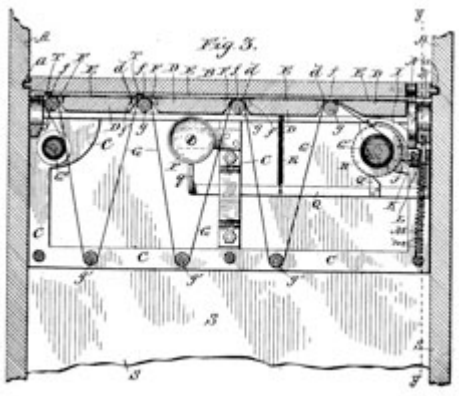
Voting Machines and the Voters They Represent



Presented as part of the special Politics Issue

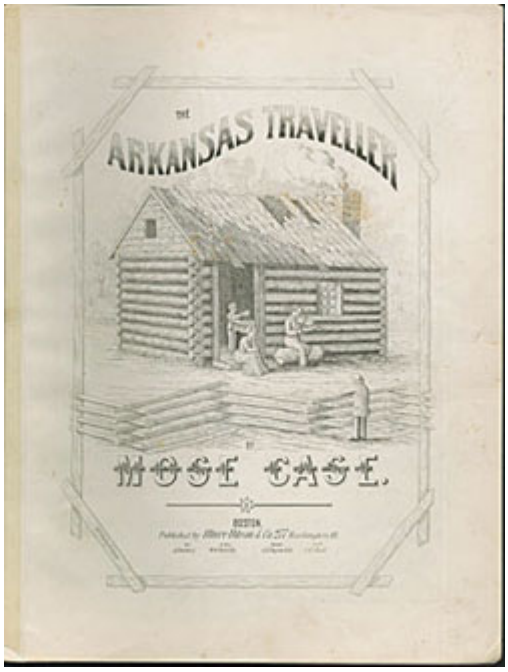
The layout of a voting machine harbors implications about meaning, about what is and what is important, and therefore harbors politics in its broadest sense.

Facts and Fictions in Revolutionary Boston

Presented as part of the Special Literature Issue

The book’s a genre send-up: a mystery, with traces of the gothic; a love story, with an overwrought romantic sensibility; a picaresque, somewhat overblown.

The Newberry Consort



1. “The Arkansas Traveller,” title page of sheet music by Mose Case (Boston, Massachusetts). Courtesy of the Lester S. Levy Collection of Sheet Music, Special Collections at the Sheridan Libraries of the Johns Hopkins University, Baltimore, Maryland.

2. “Hard Times Come Again No More,” title page of sheet music by Stephen Collins Foster (New York). Courtesy of the Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

The Newberry Consort presents historically informed programs of early music, often drawn from the collections at the Newberry Library, through an annual concert series in Chicago, national and international touring, residencies at colleges and universities, and recordings. The Newberry Consort was founded in 1986 to present public concerts of music from the collections at the Newberry Library and has offered an annual concert series continuously since 1988.

As part of our ongoing commitment to excellence in programming, we expand the usual definition of “early music” (Western European medieval, Renaissance and Baroque) to include historically informed performances of other genres, such as Polish Renaissance music and Mexican colonial Baroque music. When we began work on this program, we were astonished at the Newberry’s holdings of late nineteenth-century books and music. Then we remembered that this wealth of material came from the time when Walter Loomis Newberry and his industrialist friends were first assembling the collection. It made sense that their personal libraries would include many items from their recent history. In 1968, the Newberry Library added substantially to its holdings of Americana by acquiring the Driscoll Collection of American Sheet Music, amassed by James Francis Driscoll (1875-1959). One of the largest and most representative collections of its kind, the Driscoll Collection includes 80,000 pieces of sheet music and

related materials. Driscoll was by profession a civil engineer, but music was always his passion—for many years he was the organist and choir director at Boston's Sacred Heart Cathedral—and having a great interest in American history and music, he began collecting. As early as the 1890s, he was well on his way to amassing one of the largest collections of American sheet music.

3. "Money Musk," sheet music published and sold by Geo. Willig (Philadelphia, Pennsylvania). Courtesy of the Lester S. Levy Collection of Sheet Music, Special Collections at the Sheridan Libraries of the Johns Hopkins University, Baltimore, Maryland.

