation, "nor ever communicated to him the fact of the sale, but was now ready to account fully with him." As the tide turned against Leggett and in favor of Browere in terms of right of ownership, the question became what the busts were worth. Leggett and Browere's contract was at $1,100. But had Browere inflated the worth?

The first question was what price were the busts worth. The answers varied. Browere sitter's testified that Browere's "usual charge was $100 a bust, [for an original] and also that he usually kept the original model." And other sculptors attested that they charged between $200 and $400 for originals. Copies were drastically cheaper. "An Italian, named Caragliole, testified

that he could furnish copies at various prices between 3 and $20 each." With the valuation plummeting in cross-examination, one John Baxter, testified that "Mr. Browere threatened to destroy the bust if he wasn't satisfied." And it seemed that Browere was not going to be able to count on the satisfaction of $1,100. This must have made him especially angry when his lawyer called a witness to testify that he had heard Leggett claim that he could "get $100 each for a great many busts in Philadelphia." Quakers could pay, Leggett was in their network, and Browere was without. All Browere had was the busts.

The second question was if the busts were successful as a likeness of Elias Hicks. So three of the busts were brought into the courtroom to be viewed by the jury and judge. "Miss Browere was called first, and testified to the length they took to make, but noted that the "original mould was destroyed." Two other former sitters for Browere were brought in to testify to Browere's skill, and noted that "they had their countenances taken by Browere, and considered them extremely true." And they had also seen the "busts of Lafayette, Emmett, Van Wyck, and others taken by Browere," and noted that they were "very perfect." Leggett found a "distant relative of Elias Hicks," Robert Hicks, who testified that the "forehead and nose of the busts [were] very much like the original," but the "other parts of the countenance appears as if taken after death," a recognition of Browere's inability to extract the deathliness in his workup. So if the bust looked like Hicks, even if it remained stubbornly deathly, the question arose if Browere's method of making sculptural busts was, in fact, art? And the answer would come from the very people who Browere had alienated with his caustic art criticism—members of the National Academy of Design and the American Academy of Fine Arts. William Dunlap and Charles Ingham were two of the list of artists called to pronounce on Browere's work, both of whom Browere had personally offended in his dismissal of their ability as portrait artists. The

collective of artists all agreed that "Mr. Browere's mode is not considered as belonging to the fine arts." Robert Ball Hughes, a sculptor and member of the National Academy of Design, and who had been accepted over Browere for admission,[379] testified that he, unlike Browere, "took his bust by looking at the living subject, and consequently infusing into it the life of the countenance." In contrast, another artist noted that he couldn't tell if the Hicks statue was made from "a living or dead figure." The artists also seemed to all agree that Browere had, "in other things he had shewn his genius," and that he was "an Artist; although the manner in which he took these casts did not belong to the Fine Arts." The consensus was clear. Artists looked and let the life of the sitter impress itself on their minds, and then with their hands reproduce the image. They didn't go to graveyards in the middle of the night for impressions.

The jury was charged by Judge Hoffman to "consider whose property the busts legally were. If they could believe, as he did, that the legal right to their possession rested in Browere, they would then have to consider their value." He told them to not rely on the contractual amount of $1,100, given that it "was not fulfilled," rather, they should "consider the value set upon the busts by the artists." The jury came back, and Browere won. He was awarded damages of $225—enough to cover his back rent, and not much more. [380] Clement wrote a year later that Browere was not happy with the result. After "being dissatisfied with the verdict," Browere "possessed himself, as is supposed, of the key of the room in which they were detained, and destroyed the busts." "Thus," Clement lamented, "our labors lost to posterity, and the friends of the individual whose memory we venerate, utterly disappointed."[381]

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[379] David Bernard Dearinger, *Paintings and Sculpture in the Collection of the National Academy of Design: 1826-1925* (New York: Hudson Hills, 2004), 288.

[380] "Busts of Elias Hicks. Superior Court."

[381] Clement, "To the Public."

This intersection between Elias Hicks and John Browere is by all means odd. But it reveals how physiognomic thinking along with a great man tradition of history melded with religious devotion to an exceptional religious figure, indeed a Quaker saint. It furthermore helps us understand the long trajectory of the fraught Protestant relationship with materiality and the image. As we have seen, the body was epistemic. And the locus of sacred historical imagination was human beings, the bearers of the image of God. This image could be seen upon the real body, thus representations that remained true obviated the concerns about mediation. Busts become more than representation, but sources of character, and thus were burdened with the demands of not only likeness, but accuracy and truth to nature, whose author was still stubbornly God.

Relics are not only made via the substance of the subject they signal. They are also made by indexical relationships to the subject they invoke. Founder George Fox's "relics" were his Bible, the tree under which he preached, the stone and wood from the building he slept in. Countless other Quakers had relics from the chairs they sat on, the bonnets they wore, the samplers they sewed, in Hicks' case, the surveying equipment he used to divide the space of the Quaker community on Long Island. These were objects that had abutted and were in contact with a sacred life. But the indexical nature of Quaker relics also relates to Quaker visual culture. The silhouette, as we have seen, performed particularly well. It was simply a line formed by light. And with the arrival of the Daugeuerrean age, Quakers would also embrace that medium for its unique indexicality of light upon silver coated copper. The life and death mask was not a common Quaker form, but it was, in essence, a kind of three-dimensional silhouette. The tools that rendered the image in all these forms was nature, and thereby, the work of nature's God. No putative enhancement, just people as God had made them. Nature, in Quaker belief, was itself

imbued with the Inward Light, a kind of religious vitalism. As Hicks preached, "he is every where present, and fills all things, through unmeasured space…How beautifully [the Inner Light] is displayed to us in the outward, as it respects the inward." Throughout his preaching he insisted that the "Spirit of God" was the ground of being, and consistently used nature as an index of a more eternal (and internal) reality of the Light, the foundation of reality.[382] With the agency of the artist displaced, the silhouette and the plaster mask exhibited the humility and simplicity that Quakers strived for, that Hicks preached, in which God was revealed. What plagued Browere among the art community in New York—his method not being of the "fine arts," lacking an aesthetic theory, etc.—was precisely what led the circle of admiring Quakers to contract with the irreverent Browere to capture the image of Hicks for posterity. It was their aesthetic theory that Browere inhabited so comfortably, not that of his peers.

And the turn towards people themselves—rendered in maximum fidelity—as the religious locus of interest is revealingly Protestant. We see this in both Lavater and in the Quaker admirers of Hicks. They are inheritors of a religious aesthetic that trained its sights on the body, the temple of the Holy Spirit, the bearer of the image of God—in this case, the vessel of the Inner Light, of which the outward was understood as an index of the ineffable inward.

[382] Elias Hicks, "A Sermon, Delivered at Friends' Meeting-House, Rose-Street, New-York, Sunday Morning, June 28, 1829," *Historical Quaker Books*, January 1, 1829, 10–16, http://digitalcommons.georgefox.edu/quakerbooks/12. For more on Quaker epistemology and the interplay of the inner light and the material world see, Jeffery Dudiak and Laura Rediehs, "Quakers, Philosophy, and Truth," in Stephen Ward Angell and Pink Dandelion, eds., *The Oxford Handbook of Quaker Studies*, 1st ed., Oxford Handbooks (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2013), 507.

CONCLUSION: BISHOP SEYBERT'S NECKCLOTH

If one were to travel to Madison, New Jersey, and ask the friendly archivists at the Methodist archive at Drew University to bring you an antique handkerchief listed in the catalog, it would come to you wrapped in delicate archival tissue. [Figure 40] The juxtaposition is stark. Unwrapped from its clean, crisp paper, the piece of cotton cloth is a mess. The fabric is discolored, varying between dark brown and yellowed white. The fabric is so decayed in places that the pattern, a flower and twig stamped motif, is muddied. There is significant discoloration on parts of the object; it is ripped in multiple places, and it smells like clothing that has been stored away for far too long. It is so fragile that it is hard to even look at, much less discern its use. Why would such a commonplace, dirty, ripped object be kept carefully in a collections vault in New Jersey? The reason is, the period label notes, because it is a "relic."

