John Wesley, Superstar:

Periodicity, Celebrity, and the Sensibility of Methodist Society in Wesley's *Journal* (1740-1791)

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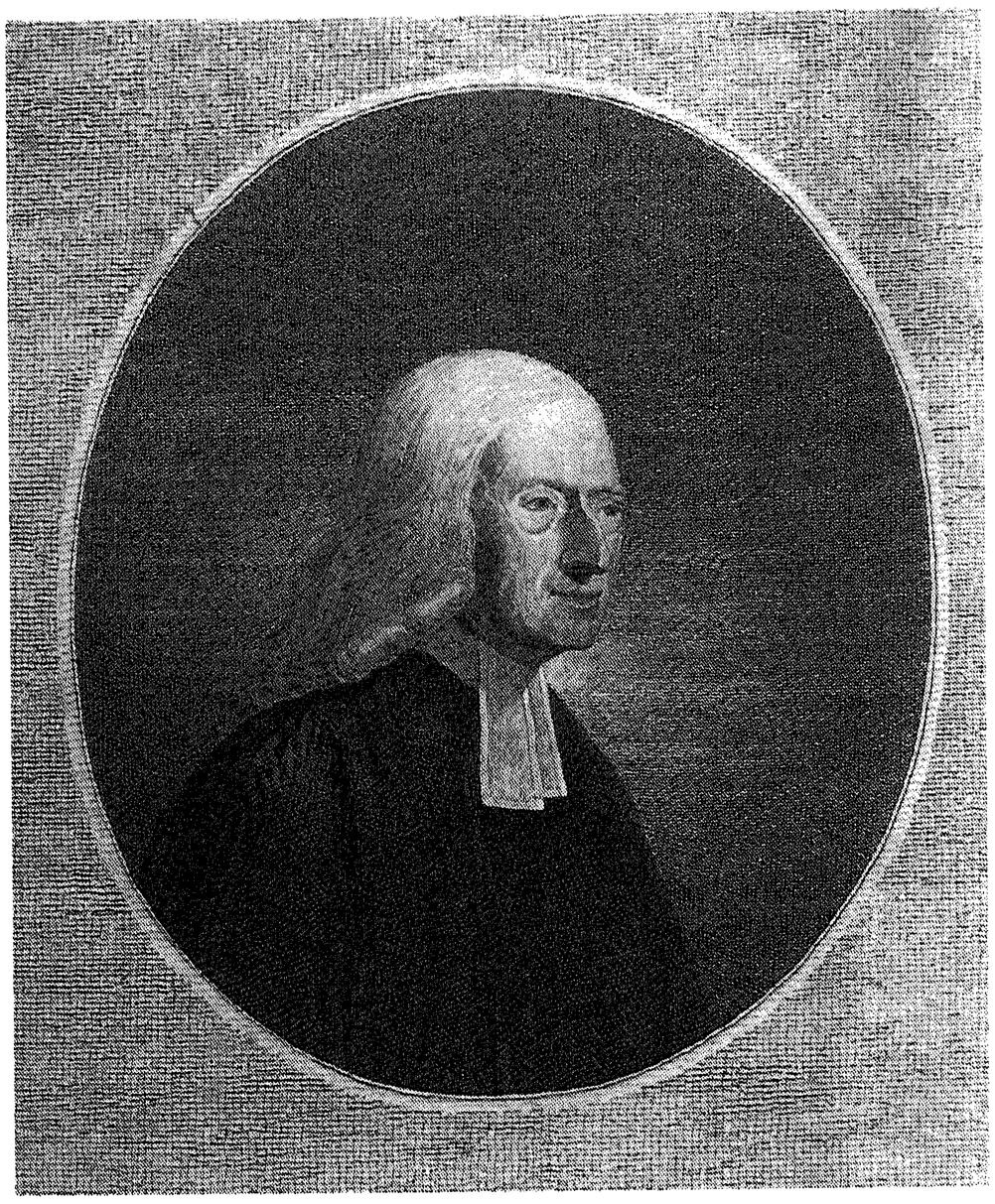
It is in fact the Beatle John Lennon, not the founder of Methodism John Wesley, who is famous for once having claimed to be more famous than Jesus Christ.[1] But if we regard Wesley's career from a social and cultural rather than a strictly religious or theological standpoint, we may be forgiven for wanting to promote Wesley to Lennon's degree of sanctified celebrity. For instance, both men were hugely enriched economically and symbolically by their public performances, live and recorded. Lennon is renowned partly for using his wealth to secure his personal privacy, leaving the media to its own avid speculation about him. Wesley, on the other hand, though he stated a decade before his death that "[t]wo and forty years ago I wrote many small tracts, generally a penny apiece; some of these had such a sale as I never thought of, and by this means I became rich," eagerly and publicly disavowed all pecuniary motives, and dispensed his profits through large and small public acts of philanthropy.[2] Contemporaries reckoned that the evangelist gave away more than $30,000 during fifty years of preaching, a number unprecedented in evangelical history in both its size and the fact of its public knowledge.[3] In this respect, at least, despite differences in emphasis and scale, the spectacle of Wesley's celebrity approaches that of Lennon's. More than the relation to capital, however, what links the evangelist and the rock star is the capacity each embodied during his height of fame as a kind of representative character, a popularly recognized symbol of a specifiable but disparate public association, or "imaginary community": in Lennon's case, the emerging "counterculture" of the 1960's; in Wesley's, the burgeoning Methodist "society" of the eighteenth century.[4]

