

RESEARCH ARTICLE

“But All Had Great Reason to Dread!”: Religion, Affect, and Conspiracy in the Stamp Act Crisis

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Abstract

This article explores affective and emotional components of conspiracism in the 1765 Boston Stamp Act Crisis. Once a common subject in the study of Revolutionary America, conspiracism has disappeared from the historiography in recent decades. I argue that this is a serious oversight in understanding religion in the Revolutionary era. Unmasking conspiratorial plots against colonial liberties was a religious experience in the colonies, simultaneously imbuing liberty with a felt sense of sacredness and forging an emotional separation between the colonies and England. In making this claim, this article aims to demonstrate how scholars of religion might incorporate affect into the historical study of religion. Attention to affective cues, particularly in religious texts, sheds light on the phenomenology of historical religion. Through such analysis, we can begin to understand how religious communities formed through affective connections to the sacred, what that sacred felt like, and how bodily and emotional experience shaped reactions to violations of the sacred. In the case of the Stamp Act Crisis, conspiracism, anti-Catholicism, and satanic symbolism sparked an affectively charged moment characterized by fear, disgust, and anger. As colonists participated in unmasking supposed Catholic and Parliamentary conspiracies against them, they created a community united around scared liberty.

In early spring of 1765, the American colonists learned of the Stamp Act, Parliament’s latest attempt to raise revenue from the colonies in the wake of the Seven Years’ War. As some colonists interpreted it, the Act not only unfairly taxed them to profit England, but it also contained provisions infringing on their right to a common law trial and expanding the power of admiralty courts. And, if all that were not worrisome enough, the law contained ominous hints at the expansion of Anglican power in the colonies, perhaps even the long-feared appointment of an American Bishop. Colonists already frustrated by the reversal of imperial neglect following the Seven Years’ War expressed their displeasure in a veritable avalanche of sermons, pamphlets, and letters.¹

After months of reading and writing angry words, Bostonians resentful of perceived British impositions on their liberty acted. On August 14, an organized protest turned violent. Then again on August 26, following a sermon from Reverend Jonathan

¹Edmund S Morgan and Helen M. Morgan, *Stamp Act Crisis: Prologue to Revolution* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1995), 73–74.

Mayhew, angry Bostonians rioted, harassed local royal administrators, and vandalized their homes. By the annual Pope's Day parade in November, their anger had calmed, but they remained resolute in their opposition to the Stamp Act. In the decades prior, parades celebrated the colonists' shared Anglo-Protestant roots and hatred of Catholicism. The parade of 1765 added a new element: a protest against the kind of tyranny presaged by the Stamp Act.

Until very recently, scholars attributed the crisis surrounding the Stamp Act to the influence of Radical Whig political philosophy, which predisposed colonists to fear conspiratorial plots against their liberties. In 1953, Edmund and Helen Morgan wrote that the anti-Stamp Act stemmed from fears of a "sinister party in England seeking by gradual degrees to enslave them."² In the late 1960s, Bernard Bailyn's *The Ideological Origins of the American Revolution* and Richard Hofstadter's *The Paranoid Style in American Politics* cemented the significance of paranoia and conspiracy republican ideology.³ Hofstadter and Bailyn were part of a cadre of historians working from the 1950s to the early 1980s who were primarily interested in republican ideology in the late colonial period. For these scholars, republicanism "meant maintaining public and private virtue, internal unity, social solidarity, and it meant constantly struggling against 'threats' to the 'republican character' of the nation."⁴ The ideological approach to the Revolutionary era reached its apogee with the publication of Gordon Wood's 1982 "Conspiracy and Causality."⁵

In that essay, Wood outlined the "the general presuppositions and conventions . . . the underlying metaphysics . . . of eighteenth-century culture."⁶ In so doing, he demonstrated how "'reasonable people,' indeed the most enlightened minds of the day" could "believe in malevolent conspiracies."⁷ From Wood's perspective, the root of colonial conspiracism lay in a metaphysics that "presumed a world of autonomous, freely acting individuals who are capable of directly and deliberately bringing about events through their decisions and actions, and who thereby can be held morally responsible for what happens."⁸ Conspiracism, in short, was a particular mode of thinking, a discourse rooted in an episteme that, by the late twentieth century, existed only on the fringes of society.⁹

Wood's contemporaries used this same approach to interpret colonial religion. In Bailyn's *Ideological Origins*, for example, Reverend Johnathan Mayhew was reduced to a mouthpiece of Radical Whiggism.¹⁰ Nathan Hatch's *The Sacred Cause of Liberty* foregrounded religion more than other scholars of the subject, combining the Puritans' millenarian theology and republican ideology to explain how liberty became

²Morgan and Morgan, *Stamp Act Crisis*, 302.

³Bernard Bailyn, *The Ideological Origins of the American Revolution* (Cambridge: Belknap Press, 1967) and Richard Hofstadter, *The Paranoid Style in American Politics and Other Essays* (New York: Alfred Knopf, 1965).

⁴Robert E. Shalhope, "Toward a Republican Synthesis: The Emergence of an Understanding of Republicanism in American Historiography," *WMQ* 29, no. 1 (Jan. 1972), 72.

⁵Gordon Wood, "Conspiracy and the Paranoid Style: Causality and Deceit in the Eighteenth Century," *WMQ* 39, no. 3 (July 1982).

⁶Gordon Wood, "Conspiracy and the Paranoid Style," 407.

⁷Wood, "Conspiracy and the Paranoid Style," 406.

⁸Wood, "Conspiracy and the Paranoid Style," 409.

⁹Wood, "Conspiracy and the Paranoid Style," 441.

¹⁰Nathan O. Hatch, *The Sacred Cause of Liberty: Republican Thought and the Millennium in Revolutionary New England* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1997), 2–3.

sacred to the colonists. Like Wood, Hatch convincingly recreated the mindset of colonial religious people. But, also like Wood, Hatch drew from limited source material—largely the writings of colonial elite.

There are major problems with the republican ideological approach to the Stamp Act Crisis.¹¹ Wood focused exclusively on the colonists' mental state, and not at all on other aspects of their lives: specifically, the welter of urges and emotions swirling just beyond cognitive apprehension—everything, in short, discourse cannot entirely account for. It is easy to see why Wood did not expand his gaze beyond the cognitive—the first historical studies of emotion to gain any traction were not published until three years after his decisive essay on colonial conspiracism.¹² More than two decades later, Nicole Eustace's magisterial study of eighteenth-century American emotion demonstrated the fruitfulness of studying emotion in the colonial context, specifically pointing out how social forces shaped colonial conceptions of "passion" in the years leading up to the Revolution.¹³

Around the same time Eustace's book was published, scholars of religion began questioning the cognitive-textualist approach to religion, which preferences discourse and ideology above emotion and the body. The "affective turn" in religious studies suggests that religion cannot be understood solely through ideology or discourse. It must be understood on the level of affect, which Donovan Schaefer, a scholar of religion and affect, calls "the animal body," referring to the non-cognitive aspects of human experience. Schaefer argues that affects are "the experiential shapes that herd together and carry religion on their backs."¹⁴ A sensitivity to affect suggests that religion is not only *believed* and *practiced* but also *felt* and that religion is not limited to scriptures or sermons but irrupts in moments of affective overflow when a mob transforms into a community through shared feeling, collectively consecrating a person, space, or value and orienting their minds and bodies around their new sacred.¹⁵

Although there has been a marked increase in attention to the senses, body, and emotion in recent years, to my knowledge there have been no attempts to incorporate affect theory into the historical study of religion.¹⁶ In this article, I aim to demonstrate

¹¹It is worth noting that more recent scholarship has reassessed the Stamp Act Crisis, abandoning republican ideology altogether and incorporating new source material. Encapsulated in Zachary McLeod Hutchins, ed., *Community Without Consent: New Perspectives on the Stamp Act* (Hanover: Dartmouth College Press, 2016), this vein of scholarship focuses on the economic factors unifying colonists—and especially Bostonians—during the crisis.

¹²Peter N. Stearns and Carol Z. Stearns, "Emotionology: Clarifying the History of Emotions and Emotional Standards," *American Historical Review* 90, no. 4 (1985), 813–836.

¹³Nicole Eustace, *Passion Is the Gale: Emotion, Power, and the Coming of the American Revolution* (University of North Carolina Press, 2008).

¹⁴Donovan O. Schaefer, *Religious Affects: Animality, Evolution, and Power* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2015), 24.

¹⁵According to Schaefer, *Religious Affects*, 86: "Affect theory is not compatible with classical secularism. It suggests that affective residues cannot be confined to the political or the religious spheres, that public and private are a Möbius strip of intertwined power relations rather than walled gardens. In this sense, affect theory is postliberal and postsecular."

¹⁶Affect theory is not to be confused with affect in a general sense, which is often used synonymously with emotion. Affect theory, by contrast, refers to the body of scholarship focused on the affects—specific bodily sensations such as anger, fear, disgust, or shame and how they motivate action precognitively (see also note 16). Religious studies scholars began paying more attention to the bodily aspects of religion in the late 1990s. One vein of scholarship focused on specific aspects of bodily experience. In Robert Orsi's chapter "Everyday Miracles: The Study of Lived Religion" in David Hall, ed., *Lived Religion in America: Toward*

how historians of religion might do so. For clarification, I use emotion to refer to socially informed bodily experiences and affect to refer to the more instinctive, pre-cognitive bodily experiences. I also frequently draw upon the concept of “affective space” as articulated by Kevin O’Neill. O’Neill suggests that the kinds of differences religious studies scholars are interested in—such as the separation and stratification of space, concepts, or peoples based on sacred/profane or purity/pollution classificatory systems—emerge from affect and emotion before (or alongside) rationally articulated differences.¹⁷ An “affective space” is any space, physical or social, felt into existence through religious modes of categorization.

This article will use those concepts to better understand the 1765 Stamp Act Crisis in Boston, paying special attention to the conspiratorial themes permeating not only that period but also the decades preceding. In what follows, I trace the fear of conspiracy through the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, when Bostonians were exposed to all manner of conspiracies involving the devil and the Catholic Church. From John Foxe’s *Book of Martyrs* and the Salem Witch Trials to popular anti-Catholic texts, the fear of conspiracy was as much a part of Boston’s affective landscape as it was its

a History of Practice (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997), 7: “an understanding of the knowledges of the body in the culture, a clear sense of what has been embodied in the corporeality of the people who participate in religious practices, what their tongues, skin, ears ‘know.’” Subsequent essays in the volume focus on the lived, bodily realities of religion including child-rearing, family conflict, religious singing, and more. Leigh Eric Schmidt, *Hearing Things: Religion, Illusion, and the American Enlightenment* (Cambridge: Harvard, 2000) draws attention to the impact of social forces in shaping how people engage with their own senses and demonstrating how scholars might track changes in the perception of physical senses over time. Similarly, Matthew Milner, in *The Senses and the English Reformation* (Burlington: Ashgate, 2011), demonstrates how arguments about religious sensorial experiences during the English Reformation were part of wider conversations about the nature of human sentience. The book also highlights the complicated relationship between individual bodies and society: by reorienting themselves around new kinds of sacred experiences, Milner shows, English reformers changed not only their understanding of the sense but also their culture. These books share in common an interest in aspects of humanity beyond reason, discourse, or cognition and a desire to take into account the influence of physical and sensorial experiences on historical actors’ experiences.