This particular relic is stored in the official archive of the United Methodist Church, one of the largest Protestant denominations in America. At this point, I am usually asked something to the tune of: "Wait, isn't that kind of Catholic?" I usually follow with a "Yes," and then a "but." But the question is the right one. How is it that a Protestant archive is actively collecting relics of the people of its past? We know instinctually that Protestants *shouldn't* be doing this kind of thing, and yet they did.

A note attached to the object relates its meaning in fading red type. It is "Bishop John Seybert's Neck-Cloth." The "associations"—as eighteenth and nineteenth century people were fond to say—to Bishop Seybert are what imbued the otherwise disposable thing with meaning. As the label writer explains, "Bishop Seybert frequently visited in Sugar Valley [Ohio] and stopped at the home of Adam Murk." Mr. Murk sadly had his "log house burned to the ground and the stricken family moved into the School house." The bishop "came along" sometime

afterwards, and "reaching to his neck he handed this neck-cloth to help along." "Sympathy and helpfulness," the note writer explains, "were prominent traits of the Bishop." How a dirty, probably sweaty neck cloth could "help" is unclear.

This was a relic that sat in the publishing house of the Evangelical United Brethren Church for most of the twentieth century, the architectural center of the largely German-speaking Protestant denomination. At the publishing house, individuals could peruse the many other relics of the denomination. There were bricks made by prominent leader Jacob Allbright, saddlebags of itinerant preachers, locks of hair encased in lockets. Before they arrived into the collection, there was considerable gift and exchange of these relics in the Brethren community. The handkerchief, for example, was donated by "Rev. A.D. Gramley," who received it from his mother, a niece of the first missionary sent by the group to Ohio in 1816.

We don't know where she got it from, but between Rev. Gramley and the Murk family, this object apparently had a considerable life of exchange and gifting. In this foggy history of possession, we can get a glimpse into the way in which a neck cloth moved within a religious community. This was not a one-off event. When the denomination merged with the Methodist Episcopal Church in 1968, a large collection of relics of the prominent religious figures of the Evangelical Association came into the collection of the new United Methodist Church.

The Brethren of the Evangelical Association would probably not have thought about this object as a contact relic, but that is exactly what it was. It not only registered the character of an elevated, indeed holy, person of their past, but it acted as a material record of a small act of charity to a family in distress. But it was also a startlingly intimate object, given meaning for being pressed tight to the Bishops neck as he toiled on behalf of the Gospel in antebellum Ohio. But in its trade and gifting, it kept the presence of the elusive Bishop alive in the community, it

reanimated his presence. Who was Bishop Seybert? The object answered that he was a man who would remove his Neck-Cloth—the piece of clothing designed to keep his shirt together and absorb his sweat—and give it to a family for assistance. Bishop Seybert, with his shirt undone, would have ridden away from the Murk family looking more like Lord Byron than a pious preacher. But this was part of the object's value. It related a past, but moreover, a person in the past—their inner morality materialized in a thing. It was an object that indexed a holy man performing a holy act—by keeping the object circulating in the community his act was enacted again and again through display, gift, remembrance, and exchange—the object, thereby, animated the Bishop. Moreover, the object declared that the famed Bishop was real, acted in time and space in the Ohio Valley, and acted on behalf of the people. The term "relic" is appropriate.

How then did this relic—a Protestant relic—differ from other curiosities collected in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries? In the United States, relics were collected of many figures of the eighteenth and nineteenth century. Fragments of George Washington's coffin were chipped off and placed into glass reliquaries, bone fragments of the fallen militia at the battle of Bunker Hill were dug up and taken home [Figure 41]. Vials of tea were collected along the shores of Dorchester in the aftermath of the Boston Tea Party to register the activity of the Sons of Liberty in Boston Harbor [Figure 42]. But this was not only an American phenomenon. In England, John Milton's body was exhumed in 1790, to a small, but well-documented rage over his bones.[383] Even in revolutionary France, the epitome of the Enlightenment desire to roll back the superstitions of the Catholic Church, many sought the bodily capture of the major leaders and

[383] Philip Neve, *A Narrative of the Disinterment of Milton's Coffin, in the Parish-Church of St. Giles, Cripplegate, 4th of August, 1790; and of the Treatment of the Corpse, During That and the Following Day* (London: Printed for T. and J. Egerton, 1790).

victims (often the same) of the conflict, by creating hyper-realistic life masks, wax figures of major leaders of the Revolution, skin, hair, personal effects—all efforts to capture the bodies of those involved. Even the personal objects of Voltaire's life were saved.[384] In all these cases, there was a desire to capture not just the material of history, but the material related to the people, seen as pivotal in that history. As David Bell has noted of the French context, the roots of this behavior were deeply religious despite its national veneer.[385]

Clearly, relics functioned at many levels. But the boundaries between "religious" and "secular" relics were not as firm as one might suppose. This dissertation has focused on the religious aspects to note how thoroughly religious relic culture could be and was. But in each case study, relic culture has shown itself to be full of abundant meaning. People could seek out George Whitefield to understand the ways God used him in the awakenings across the Atlantic World, but they could also seek out his body to understand the nature of celebrity. The people in the Hudson Valley and beyond could cast Jane McCrea as a martyr of their Protestant émigré community, but they could also use her bodily sacrifice to explain the emergence of a new nation from a morally bankrupt empire. Followers of Elias Hicks could seek to understand and relive his ministry, but they also could use the indexical capture of his face to pronounce on the nature of genius, and ask, what is art? The reason why fragments of George Washington's coffin were chipped off and put into reliquaries is not because the political superseded the religious, rather because the political needed the deeper, more entrenched, religious ways of approaching the matter of the past. There were two ways of elevating the past in the late eighteenth and

[384] Laqueur, *The Work of the Dead*; Darrin M. McMahon, *Divine Fury: A History of Genius* (New York: Basic Books, 2013).

[385] David Avrom Bell, *The Cult of the Nation in France: Inventing Nationalism, 1680-1800* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2001), 7–10.

nineteenth century, through the classical or the religious, and in this dissertation we have seen how powerful the religious could be.

Relic culture in America does not have a large bibliography, but those who have studied it have emphasized its "secular" nature, as Michael Kammen has noted.[386] Theresa Barnett in her book, "Sacred Relics," despite the title, emphasizes that nineteenth century American relic culture is "qualitatively different from earlier kinds of objects it is often grouped with, such as the religious relic and the curiosity."[387] But this dissertation has shown that relics could have a role in the culture of American Protestantism. At the same time, as scholars of romanticism and the enlightenment in the North Atlantic have shown, the concept of the sacred in this period was undergoing an expansion, allowing religious energy to flow into new domains—areas that the sacred was previously related to but did not constitute—such as nature, the political, the nation, genius, art, and celebrity.[388] Despite these flows, relics retained a role in early American Protestant culture, even if Protestants remained conflicted about the human-material form. In their efforts to access the real amid the history and mythology surrounding these iconic figures from their past, they were driven by a desire to know and reanimate the presence of these people through relics.

[386] Michael G. Kammen, *Digging up the Dead: A History of Notable American Reburials* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2010), 18.

[387] Barnett, *Sacred Relics*, 7.

[388] On the sacralizing of both art and nature, see Koerner, *The Reformation of the Image*. In terms of the sacrality of political iconography, see Adam Greenhalgh, "'Not a Man but a God' The Apotheosis of Gilbert Stuart's Athenaeum Portrait of George Washington," *Winterthur Portfolio* 41, no. 4 (December 1, 2007): 269–304. On genius, see McMahon, *Divine Fury*.