If we can agree that the publicity of Lennon's personal privacy – in live performances, recorded songs, interviews, miscellaneous writings, and other public manifestations – served as one of the means by which the '60s counterculture achieved self-consciousness as a social body and a culture, recognized its multiple values, histories, possibilities, and identities, then it can I think be claimed that the publicity of Wesley's privacy operated similarly for convinced and would-be Methodists during the first half-century or so of Methodist association. In what follows I will consider how Wesley's serially-published *Journal* cultivated the evangelist's celebrity as the symbolic embodiment of Methodism in England, enabling early Methodists to identify themselves individually and collectively as constituting a movement of social and cultural, not just religious, proportions: an expanding body defined by a common perspective of and engagement with secular culture, rather than as merely a set



Portrait of John Wesley from: John Whitehead, The Life of the rev. John Wesley 2 vols (London: Stephen Couchman, 1793-1796) (Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam).

of the inhabitants of a place, region, or network of routine social interactions. In performing this function the *Journal* was not chiefly a vehicle for Wesley's individual introspection and self-expression, as many of its harshest recent critics, likening it to a modern autobiography, have expected it to be. Instead, the *Journal* operated as the sort of text it explicitly purported to be, a periodical, a work of journalism in the manner of an organizational newsletter. As such, it was an evangelical instrument contrived to present a persona, "the Reverend Mr. John Wesley," as the public image and focal point of a distinctive Methodist sensibility or, to coin the phrase routinely used in the *Journal* to authorize the Reverend Mr. Wesley's many social and cultural discriminations, "common sense." This common sense embodied in the *Journal* became a distinguishing feature of Methodist society within the bourgeois public sphere of the eighteenth century.

THE JOURNAL AS A DOCUMENTARY TEXT

Wesley's *Journal* is virtually unknown to us, the unfortunate consequence of multiple critical misunderstandings. Historians, on the one hand, though prizing it as, in Frank Baker's words, "a worthy introduction to the first rise of Methodism," approach it cautiously as a source of fact. Baker writes that "Wesley selected and presented his extracts...in the light of his knowledge of subsequent events, of his prej-

udices or his desire for diplomatic caution; occasionally his later versions seem strongly colored by imagination, or are marred by errors which would more easily have been eradicated had the published *Journal* been an up-to-the-minute document." Indeed, Baker finds Wesley "guilty of many errors in dates and facts."[5] Upholding Baker's verdict, the editor of the latest text of the *Journal* observes Wesley's proneness to "innumerable mistakes" and some "gross carelessness."[6] Accordingly, historians in search of evidence have not beaten a path to the *Journal.*

On the other hand, literary scholars have found the *Journal* "disparate" in style and form, supporting the consensus that, as George Lawton puts it, "of all [of Wesley's] works the *Journal* is the least satisfactory from the literary point of view."[7] But as a kind of diary or travelogue, para-literary documentary genres in which disparity is seen as a sign of authenticity, the *Journal* was once thought to possess "something of the charm of Pepys" and "descriptive powers" complementary to those of Cobbett, Young, and Byng.[8] More recently, however, in her introduction to the 1987 Oxford Paperbacks edition of selections from the *Journal,* Elizabeth Jay pretty much destroyed any hope of its inclusion in a revised canon of eighteenth-century literature on the basis of its documentary value, remarking straight off the work's failure to conform to late twentieth-century expectations of a diary: "A million or more words fail to yield an intimate glimpse of Wesley's private emotional life. The reader who relishes diaries for the delightful indiscretions, contemporary gossip, private malice, or personal soul-searching they can provide will find few such pleasures here." As a travelogue, it also disappoints: "The *Journal* does contain some descriptive set-pieces....These passages, however, are almost entirely devoid of the individual response to the environment which lend the best travellers' tales their charm....One looks in vain for aesthetic impressions....The would-be visitor learns little from an account drawn up in a form which bears the hallmarks of Wesley's obsessional organizational talents."[9] It is no wonder that this edition went out of print after its first run, for who would bother with it after such a portrayal?