So much of our time as an early music ensemble is spent exploring European cultures that it was a welcome diversion to explore the early music of our own county. Music from late nineteenth-century America reflects the panoply of styles of the country's vast melting pot of cultures and classes (much as it remains today). But the music also reflects the huge, untamed wilderness at the doorstep of the urban centers that fueled the imagination of performers and composers. Stories of life and death experiences rubbed shoulders with the centuries-old traditions of European cultures. As a result, our program presents an array of musical entertainments, from the fireside recreations of pioneers and sod farmers to the concert hall performances and parlor soirees of high society. We spent the same care finding old instruments or reconstructions of old instruments to play this music as we do to play Renaissance or medieval music. Nineteenth-century pianos and violins are easy to find, but a gut-strung fretless banjo from the 1860s was another challenge. We are lucky to have in our city one of the world's experts in historical banjo, Michael Miles.

While our audience was surprised when we first presented this program on our series, they loved it, and audiences who have heard early American music only through the lens of folk traditions are surprised at the elegance and complexity in the music of Foster, Gottschalk, and others when played in a historically informed manner.

Visit The Newberry Consort's website.

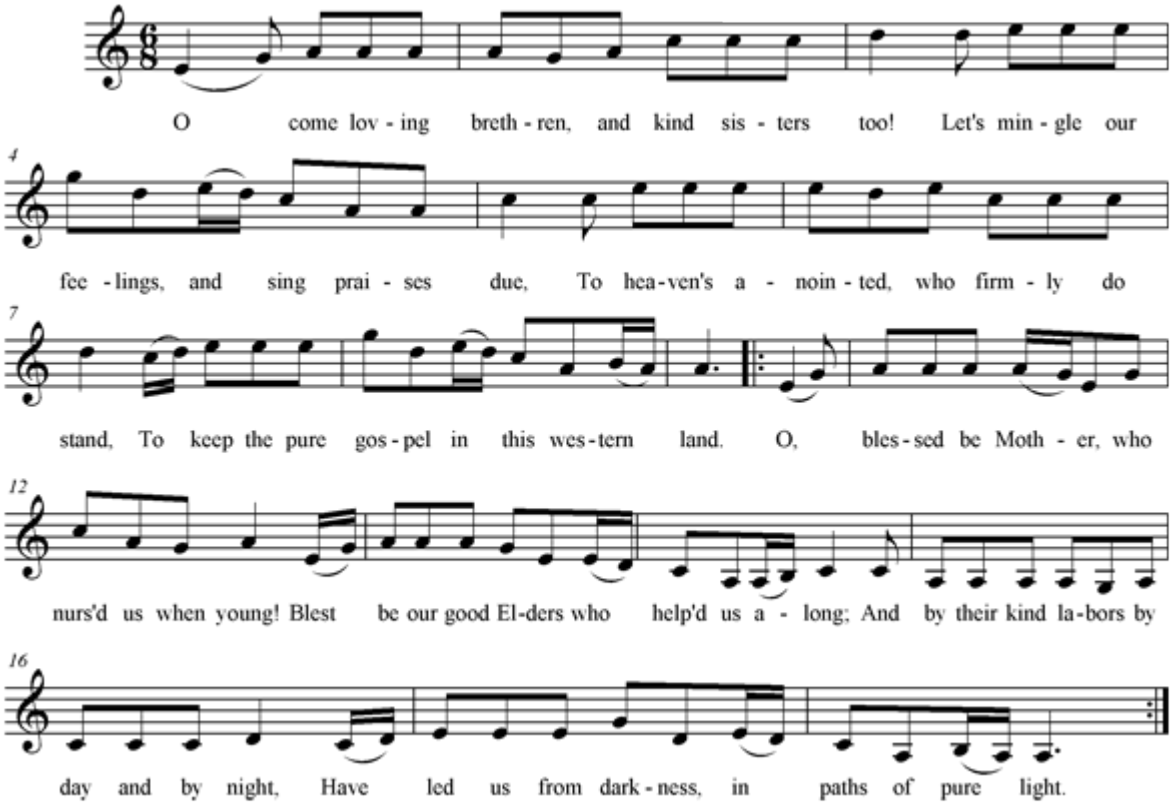
David on Bows:

David on Lincoln's America:

Michael Miles Lincoln Banjo:

This article originally appeared in issue 13.2 (Winter, 2013).