APPENDIX: IMAGE FILE

INTRODUCTION

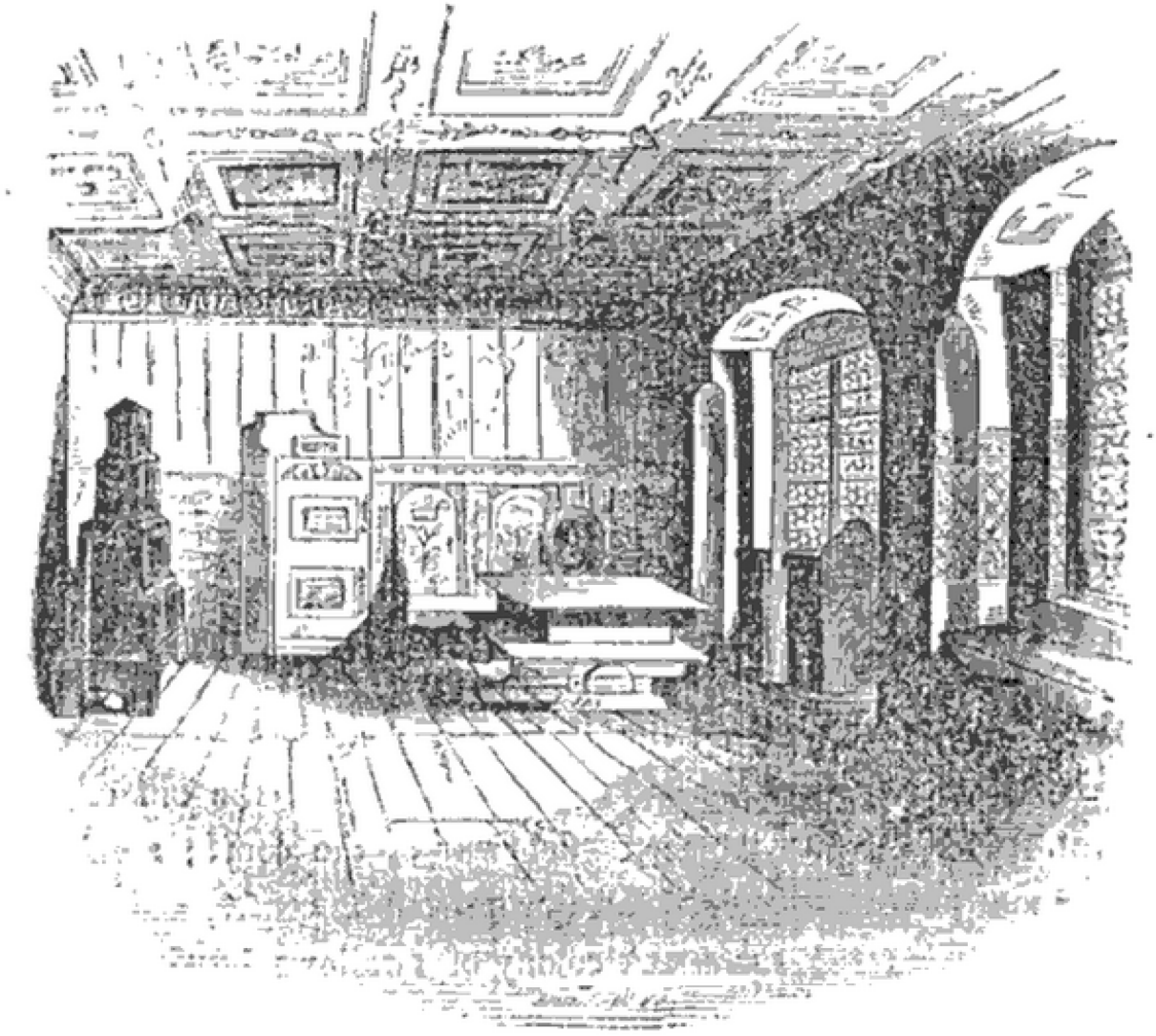


Figure 1: Luther's room in Eisenbach as printed in Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Sunny Memories of Foreign Lands* (Boston: Phillip Sampson & Company, 1854), 364. Creative Commons.

Figure 2: Relics are usually uncatalogued in modern repositories, material anomalies to the logic of the paper-based archive. But some collections did organize them. One especially diligent Quaker archivist catalogued all of the relics at the Friends Historical Library at Swarthmore College. Courtesy of Friends Historical Library of Swarthmore College. Photo by author.

Figure 3: Joseph Badger*, George Whitefield,* c. 1745. Oil on canvas. 106.5 x 83.5 cm (41 15/16 x 32 7/8 in.) Harvard University Portrait Collection, Gift of Mrs. H. P. (Sarah H.) Oliver to Harvard College, 1852.

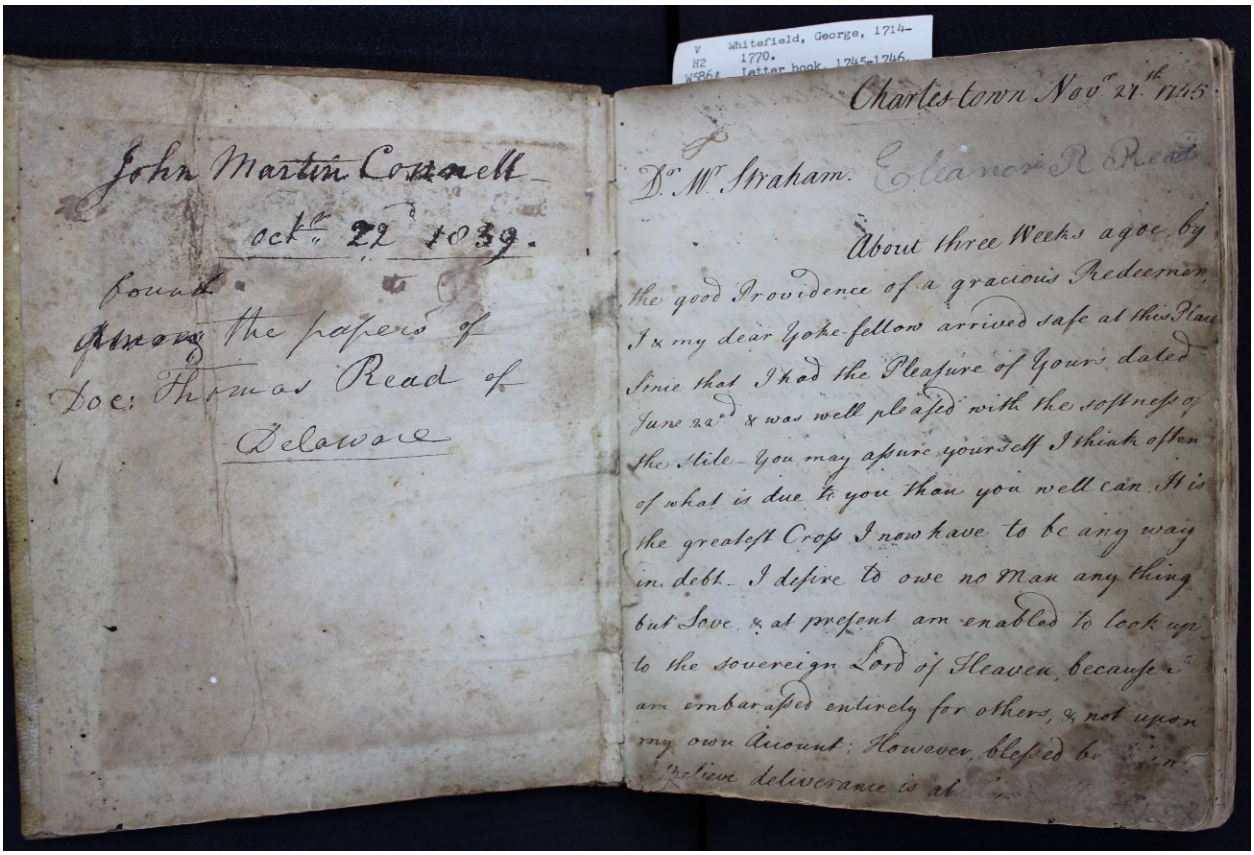


Figure 4: Inside the cover of the *George Whitefield Letter Book, 1745-1746*, Courtesy of the Presbyterian Historical Society, Philadelphia, PA. Image by Author.

Figure 5: Unknown artist, Whitefield Bust, painted horse vertebra, mid 18th century. Methodist Archives and Research Center, John Rylands Library, University of Manchester (UK). Photo by permission of John Rylands Library.

Figure 6: Carrington Bowles and John Raphael Smith, *Spectators at a Print Shop in St. Paul's ChurchYard*, 1774. Mezzotint. Methodist Archives and Research Center, John Rylands Library, University of Manchester. Photo by author.