In another vein, Ann Taves, *Fits, Trances, & Visions: Experiencing Religion and Explaining Experience from Wesley to James* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999), explores the bodily experience of religion, focusing on the involuntary experiences her Protestant subjects attributed to religion, and which their critics—both insider and outsider—attributed to natural or secularizing causes. Taves’s book highlights how deeply those debates informed the field of Religious Studies, leading some scholars to become closet theologians in their defense of experience and others to focus on unmasking the religiosity of their subjects’ religious experiences (361). Taves’s non-dual approach to studying religious experience, which eschews the insider-outsider binary, paved the way for later efforts to incorporate affect theory into Religious Studies, most notably Kevin Lewis O’Neill, “Beyond Broken: Affective Spaces and the Study of American Religion,” *JAAR* 81, no. 4 (Dec 2013) and Schaefer, *Religious Affects*.

There has likewise been an increasing attention to emotion in the last two decades. In the field of history, three scholars forged methodologies for denaturalizing emotional expression—see Peter N. Stearns and Carol Z. Stearns, “Emotionology: Clarifying the History of Emotions and Emotional Standards,” *The American Historical Review* 90, no. 4 (Oct. 1985), William M. Reddy, *The Navigation of Feeling: A Framework for the History of Emotions* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2001), Barbara H. Rosenwein, “Worrying about Emotions in History,” *American Historical Review* 107, no. 3 (2002). John Corrigan, *Business of the Heart: Religion and Emotion in the Nineteenth Century* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002), demonstrates the usefulness of these methods in religious studies. It is upon this foundation for the study of emotion that this article is built.

¹⁷O’Neill, “Beyond Broken,” 1095.

intellectual or theological landscape. With that background established, I turn to Jonathan Mayhew, whose personal experiences with royal agents in Boston and radical Whig leanings imbued his sermons and writings with an affective force that exceeded their intellectual arguments. It was that affective force, I argue, that enabled Mayhew, in the words of John Adams, to “spread universal alarm.”¹⁸ In the early 1760s, as the political climate became increasingly tense, the negative affects in Mayhew’s sermons and pamphlets resonated with Bostonians who were fearful of parliamentary authority and passionate about their liberty. That affective resonance imbued the love and protection of liberty with a religious importance that was as much felt in the body as grasped by the mind. The exposure of conspiracies against liberty became a sacred activity—not only in the sense suggested by Nathan Hatch but in another, more bodily sense. Unmasking conspiracies was one way that some Bostonians could feel like they were coming to understand and control a changing world and feel like they were confronting those changes as part of a community. Republicanism, in this reading, was more than an ideology; it was a bodily experience of religion. Through attention to the affective elements of the Stamp Act Crisis, we see the separation between the colonies and England beginning to be *felt* into existence.

I. “That Most Execrable of All Tyrannies, Popery”: Disgust and the Devil¹⁹

Any discussion of the seventeenth and eighteenth-century Bostonians’ obsession with deception should begin with the arch-deceiver, Satan. Described in Revelation 12:9 as “the old serpent . . . which deceiveth the whole world” and by John Milton as “the chief directing agent in all the dark plots of tyranny, persecution and oppression,” the devil was the root of the mischief plaguing the colonies in the seventeenth century. Indeed, the devil’s active attempts to subvert or conquer the New England colonies, especially Massachusetts, was an important aspect of the Puritan theology.

The Puritans believed the Reformation initiated Satan’s earthly demise, and their project to establish a “City on a Hill” put them at the center of Revelation’s chiliastic drama.²⁰ They would build the New Jerusalem of Revelation, the site of God’s kingdom on earth. In the late seventeenth century, Increase Mather recorded a list of “illustrious providences,” or miracles, proving the millennium was imminent.²¹ Even for those less learned in eschatology, the devil and his demons were a critical component of vernacular beliefs and practices brought from the Old World.²² The most active participants in the Salem Witch Trials understood those strange events in the light of diabolism.

The reverend at the heart of the Salem witch scare, Samuel Parris, preached that the devil schemed against the Saints, “doing lying Wonders whereby multitudes were deluded” and entering into covenant with “multitudes” of people in New England—even within the church itself.²³ Increase Mather’s son Cotton was convinced that the

¹⁸John Adams to Hezekiah Niles, February 13, 1818.

¹⁹Mayhew, Jonathan. *The snare broken: a thanksgiving-discourse*. . . (Boston, 1766), 20–22.

²⁰Robert Middlekauff, *The Mathers: Three Generations of Puritan Intellectuals, 1596–1728*, 24.

²¹Increase Mather, *An essay for the recording of illustrious providences: wherein an account is given of many remarkable and very memorable events, which have hapned this last age, especially in New-England* (Boston, 1684); David Hall, *Worlds of Wonder, Days of Judgment*, 77–78, 105.

²²Jon Butler, *Awash in a Sea of Faith: Christianizing the American People* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press), 71.

²³James F. Cooper, Jr. and Kenneth P. Minkema, eds., *The Sermon Notebook of Samuel Parris, 1689–1694*, vol. 66 (Boston: Colonial Society of Massachusetts), 152, 154–155. See also Paul Boyer and

witch happenings in Salem were part of a new “PLOT of the devil, against *New-England*.”²⁴ Having failed at direct physical attacks against the colonists, Satan made “an Attempt more Difficult, more Surprizing, more snarl’d with unintelligible Circumstances than any that we have hitherto Encountered; an Attempt so *Critical*, that If we get well through, we shall soon enjoy *Halcyon Days*.”²⁵ Reading such words three centuries later, it is tempting to think of the Puritan’s devil as the symbolic embodiment of economic, political, religious, or social pressures facing a newly settled, expanding colony. Paul Boyer and Stephen Nissenbaum make a strong case for such an interpretation.²⁶ Though “reading” the devil as a text that can be rationally interpreted illuminates much, it also misses the phenomenological experience of diabolism in the colonies.

The specific supernatural events in Mather’s text suggest the devil was linked to affective responses. In one prolonged description of children affected by *maleficia*, Cotton Mather listed the forced swallowing and vomiting of foreign objects, particularly nails and pins.²⁷ Abigail Williams, one of the children involved in the first Salem accusations, described a witch’s sabbath in which participants ate “*Red Bread*, like a *Man’s Flesh*.”²⁸ In another section, the devil caused illness by raising noxious air: “And when the devil has raised those *Arsenical Fumes*, which become *Venemous Quivers* full of *Terrible Arrows*, how easily can he shoot the deleterious *Miasms* into those Juices or Bowels of Mens Bodies, which will soon Enflame them with a Mortal Fire!”²⁹ Similar accusations involving ingestion, vomiting, odor, and illness appear throughout devil and witchcraft lore, all pointing to a bodily relationship with the devil. Affect theory helps elucidate that relationship.

On the most basic level, the affects of disgust and contempt relate to unpleasant, even dangerous, sensory encounters. An accidental swallow of spoiled milk, for example, may trigger the disgust affect, which leads to a physiological response—a gag to expel the milk—which will, in turn, reduce the unpleasant affect. Contempt operates in a similar way; in fact, affect theorist Silvin Tomkins eventually renamed contempt “dissmell” to link it to the olfactory system and separate it from the commonsense understanding of the term. A noxious smell triggers an upturned nose, a closing of the nostrils, and an expelling of air either through puffing or coughing. When the malodorous presence is gone, the unpleasant “dissmell” affect stops.³⁰ Unlike other affects that seek connection with their triggering objects, disgust and contempt seek separation from those objects.³¹ In this reading, witches *felt* toxic, and their expulsion from the community was a bodily reaction as much as a symbolic expression of social upheaval.³²

Stephen Nissenbaum, *Salem Possessed: The Social Origins of Witchcraft* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1974), 168–171, for Parris’s conspiratorial preaching.

²⁴Cotton Mather, *The Wonders of the Invisible World. Being an Account of the Tryals of Several Witches Lately Executed in New-England. To which is Added, a Farther Account of the Tryals of the New-England Witches* (Boston, 1693), 4.

²⁵Mather, *The Wonders of the Invisible World*, 14.

²⁶Boyer and Nissenbaum, *Salem Possessed*.

²⁷Mather, *The Wonders of the Invisible World*, 112–120.

²⁸Mather, *The Wonders of the Invisible World*, 210.

²⁹Mather, *The Wonders of the Invisible World*, 53.

³⁰Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick and Adam Frank, eds., *Shame and Its Sisters: A Silvan Tomkins Reader* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1995), 135 and note.

³¹Sedgwick and Frank, *Shame and Its Sisters*, 22.

³²Sara Ahmed, *The Cultural Politics of Emotion* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2014), 94.

New Englanders were not merely contemptuous of and disgusted by the devil—they also feared him. Like disgust and contempt, the fear-terror affect is unpleasant. It triggers the fight-flight response of the sympathetic nervous system and takes a harsh toll on the body.³³ The devil’s power to beguile, harm, infect, punish, and torture all make him an object of fear. The links between the devil and, by extension witches, and the affects of fear, disgust, and contempt made the mere mention of his name a powerful motivation to act—to do something to separate, to remove, or to destroy whatever he touched.³⁴ Physical descriptions of the devil as a “black man”—and sometimes as an Indian—of “terrible aspect, and more than human dimensions” reflect the affective compulsion to set him apart from the Anglo-Puritan community.³⁵

The colonists’ reactions to the devil resonated with their feelings towards Catholicism, and throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries the two entangled, becoming mutually reinforcing objects of fear, disgust, and contempt. Fears of secret Catholic conspiracies opened the 1563 edition of John Foxe’s *Book of Martyrs*: “Fyrst, you [Catholics] see now your doinges so wicked can not be hid, your cruelty is come to light, your murthers be euident, your prety practises, your subtyle fleightes, your secrete conspiracies, your fylthy liues are sene, and stincke before the face both of God and man.”³⁶ Evidence suggests that colonists’ access to the book was limited, though its anti-Catholic essence permeated the colonies and selections were printed in the mid-seventeenth century under the title *Divine Consolations for Mourners in Sion*, probably by Joshua Scottow (1618–1698).³⁷ Similar, fear-inspiring conspiratorial language was used in contemporaneous anti-Quakerism, combining on the same darkness-light, hidden-revealed rhetoric as Foxe with the common assumption that the devil was at the root of religious heterodoxy.³⁸

Various eighteenth-century publications reinforced the fear of Catholicism, its connection to the devil, and the affective ties between them. *The French Convert*, which

³³Sedgwick and Frank, *Shame and Its Sisters*, 237.