In Search of American Music: Introduction to Common-place 13:2



What makes American music *American?* Is there a distinctive American music? What is the relationship between American music and music that is performed in America, that is, musical practices transplanted from other parts of the globe? These questions have commanded the attention of American music historians ranging from George Hood in the nineteenth and John Tasker Howard in the earlier part of the twentieth century, to Charles Hamm and Richard Crawford today. The essays collected in this issue on American music before 1900 provide a range of approaches and answers to persistent questions about the Americanness of American music.

Two scholars (Jeanne Eller McDougall and Nara Newcomer) explore the performance of European musical styles in their original form in North America. Both concern Europeans who travelled and settled in the coastal south during the colonial and early national periods. Other contributors (Myron Gray and Glenda Goodman) are more concerned with hybridity in American music culture. Their essays focus on how musical practices rooted in other places and eras change as a result of the unique musical and political climate of the United States. As essays by Christine DeLucia and me suggest, music could and did reflect political transformations, serving as a form of memory that shaped how composers, musicians, and listeners understood their past.

Finally, two other contributors (April Masten and Carol Medlicott) detail more idiosyncratic forms of American hybridity: Their essays explore jigs based on Irish and African American performance traditions and Shaker music, rooted in their distinctive concepts of family, society, and gender, as well as the special role they created for sacred music.

Rather than trying to define American music according to a narrow understanding and definition, the contributors to this special issue of *Common-place* explore the multivalent world of British North America and the United States for its first three centuries of existence. They reveal uniquely American trends in music performance, composition, and the climate for musicking, especially in the period predating recorded sound as well as the replication of European practice in the Western Hemisphere and its resonance and use in its new environment. Together, their essays explore the *many* ways in which music existed in the United States. The result reveals how disparate and quirky American music was in that period. For me, this issue musically captures the sentiment of *E pluribus unum* so central to our national character.

This article originally appeared in issue 13.2 (Winter, 2013).

Nikos Pappas, an assistant professor of musicology at the University of Alabama, is actively engaged as a scholar and performer of American music from the colonial, early nationalist, and antebellum periods. A recognized Kentucky master traditional musician, he is currently preparing a database of Southern and Western sacred music from 1750 to 1870. His research has received support from the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, American Council of Learned Societies, the American Musicological Society, the Bibliographic Society of America, Music Library Association, and the American Antiquarian Society.

The Civil War at 150: Memory and Meaning – Special Issue of Commonplace

The making of Civil War memory did not begin only after the war ended. Americans began shaping their memories of the war in camps, on battlefields, and in homes across the nation as early as the spring of 1861. Officers wrote battle reports and soldiers jotted down diary entries, describing their experiences and shaping the war's many histories. They picked up cotton bolls and shards of trees, bullets and buttons, and sent these souvenirs home as records of what they lived through during the war. After 1865, veterans and their families pondered these relics and thought about their wartime experiences, telling stories and sharing memories of those who had fallen in battle.

In the 1880s and 1890s, the war generation began to publish memoirs, letter collections, and other accounts while both Union and Confederate veterans' groups erected monuments on town greens and in cemeteries across the nation, creating the war's public histories. These texts and objects offered competing versions of the war's events and ideologies: the North's won cause, with its

assertion of the perpetuity of the Union and the moral victory of emancipation; and the South's lost cause, with its twin themes of defeated valor and noble sacrifice in defense of states' rights. In the first decades of the twentieth century, white northerners and southerners began to reconcile their war memories and craft a shared narrative of white, martial manhood that ignored the contributions of black soldiers and denied the centrality of slavery and emancipation to the conflict. This new narrative of reconciliation and reunion was not uncontested, but it was strong, and it endured.

We find ourselves at a critical moment; at the sesquicentennial's midpoint, we can assess how Americans have remembered the war, and how we might commemorate it in the future.

Fifty years ago Americans commemorated and celebrated the centennial of the American Civil War. On the surface, the centennial reflected a broad consensus among white Americans that had changed little since the turn of the twentieth century. The war was remembered through battle reenactments and in museum exhibits as a gallant struggle between soldiers who fought for their respective – and equally legitimate–causes. The war's consequences were minimized and often ignored entirely. Below the surface, however, cracks appeared and widened. The civil rights movement, gaining ground in the late 1950s and early 1960s, transformed the nation politically and socially. African Americans challenged the nation's collective Civil War memory by drawing its attention to the war's legacy of emancipation and Reconstruction.