Figure 7: (Left) John Wollaston, George Whitefield, c. 1742. Oil on canvas. (Right) John Faber Jr., printed for John Bowles, after John Wollaston, c. 1742. Mezzotint. © National Portrait Gallery, London.

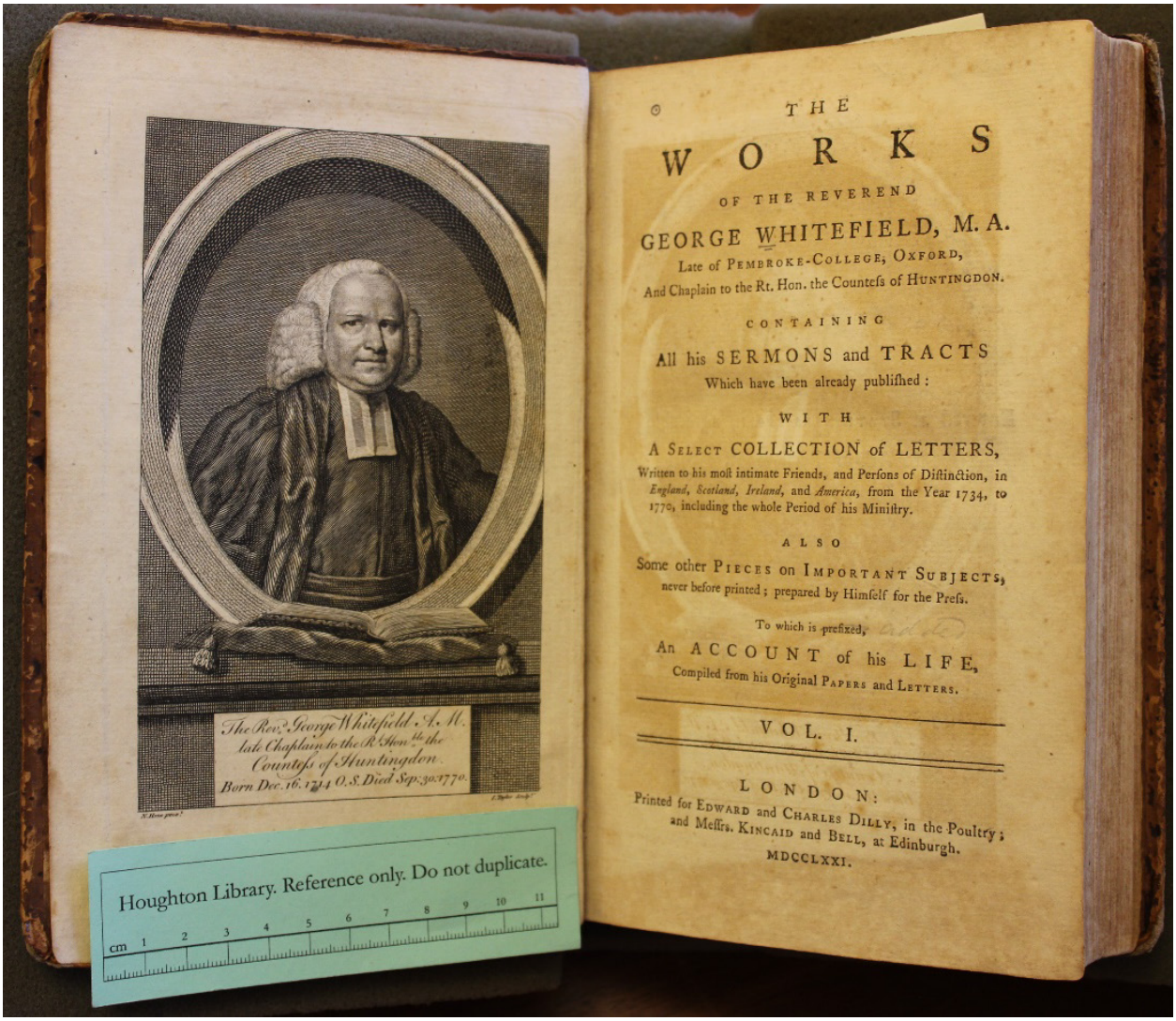


Figure 8: Frontispiece of Whitefield's *Works*. Houghton Library, Harvard University. Image by author.

Figure 1: Unknown artist, *This FIGURE represents Mr. Whitefield, dress'd as he was laid out & buried* (Boston: John Boyles and Ezekiel Russell, 1770-1771). Houghton Library, Harvard University, Cambridge, MA. Photo by author.

Figure 2: Photograph of Whitefield's crypt, ca. 1920. Old South Archive. Image by Author. Courtesy of Old South Presbyterian Meeting House.

Figure 3: Bolton's Box. Image by author. Courtesy of Old South Presbyterian Meeting House.

Figure 4: Hand or wrist bone attributed to George Whitefield. Courtesy of the Methodist Library, Drew University. Image by author.

Figure 13: Nathan Shurtleff (attributed), *Cast of the Skull of George Whitefield and Bible*, 1833. Courtesy of Old South Presbyterian Meeting House. Photo by author.

Figure 14: Detail of right seventh rib of George Whitefield, specimen number 10107A, Warren Anatomical Museum, Harvard University. Label reads: “Rib of Rev. George Whitefield, a celebrated preacher.” Image by author. Permission of Harvard Medical School.

ALEXANDER STEWART,

CURATOR, PHRENOLOGICAL MUSEUM

1, SURGEON SQUARE, EDINBURGH,

Respectfully intimates that he supplies the following Casts, illustrative of Phrenology and Ethnology.

CASTS OF CRANIA.

NATIONAL.

1. Swiss
2. Greek (ancient)
3. Turk
4. Hindoo
5. Ceylonese
6. Chinese
7. Egyptian Mummy
8. Ashantee
9. Esquimaux
10. New Holland Chief
11. Blackfoot Indian
12. Peruvian (extinct race)
13. Carib (artificially flattened)
14. Araucanian
15. Chilian
16. Sandwich Islander
17. Circassian Girl
18. Icelander
19. Celt [1]
20. Malay
21. Papuan
22. Burmese
23. Javanese
24. New Zealander
25. Negro
26. Caffre (Female)
27. Bushman

MISCELLANEOUS.

1. Dr Spurzheim
2. Dr A. Combe
3. Robert Burns
4. Dean Swift
5. Dr Hette, small 1 & 14
6. George Whitfield
7. King Robert Bruce, large Nos. 6, 15
8. D. Haggart, large 9 & 15
9. French Soldier, large 15
10. Bellingham, large 5 and 6, small 13
11. Pepe, pirate & murderer
12. Tardy do. do.
13. Skull of an Idiot

Figure 5: George Whitefield's skull sold alongside pirates and poets. Advertisement from J.W. Jackson, Ethnology and Phrenology as an Aid to the Historian, (London: Trübner & Co., 1863), 2. Creative Commons.

The strong, black hair, rough, prominent features, and bony development of Verazzano indicate toughness and endurance; the power and hardihood of the Motive temperament. The deep chest, rounded face, and glowing countenance of Whitefield indicate the Vital temperament; and he was known for ardor, strong affection, and impassioned eloquence.

The large top-head of Melancthon indicates a predominance of the Mental temperament, which gives a tendency to thought, philosophy, moral sentiment, and an appreciation of the beautiful and esthetical. In Sir John Franklin we find the strength of the Motive temperament, the plumpness and ardor of the Vital temperament, and sufficient amplitude of the brain to indicate a full degree of the Mental temperament; thus, all being combined, he was harmonious; strong without being rough, ardent without impulsiveness; thoughtful and studious, without being too abstract or excitable. Persons so organized are fortunate. Genius often comes from unbalanced development, some faculties being greatly in excess; but more often, vice, crime, or misfortune are the result.

MOTIVE TEMPERAMENT.

VERAZZANO.

VITAL TEMPERAMENT.

WHITEFIELD.

MENTAL TEMPERAMENT.

MELANCTHON.

TEMPERAMENTS COMBINED.

SIR JOHN FRANKLIN.

Figure 6: Wells, Samuel Roberts. The Illustrated Annuals of Phrenology and Physiognomy: For the Years 1865. Complete in One Volume, of Over 500 Pages. S.R. Wells, Publishers, 1873, p. 67. Creative Commons.