Needless to say, the *Journal* has not sustained a great deal of scholarly attention.[10] Yet the limited interest has not all been ruinous. Countering its massive critical dismissal, the intellectual historian Isabel Rivers finds that Wesley's *Journal,* "in its careful observation and analysis over many years in hundreds of cases of the nature and meaning of experimental religion, may well be the most important work of practical divinity of the [eighteenth] century," given the long-term social and cultural significance of Methodism, and Wesley's failure to produce a devotional handbook to explicate his theology.[11] Yet so far, nobody has singled out the *Journal* for extensive analysis to prove this claim. Instead, attempts to elaborate Wesley's creed have utilized a mixture of his own writings, including sermons, the *Journal,* and his correspondence, alongside Wesley's editions of others' works.[12] In her study of Methodist faith and religious experience, Rivers herself pays greater attention to Wesley's efforts as an editor and to his periodical *The Arminian Magazine* (commenced in 1778), which may rather be the most important of his practical works, in terms of

presenting doctrine.[13] Rivers notes that Wesley's concept of experimental religion, like that of his seventeenth-century evangelical Protestant forebears, relied upon the recording, collection, and scrutiny of individual testimonies, of one's own and others' religious experience, to ensure that one's faith was not uncommon and to edify and exhort one to persevere.[14] Though the *Journal* indeed supplied material to this end, especially in the oft-reprinted first and third parts describing the circumstances and manner of Wesley's own conversion and the origins of the movement, it does not appear to do so deliberately; increasingly, readers had to read between the lines of large amounts of worldly advice to locate the marrow of spiritual experience.

Nonetheless, its evident deception, disparity, and dilution of doctrine may partly explain why the *Journal* was, and remains, according to George Lawton, "the most read and best-beloved" by common readers of Wesley's works, despite the reservations of professional historians and literary critics.[15] For generations the *Journal* formed the basis of Wesley biographies and, more important, Methodist lore, helping to activate, extend, and secure the popular memory of a movement that was, especially in its early phase, because of its mobilization of semi-literate and entirely analphabetic plebeians, transmitted more by oral discourse and physical expression. A work of writing that functioned as a kind of conversation piece, the *Journal* operated much like a daily newspaper or monthly periodical. But its appearance was not so frequent as these. Technically, the *Journal* belongs to the class of "part" or "serial" publications, which saw its heyday in the middle of the eighteenth century. The *Journal* appeared in twenty-one duodecimo pamphlet installments comprising 100 pages or so each, published every two to three years on average from 1740 to 1791 (the year of Wesley's death), bearing the series title (starting with number 3), *An Extract of the Rev. Mr. John Wesley's Journal, from [month/day/year] to [month/day/year].* Each part was a cheap purchase, retailing for about 8*d.* in sheets.[16]

Though the series is uniform in format (size, type, layout, etc.) and materials (ink and paper), and the specified dates in the titles amount to an unbroken chronological sequence of time "from his embarking for Georgia..." in number 1 "...to October 24, 1790" in number 21 (allowing for a few small errors in dating), the text contains no indication that Wesley ever designed the individual parts to be collected and retained together as an integral text, as were many serial publications of the time (each part of the *Journal* employs its own pagination, for example).[17] Nor does it appear that contemporary readers thought to create such a text for themselves, as there are few surviving copies of most parts, and a complete set of every part collated together is a rarity.[18] In fact, copies of many of the original parts were already rare in Wesley's day. Each part appeared therefore as an autonomous object, and was consumed immediately as such. After consumption, the parts tended to be disposed of rather than preserved as mementos or reference tools. Moreover, though the *Journal*'s individual title-pages tally up to a temporal totality, its actual contents do not. The complete calendar is not all accounted for by the text; there are lapses of days and sometimes weeks between dated items. While there is a plausible ra-

tionale for the starting point of the series as the beginning of Wesley's evangelical career, the last date recorded in it is arbitrary, as are the last recorded entries in each of its parts – readers are never left with either the sense of an ending or the promise of continuation. This aspect, and the brevity of many dated items, contributes to the verisimilitude of each *Journal* part as an "extract" taken from some larger and more complete text, though no such text actually exists today, and it is likely that no such text ever did exist. In material terms, the *Journal* appeared more like an intermittent periodical than a book; in form, it was more like a sporadic diary than an autobiography. It was inherently disparate and unreliable, a disjointed and ephemeral text that gestured toward but did not represent a temporal totality, such as Wesley's "life." It was never meant to be an "autobiography," especially in the modern literary sense of comprising an integral historical narrative.