³⁴Ahmed, *The Cultural Politics of Emotion*, 87, 89–90.

³⁵Quoted text from Robert Calef, *More Wonders of the Invisible World* (Boston, 1828. Orig. 1700). For more instances of the devil as the “black man,” see Calef, *More Wonders of the Invisible World*, 27, 28, 32, 55, 227, 246, 254, 288, 368. Once in Calef the devil was described as an Indian: “but they supposed the black man (as the witches call the devil, and they generally say he resembles an Indian) (286).” See also Deodat Lawson, *A brief and true narrative of some remarkable passages relating to sundry persons afflicted by witchcraft, in Salem Village: which happened from the nineteenth of March, to the fifth of April, 1692* (Boston, 1692).

³⁶John Foxe, *The Unabridged Acts and Monuments Online or TAMO* (The Digital Humanities Institute, Sheffield, 2011). <http://www.dhi.ac.uk/foxe>, 12. (Accessed June 24, 2020.)

³⁷For anti-Catholicism in the colonies, see Francis Cogliano, *No King, No Popery: Anti-Catholicism in Revolutionary New England* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1995), and Carl Bridenbaugh, *Mitre and Sceptre: Transatlantic Faiths, Ideas, Personalities, and Politics 1689–1775* (New York: Oxford University Press: 1962). On Foxe’s availability in the colonies, see Francis J. Bremer, “Foxe in the Wilderness: The Book of Martyrs in Seventeenth Century New England,” in David Loades, ed., *John Foxe at Home and Abroad*, (Burlington, VT: Ashgate Publishing Company, 2004), 115. Anne G. Myles, “Restoration Declensions, Divine Consolations: The Work of John Foxe in 1664 Massachusetts,” *New England Quarterly* 8, no. 1 (March 2007), 35–68.

³⁸See, for example, John Norton, *The heart of N-England rent at the blasphemies of the present generation. Or a brief tractate concerning the doctrine of the Quakers, demonstrating the destructive nature thereof, to religion, the churches, and the state, with consideration of the remedy against it. Occasional satisfaction to objections, and confirmation of the contrary truth*, 1606–1663. See also Increase Mather, *An essay for the recording of illustrious providences : wherein an account is given of many remarkable and very memorable events, which have hapned this last age, especially in New-England*. (Boston: 1684), 356.

enjoyed tremendous popularity throughout the colonial period and even the Early Republic, dramatized the plight of a Huguenot woman, pursued by a lecherous priest who “show[ed] himself a devil to his Mistress, & too plainly shew’d his cloven foot” the moment her husband left for war.³⁹ *Popish Cruelty Displayed* graphically described Catholic atrocities against Protestants—children murdered in front of parents and wives raped in front of husbands; no level of evil was beyond the “Romish crew, first spawn’d in Hell” and made up of “whoring Nuns and bawdy bugging Priests.”⁴⁰ The extent of the Church’s violence and depravity not only pointed directly to diabolism but also *felt* like diabolism. Similarly, Boston’s annual Pope’s Day parades—discussed in more detail below—regularly renewed the mutually reinforcing affective charges of both the devil and the Church.

In sum, Puritan theology explicitly linked the Catholic Church and the devil throughout the seventeenth century. Cotton Mather called the Catholic Church “the last, *Vehicle*, wherein [the devil] will be capable to abuse our World,” and he labeled the Pope the “Antichrist” and the “devils *Eldest Son*.”⁴¹ Mather believed the Reformation began the eschatological process because the Catholic Church followed the devil’s orders and represented his last, great stronghold on earth.⁴² The intensity and cultural influence of Puritan chiliasm cooled over time, but, as affect theorist Sarah Ahmed has argued, shared histories bind objects together as things to be feared.⁴³ Anti-Catholic publications and yearly Pope’s Day parades evinced the same kinds of affects as Mather’s descriptions of the devil—fear, disgust, and contempt. The continued cultural significance of anti-Catholicism therefore perpetuated the devil’s affective potency. Throughout the 1700s, then, both the devil and the pope were affectively charged symbols that united a community in fear and contempt of an ultimate, disgusting other, whether that be the “black man” and his book, Catholic conspiracies against British Protestantism, or even, in 1765, the tyrannical designs of British Parliament.

II. Jonathan Mayhew, Anti-Catholicism, and the Anglicans

Although the Boston Puritans had always been skeptical of the Anglican Book of Common Prayer and linked it with Catholicism, their mistrust—perhaps even hatred—of the Church of England rose on a wave of more general discontent with the mother country in the late 1740s. At the time, food prices were on the rise, the economy was floundering, and rumors circulated that the British were ceding colonial land to France.⁴⁴ In 1747, Bostonians rioted after British Admiral Charles Knowles arrested

³⁹[A.D. Auburn], *The French Convert* (London, 1699), 16. On the popularity of the *French Convert* and an account of its various printings in the colonies, see Thomas Kidd, “Recovering ‘The French Convert’: Views of the French and the Uses of Anti-Catholicism in Early America,” *Book History* 7 (2004), 104–106. Kidd notes that the book was “almost certainly” printed in Boston as early as 1708, twelve years after its first printing in London, and saw at least two more editions there, one in 1725 and another in 1744.

⁴⁰Thomas Fleet, *Popish Cruelty Displayed* (Boston, 1753), 3.

⁴¹Cotton Mather, *The wonders of the Invisible World*, 70–71.

⁴²Cotton Mather, *Fall of Babylon: A Short and Plain Catechism, which Detects and Confutes the Principles of Popery: and Arms the Protestant from the Tower of David, for the Defence of his Holy Religion: Intended Particularly for the Service of the Christians in Maryland, Who May be in Danger of Popish Delusions* (Boston 1707).

⁴³Ahmed, *The Cultural Politics of Emotion*, 66.

⁴⁴Chris Beneke, “The Critical Turn: Jonathan Mayhew, the British Empire, and the Idea of Resistance in Mid-Eighteenth-Century Boston,” *Massachusetts Historical Review* 10 (2008), 30.

several local sailors, initiating a public conversation about the limits of submission to imperial authority.⁴⁵ Around this same time, the long-feared specter of an Anglican Bishop in the colonies reappeared, this time hinted at in a letter in a Boston newspaper. As one historian noted, though the storm brewing may have been as much political or economic as anything else, the Anglican church was the lightning rod.⁴⁶ During these imperial tensions, multiple pamphlet wars raged in the northern colonies, all centering on the issue of submission to the Church of England—an institution long linked with tyranny among the dissenting colonists.⁴⁷

The most infamous of these pamphlets was a sermon by Jonathan Mayhew, printed in 1750 under the title *A Discourse Concerning Unlimited Submission*.⁴⁸ Observers through the mid-twentieth century praised this document as the first stage of the Revolution, calling it “the MORNING GUN OF THE REVOLUTION”⁴⁹ and the “first responsible public expression in colonial America of the sacred right and duty of resistance to tyranny.”⁵⁰ Twenty-first-century historians have since all but severed the connection between Mayhew’s sermon and the American Revolution, dramatically deflating its overall significance.⁵¹ Rereading Mayhew’s *Discourse*, his subsequent work, and his interlocutors with a sensitivity to affect and emotion suggests Mayhew helped to create an affective space, that is, a “moment when affect serves as the medium through which spatial divisions and interconnections become legible.”⁵² From this perspective, Mayhew’s conspiracism helped *feel* the separation between England and the American colonies into existence.

Discourse studies Romans 8:1–8, a passage beginning “Let every soul be subject unto higher powers.”⁵³ Mayhew’s approach to this passage was as measured and logical as any of his day, but the sermon’s real power came more from its poetic force than its argument. The first portion of his sermon is a long, carefully reasoned albeit repetitious invective against unlimited submission to authority. The second section challenged the reverence with which Anglicans treated King Charles I, whom Mayhew called a tyrant and a crypto-Catholic. Ultimately, Mayhew called for freedom both from unjust oppression and loyalty to just kings. Political scientist Howard Lubert’s assessment certainly applies here: in terms of the content of his sermon, Mayhew was a conservative

⁴⁵Beneke, “The Critical Turn,” 32.

⁴⁶Beneke, “The Critical Turn,” 35–36.

⁴⁷James Bell, *A War of Religion: Dissenters, Anglicans, and the American Revolution* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), 28–29; Increase Mather, *Some Remarks on a Late Sermon, Preached at Boston in New England, by George Keith M.A. Shewing That his pretended Good Rules in Divinity, Are Not Built on the Foundation of the Apostles and Prophets* (Boston, 1702). For examples of such pamphlets, see Noah Hobart, *A Serious Address to the Members of Episcopal Separation in New-England* (Boston, 1748), and Micaiah Towgood, *The Dissenting Gentleman’s Answer to the Reverend Mr. White’s Three letters. . . fifth edition* (Boston, 1748), which was originally published in Ireland and England.

⁴⁸Jonathan Mayhew, *A Discourse Concerning Unlimited Submission and Non-Resistance To The Higher Powers: With Some Reflections On The Resistance Made To King Charles I. . .* (Boston, 1750).

⁴⁹J.W. Thornton, ed., *The Pulpit of the American Revolution* (Boston, 1860), 43.

⁵⁰Clinton Rossiter, “The Life and Mind of Jonathan Mayhew,” *WMQ* 7 no. 4 (1950), 545.

⁵¹Additionally, academic debate over Mayhew’s *Discourse*—and his political thought in general—tends to categorize him as either a conservative or a revolutionary with little middle ground, see Howard L. Lubert, “Jonathan Mayhew: Conservative Revolutionary,” *History of Political Thought* 32, no. 4 (Winter 2011), 593.

⁵²O’Neill, “Beyond Broken,” 1103.

⁵³Mayhew, *Discourse*, 1.

revolutionary.⁵⁴ But texts, and sermons in particular, speak to more than the mind—they speak to the body as well.

It is important to consider Mayhew within the wider context of colonial conspiracism and to bear in mind that both his thoughts *and* emotions about British tyranny evolved over time. Cultural anthropologist Susan Lepselter has noted that, in conspiratorial language, “events or images themselves are meaningless. It is when they are suddenly revealed as connected to each other in a single structure that their connection grows charged with the intimation of hidden significance.”⁵⁵ The connections resonate, “produc[ing] aesthetic intensity and the poetic pleasure of repetition with variation,” experienced as bodily sensation.⁵⁶ As Mayhew developed his thought as events unfolded, the rhetorical devices and tropes from *Discourse* took on a new, almost uncanny significance, as though he and his listeners had always known there was *something* suspicious happening.