Figure 7: Bute (Invt.), Germaine (Ext.), and Mansfield (Sculp.), *The Closet*, Aquatint with etching, January 28, 1778, PC 1 - 5470 (A size) [P&P], British Museum. By permission.

Figure 8: McCrea Detail from The Closet, 1778. British Museum. By permission.

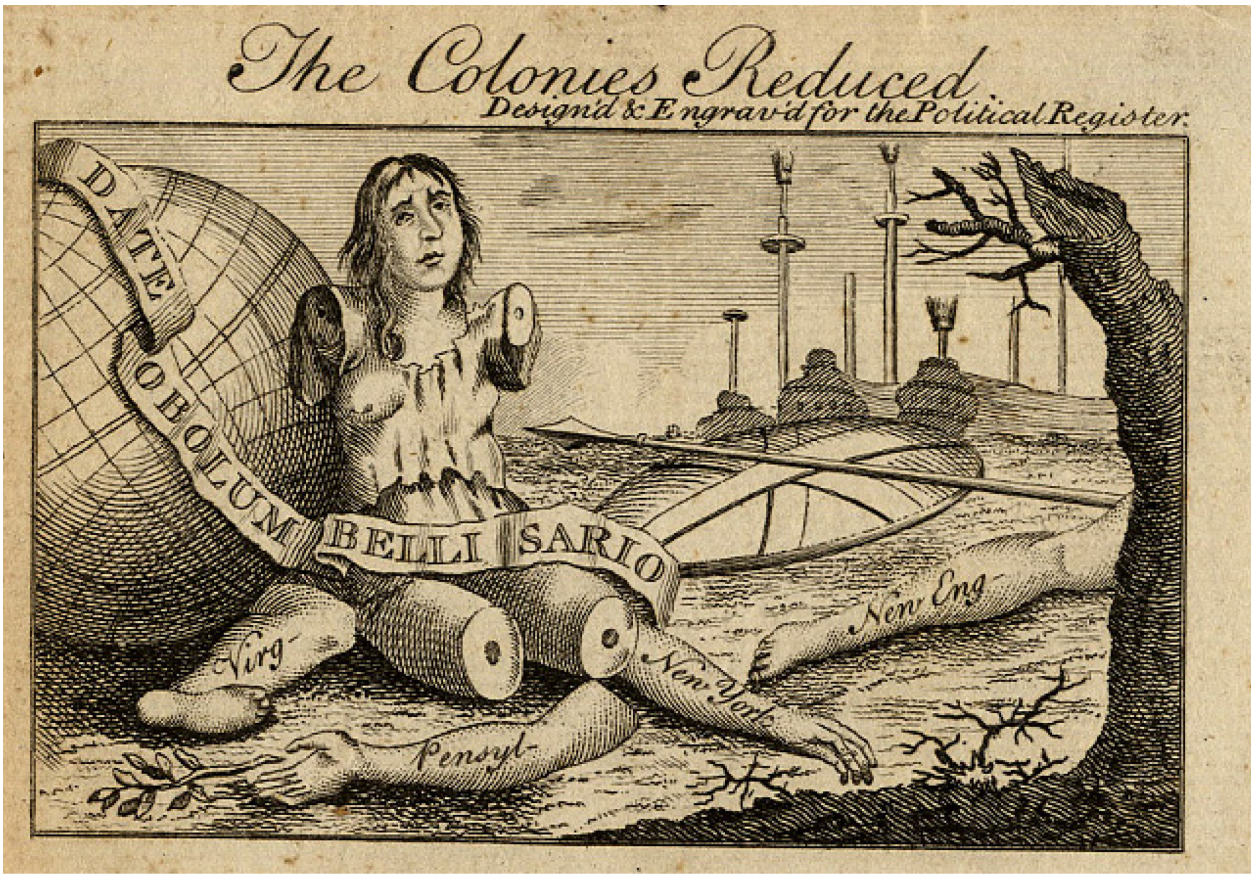


Figure 9: Benjamin Franklin (attributed), *The Colonies Reduced. Its Companion., Engraving, 1767, BM 4183, Courtesy American Antiquarian Society.*

Figure 10: La Grande Bretagne Motile-Das Verstunelte Britanien, Engraving, 68 1767, BM 4183a, Courtesy American Antiquarian Society.

Figure 11: Unknown artist, *The Able Doctor; or American Swallowing the Bitter Draught, Engraving,* 1774, BM 5226, Courtesy American Antiquarian Society.

Figure 12: John Vanderlyn, *Death of Jane McCrae*, 1804. Oil on canvas, 32 ½ x 26 ½ in. (82.6 x 67.4 cm). Courtesy of Wadsworth Atheneum Museum of Art, Hartford, CT. Purchased by Subscription, 1855.4. Photography credit: Allen Phillips\Wadsworth Atheneum.

Figure 13: Here Susannah Inman sits for a portrait in her wedding dress. Robert Feke, *Susannah Speakman Inman (Mrs. Ralph Inman)*, Oil on canvas, 1748, Harvard Art Museums.

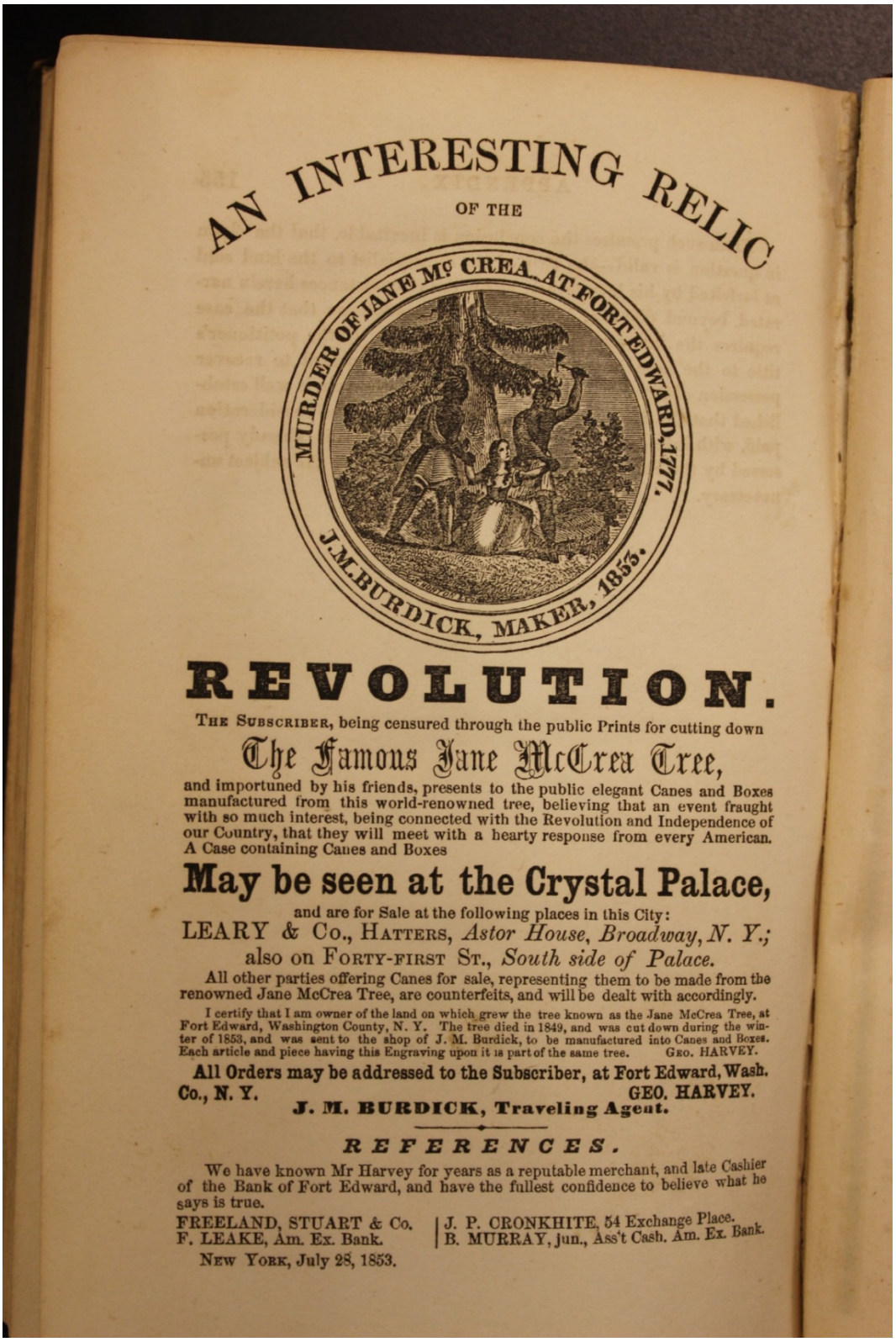
Figure 14: 1. Robert Smirke and Mary Smirke*, The Murder of Lucinda*, Etching and line engraving on chine collé laid down on wove paper, 1807, Yale Center for British Art, Paul Melon Collection.