As Americans have marked the Civil War's sesquicentennial over the past few years, the cultural impact of the civil rights movement on the dominant narrative has been clear. The anniversary's events have emphasized the story of slavery, emancipation, the service of black Union soldiers to the war effort, and to the cause of freedom. Although this is the most salient shift in how Americans are currently remembering and commemorating the war, it is far from the only one.

A range of historical topics that take us beyond the traditional narrative of battles and leaders can now be found in public events, museum exhibits, and classrooms from Georgia to Massachusetts to California. The scholarly output on the Civil War has burgeoned, while Civil War enthusiasts of all stripes are making use of social media tools such as Facebook, Twitter and YouTube to share perspectives that do not easily fit into the standard narrative of Civil War memory.

We find ourselves at a critical moment; at the sesquicentennial's midpoint, we can assess how Americans have remembered the war, and how we might commemorate it in the future. To this end we have assembled essays for this special issue of *Common-place* that examine war memory produced from the 1860s to the present, in unexpected places and with surprising results. While each essay focuses on a specific "site" of memory–battlefield parks, for example, or the published memoirs of abolitionists–what brings them together is a shared interest in

challenging ingrained assumptions and established dichotomies. Like recent sesquicentennial events, they emphasize the important roles that race, slavery, and emancipation played in the war and its memory, but they also reveal that this narrative has been and continues to be contested. The essays also suggest that the war and its memory-making did not only occur only in the "North" and "South," but also in Kentucky and Missouri, in Wisconsin and Colorado. And it not only occurred in the pages of published letters, diaries, and memoirs, but also at veterans' events and memorial dedications. The future of Civil War memory is currently being shaped in classrooms and movie theaters, in government agencies and cultural institutions, and by individuals across the nation.

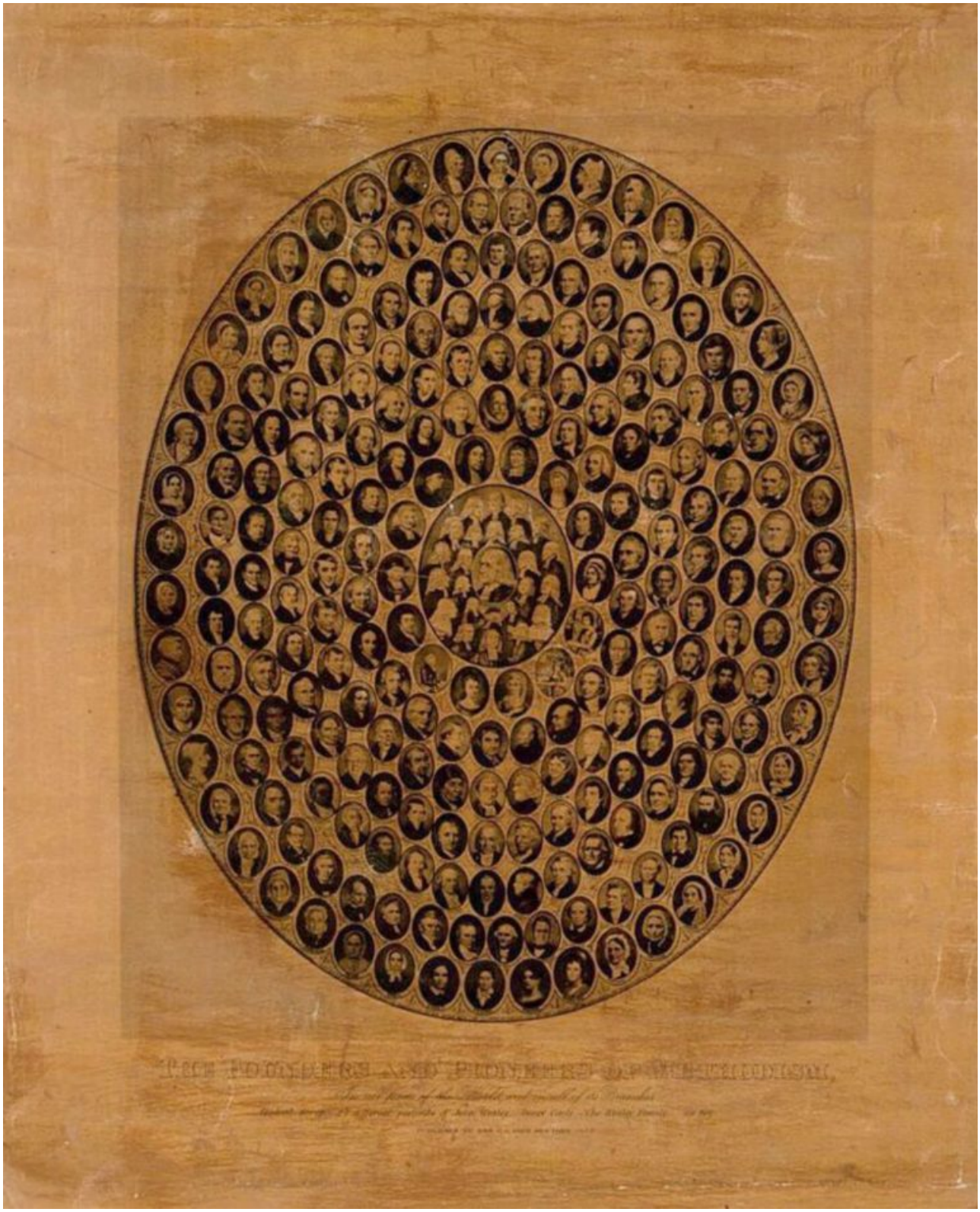
With this special issue of *Common-place*, we hope to illuminate the myriad ways that Americans have wrestled with our Civil War past and why we continue to return to it to bring meaning to our own lives.