Two sections of *Discourse* are significant in establishing the poetic force of conspiracism that would become increasingly significant in the following years. First, Mayhew’s criticism of unlimited obedience was a thinly veiled attack on the perceived laziness and tyrannical designs of the Anglican Church, as well as on members of the British government who were similarly inclined.⁵⁷ The climax of this attack comes when Mayhew reverses the usual interpretation of the passage entirely, noting that it “does not answer their purpose” of providing scriptural justification for unlimited submission to worldly authority, “but really overthrows and confutes it.”⁵⁸ That Mayhew successfully reversed the Anglicans’ interpretation of Romans 8 and then used it to support his own stance was more than a bit of acrobatic ratiocination—it was an affectively satisfying rhetorical device, aligning Mayhew and likeminded listeners or readers with biblical truth in the rush of an *ah-ha!* moment. Second, after outlining Charles’s flaws, chief among which was his political and religious connections to the French and his tyrannical rule, Mayhew celebrated the fact that Lord and Commons of England resisted him and not “a private *junto* . . . a small seditious *party* . . . a few *desparadoes*.”⁵⁹ In the years to come, events would echo with this initial juxtaposition between legitimate leadership and conspiratorial cabals.

Four years after Mayhew’s *Discourse*, the *New York Mercury* ran a weekly section called “The Watch Tower,” arguing against the establishment of an Anglican college. The author proposed that the new college was a disguised attempt to usurp control of colonial governments. It would begin, the author suggested, with the church taking over governance of the institution.⁶⁰ Once the Anglicans had established that foothold, the situation would deteriorate quickly: “The Masque is now thrown off, and Projects are to be carried into [*illeg.*] by meer dint of Power. Their great and increasing Opalence [*sic*], joined to an incurable Propensury [*sic*] for Dominion, will enable them, without some preventative Remedy, to sway the whole Colony.”⁶¹ In articulating the notion that the Anglican church was the mask for a broader conspiracy against colonial freedoms, the author magnified the echoes of that conspiracy reverberating around

⁵⁴Lubert, “Conservative Revolutionary.”

⁵⁵Susan Lepselter, *The Resonance of Unseen Things: Poetics, Power, Captivity, and UFOs in the American Uncanny* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press 2016), 23.

⁵⁶Lepselter, *The Resonance of Unseen Things*, 24.

⁵⁷Mayhew, *Discourse*, 21–22.

⁵⁸Mayhew, *Discourse*, 31.

⁵⁹Mayhew, *Discourse*, 44.

⁶⁰*New York Mercury*, December 9, 1754.

⁶¹*New York Mercury*, December 16, 1754.

the Northern colonies for years. The echoes themselves were becoming proof of the danger the colonists faced.

The historiography of Mayhew's role in the rising anti-British—and specifically anti-Anglican—movement in 1760s Boston tends to focus on his preaching and pamphleteering on issues of religious freedom. In an 1818 letter, John Adams reflected, “the Controversy . . . on the Charter and Conduct of the Society for propagating the Gospels in foreign Parts . . . Spread an Universal Alarm against the Authority of Parliament” and stoked fears “that Bishops and Diocesses and Churches, and Priests and Tythes, were to be imposed upon Us by Parliament.”⁶²

Although the 1740s and early 1750s fears of Anglican conspiracy were doubtlessly animated by imperial tensions, and although Mayhew crystalized those tensions in his 1750 *Discourse*, many scholars have overlooked the personal vendetta inspiring Mayhew's more significant actions of the 1760s.⁶³

In November 1761, Mayhew met two Indian men who claimed to have offered a bribe to the Governor of Massachusetts, Francis Bernard—and, according to the men, Bernard took it. Mayhew, who seems to have been honest to a fault and overly loquacious, told two friends about the incident. Eventually, word got back to Governor Bernard who demanded a meeting with Mayhew. In that meeting, Bernard proclaimed his innocence and demanded an apology. While Mayhew granted that Bernard may have been innocent, he refused to apologize.⁶⁴

Mayhew's stubbornness infuriated Bernard, who hinted at further, potentially legal, action. A fearful Mayhew sought the advice of two lawyers—one of whom, James Otis Jr., had his own issue with Bernard. A year before the Indian Affair, Governor Bernard reneged on a promise to promote Otis's father to the position of chief justice of the Superior Court, the highest legal authority in the province. Bernard gave the position instead to Lt. Gov. Hutchinson. Bernard's move was more than a bit of political favoritism. Since his appointment to the governorship in 1760, Bernard had used writs of assistance—a *carte blanche* search warrant—to crack down on smuggling and enrich himself at the expense of the Boston merchants sneaking goods into the colony. Otis was skeptical of the legality of such writs; Hutchinson could be trusted to side with Bernard. Otis's outraged son resigned his own royal commission and represented Boston merchants in a suit against writs of assistance, characterizing Bernard and his inner circle as a corrupt cabal.⁶⁵ As a result, James Otis Jr. was quick to affirm Mayhew's suspicions that Bernard was a petty, bullying tyrant.

Massachusetts's Lieutenant Governor Thomas Hutchinson, acting on the governor's behalf, approached Mayhew to offer a deal: apologize and the governor would take no legal action. Again, and this time in writing, Mayhew refused to apologize on principle, and the two parties retreated into silence. Gossip circulated around Boston, eventually harming both men's reputations enough to inspire Mayhew to circulate a detailed account of the event. That document dispelled the rumors about the conflict circulating around Boston and helped put an end to what is now called the Indian Affair.⁶⁶

⁶²John Adams, “John Adams to Hezekiah Niles, 13 February 1818,” *Founders Online*, National Archives, last modified June 13, 2018, <http://founders.archives.gov/documents/Adams/99-02-02-6854>.

⁶³Beneke, “Critical Turn,” 28–29.

⁶⁴J Patrick Mullins, “‘A Kind of War, Tho’ Hitherto an Un-Bloody One’: Jonathan Mayhew, Francis Bernard, and the Indian Affair,” *Massachusetts Historical Review* 11 (2009), 37.

⁶⁵Mullins, “‘A Kind of War,’” 30, 32–33.

⁶⁶Mullins, “‘A Kind of War,’” 32–42.

Although that conflict sputtered out, it personalized threats to colonial liberty for Mayhew, giving specific form to the fear and disgust tied to conspiracism. He had experienced first-hand the danger a tyrant could pose to his freedom of speech and writing—liberties entitled to him both as a British citizen and as a Christian. Worse, those threats came from a *scheming* tyrant, who, a mere four days after their emotionally charged encounter, tried to change the Massachusetts Royal Charter to grant himself more power.⁶⁷ As Mayhew wrote in the document describing the Indian Affair, “people must be reduced to an abject state of slavery indeed” to be silent about such infringements on their rights.⁶⁸ And so, from the Indian Affair until the end of his life, Mayhew was hypervigilant for conspiracies against colonial liberties.

With his ire aroused and his eyes opened to potential plots, it did not take Mayhew long to find them. On April 6, 1762, mere months after the Indian Affair fizzled out, Mayhew wrote to his friend Thomas Hollis. Mayhew felt “apprehensive” about “a scheme forming for sending a Bishop into these parts”; naturally, “our Governor, Mr. Bernard, a true church-man, is deep in the *plot*.” There is no evidence of Bernard’s involvement, but, given their fraught past, it is not surprising that Mayhew implicated him.⁶⁹ In that same letter, Mayhew worried about “another Scheme lately set on foot, here . . . founding another College in this Province.” Though Mayhew worried that the other college would be “prejudicial to Harvard College, and indeed to the general interest of learning amongst us,” he was more concerned about Bernard’s role in the proposal. “Mr. Bernard has taken it upon him,” Mayhew went on, “as the King’s Governor” to propose the college, even though Mayhew believed “the Governor has no such authority as he asserts, and has thus assumed to himself, of granting Charters.”⁷⁰ For Mayhew, conspiratorial plots were not orchestrated solely by shadowy cabals across the Atlantic—they could be traced directly to the machinations of his personal rival.

While Mayhew successfully helped quash Bernard’s plan for a rival college, the proposed Anglican episcopate eventually became a major conflict. The Bishop Controversy began with a 1763 Boston newspaper article attacking the Church of England’s missionary practices. The Church, the article pointed out, placed missionaries in New England towns and not on the frontiers where they could save the most souls.⁷¹ There followed a series of pamphlets between Mayhew and several detractors debating the missionary arm of the Church, called the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts (SPG). These pamphlets explain how unmasking Anglican conspiracies became an emotionally charged activity.

In the introduction to the 1763 *Observations on the Charter and Conduct of the Society*, Mayhew’s lengthy assault on the SPG, he connected liberty with emotion by describing three kinds of “dispositions” incompatible with liberty.⁷² In this period, “disposition” was the most common means of describing someone’s emotional demeanor, and embedded within that term “is the idea that the self exists only in relation to other selves, that one’s ‘bent of mind’ reflects, not one’s autonomous individuality, but rather

⁶⁷Mullins, “A Kind of War,” 42–43.

⁶⁸Quoted in Mullins, “A Kind of War,” 49.

⁶⁹Bernard Knollenberg, ed., “Thomas Hollis and Jonathan Mayhew: Their Correspondence, 1759–1766,” *Proceedings of the Massachusetts Historical Society* 69 (Oct. 1947–May 1950), 129 n30.

⁷⁰Knollenberg, “Thomas Hollis and Jonathan Mayhew,” 128–129.

⁷¹Rossiter, “The Life and Mind of Jonathan Mayhew,” 537.

⁷²Jonathan Mayhew, *Observations on the Charter and Conduct of the Society* (Boston, 1763).

one's position vis-à-vis a collective whole." The term "personality," by contrast, positing a "self as an autonomous and free individual," had not yet developed.⁷³ As Mayhew outlined these three dispositions, in short, he simultaneously outlined the emotional criteria for communal belonging.

Those in the first category "write, and . . . read controversy, merely from a wrangling disposition; without any regard to truth, right, or the importance of the matters contested."⁷⁴ "Wrangling," a term rarely used now, means something like argumentative or contentious in this context.⁷⁵ Mayhew dismissed those with "wrangling dispositions" as unchristian, excluding them from the community. The second group has "an utter dislike to all disputes relative to the subject of religion, because they are Sceptics." Their lack of passion—the contemporaneous term both for emotion in general and the spectrum of emotions related positively and negatively to anger—was as bad as the excess of passion exhibited by the first group.⁷⁶ They too were excluded from Mayhew's ideal emotional community. Finally, there were those who love religion, "but are such great lovers of peace . . . that they think it best never to enter into debates on religion . . . and condemn those who do so."⁷⁷ Such dedication to peacefulness smacks of Quakerism, which to Mayhew and his audience was almost as distasteful as Catholicism. If "religion itself is of any great importance," Mayhew concluded, then "there may be just and sufficient cause for disputing." Even Peter "exhorted [his gentile readers] to stand fast in their LIBERTY, instead of submitting to any yoke of BONDAGE."⁷⁸

Mayhew's classification of emotions in this passage reflects what historian Peter Stearns and psychiatrist Carol Z. Stearns call emotionology. The term describes the "the attitudes or standards that a society, or a definable group within a society, maintains toward basic emotions and their appropriate expression" and the ways that "intuitions reflect and encourage these attitudes in human conduct."⁷⁹ Effectively, Mayhew was laying the emotionological foundations of republicanism by connecting the love of liberty to specific emotional states. *Real* Bostonians, his words suggest, those who *belong* in the community, have enough passion to defend their liberty.