Figure 15, John Trumbull, *Study for Death of Jane McCrea,* 1790. Pen and Ink on Paper. ca. 1790. Courtesy of Fordham University Libraries.

Figure 16: 1. N. Currier, *Murder of Miss Jane McCrea A.D. 1777*, hand colored lithograph, LC-USZC2-2850, Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division, Washington, D.C., accessed July 7, 2015, *http://www.loc.gov/pictures/item/2002710603/.* Creative Commons.

Figure 17: From Lossing's *Fieldbook*, Creative Commons.

Figure 18: From Lossing's *Fieldbook*, Creative Commons.



AN INTERESTING RELIC

OF THE

REVOLUTION.

THE SUBSCRIBER, being censured through the public Prints for cutting down

The Famous Jane McCrea Tree,

and importuned by his friends, presents to the public elegant Canes and Boxes manufactured from this world-renowned tree, believing that an event fraught with so much interest, being connected with the Revolution and Independence of our Country, that they will meet with a hearty response from every American. A Case containing Canes and Boxes

May be seen at the Crystal Palace,

and are for Sale at the following places in this City:

LEARY & Co., HATTERS, *Astor House, Broadway, N. Y.;*

also on FORTY-FIRST ST., *South side of Palace.*

All other parties offering Canes for sale, representing them to be made from the renowned Jane McCrea Tree, are counterfeits, and will be dealt with accordingly.

I certify that I am owner of the land on which grew the tree known as the Jane McCrea Tree, at Fort Edward, Washington County, N. Y. The tree died in 1849, and was cut down during the winter of 1853, and was sent to the shop of J. M. Burdick, to be manufactured into Canes and Boxes. Each article and piece having this Engraving upon it is part of the same tree. GEO. HARVEY.

All Orders may be addressed to the Subscriber, at Fort Edward, Wash. Co., N. Y.

GEO. HARVEY.

J. M. BURDICK, Traveling Agent.

REFERENCES.

We have known Mr Harvey for years as a reputable merchant, and late Cashier of the Bank of Fort Edward, and have the fullest confidence to believe what he says is true.

FREELAND, STUART & Co.
F. LEAKE, Am. Ex. Bank.

J. P. CRONKHITE, 54 Exchange Place.
B. MURRAY, jun., Ass't Cash. Am. Ex. Bank.

NEW YORK, July 28, 1853.

Figure 19: Advertisement from Wilson, *The Life of Jane McCrea*, 1853. Houghton Library, Harvard University. Photo by author.

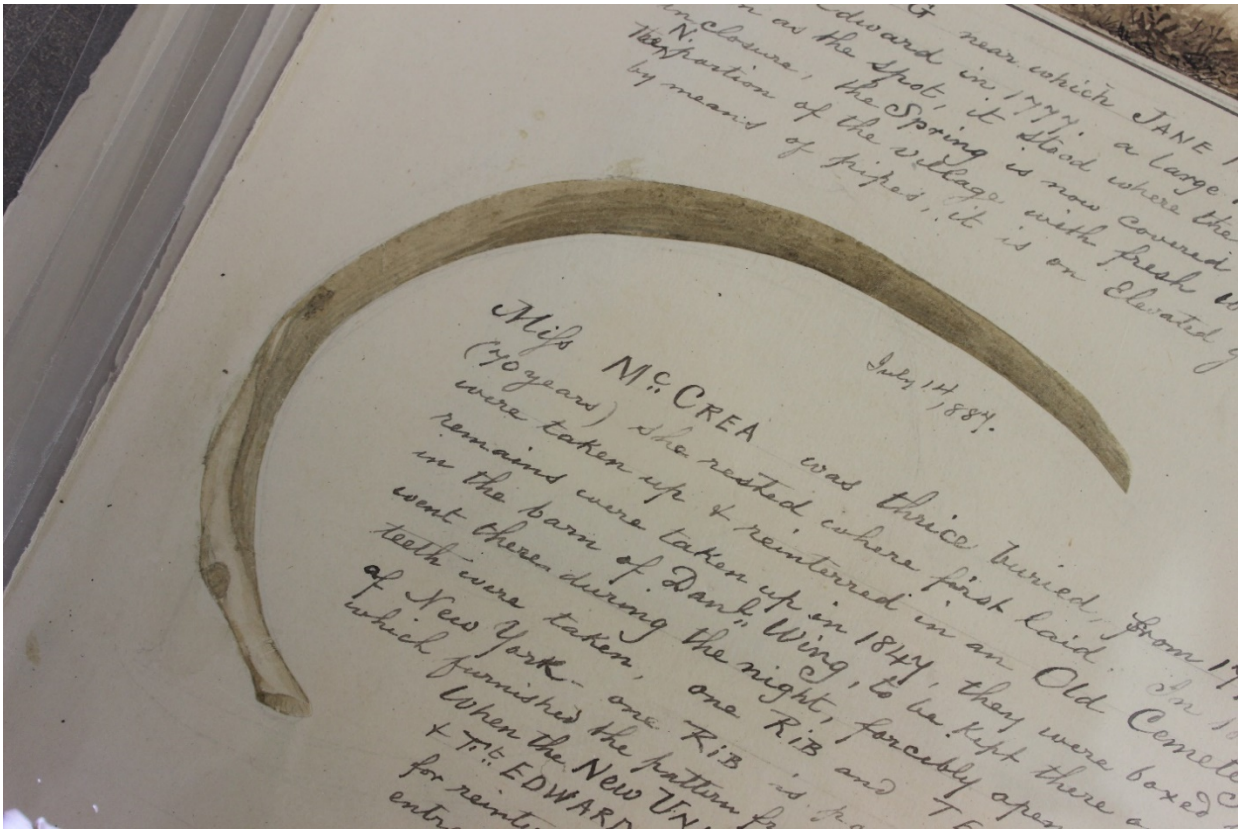


Figure 20: Detail from Rufus Grider Albums, n.d., Volume VI, p. 2.. Photo by author, courtesy of New York State Library Manuscripts and Special Collections, Albany, NY.