This article originally appeared in issue 14.2 (Winter, 2014).

Kevin M. Levin teaches history at Gann Academy in Waltham, Mass. He is the author of *Remembering the Battle of the Crater: War as Murder* (2012) and blogs at Civil War Memory.

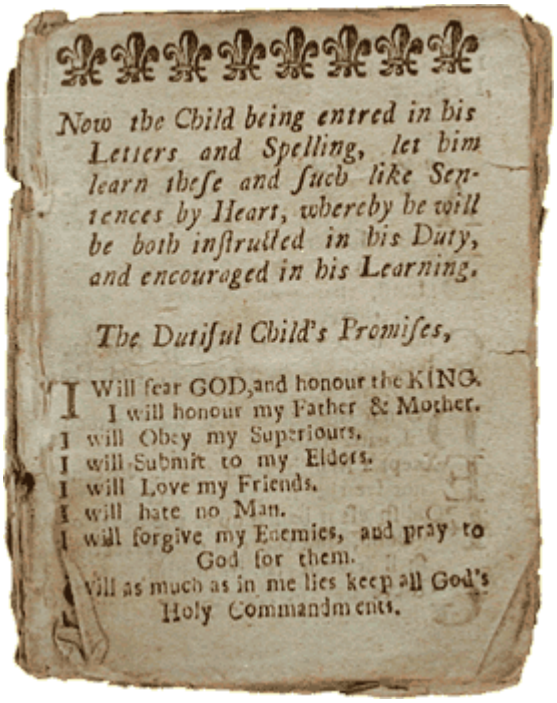
Megan Kate Nelson is visiting assistant professor at Brown University. She is a cultural and environmental historian of warfare and the author of *Ruin Nation: Destruction and the American Civil War* (2012).

Religion, Revolution, and the Early Republic Revisited



Both New Englanders and English dissenters talked the talk of Protestant internationalism and unity, but when the conflict between Britain and the American colonies escalated, they did not walk the walk.

Literacy Then and Now



Now the Child being entred in his Letters and Spelling, let him learn these and such like Sentences by Heart, whereby he will be both instructed in his Duty, and encouraged in his Learning.

The Dutiful Child's Promises,

I Will fear GOD, and honour the KING.
I will honour my Father & Mother.
I will Obey my Superiours.
I will Submit to my Elders.
I will Love my Friends.
I will hate no Man.
I will forgive my Enemies, and pray to God for them.
I will as much as in me lies keep all God's Holy Commandments.

"The New England Primer emerged from, in David E. Stannard's phrase, 'a world in which the presence of early death was everywhere.'"

Crossing Frontiers: Early American and Native American histories

Taking Native culture seriously requires that we abandon the attempt to put Native wine into European bottles.

Puritan Spectacle

Three poems

In *God's Altar: The Word and Flesh in Puritan Poetry* (Berkeley, 1978), the literary critic Richard Daly writes that, for the earliest New England colonists, "symbolic correspondences occur . . . at the level of perception." I am interested in the way language, perception, and existence are central to the difficult lives of these American Puritans. My poems explore this phenomenon as the source of distinctly American expression.