In this respect the *Journal*'s newest editor W. Reginald Ward's placement of the text within the history of the literary genre of autobiography is miscalculated. It leads him to underrate Wesley's work for the same shortcomings identified by Lawton and Jay, though for different reasons. Whereas Ward's predecessors found the *Journal* a total formal shambles, Ward focuses on Wesley's "general inability to emulate the pioneers of the new autobiography," such as Rousseau, and pronounces the *Journal* unrefined as such.[19] However, this is unjust: Wesley's *Journal* should occupy a prominent place in the history of writing in the first person, but not as an autobiography, of the sort known to us through the scholarship of Romantic and post-Romantic literary genres.[20] It is more accurately treated as a different kind of documentary text: an early work of journalism, not of self-expression or introspection. The *Journal* is especially important as a reformulation of the quasi-autobiographical promotional publications of Wesley's immediate religious predecessors, George Fox and Richard Baxter, which were produced to secure the historical legacy of the community of post-1650 religious dissenters. Furthermore, it was also right in step with the formal and stylistic innovations of Wesley's secular contemporaries, for instance Charlotte Charke, Constantia Phillips, and Laetitia Pilkington, who in the early 1750's were each experimenting with serial narrative as form of public self-identity performance.[21] Besides this, the *Journal* also anticipated aspects of post-modern sensibility, especially in its anti-intellectual predilection for empirical, or superficial, knowledge. Compared to the most prominent examples of early modern autobiographical discourse, the *Journal* was indeed an important and pioneering text. To understand its novelty, we must appreciate the extent to which it was a part and product of the literary culture of early eighteenth-century voluntary sociability, and the way it worked to make a spectacle of the Reverend Mr. Wesley.

WESLEY AND EVANGELICAL JOURNALISM

While Wesley never referred to his publication as anything other than a "journal," it can be likened to a kind of organizational newsletter or interim report, issued tri-

ennially. This analogy makes sense when we recall that Methodism was in Wesley's conception not a religious order, denomination, sect, or church but at first, when its membership was very local, a "club," and later, after expansion, a "society."[22] As a society, Methodism was but one entity within a swelling secular "associational world" of voluntary clubs and societies in eighteenth-century Britain that included old standbys such as the aristocratic Royal Society – which, like the Methodist society, began as a "club" at Oxford before enlarging into a "society," in 1660; by 1700 it was the sun at the centre of a galaxy of spin-off scientific clubs and circles – and middle-rank newcomers like the freemasons and oddfellows, and countless more like them.[23] Religious societies were no strangers to this universe. They flourished in the late seventeenth century, especially in London and outlying urban areas, where zealous middling members of the established Church volunteered to promote Christian morality, reform local manners, propagate the faith, and provide para-institutional fellowship.[24] Wesley's father Samuel – who was, like his son, an ordained minister of the Church of England – was an energetic exponent of such groups, preaching at the public lectures sponsored by the London societies.[25] Therefore, from the beginning Wesley was able to draw much of his membership as well as the concept of Methodism from the already-established religious and secular associations among which he grew up.[26]

Newsletter-type publications were a component of the organizational structure of some associations, but periodicals like the Royal Society's *Philosophical Transactions*, commenced in 1665, were rare.[27] Few societies even had need of recording secretaries, let alone printed reports of their business.[28] To the extent that it played a role at all, the rising tide of daily or weekly newspapers helped to promote societies by means of advertisement. Clubs gave public notice of meetings through paid ads; sometimes their own puff pieces were planted in the news or editorial pages, and occasionally the activities of a club or society might be reported as genuine news.[29] But on the whole, the secular clubs and societies of the early eighteenth century apparently failed to realize the full organizational potential of the newspaper and its variations, though periodical writers grasped the utility of the "club" motif as a means of cultivating their audience.[30]

The publishing activities of the evangelical Protestant religious societies, however, comprise the exception that proves this rule. Given their fundamental relation to scripture and the literate culture supplementing it in early modern society, the religious societies' ready appreciation for the potential uses of writing and the emerging, constantly evolving, print media might be expected. The minute book of at least one religious society survives today, indicating that writing in the most sophisticated of these associations was routine and highly organized: they appointed secretaries, drew up orders and directions, and kept minutes and accounts of their business.[31] Also, public and private correspondence, both lay and ministerial, bloomed in religious societies, as the numerous bundles of such letters surviving today demonstrate. Furthermore, the historian Susan O'Brien reminds us that during the