After his introduction, Mayhew took up the question that began the controversy: does the SPG's charter permit it to missionize in New England? After an analysis of the charter, Mayhew concluded it did not.⁸⁰ But what, then, accounted for the glut of missionaries in New England? The answer, unsurprisingly, involved conspiracy. Mayhew used unmasking, a trope in which something obscured is revealed, to make his case. What is important in unmasking is not whether there *really is* something hidden. Rather, unmasking gets its power from poetics. The more the fifth column trope was repeated and the more it appeared in affectively charged contexts, the more it conveyed truthfulness, the more it *felt* right.⁸¹ Mayhew needed no direct evidence, therefore, to claim "the Society have manifested a *sufficient* forwardness to encourage and

⁷³Nicole Eustace, *Passion Is the Gale*, 66–67.

⁷⁴Mayhew, *Observations*, 5

⁷⁵OED Online, September 2020 (Oxford University Press). (Accessed October 31, 2020.)

⁷⁶Eustace, *Passion Is the Gale*, 20.

⁷⁷Mayhew, *Observations*, 6.

⁷⁸Mayhew, *Observations*, 6.

⁷⁹Peter N. Stearns and Carol Z. Stearns, "Emotionology: Clarifying the History of Emotions and Emotional Standards," *The American Historical Review* 90, no. 4 (Oct. 1985).

⁸⁰Mayhew, *Observations*, 13–38.

⁸¹Lepselter, *Resonance*, 23.

increase *small disaffected* parties in our towns. Some of these little parties, or rather factions” were simply greedy or petulant, or perhaps they were dissatisfied with the pew rent system. These people, “angry without cause,” appealed to the Church of England for help, whereupon the church sent more missionaries to support its supposedly embattled members. Mayhew claimed the missionaries in New England were “very busy in intrigues in order to foment these divisions and parties, *for the good of the church.*”⁸² Carried by momentum of its poetic force, Mayhew’s argument linked the SPG to the dreaded possibility of an American Bishop:

These small parties thus encouraged and supported by the Society in different parts of New-England at a great expence [*sic*], have in short all the appearance of entering wedges; or rather of little lodgments made in carrying on the crusade, or spiritual siege of our churches, with the hope that they will one day submit to an episcopal sovereign. And it will appear at least probable in the sequel, that this has long been the formal design of the Society; and that it is the true plan, and grand mystery of their operations in New-England.⁸³

The rhetorical power of this passage comes from the hidden-revealed tension inherent in unmasking: the *ah-ha!* moment of discovery.

In his response to Mayhew’s pamphlet, Archbishop of Canterbury Thomas Secker, argued two simple points: there would be only one bishop in America, and he would have only ceremonial authority. Mayhew rejected Secker’s claims outright. Even a single bishop could “be another *Sacheverel.*”⁸⁴ Mayhew here referred to Reverend Doctor Henry Sacheverell whose 1709 Pope’s Day sermon attacked dissenters within the Anglican Church. The sermon was widely circulated in London and, despite censure from the unpopular Whig government, Sacheverell quickly became a folk hero. After a trial for high crimes and misdemeanors, pro-Sacheverell rioters flooded the streets of London, looting dissenting meeting houses and shouting “High Church and Sacheverell!”⁸⁵ Later, in 1710, Sacheverell embarked on something of a victory tour around the country, which contributed to an overwhelming Tory victory in the election of 1710. Mayhew specifically referenced Sacheverell’s tour of the country, wondering what could happen if an American Bishop might “*infect* the country

⁸²Mayhew, *Observations*, 55.

⁸³Mayhew, *Observations*, 57.

⁸⁴Mayhew, *Remarks on an anonymous tract, entitled An answer to Dr. Mayhew’s Observations on the charter and conduct of the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts. Being a second defence of the said Observations* (Boston, 1764), 61. Coincidentally, Sacheverell gained notoriety for a sermon delivered Pope’s Day 1709, entitled *The Perils of False Brethren*, which compared the dangers of the Catholic Gunpowder Plot to the dangers posed by dissenters within the Church of England. Sacheverell’s aim was to “throw off the Mask,” expose the dissenters as “Impostures of False-Apostles,” “Wolves in Sheep’s Clothing,” and “Double-Dealer[s],” and save the Church of England from destruction. Sacheverell used the same kind of unmasking rhetoric as Mayhew. See Henry Sacheverell, *The Perils of False Brethren, both in Church, and State*, London, November 5, 1709.

⁸⁵Geoffrey Holmes, “The Sacheverell Riots: The Crowd and the Church in Early Eighteenth-Century London,” *Past and Present* 72 (August 1976), 64, 78–81, 84. Again, there are uncanny resemblances to Boston in 1765. One historian concluded that the Sacheverell riots resulted from both the instigation of Anglican clergy and the machinations of wealthy men of status who thinly disguised themselves, went out among the city’s working class, and organized the tumult in advance with the aim of toppling the Whig government. As will be seen below, this resembles the Loyal Nine’s work during the Stamp Act protests.

in travelling thro' it, and diffuse *plagues* instead of *blessings*, in his progress?"⁸⁶ Although the Sacheverell incident happened more than half a century before Mayhew's *Remarks*, historian Patricia Bonomi has noted that Sacheverell was a potent symbol for radical dissenters, and he was periodically invoked in colonial newspapers during the eighteenth century.⁸⁷ As a result, Mayhew's audience would likely have both known and *felt* the reference to a rogue bishop spreading "plagues" —a word charged with the affect of disgust—throughout the country.

Warned by his friend Thomas Hollis that Secker had Catholic sympathies and worried by Secker's own admission that Catholicism was on the rise in England, Mayhew saw history repeating itself.⁸⁸ Just as it happened before, perhaps during the Gunpowder plot, or even Sacheverell's speech and subsequent political impact, "a corrupt, abandon'd ministry have both had occasion for, and by concert received, the parliamentary interest of the wealthier papists."⁸⁹

In line with this Radical Whig leanings, Mayhew believed that corruption was a slow creep, setting in little by little through laziness, malice, or both. What is worse, the rot starts below the surface, goaded on by those operating behind the scenes. To be free of corruption, and thus to be free of tyranny, one must be always alert to the merest hint of danger. While Bailyn and Wood attribute this to an ideology—that is, a particular mode of cognition—it is important to acknowledge that this is also a way of affectively understanding the world.

Take, for example, this passage immediately following the long section above:

By such-like means has the *Scarlet Whore*, with whom the Kings and great men of the earth have committed *fornication*, at certain seasons got fairly mounted on her *horned beast*, and rode, with the cup of *abominations* in her hand, almost triumphant thro' England: Seeming to want only a little more time, and a favourable concurrence of circumstances, by means of foreign or domestic broils and jarrings, to shew her execrable, infernal face in its most hideous attitudes, and to exert a bloody, fiery, diabolical strength; the utmost consequences of which, no one could foresee, but all had great reason to dread!

Reading through Wood's cognitive-textualist lens, Mayhew's mention of the Whore of Babylon takes the hue of mere metaphor, a figure of speech borrowed from the Bible to describe the political corruption festering in England. But in English literary tradition, the Whore of Babylon was more than a metaphor: she was laden with affective symbolism that could be channeled towards political ends.

For example, in 1605–1606, Thomas Dekker (1572–1632) wrote the play *The Whore of Babylon* "in the brief period of emotional intensity following the Gunpowder Plot."⁹⁰ *The Whore of Babylon* tapped into the kind of anti-Catholic sentiment espoused in John Foxe's *Book of Martyrs*, reinforcing the nationalist sentiment that saw England as the

⁸⁶Mayhew, *Remarks*, 61.

⁸⁷Patricia U. Bonomi, *Under the Cope of Heaven: Religion, Society, and Politics in Colonial America* (1986), 191–197. The Scottish newspaper the *Independent Whig* referenced Sacheverell, for example, and was published in Philadelphia in 1724 and 1740. Likewise, the New York paper the *Independent Reflector*, modeled after Scottish *Whig*, referenced Sacheverell in 1753.

⁸⁸Knollenberg, *Proceedings*, 145–156.

⁸⁹Mayhew, *Remarks*, 74.

⁹⁰Susan E. Krantz, "Thomas Dekker's Political Commentary in 'The Whore of Babylon,'" *Studies in English Literature, 1500–1900* 35, no. 2 (Spring 1995), 272.

true Protestant Church and, as a result, the ultimate enemy of the antichrist.⁹¹ Dekker described the Whore of Babylon as a hideous woman pockmarked with syphilitic sores. Because early moderns understood syphilis as originating from unrestrained female sexuality, comparing the Church of Rome to the diseased Whore of Babylon created a powerful analogy: just as a syphilitic woman was, almost by nature, compelled to spread her disease to the unsuspecting man, so too was the Church of Rome compelled to spread its own impurities to the unsuspecting society.⁹² Furthermore, in Dekker's play, the Whore of Babylon's body leaked toxic fluids that pollute Fairyland's streams—described by one scholar as “penetration by sexually, morally, and politically diseased” aliens.⁹³ Such graphic imagery—written in a highly emotional political climate for an equally emotional audience—effectively made the Church of Rome disgusting by contact.⁹⁴ In Mayhew's *Remarks*, the Whore of Babylon, Sachaverell, and the Catholic Church all resonated through the affect of disgust, creating an immediately felt sense that something was deeply wrong and had to change—a feeling the political and economic developments of the mid-1760s made all the more real.