They work specifically with the requirement for publicly delivered conversion narratives, sometimes called professions of saving grace, that were a prerequisite for full church membership in the seventeenth-century Massachusetts Bay Colony. [Examples of these narratives can be seen in *God's Plot: Puritan Spirituality in Thomas Shepard's Cambridge* (Amherst, 1994), edited by the historian Michael McGiffert.]

My poem "The 88 Hearts of Wm. Adams" is written around an early conversion narrative I transcribed from the Massachusetts Historical Society archives. The title of the poem is derived from the overwhelming number of times Adams mentions a motion of his heart in the course of his twelve-page narrative.

"Visible" takes its title from Edmund S. Morgan's classic study *Visible Saints: The History of a Puritan Idea* (Ithaca, 1965) and the saints' central dilemma of making oneself an outward, visible sign of an inner, unknowable, and unconditional election to grace. The tortuous tautology of "I must show what

cannot be shown” yields much difficult beauty in Puritan expression and, I believe, continues to resonate in American poetry. “Visible” suggests that this beauty exists only where those inner truths and outer impossibilities collide: on the skin, in the eyes, in breath.

Brought into the Puritan fold by the missionary work of John Eliot and joined to their own congregations by full professions of saving grace, the “Praying Indians” of the Massachusetts Bay Colony faced the deep contradictions of visibility during King Philip’s War. They found themselves exiled to Deer Isle in Boston Harbor for the duration of the war where many starved to death. “A Bold Plea for the Easement of Suffering of these Professed and Reading Red Saints” is a voicing of the pleas, not only by the minister Eliot on behalf of fellow Christians, but also by a literary man for the protection of his best linguists and translators—the Christianized Indians.

The poems presented here explore an array of formal structures and expressive modes; I choose this strategy in allegiance with those colonists—be they antinomians, shy public performers, or native Algonquian speakers—who struggled against the predetermined and mediated structure of a required profession to communicate their experience of God’s saving grace. These poems pay tribute to those who faced the impossible task the Puritans required of themselves above and beyond mere physical survival: describing in words what they insisted was beyond language, what they insisted was the nigh-perceivable evidence of their relationship to God.

The 88 Hearts of Wm. Adams

d. 1659, Ipswich

Hollowed by shadow or shone forth
By sometimes more
Than ordinary stirrings
Against the awful ways

Occasion offers, I will tell you
The incision in my chest,
Let the mouth confess up
What the heart congests:

Pull aside my shirt, my
Addiction is stitched, stripped
Of circumstance, stripped of habit,
Confined to four chambers & their flagellation.

Pour black powder below

The smooth balls of shot
Set in each chamber.
Make fire by focusing, take flight

In the off-beat between
Each flutter—such like thoughts
Do much take me up—
It’s said this almost endless

Muscle is our weapon, in & out
It goes without meaning or sense
Being lost—limited
Only by half-life in a body

That diverts blood away
From less important humors
To keep an extra beat
From tripping the flintlock.

Armed, quitting earth
For the church turret I saw a bird
Change energy at higher elevations &
Clear out the thunderclouds

Like a topsail to loose itself
In the sky—my dull lusts
Let go as a fistful of dead petals
Flew round my feet & the war

Of good discord went off
In my chest. I fell with fatigue
Of breathing in thankfulness
For this new frame.

Limping home,
The storm seemed to go over.
I slacked my pace
& was overwhelmed in rain.

Will I falter like faith or
Will I falter like fear?
Things fall
From the sky we see

With our eyes. This spring
A swan did move easy
In the river’s shifting ice-splinters
As my flint failed, its neck motionless

As if stitched
To the white heart of a bird
Not beating her wings
& not falling.

Visible

waterproof with metaphor more than encasing
heaven
eyes make
every move, each window, wet lightning hits
the lights out, all us at last see each other only
like
souls again
walking this hard, electrified land in sight
not deeper than skin thin shallows
poured upon like milk muddied upward
toward out in the air between us,
groaning bones to cleave to
as tongues
to significance,
to hot, to (I am my map of) when the church
burned down some got charred,
repainted the hall and parlor for appearance,
for appearance degenerates into personality,
personality a vain plaything—

[*they armor as the congregation fronting the wreckage framed in fading light, a quarter faithful, porcelain features pre-disposed to being ill-treated, little ink edges under the skin rose pink: reverse if seen from the inside or thin pond-surface*]

it’s encased intention attached
to the small safety of saying attacked
to the danger of appearing over and over
every day
you might lovingly release the touch you’ve taken
too extremely to such
outsides disappear
into ideas, a whole body fed by eyes only
feel beauty then
to be misleading