first half of the eighteenth century, English and colonial American ministers, lay evangelists, financiers, and printers expanded a rudimentary transatlantic letter-writing network that had been established in the seventeenth century to communicate news and transact evangelical business.[32] One of the chief innovations of this expansion was the printing of individual letters or compilations of letter extracts in periodicals established to publicize evangelical activity more broadly. Such printing was the outgrowth of the occasional practice of reading edifying or inspirational letters or parts thereof aloud before assembled congregations, which itself dates back to the origins of Christianity, but was institutionalized as a monthly routine by English evangelicals at the so-called "Letter Days" organized in the late 1730s to communicate foreign and domestic news of "the progress of the gospel."[33] This institution enabled individual participants of the incipient evangelical revival to see themselves as part of a larger community or movement possessing spatial and temporal dimensionality beyond the confines of their own assemblies.

Routinely printed collections of evangelical letters amplified the symbolic functions and effects of the Letter Days. The London printer John Lewis published the first weekly evangelical newspaper in 1740 under the title, *Christian's Amusement containing Letters Concerning the Progress of the Gospel both at Home and Abroad.* In addition to contemporary letters, Lewis's four-page penny paper also reprinted selections from the writings of sixteenth and seventeenth-century Protestant divines. Seven months after Lewis began his paper it was adopted by Wesley's former student and friend turned Calvinist Methodist rival, George Whitefield, as a means of publicizing his own ministry, and renamed *The Weekly History.* Under Whitefield's direction the paper became closely tied to the Letter Days, its contents consisting almost entirely of the letters read publicly. It ran, with several more changes of title, until 1748.[34] As O'Brien rightly maintains, this publication and others like it represent a technical innovation in evangelical practice that helped establish a virtual "community of saints" transcending the limits of physical place.

Wesley's *Journal* continued Lewis and Whitefield's innovation, chiefly by narrowing and thereby sharpening its focus. Whereas the letters comprising the *Christian's Amusement* and its successors came from several hands, offering a synoptic perspective of the gospel's progress, Wesley's *Journal* represented the Reverend Mr. Wesley's point of view exclusively, even when it presented anecdotes of or written extracts from the experience of others, as it sometimes did. In limiting his focus so, Wesley was undoubtedly influenced by the Christian church's long-standing practice of using the records of exemplary individual lives to refine its godly community – the gospels of Christ and the *Confessions* of St. Augustine are well-known tools of early Christian evangelism. The advent of the printing press set off an explosion in the documentation of such lives; in Britain, the Reformation gave this explosion even greater mass, as reformers introduced a whole new kind of godly "life" to serve the needs of the religion of Protestants.[35] By the late seventeenth century, a substantial tradition of indigenous religious biography was deeply rooted in British

Protestant evangelical culture.[36] Wesley's childhood and early adulthood were steeped in this tradition and its Christian hagiographical ancestry. Wesley spent the better part of his ministry issuing new editions of his favourite out-of-print works and publishing fresh examples collected on his own; these were among the aforementioned "many small tracts" that made him rich.[37]

Wesley's personal experience as a reader, editor, and publisher of godly Christian lives constitutes one source of inspiration for the *Journal*'s singular perspective. However, Wesley was probably more directly inspired by the phenomenal success of *The Reverend Mr. Whitefield's Journal*, which appeared in seven printed parts between 1738 and 1741, when Whitefield abandoned it for Lewis's paper. The first part, entitled *Journal of a Voyage from Gibraltar to Georgia*, went to six editions in its first year, thanks partly to the newspaper publicity generated by two rival printers who each claimed to possess the most authentic version of Whitefield's manuscript diary, which the printed *Journal* purports to represent. Nearly all the subsequent parts sold equally well. Although it appears as a regular and complete diurnal record, the first printed *Journal* part begins with an address to "*My dear Friends*," in imitation of the letters (such letters were often identified by their writers and readers alike as "journals"; a journal was a kind of news-letter[38]) of the transatlantic evangelical correspondents already familiar to its readers. While the preface to the second part of the *Journal* claims that the first part was printed without Whitefield's knowledge, Whitefield likely anticipated its publication, if only by a reading before a particular congregation, since he himself prepared and sent a copy abroad. In any event, in the second part of the *Journal* Whitefield explicitly and publicly consented to its continuation in print.[39] Moreover, the parts were printed in a variety of sizes and sold at different prices, in order to expand sales and perhaps increase profit, making the printed version a pretty deliberate, rather than (as Whitefield implied) merely casual, effort.