In the summer of 1763, George Grenville, charged with refilling England's treasury after the Seven Years' War, ordered colonial customs officers to enforce existing duties more vigorously.⁹⁵ By January of 1764, Massachusetts Governor Francis Bernard reported that the newly “strict execution of the Molasses Act has caused greater alarm in this country than the taking of *Fort William Henry*.”⁹⁶ Even before news of the Sugar Act reached them, colonists were swapping rumors of expanded taxation, rumors that fit perfectly into Mayhew's conspiracism. If England were planning to send bishops to the colonies, he wrote in his *Remarks*, “it seems not wholly improbable, from what we hear of the *unusual* tenor of some late parliamentary acts and bills . . . that provision might be made for the support of these bishops, if not of all the church clergy also, in the *same way*.”⁹⁷

When the colonists finally learned of the Sugar Act in May of 1764, they were distressed by its comparatively drastic 3d. per gallon duty compared to the anticipated 1d. or 2d.⁹⁸ The situation grew more intense in January of 1765 when Nathaniel Wheelwright, a wealthy Boston merchant, suddenly stopped honoring his debts. Wheelwright's financial collapse led to an economic depression in Boston, which colonists linked to the Sugar Act.⁹⁹ So when news of the Stamp Act's passage reached the colonies in early April of 1765, it was received as more than an economic imposition, the creeping expansion of political tyranny, or the threat of religious oppression—it was all of them at once, and the gravity of their interconnection was apprehended first physically as fear and disgust. As November 1, 1765, loomed—the day the Stamp Act was to go into effect—the hidden significance of the past years' events made it clear to the more radical Bostonians that drastic action was necessary. As Mayhew argued

⁹¹Krantz, “Thomas Dekker's Political Commentary,” 271.

⁹²Sarah Scott, “The Empress of Babylon's ‘carbuncles and rich stones’: The Metaphorizing of the Pox in Thomas Dekker's ‘The Whore of Babylon,’” *Early Theater* 7, no. 1 (2004), 67.

⁹³Scott, “The Empress of Babylon,” 75.

⁹⁴Ahmed, *The Cultural Politics of Emotion*, 89–90, 98.

⁹⁵Morgan and Morgan, *Stamp Act Crisis*, 24.

⁹⁶Francis Bernard, *Select Letters on the Trade and Government in America*, 9.

⁹⁷Mayhew, *Remarks*, 67.

⁹⁸Morgan and Morgan, *Stamp Act Crisis*, 28–29.

⁹⁹Morgan and Morgan, *Stamp Act Crisis*, 31–32.

years earlier, *real* Bostonians must be prepared to “stand fast in their LIBERTY, instead of submitting to any yoke of BONDAGE.”¹⁰⁰

III. Unmasking and the Stamp Act Crisis: An Affective Approach

In the two and a half centuries of scholarship following the protests and riots of August 1765, the Stamp Act Crisis in Boston has become an iconic instance of proto-revolutionary activity. The events are well known. Sometime before dawn on August 14, someone hung an effigy of Andrew Oliver, the man set to be the stamp tax collector, next to a boot with a devilish imp inside—a reference to the Earl of Bute, whose influence on the crown angered colonists and English alike, as well as presenting a hint that something evil was at work beneath the surface.¹⁰¹ The tree to which the effigies were hung later became known as the Liberty Tree and served as the locus for anti-British protests. In the evening, a crowd marched the effigy around Boston and ended at Oliver’s house, demanding his resignation. Oliver fled while the crowd beheaded and burned the effigy and then proceeded to loot his home. Despite Governor Bernard’s belief that “disguised gentlemen” led the crowd, at least until the point of burning the effigy, participation in the day’s activities was too fluid and diverse for Bernard, Oliver, or other administrators to identify specific individuals.¹⁰² On August 26, similar tactics, known in the eighteenth century as “rough music,” were employed on an even larger scale against other agents of the crown directly involved in trade and customs: William Story, Benjamin Hallowell, and Lt. Gov. Hutchinson.

Royal administrators were never able to determine who led the rioters, but they believed that rabble-rousers like Mayhew must have whipped Boston’s lower sorts into a frenzy.¹⁰³ Modern historians take a different approach, assuming the crowd was steered by one or another group, each representing a different ideological force in the pre-Revolutionary era. Edmund and Helen Morgan concluded that the Loyal Nine initiated the rough music of August 14, a group another historian has called “a shadowy social club [that sought] to organize political opposition to these menacing British measures.”¹⁰⁴ The Loyal Nine enlisted the help of the notorious South End Mob, made up of working class Bostonians and led by shoemaker Ebenezer Mackintosh.¹⁰⁵ The Morgans suggested the Loyal Nine only intended to burn Oliver in effigy, but Mackintosh wrested control of the riots in the evening and led the charge on Andrew Oliver’s home.¹⁰⁶

Did a group of middling merchants with a passion for liberty ultimately steer the riot, or was it a working-class gang seeking to level the playing field? Were the first steps of Revolution the work of republicanism or class consciousness?¹⁰⁷ Given that the Stamp Act Crisis is often understood to be the earliest stage of the Revolutionary

¹⁰⁰ Mayhew, *Observations*, 6.

¹⁰¹ Molly Perry, “Burned Liberties and Hanging Effigies: Imperial Persuasion, Intimidation, and Performance during the Stamp Act Crisis,” in Hutchins, ed., *New Perspectives*, 38.

¹⁰² Quoted in Perry, “Burned Liberties,” 41.

¹⁰³ J. Patrick Mullins, “The Sermon That Didn’t Start the Revolution: Jonathan Mayhew’s Role in the Boston Stamp Act Riots,” in Hutchins, ed., *New Perspectives*, 16.

¹⁰⁴ Morgan and Morgan, *Stamp Act Crisis*, 127–128; Mullins, “The Sermon That Didn’t Start the Revolution,” 26.

¹⁰⁵ Morgan and Morgan, *Stamp Act Crisis*, 128–130.

¹⁰⁶ Morgan and Morgan, *Stamp Act Crisis*, 127–130.

¹⁰⁷ Mullins, “The Sermon That Didn’t Start the Revolution,” 28.

moment, it is no wonder that many scholars “fall victim to the desire to determine who was ‘behind the curtain’ and led the crowd.”¹⁰⁸ More recent analyses have avoided picking sides, suggesting that the August riots were led “by a covertly coordinated effort of middling businessmen and the Boston ‘street’” united by mercantile interests.¹⁰⁹ It is not the aim of this piece to weigh in on who ultimately led the rioters. Rather, I want to suggest that the conspiracism at work in the Stamp Act Crisis was itself an important part of the bodily experience of republicanism. The fight for freedom felt all the more significant because it was ensconced in conspiratorial rhetoric that had been part of the colonial milieu for decades.

The bodily experiences of anger, frustration, and fear, and the actions stemming from them, bound people together before the exact meaning of the revolutionary moment became clear.¹¹⁰ Drawing our attention to those bodily realities, historian Molly Perry’s study of the carnivalesque nature of the Stamp Act’s rough music reminds us that “crowd action surrounding effigies never demanded or articulated absolute ideology purity.”¹¹¹ The August 14 protests, for example, would have been noisy affairs—the streets filled with the pattering of drums, shouts of “Huzzah!,” chants, and music. The eyes would have been equally excited: the visual pun of the hanging boot and imp, the hanged straw figure of Andrew Oliver, the sight of hundreds or even thousands of gathered protestors marching through the streets and waving from windows. Add to this the smell of sweat, alcohol wafting from hot mouths to hang heavy in the August air, and finally burning wood and straw as the bonfire blazed. Participants would have come and gone, drifting closer and farther from the center of the action at different points in the day. Some joined for spectacle, others out of anti-stamp zeal, others out of class frustration, and their motives may have easily shifted from day to day, even hour to hour. Whatever their motivation, conspiracism was thick in the air, uniting this ideologically diverse group into a community bound together by shared fear, disgust, and anger.

Whoever ultimately steered the rioters, they were led by organizations acting incognito. Bostonians never told royal officials about the pact between that secretive street gang and the secret society. Fear of royal retribution forced the orchestrators to hide their identities and Bostonians guarded them, even though doing so was dangerous. There is also evidence that participants in the protests acted spontaneously—a “mob” almost rioted on August 15, only to be dissuaded at the last moment by the Loyal Nine.¹¹² In any event, all the covert activity resonated with the conspiratorial plots the colonists had learned to fear, from the SPG-supported troublemakers to the Catholic Church and to the devil himself. That they themselves were participating in secret schemes exacerbated the felt sense of the power of conspiracies. In other words, it was easier for radical-leaning colonists to imagine—and, importantly, to *feel*—the machinations of a secret cabal after experiencing similar machinations firsthand in a conspiracy of their own.

On August 25, Mayhew gave a sermon repeating his usual warnings about threats to colonial liberties. He outlined three categories of polity: slavery, liberty, and anarchy.¹¹³

¹⁰⁸Perry, “Burned Liberties,” 61 n12.

¹⁰⁹Mullins, “The Sermon That Didn’t Start the Revolution,” 29.

¹¹⁰Zizi Papacharissi, *Affect Publics: Sentiment, Technology, and Politics* (Oxford Scholarship Online, 2014), 93.

¹¹¹Perry, “Burned Liberties,” 42.

¹¹²Morgan and Morgan, *Stamp Act Crisis*, 131.

¹¹³Lubert, “Conservative Revolutionary,” 598.

Based on the emotionology outlined in his own 1760 pamphlet and the reported content of this sermon, Mayhew likely conveyed to his audience that those with too much passion lived in anarchy, while those who lived with too little were bound to become enslaved. Liberty could only be preserved through the inspiration of passionate love, both of liberty and of Christianity.¹¹⁴ Moreover, the love of liberty meant vigilance, lest tyrants or Catholics or Satan (if the two were indeed separate) steal away one's freedoms little by little.

Even in the years leading up to that sermon, Mayhew never articulated the exact nature of the link between Catholics and Anglicans. That may be because he himself did not apprehend that connection cognitively. Instead, he likely felt it, driven by his dislike and distrust of Governor Bernard, his radical Whig leanings, and his fierce attachment to the liberties to which he felt entitled as an English Protestant. After the Stamp Act passed, the colonists' fears were realized and their anger roused. Perhaps they were already in line with Mayhew's fears of conspiracy, or perhaps they were beginning to resonate with his own sense of anger and fear, especially after the events of the 14th. That August, in sum, the search for hidden plots against Protestant-English liberty was being forged into an emotionological prerogative in the furnace of affective excitement: *if you love liberty, you will be ever alert*.

The day after the August 25 sermon, Bostonians again rioted, attacking the homes of two colony officials and as well as that of Thomas Hutchinson. Mayhew's apology letter to Richard Clarke, a parishioner who left Mayhew's church as a result of that incendiary sermon, highlights how powerful that emotionological prerogative was. Mayhew began his justification for the sermon by explaining that he had "often heard the ministers of this town in general blamed for their silence in the cause of liberty," and "called cowards and the like." Even though Mayhew had been an outspoken proponent for liberty since 1750, he was not immune from such aspersions. He claimed to have been "for weeks, nay, for months before Aug. 25, solicited by different persons to preach upon" the present dangers to colonial liberty, and he was singled out because he "was a known friend to liberty; and was in some measure reflected upon, as not having that good cause duly at heart, in this important crisis. This was a reproach, which I knew not well how to bear; and this, however insufficient a reason it might be, was yet the true reason of my preaching the sermon." This, then, is why Mayhew was "too far carried away with the common current" of excitement pervading Boston at the time: he was goaded into action by his own emotionological standards and angry at the accusations of hypocrisy.¹¹⁵

In all likelihood, Mayhew's passions, along with those of the Loyal Nine, had been building to a breaking point since the Indian Affair four years earlier. As other historians have noted, it can hardly be a coincidence that three of the four victims of the Stamp Act riots had sided with Governor Bernard in that controversy.¹¹⁶ Ironically, Mayhew's fear of "factions" operating in the shadows had become a self-fulfilling prophesy, and his desire to unmask conspiracies led to the creation of conspirators. While Mayhew cannot be given full credit either for the riots themselves or for the broader fear of conspiracy mounting during this period, he is certainly indicative of

¹¹⁴Lubert, "Conservative Revolution," 599. Not only does Mayhew make this explicit, but Nicole Eustace demonstrated that it was a pervasive emotionological understanding of liberty at this period.