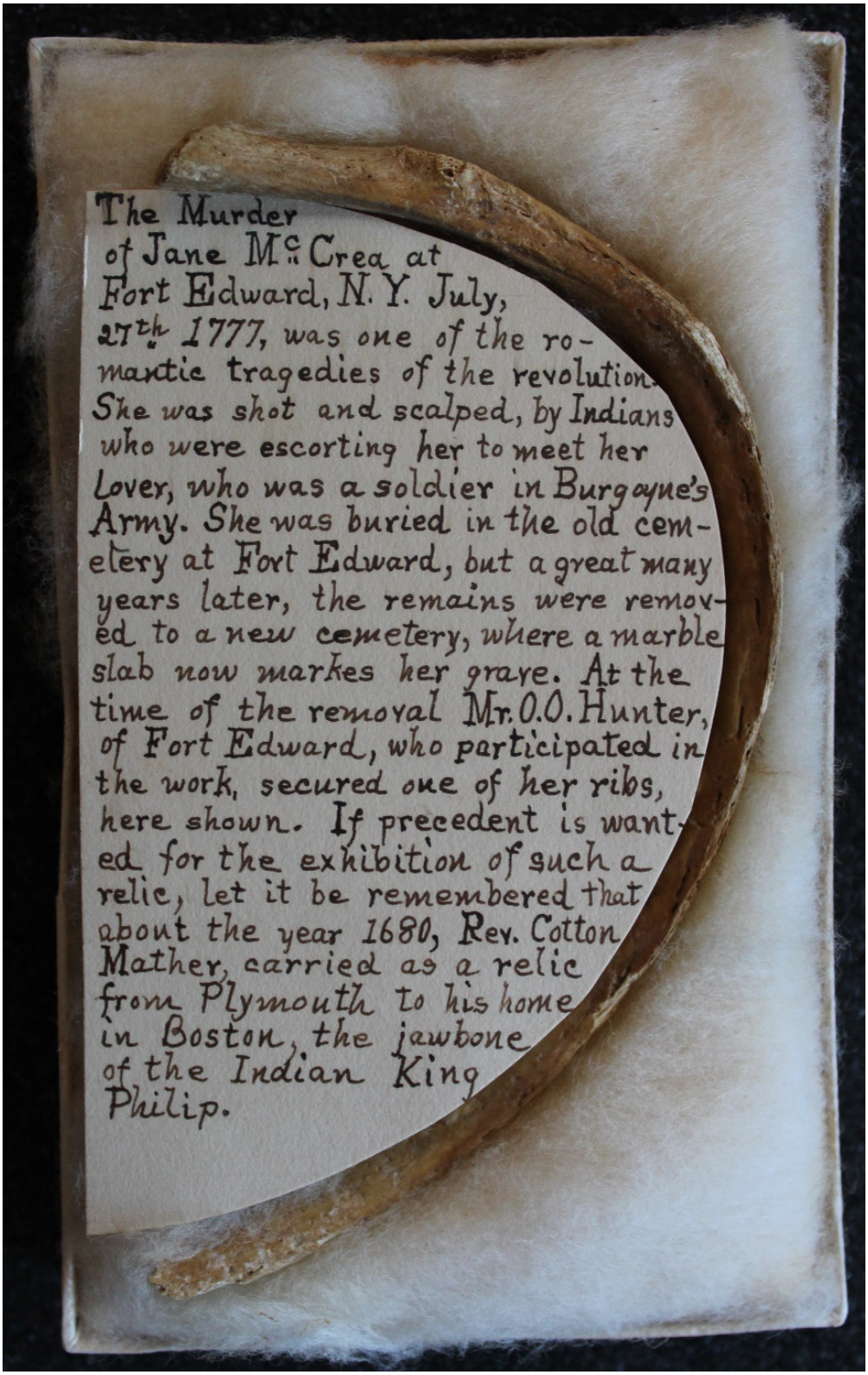


Figure 21: Jane McCrea's Rib. Photo by author, by permission of Fort Ticonderoga Museum.

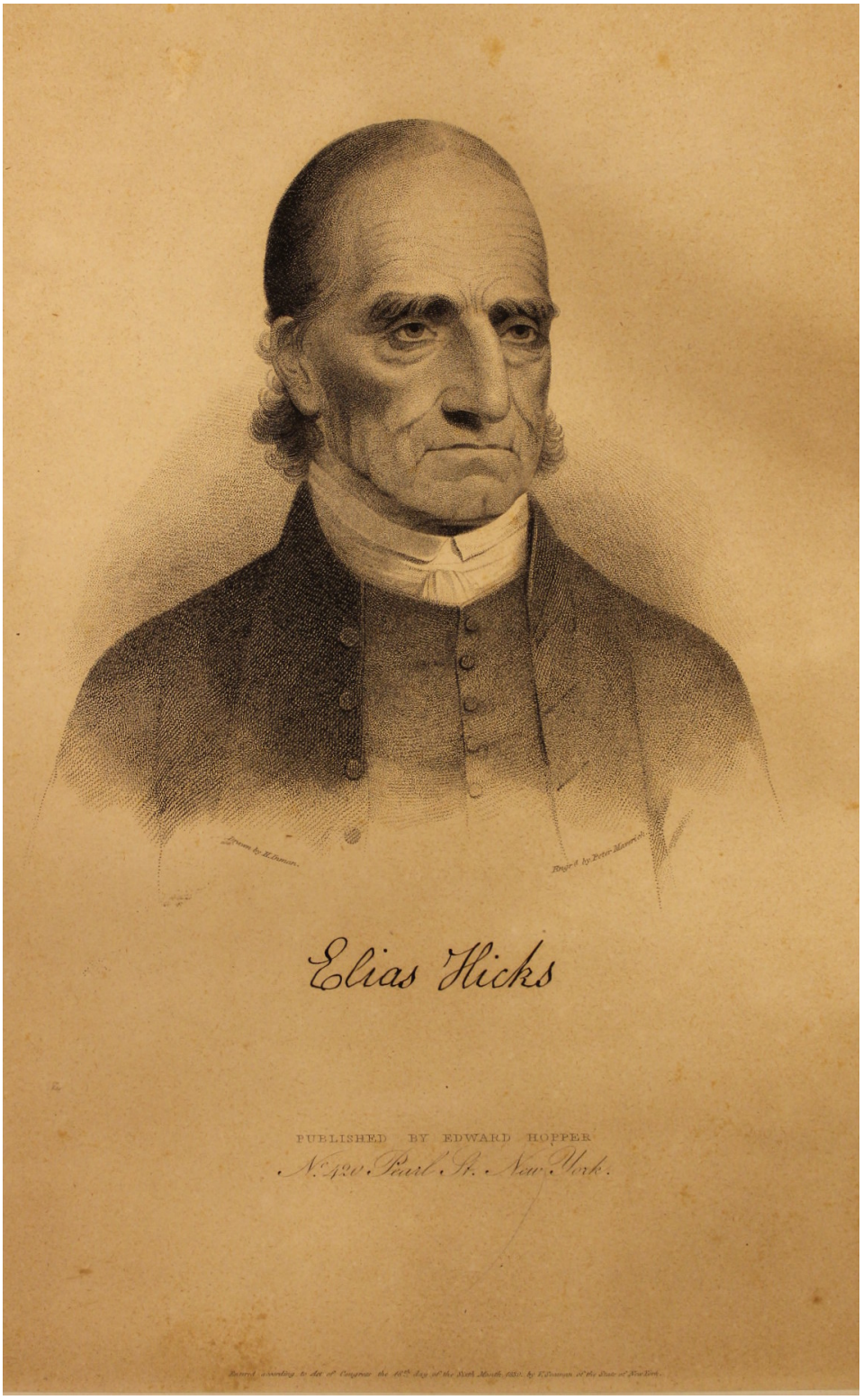


Figure 22: H. Inman [Artist], Peter Maverick [Engraver], and Edward Hopper [Publisher], Elias Hicks, Print, June 18, 1830, Courtesy of Friends Historical Library of Swarthmore College. Photo by author.