The historian Frank Lambert describes Whitefield's *Journal* as a "self-promotional" tool that was marketed to a mass audience of "consumer[s]" by means of several "innovative merchandising techniques," such as serial publication and flexible pricing.[40] Whether Whitefield's evangelical activities and products were as integrally related and self-interested as Lambert claims is a matter of debate. Yet he is right to situate Whitefield's *Journal* within the avant-garde of self-promotional publications appearing in the mid eighteenth century. It was especially unusual as a religious work. Prior to the issue of Whitefield's *Journal*, the printing of documentary materials describing the history of religious personalities had usually been done posthumously. And even among such posthumous works, a self-penned personal history was rare. Indeed, such modesty also prevailed within secular culture. In these two respects – the self-composition and the appearance while its eponymous author was yet alive – Whitefield's publication constituted a striking departure from the standard evangelical practice. Its popularity on both sides of the Atlantic made it even more remarkable.[41] Wesley, who with his brother Charles in 1729 founded

the "Holy Club" at Oxford that drew Whitefield into evangelical society, who was elected a corresponding member of the Society for Promotion of Christian Knowledge in 1732, and who in 1737 sent an "extract" of his own "journal" to the *Gentleman's Magazine* in his capacity as one of its "foreign correspondents,"[42] had to be impressed by Whitefield's promotional audacity. He may even have felt threatened by it, since in 1739 the two were becoming engaged in a doctrinal controversy that eventually would split the Methodist movement into separate camps.

If it was conceived in an effort to compete with Whitefield's *Journal* as an organ of publicity, Wesley's *Journal* succeeded. It outlasted and became even more socially and culturally influential than its archetype. Whereas Whitefield used his *Journal* simply as an oratorical machine – Lambert dubs Whitefield's practice a "preach and print" strategy[43] – for Wesley the *Journal* was not just a plug for his preaching; rather, in concert with Wesley's numerous printed products, it was an indispensable and semi-autonomous component of his ministry. It might even be argued that in the long run, print weighed more heavily in the foundation of Methodism in England than preaching did. The comparatively greater emphasis Wesley attributed to the written and printed word is evident in the volume of works he composed and published, which easily buries Whitefield's output. Whereas Whitefield abandoned his *Journal* for Lewis's *Christian's Amusement* just three short years after its inception,[44] Wesley sustained and continued to develop his *Journal* right up until his death in 1791, sometimes labouring over its composition. His diary reveals that in the spring of 1740, he spent twenty to thirty hours over several weeks putting together the first part for the press. By comparison, he normally took between ten to fifteen hours in just a few days writing a sermon.[45] Whereas Whitefield's parts were issued every six or seven months, none – except the last, posthumous, installment – of Wesley's appeared less than two years after the last event to which it referred, some more than six years, the average interval being four. The time and attention Wesley dedicated to the publication of his *Journal* suggests a larger design than mere self-advertisement. Although this function was by no means clear at its inception, over time Wesley's *Journal* became a means of informing and generating the self-conscious coherence of a vast and disparate membership.

FOLLOWING THE REVEREND MR. WESLEY

"What I design in the following extract is openly to declare to all mankind what it is that the Methodists (so-called) have done and are doing now." So claims the preface to the *Journal*'s third installment, published in 1742, representing the period from 12 August 1738 to 1 November 1739.[46] Not only did Wesley's *Journal* vie for public attention with rival evangelical periodicals such as Whitefield's, it also competed with secular newspaper accounts of Methodist activity – some approving, most, however, not. For both social and cultural reasons, Methodism was perceived by many during its early years as a challenge to public order and the authority of

the established powers. It was therefore regarded with curiosity and fear, and it often provoked outrage – it was alleged to be a kind of madness, and even witchcraft.[47] Accordingly, the first notice of Methodism in the secular press was negative. After a member's sudden death in 1732, *Fogg's Weekly Journal* criticized the habits of the Oxford Holy Club, accusing its members of being hypocrites who "use religion only as a veil to vice." This was but the first of several decades' worth of sensationalist rumour, innuendo, and accusation in the press, much of it focussed on Wesley himself, warranting the sustained attention and occasional response broadcast by the *Journal*.[48] Later, beginning around 1760, as detractors dwindled in number and Methodism grew, in both membership and social and cultural acceptability, the *Journal*'s corrective function became less apparent. However, Wesley offered no explicit alternative rationale for its continued publication, and the *Journal*'s contents become, as Wesley's modern bibliographer puts it, "a most interesting record" of Wesley's itinerant ministry.[49] It seems that while narrowing its focus to events within his own purview and thus to verifiable fact, Wesley sought also to enlarge his *Journal*'s and by extension Methodism's parameters, by engrossing the anonymous newspaper-reading public in his own activities and opinions.