¹¹⁵Mayhew to Richard Clarke, Sept. 3, 1765, in *The New England Historical and Genealogical Register*: Volume 46, 1892, 16–20.

¹¹⁶Mullins, "A Kind of War," 29.

the affective and emotional atmosphere in August. The ideological school of the American Revolution saw Mayhew as an example *par excellence* of republicanism, but neither Mayhew nor republicanism can be fully understood without reference to affect and emotion.

Mayhew, like most Bostonians, did not wish to break from the mother country in 1765. That would come later. The riots of August were an affective overflow—the liminal stage of the revolutionary moment, the beginnings of a decade-long transition from loyal British subjects to rebellious patriots. In the post-violence clarity that settled over Boston in the next few months, as more and more states successfully intimidated stamp men into resigning their posts, eighteenth-century emotionology began to shape that affective overflow, tempering the welter of raw affects into a more refined, collective emotional expression. In the course of this process, Bostonians began to reshape the affective contours of the community and, as a result, to change what it *felt* like to be an American. If, to paraphrase Emile Durkheim, religion is a process of transforming a mob into a “church” through shared feeling, then the Stamp Act riots and their aftermath were religion.¹¹⁷

IV. Stamp Act Pope’s Day

Most scholars agree the Pope’s Day parades between 1730–1764 were rituals reinvigorating the militant Protestant nationalism that united the British following the Gunpowder Plot. In the Foxean vein, the Pope’s Day parade linked Catholicism and the devil to plots against English liberty. The drunken combat accompanying the annual event reinforced that militant Protestant ethos. They were also carnivalesque rituals that solidified the social order through temporary hierarchy reversal. In this way, the Pope’s Day parade unified participants both through internal and external community formation mechanisms.¹¹⁸ This analysis, which focuses on the symbolic meanings of the parades vis-à-vis colonial society, can be augmented by attention to bodily experience. Pope’s Day resonated with the fear of conspiracy ignited by the Stamp Act.

An affective interpretation of the Pope’s Day parades, both before the Stamp Act and during that tumultuous year, illustrates how deeply conspiracism was felt in the years leading up to the Crisis and how significant the 1765 parade was. Before the Pope’s Day of 1765, the traditional effigies of the pope and the devil were more than embodiments of discourse; they were also affective symbols, stirring up physiological responses among participants. Both figures would evoke fear, contempt, and disgust, and those affects were channeled into a narrative over time: Catholics and the devil were working, in secret, to overthrow England. Furthermore, the large, elaborate effigies took time to construct. In the weeks leading up to the parade, then, anticipation built, leading to a rising level of affective background noise. When gangs dragged their effigies across their rivals’ territories or past a wealthy merchant’s home, they signaled more than

¹¹⁷Emile Durkheim, *The Elementary Forces of Religious Life* (New York: The Free Press, 1965), 240–245. Durkheim’s reference to the French Revolution on these pages is particularly interesting because Durkheim suggested that the French Revolution was, in effect, religious insofar as “things purely laical by nature were transformed by public opinion into sacred things (245).” That religious moment died because the “common passion (240)” and “enthusiasm (245)” were short lived. As I argue here, the American Revolution was similarly religious in nature, though much longer lasting.

¹¹⁸Francis Cogliano, *No King, No Popery: Anti-Catholicism in Revolutionary New England* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1995).

geographic conquest. Recall Cotton Mather's imagery of the devil blasting dangerous miasmas directly into the bowels of sinners, or the fear of "small parties" in New England communities, or even Sacheverell's march through England—the devil spread illness and sowed fear, and worse, he was literally within the heart of their community.

During the parades, the participants drank copiously. Alcohol reduces inhibition, making anger and joy more keenly felt and harder to control. Angry shouts, angry laughs. Joyous shouts, joyous laughs. Marching. Walking. Drinking. Talking. Sights, sounds, smells. Rival gangs. Enemies. It is little wonder the violence during Pope's Day was so extreme: it was an affectively charged day, made all the more affectively potent by the discursive meanings attached to it. By evening, all the fear and anger directed not only at diabolical Catholic plots but also at the unfair economic system, the rigid class structure, and the various frustrations of daily life had been expelled in an orgy of violence. At the end of the day, the anger and the fear had been exorcised. All that remained was the sense of *us*. Until 1765, Pope's Day was what being a British colonist felt like.

By 1765, though, some Bostonians did not feel quite so British. For the twenty years prior to the Stamp Act, Bostonians like Mayhew had been exposed to the mounting sense that someone, or some group, was working in secret to overthrow their liberties. There was no ideological cohesion to this fear. It was expressed differently by different people because it was felt differently. For Mayhew, it felt like a religiopolitical conspiracy because he was primarily interested in church matters. For James Otis Jr., by contrast, whose father was passed over for political office, it was a political-legal plot. For the Loyal Nine, it was a threat to pocketbooks as much as liberty. For Mackintosh, it was a chance to get even with the rich. While it would be another decade before the Patriot-Loyalist divide hardened, it began to be felt into existence during the 1765 Pope's Day parade.

Evidence suggests that the Loyal Nine and the South End Mob brokered some kind of peace agreement in the month leading up to the 1765 Pope's Day parade. The *Boston Gazette* noted that gentlemen "set up a purse" to stop the violence—the Loyal Nine themselves likely orchestrated this as a bribe for the South End Mob, who agreed to work together with the Nine toward the shared goal of overturning the Stamp Act.¹¹⁹ Mackintosh oversaw the construction of the effigies, which this year included the addition of "several other effigies signifying tyranny, oppression, slavery, etc."¹²⁰ These new effigies suggest the mounting affective significance of liberty for the colonists. The connection between the pope, the devil, and slavery would have been *felt* as much as understood.

The floats and effigies took weeks to construct, so for the parade to include new effigies—oppression, tyranny, and slavery—then Ebenezer Mackintosh would have had to organize their construction well in advance. The parade's motto of "Lovely Unity," the donations set up by wealthy merchants, and the lack of violence all suggest that these two ends of the Boston social hierarchy threw aside their differences for this parade and maintained their alliance for an extended period of time. The ground had already been paved for such an alliance by the riots in August, but why would the violence stop altogether, especially when Pope's Days past had been pandemonium?

While ideologist historians suggest that the answer may lie in budding republican virtue, more recent scholarship suggests that the merchants and the working class

¹¹⁹*Boston Gazette*, November 11, 1765.

¹²⁰*Boston Gazette*, November 11, 1765.

cooperated out of shared economic interest. J. Patrick Mullins argued that merchants and workingmen “viewed themselves as part of a vertically aligned mercantile interest benefiting from the importation of cheap goods. . . and they shared a compelling motive to stop the Bernard-Hutchinson-Oliver faction from enforcing Crown policy.”¹²¹ Mullins’s assessment, while convincing, assumes a high level of cognitive awareness on the part of a vast number of participants and fails to account for the raw emotion accompanying protest movements and instances of violence. Moreover, previous Pope’s Day parades indicate that animosity between the working class and the merchants was too powerful to be overcome easily. Setting aside such deep feelings for the August riots and then keeping the peace at the traditionally violent Pope’s Day parade would have necessitated more than shared interest—it would have required shared affect that had crystallized into shared emotionology.¹²²

Whereas the riots in August resulted from unrestrained affective compulsions, the Pope’s Day parade in November represented the physical embodiment of the emotionology outlined in Mayhew’s *Observations*. In that emotionology, passion—the colonial term for emotional fervor—was a necessary component of liberty. Only those who were passionate *and* could channel that passion towards Protestant ideals could protect their liberty from corruption’s inevitable rot. Those too querulous were unchristian, and so this year the two gangs amicably marched across each other’s territory, with the North-End gang heading south and vice versa before they rejoined near the courthouse. Together, the two gangs marched to the Liberty Tree, lounging, eating, and drinking in its shade. Then the group, embodying “Lovely Unity,” marched together to burn the effigies. Perhaps as they lounged under the tree or marched they sang one of the protest songs penned during the Stamp Act Crisis. Five days before the parade, for example, *The Boston Gazette* printed “Advice from the Country; a Song sung at Boston, in New-England.”¹²³

The song was from the perspective from a rural man offering advice to the urbanites. This hearty country man “could readily join in the throng;/ With club, teeth or fist, / Still intrepid persist, / And help a good purpose along,” but the song asks, “why recur to such means? — / Revert, and detest the rude sport.” It goes on to encourage Bostonians, accustomed to the luxuries of city living, to embrace the simpler lifestyle of the countryside, but despite the next eight verses depicting pastorate peace, the song ends with hints of violence: “Our fathers in blood,/ The rough savage withstood,/ And their rights, with their wealth, could defend;/ To sons of our own,/ Let then the nation renown,/ Of BRITONS and FREEMEN descend.”¹²⁴ Singing such songs in community was, in the words of John Adams, effective means of “cultivating the sensations of freedom.”¹²⁵

The “sensations of freedom” belied its peaceful message. The pun “fathers in blood” played upon Bostonians’ understanding of love of freedom as endemic to their Anglo-Saxon ancestry, as well as their own specific ancestors’ bloody experiences in

¹²¹Mullins, “The Sermon That Didn’t Start the Revolution,” 29.

¹²²Eustace, *Passion Is the Gale*, 407–408. Eustace’s point adds subtle but significant nuance to the disagreements. Without the emotionological pressure to perform grief, none of the ideological or materialist motives would have been effective enough to unite the upper and lower classes.

¹²³*The Boston Gazette*, October 31, 1765.

¹²⁴*The Boston Gazette*, October 31, 1765.

¹²⁵Quoted in Arthur Schlesinger, “A Note on Songs as Patriot Propaganda 1765–1776,” *The William and Mary Quarterly* 11, no. 1 (January 1954), 79.

the early colonial period.¹²⁶ Fathers, sons, savages, and blood—the affect-laden imagery in this verse suggests the violent defense of the community from hostile outsiders and elided the colonists’ fears of Indian attack with their fears of British tyranny. Emotion and affect run contrary to one another in “Advice from the Country.” The emotional message is one of forbearance and calm while the affective message conveys anger and presages violence. For radical-leaning colonists, songs like this conveyed the feeling of freedom precisely because they rang with passion, without which liberty was impossible.