A Bold Plea for the Easement of Suffering of these Confessed and Reading Red Saints

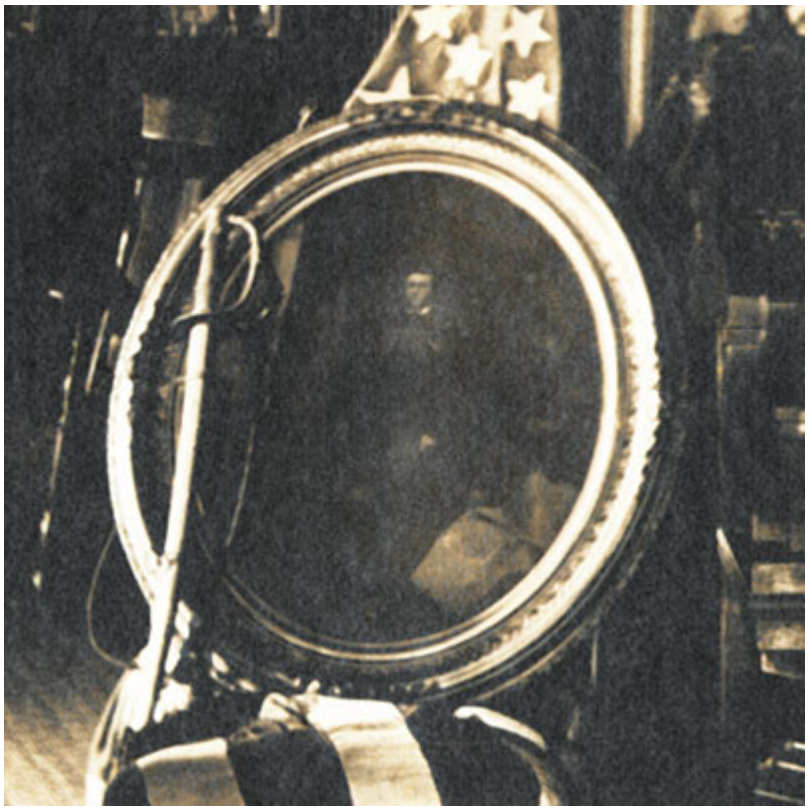
Rev. John Eliot
King Philip's War
Massachusetts, 1675

The sermon of the day is: physicians, books, the lost tribe of knowledge is forecast to unmanifest its fatal arrows: operate in this drastic forest of articulate sounds, please send bread and fish: starving guttural sounds aspirate at back the throat (where we shy from letting our own thoughts go even so deep: the way we think Devil where Oak and Fir cloak their universal sense and church, their not having words and we have nothing to carry them outside our own tongues: *For he that speaketh in an unkown tongue speaketh not unto man, but unto God*). Sirs, four hundred saved red souls starve on Deer Isle, selecting stones, as other sermons run to prophecies and fort defense: daily we drown in discovering loose heads strewn on the highway, as in the Bible: we must translate this universal nourishment to all tongues: every instrument set to work does press for pay, and in this desert the sermon of the day prays the biggest boats closer, waves the marked arm rising off Death Isle, says bring budgets and bring butter and that best Word: the least generous omniscience of our own utter limit unto death (or coming into sight) of those yet tasting what charity and what, already, we are capable of having done. *What? came the word of God* out *from you? or did it come* to you *only?* The press needs also twelve pounds each of fresh *k*'s and *l* 's to conform this ancient Hebraic language to the rules of our alphabet.

This article originally appeared in issue 5.3 (April, 2005).

Robert Strong is a poet and independent scholar living north of the Adirondack Park. His manuscript *Puritan Spectacle*, from which this work is drawn, was selected as a finalist for the Beatrice Hawley Award from Alice James Books and the Wick Prize from Kent State University Press. He completed this collection of poems with the generous help of a Mellon short-term research fellowship at the Massachusetts Historical Society. He is currently preparing a scholarly introduction and contextualization of William Adams's conversion narrative.

Family Values: Lessons in material culture



Starting in the dining room, I stared blankly at the large gold-framed portrait of a young woman. Although I had walked past her a hundred times, I had never stopped to ask, “Who is she, the woman with knotted braids gracing her rose-tinted cheeks?”