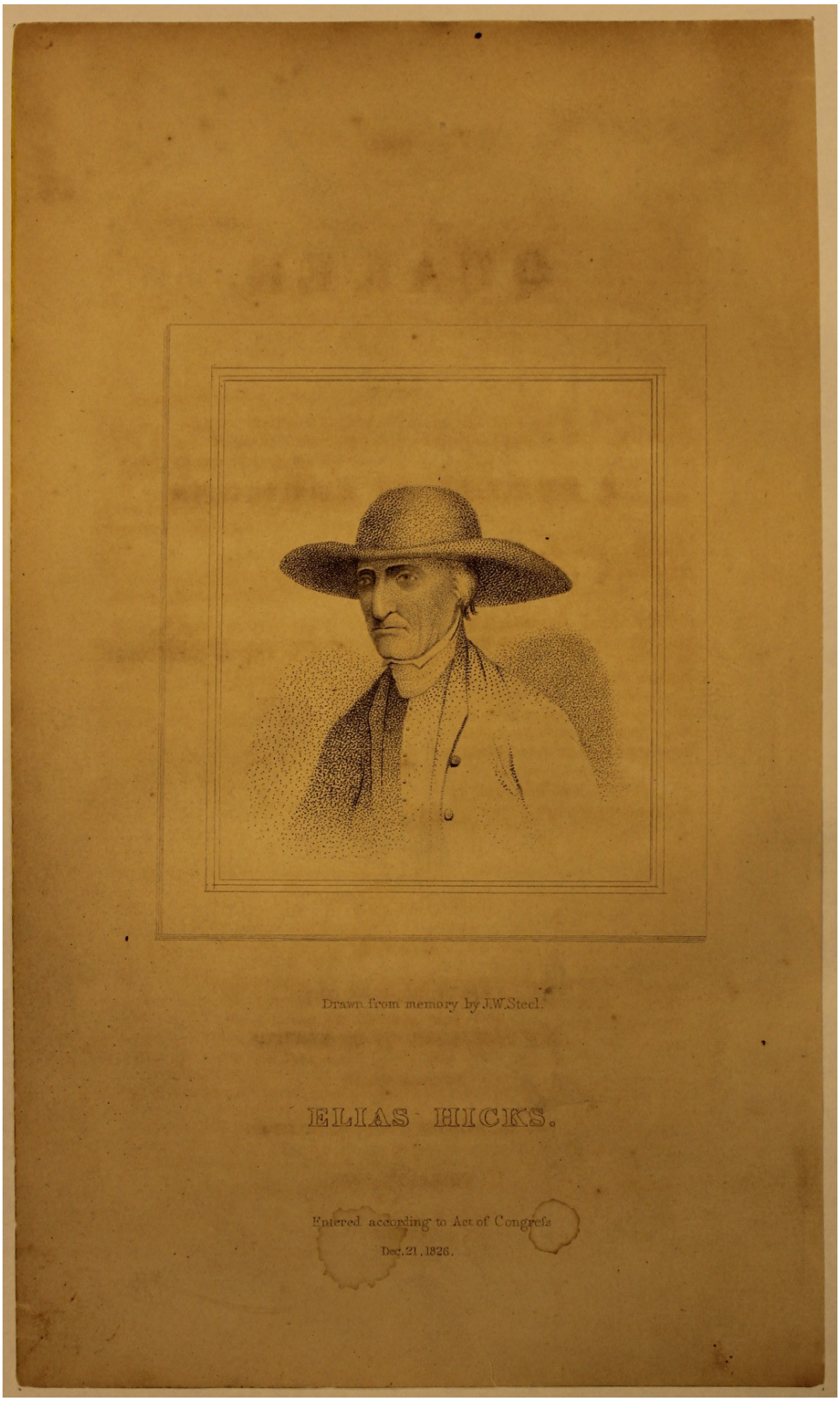


Figure 23: J.W. Steel's 1826 miniature engraving of Hicks, "Drawn from Memory." Courtesy of Friends Historical Library of Swarthmore College. Photo by author.

Figure 24: "A woman whose face exemplifies the phlegmatic temperament," drawing that was the basis for the subsequent engraving from Lavater, c. 1789. Wellcome Trust, Open Collections. Lavater's commission of faces depicting the four humors was the most popular and influential visual aspect of the book.

Figure 25: This image, from the German edition, visualzes the "foundation" of the science of Physiognomy, and, in a macabre way, Lavater's dread of deception of the malleable live face. Lavater, *Physiognomischen* Fragmente *zur Beförderung der Menschenkenntnis*, (1775-1778), Vol. I: 293. Houghton Library, Harvard University.

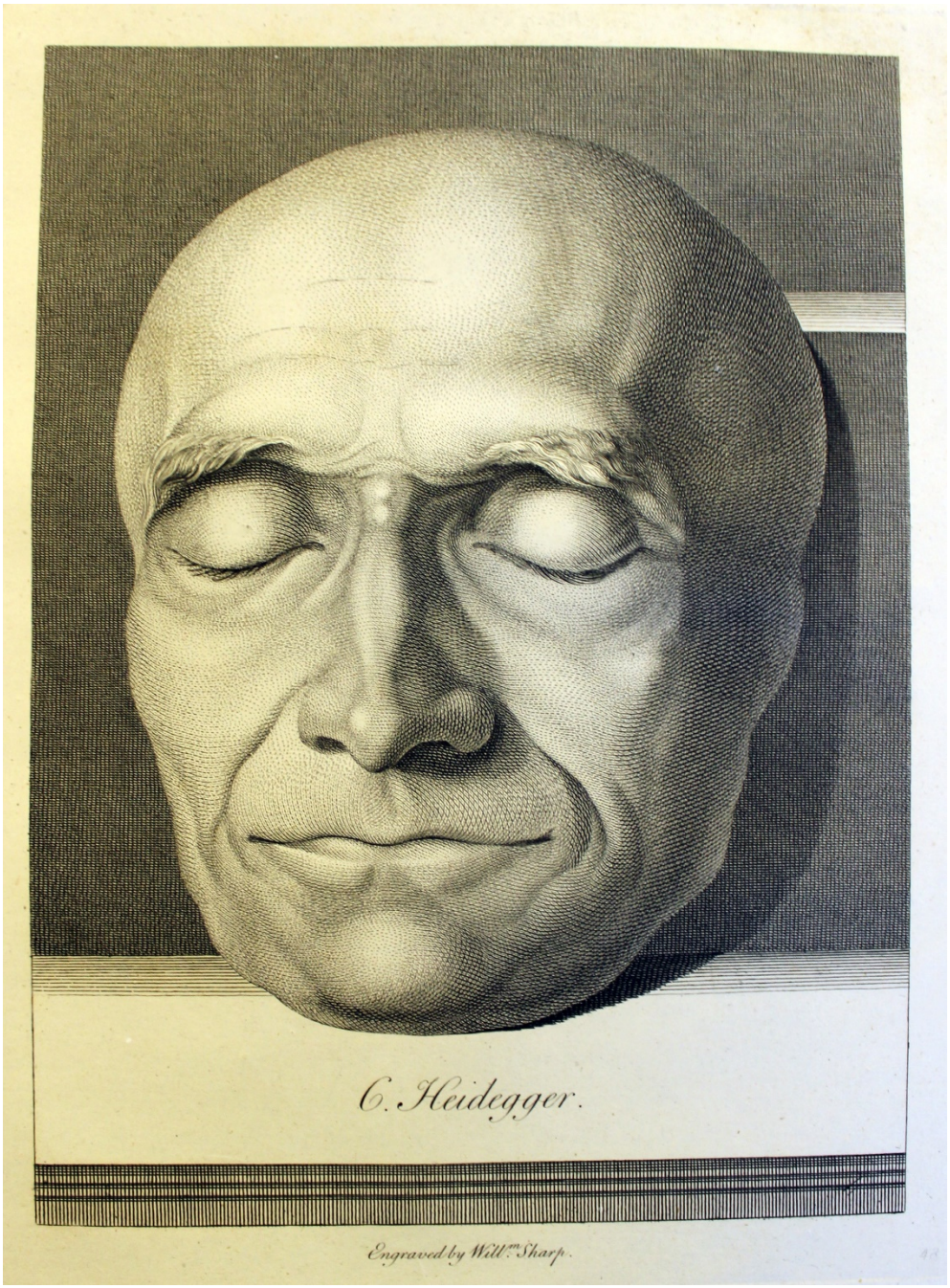


Figure 26: "Yet who durst affirm, after examining it: 'that mute face says nothing!' Lavater, *Essays on Physiognomy,* Holcroft Edition, 1789, Vol II: 260-261. Image by author. Houghton Library, Harvard University.

Figure 27: John Browere, *James Monroe* [death mask], plaster cast, 1831. Courtesy of the New York State Historical Association and Fennimore Art Museum, Cooperstown, NY.

Figure 28: John Browere, *Elias Hicks* [death mask], 1830, cast painted plaster. Courtesy of Friends Historical Library of Swarthmore College. Image by author.

Figure 29: John Browere, *Elias Hicks* [death mask], 1830, cast painted plaster. Courtesy of Friends Historical Library of Swarthmore College. Photo by author.

Figure 30: "Bishop John Seybert's Neckcloth." Photo by author. Permission from General Commission of Archives and History, United Methodist Church and Methodist Library, Drew University.

Figure 31: Reliquary with a fragment of George Washington's coffin. Friends Historical Library of Swarthmore College. Photo by author.

Figure 32: "Tea Thrown into Boston Harbor Dec. 16, 1773." Courtesy of the American Antiquarian Society.