From its inception, therefore, Wesley's *Journal* was a part and product of the expanding secular newspaper culture of eighteenth-century England. As such, its subject-matter was a part and product of the mushrooming discourse of fact that grew within that culture. In concert with other contemporary periodicals, the *Journal* offered news or, as contemporaries called it, "intelligence" – what we know as "information." The *Journal*'s stock-in-trade was Methodist intelligence: manufactured information of the personal experience of "the Reverend Mr. John Wesley." By means of such information, the persona of the Reverend Mr. Wesley and, by extension, the identity of Methodism, became known to Wesley's followers – that is, those who consumed journalistic intelligence of the Reverend Mr. Wesley – as a widespread social and cultural phenomenon. In this regard the *Journal* performed a crucial function in an age of enlightened religious knowledge, which consciously acknowledged the relativizsation, territorialization, and politicization of religion. At the very least, in the persona of the Reverend Mr. Wesley, the *Journal* gave Methodism a precise – that is to say, a factual, and therefore an empirical – location in space and time: it informed readers that on such a day, the Reverend Mr. Wesley preached in such a town, encountered a crowd of such a size and disposition, which responded in such a manner; later that same day, at such an hour, the Reverend Mr. Wesley dined at such a place, with such a person or persons; the next day, he travelled to such a town, with such a person or persons, covering so many miles in so many hours, resting the horse at such a village, and so on. Readers of the *Journal* literally followed the Reverend Mr. Wesley from place to place, both within and between individual parts of the *Journal*. At the same time, they could see themselves as a part, however small and remote, of this activity, for many readers would have witnessed or actually participated in an event the *Journal* described, or have been acquainted with someone who

had done so, or at the very least might have lived in or near a place noted in the *Journal*. The pile-up in the readers' imaginations of the *Journal*'s information, of places visited and faces seen by the itinerant preacher, slowly ossified into a memory they all held in common: that of the experience of the movement itself, as witnessed in the persona of the Reverend Mr. Wesley.

This collective association of Methodists as virtual followers of Wesley in part explains the unprecedented proliferation of religious artifacts representing an image of "the Reverend Mr. John Wesley" during the evangelist's lifetime, for the *Journal* helped to fashion this persona as the epitome of the religious society he publicly claimed to speak for and of. One way to signify a Methodist affiliation at home was by displaying an immediately recognizable object – a ceramic likeness or engraved print of the evangelist – in a public room of one's house. The presence of such souvenirs at home silently and constantly symbolized Methodist community membership for the homemaker, his family, and his guests.[50] In the mid-1770s, for example, as his pottery business was firming up, Josiah Wedgwood began production of a line of tea and coffee-pots featuring an image of "The Revd. John Wesley, M.A." (as they were uniformly inscribed). These were affordable, popular versions of the famous gallon-sized teapot presented to Wesley by Wedgwood himself, which to this day remains on display in Wesley's London house. Wedgwood, a consummate businessman, was quick to appreciate the ready market for his wares among followers of Wesley. His potteries also manufactured John Wesley medallions, cameos, plaques, busts, plates, dishes, and flasks of various materials, designs, and sizes. Seeing Wedgwood's success, other potters quickly copied his example.[51] Engraved prints of Wesley were widely and more cheaply available than ceramics, even as early as 1743; in that year an engraving by Faber after an original portrait by John Williams was advertised in the daily *London Evening Post*.[52] Though requiring more careful scrutiny to signify than a sculptural or pictorial representation, books on display also symbolized Methodist affiliation. Wesley's death occasioned an eruption of commemorative biographical works: besides two funeral sermons and an account of his last hours, there were at least three complete biographies and a collection of personal letters published amidst much controversy within five years of his decease, although according to the bookseller James Lackington, a variety of writers and vendors of "hasty performances" created a "truly ludicrous scene" loudly hawking their biographical wares outside Wesley's City Road chapel and nearby Bunhill Fields on every lecture night for weeks immediately after the funeral.[53] It is easy to see in this inundation of material goods the simple exploitation of a market by various kinds of manufacturers. Books, prints, and ceramics were novel and popular commodities in the eighteenth century. But the growth of the market for Wesleyana in particular was a phenomenon nurtured by Wesley, who by his preaching and his writings, especially the *Journal*, created an association that was then realized by commercial interests as a market for their products.