Mayhew’s emotionology resonated with the wider belief in the colonies that only those who felt a passionate love for liberty were entitled to it, while those who lacked passion were bound to be enslaved.¹²⁷ Because colonists saw Blacks as “spiritless” people, lacking in passion, they were thought to be fundamentally incapable of liberty.¹²⁸ This helps to explain why no “Negro [was] allowed to approach near the stages [floats]” during the Stamp Act parade, despite their active participation in previous years.¹²⁹ The exclusion of Blacks from the Pope’s Day festivities signaled a critical point in the coevolution of racism and republicanism during the Stamp Act Crisis.

Winthrop Jordan noted that early New England puritanism was fundamentally tribalistic and desperate to “avoid contamination from graceless riffraff who inevitably seeped (or flooded) into their wilderness Zion.”¹³⁰ Jordan’s language here accurately conveys an affect animating racism: disgust. Race-based segregation simultaneously stems from and is perpetuated by disgust, which separates the pure self or community from the polluting contaminant. Hence, in the colonial period, “sexual intermixture was frequently referred to as ‘staining’ the white population,” and it was a “widely circulated notion that Negroes emitted a rank and fetid odor.”¹³¹ The disgust affect tied to blackness helped ensure that, by the eighteenth century, it “had become so thoroughly entangled with the basest status in American society that . . . it was almost indecipherably coded into American language and literature.”¹³²

In instances of communal crisis, Boston whites reinforced the affective and discursive othering of Blacks for political purposes. For example, after the 1747 Knowles impressment riots, town freeholders blamed the “Riotous Tumultuous Assembly” on “Foreign Seaman, Servants Negroes and other Persons of mean and Vile Condition.”¹³³ It is noteworthy that the actual foreigners were considered as separate from the “proper” Boston community as local Blacks. Similarly, five years after the Stamp Act Crisis, John Adams labeled the protestors who sparked the Boston Massacre a violent “mob” made up of “a motley rabble of saucy boys, negroes and molattoes, Irish teagues and outlandish jack tars.”¹³⁴ Adams took pains to highlight—and,

¹²⁶Reginald Horsman, *Race and Manifest Destiny: The Origins of American Racial Anglo-Saxonism* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1981), 16.

¹²⁷Eustace, *Passion Is the Gale* 386.

¹²⁸Eustace, *Passion Is the Gale*, 387.

¹²⁹*Boston Gazette*, November 11, 1765.

¹³⁰Winthrop Jordan, *White Over Black: American Attitudes Toward the Negro, 1550–1812* (Omohundro Institute of Early American History & Culture, 1968, 2012), 204.

¹³¹Jordan, *White Over Black*, 256–257.

¹³²Jordan, *White over Black*, 257–258.

¹³³*A Report of the Record of Commissioners of the City of Boston, Containing the Boston Town Records, 1742 to 1757* (Boston: Rockwell and Churchill, 1885), 127.

¹³⁴*The Trial of William Wemms, James Hartegan, William M’Cauley, Hugh White, Matthew Kilroy, William Warren, John Carrol, and Hugh Montgomery, soldiers in His Majesty’s 29th Regiment of Foot,*

according to one historian, exaggerate—the role of the half-Black, half-Indian Crispus Attucks in instigating the violence.¹³⁵ Adams described Attucks as a “stout Molatto fellow, whose very looks, was enough to terrify any person.”¹³⁶ Adams’s words call to mind the descriptions of the devil from a century before: a Black man or an Indian of “terrible aspect, and more than human dimensions.”¹³⁷ The point here is not that Attucks was explicitly linked to the devil, but that the affects contributing to the expulsion of racialized others from the Boston community resonated with those attached to the devil.

What made the Stamp Act Pope’s Day parade unique among such examples was the participants’ premeditated exclusion of black Bostonians. During the Stamp Act Crisis, Bostonians felt more acutely than ever that their freedom had to be defended from power’s encroachment. When elite, middling, and working-class Bostonians united in opposition to the Stamp Act, they were establishing what their community, bound together by the defense of sacred liberty, felt like. Because Blacks purportedly lacked passion for liberty, they were emotionologically excluded. Because whites saw Blacks as repulsive, they were affectively excluded.¹³⁸ As white Bostonians marched through the streets that November afternoon, they were forging an affective space in which *feeling* free meant *being* white.¹³⁹

The addition of new effigies symbolising tyranny, slavery, and oppression to the usual effigies of the pope and the devil further contributed to the emerging affective space. Displaying the new effigies, inspired by the Stamp Act, next to symbols of the Gunpowder Plot added to the felt sense that there was something hidden and unsavory at work in Parliament’s latest action. And, by extension, the parade connected the feelings associated with the Catholic Church and the devil—fear, disgust, and anger—to British Parliament. The exact nature of these connections was not specific—nor did it have to be. As Sara Ahmed noted, “disgust” is contagious, transferring from object to object through contact or proximity and fear “stick[s] objects together as signs of threat.”¹⁴⁰ As a bodily experience, effigy parades were about emotional and sensual experience as much as the pedagogy of ideology. Participants in the parade may not have been able to articulate exactly how the pope, the devil, the Gunpowder Plot, and the Stamp Act were linked in any kind of detail, but they nevertheless would have felt the affective resonances. Through this complicated mix of experiences, colonists began to feel a separation between Britain and the colonies into existence.

for the murder of Crispus Attucks, Samuel Gray, Samuel Maverick, James Caldwell, and Patrick Carr, on Monday-evening, the 5th of March, 1770, at the Superior Court of Judicature, Court of Assize, and general goal delivery, held at Boston. The 27th day of November, 1770, by adjournment. Before the Hon. Benjamin Lynde, John Cushing, Peter Oliver, and Edmund Trowbridge, Esquires, justices of said court. Published by permission of the court (Boston, 1770). 174. See also Eric Hinderaker, Boston’s Massacre (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2017), 207–209.

¹³⁵Hinderaker, *Boston’s Massacre*, 204–205.

¹³⁶*The Trial of William Wemms*, 176. Historian Eric Hinderaker has argued that Adams deliberately homed in on the single eyewitness who placed Attucks at the front of the crowd in order to further discredit and other them. See Hinderaker, *Boston’s Massacre*, 205.

¹³⁷See note 31.

¹³⁸Eustace, *Passion Is the Gale*, 387.

¹³⁹I use “white” here as shorthand for Anglo-American, in connection with the colonists’ belief that they descended from the Anglo people, who were inherently freedom-loving. See note 124.

¹⁴⁰Ahmed, *Cultural Politics of Emotion*, 87, 66.



Figure 1. Library Company of Philadelphia

Sometime around November 1, while the South End Gang was finishing the effigies, a painter named John Singleton Copley published an anti-stamp propaganda cartoon depicting the same themes that would be played out during the parade (fig. 1).¹⁴¹ A figure representing America sheds “refined feminine tears” designed to appeal to British gentility and gender conceptions. A dying American Indian represents liberty—whereas black slaves had too little passion for liberty, American Indians had too much, explaining why colonists later dressed as American Indians during the Boston Tea Party and other protest actions.¹⁴² A snake sinks its fangs into the dying man’s abdomen, symbolizing the hidden dangers threatening liberty. Nicole Eustace reads this image as an expression of grief, which colonists felt was the most appropriate performative emotion for a protest action. Grief, unlike anger, signals a continued connection with the mother country and thus was less likely to be interpreted as treasonous.¹⁴³ As was the case with “Advice from the Country,” although the emotionological symbolism of this image pointed to a continued relationship with England, an affective countercurrent highlights the fear and hostility fomenting in the colonies.

The snake, hidden in the grass and biting the American Indian at the base of the liberty tree, is the clearest example of this affective countercurrent. Conspiracism is, in part, the fear that something dangerous lurks either behind the guise of something safe or just out of sight—it is archetypal snake in the grass, perfectly camouflaged and slithering silently closer until it can strike. Though the August Riots came to be dressed in various emotional and ideological guises, the underlying fear was the stealthy murder of liberty, and the serpentine imagery suggests a deeply physical experience of that fear.

¹⁴¹E.P. Richardson, “Stamp Act Cartoons in the Colonies,” *The Pennsylvania Magazine of History* 96, no. 3 (July 1972), 279.

¹⁴²Eustace, *Passion Is the Gale*, 406

¹⁴³Eustace, *Passion Is the Gale*, 406.

The November Pope's Day parade was much like "Advice from the Country" and this image: raw affect had been channeled into more socially acceptable forms of expression, shaped by colonists' understanding of liberty, civility, and economic shared interest—but some colonists were still plagued by the lingering feeling that something beneath the surface needed to be righted.

V. Conclusion

Though the colonists did not advocate for explicit separation from England for another decade, the Stamp Act crisis signaled an important change in their lived experience. Motivated by the powerful affective forces and guided by the eighteenth-century understanding that liberty was related to emotional experience, colonists began forging a new affective space in which the defense of liberty *felt* significant. That the colonists enshrined the Liberty Tree—the site of the initial anti-Stamp Act protests on August 14—as a kind of sacred center throughout the Revolution suggests that the affective power of those moments lasted far beyond the Crisis of 1765.¹⁴⁴ As John Adams reflected on the impact of Jonathan Mayhew decades after the Crisis, he homed in on the feeling of "universal alarm" that Mayhew incited in the colonies. Though the initial affects were tempered in the months following the riots, they did not fade away. The Stamp Act Crisis forever changed Boston's affective landscape.

An affective approach to the Stamp Act Crisis suggests that republicanism was much more than an ideology. It was a felt experience magnified by affective resonances among people. It was a dynamic mixture of ideology, social force, and bodily reality forged not only through words and ideas but also through bodies in motion and emotions in bodies.¹⁴⁵ It was formed by the fear of the snake in the grass as much as the lofty ideals of Cicero or Cincinnatus. It was shaped by disgust and contempt of the devil, that "black man" of "terrible aspect," and the Catholic Church, that disease-spreading Whore of Babylon, as much as by Enlightenment philosophy. It was quickened by personal vendettas as much as anger over unjust taxation. It was experienced as inequality as much as it was proclaimed to be equality. And, above all, it was rooted in sacred liberty. Republicanism was, in other words, religion.

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¹⁴⁴See, for example, Thomas Paine's 1775 song "Liberty Tree": "For freemen like brothers agree;/With one spirit endued, they one friendship pursued,/ And their temple was Liberty Tree," which can be found in Schlesinger, "A Note on Songs as Patriot Propaganda," 86.

¹⁴⁵Kimerer L. LaMothe, "What Bodies Know about Religion and the Study of It," *JAAR* 76, no. 3 (Sep. 2008), 573–601.

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