To be sure, Wesley knowingly collaborated in the commoditization of his persona

by sitting for portraits and publicly accepting gifts like a teapot that was too big to pour properly when full. He also once wrote to a friend that, "news-writers...are glad to have anything from *me*. They know how it increases the sale of their paper."[54] Wesley did however decline to sit for a life-sized wax effigy of him to stand in Mrs. Wright's Haymarket wax museum; he mentioned in the *Journal* that her figure of Whitefield, like those of the other personalities Wesley examined there, failed in comparison to "a well-drawn picture."[55] Even as early as the eighteenth century, celebrity was a property whose value was quickly and insistently redeemed by profiteers. Yet it would be a mistake to read the *Journal* as another mere commodity. Though technically it was – like a figurine, print, or book – an object, it was not designed to function as a souvenir of that kind. Unlike the solid, seemingly timeless effigies preserved on the home shelf or mantel, each part of the *Journal* was ephemeral, of the moment. In its representation of elapsed time, each part created and sustained a sense of direction and momentum that always exceeded the here and now it displayed. Thus, in addition to identifying it as the essence of collective memory, the *Journal* also represented Methodism as a comprehensible *movement*: in its depiction of the itinerant and methodical persona of the Reverend Mr. Wesley, Methodism seemed to cover the map and make steady historical progress in the calendar day. Likewise, the *Journal* made Methodism appear comprehensive: eventually, it seemed, nearly every place and every day met with and was filled by some kind of Methodist activity, even if that activity consisted merely of a private conference or a period of restful solitude for the Reverend Mr. Wesley. In effect, thanks to the *Journal*, Methodism appeared always aggressively on the move, which no doubt contributed to the anxiety and defiant posture of those who stood against it. The occasional inclusion in the *Journal* of "outside" matter – a "remarkable relation"[56] connected to but not occurring in Wesley's own experience: a letter received from a follower, an account taken of a conversion – served to broaden the scope of the momentum concentrated in the figure of the Reverend Mr. Wesley, adding to the sense of what Benedict Anderson calls the "steady, anonymous, simultaneous activity" of "a sociological organism moving calendrically through homogeneous, empty time."[57] In this way, for Wesley and his followers, the *Journal* was more than a commodity. It functioned as a foundational text, the locus of a meaning that was independent of the specific information it contained. Readers of the *Journal* shared a profound imaginary comradeship in their relation to the celebrity of the Reverend Mr. Wesley and the perception it afforded of Methodism as a progressive social movement.

EARLY METHODIST INTELLIGENCE

The self-conscious coherence of Methodist society created by the *Journal* was also manifest as a kind of sensibility or common sense apparent in the opinions of the Reverend Mr. Wesley. Not only did the *Journal* manufacture particular information, it also served to cultivate an intelligence of fact, and empirical reality in general, as a mode of perception and discrimination that would characterize Methodists and Methodism in

the bourgeois public sphere of the eighteenth century. In openly declaring "to all mankind what it is that the Methodists have done and are doing now," the *Journal* shows the Reverend Mr. Wesley constantly engaged in looking, measuring, and analysing his world, even as he reaches souls, as the following passage suggests:

> Sat. 22 [August 1773]. I preached in Illogan and at Redruth; Sunday 23, in St. Agnes churchtown, at eight; about one, at Redruth; and at five, in the amphitheatre at Gwennap. The people both filled it and covered the ground round about to a considerable distance. So that, supposing the space to be fourscore yards square and to contain five persons in a square yard, there must be above two and thirty thousand people – the largest assembly I ever preached to. Yet, I found, upon inquiry, all could hear, even to the skirts of the congregation! Perhaps the first time that a man of seventy had been heard by thirty thousand persons at once![58]

In establishing its presence thus the Wesley persona appears to us almost numbingly detail-oriented and literal-minded, which accounts for the "curious impersonality" of the *Journal* complained of by Jay and other recent critics. Consider how, for a typical instance, the *Journal* represents the Reverend Mr. Wesley's perception of "the effects" of an earthquake that occurred near Madeley, in May 1773:

> On Monday 27, at four in the morning, a rumbling noise was heard, accompanied by sudden gusts of wind and wavings of the ground. Presently the earthquake followed, which only shook the farmer's house and removed it entire about a yard, but carried the barn fifteen yards and then swallowed it up in a vast chasm; tore the ground into numberless chasms, large and small; in the large, threw up mounts fifteen or twenty feet high; carried an hedge with two oaks above forty feet and left them in their natural position. It then moved under the bed of the river, which making more resistance received a ruder shock, being shattered in pieces and heaved up about thirty feet from its foundations. By throwing this and many oaks into its channel, the Severn was quite stopped up and constrained to flow backward till with incredible fury it wrought itself a new channel. Such a scene of desolation I never saw. Will none tremble when God thus 'terribly shakes the earth'?[59]

Although the place of emphasis in this brief narration is occupied by the providential gloss of Isaiah 2:19, 21, which is preceded by the Reverend Mr. Wesley's personal remark, these qualitative comments are hardly substantial enough to counterbalance the weight of precise and apparently complete quantitative detail provided, which dominates the passage. Indeed, the passive verb construction in the first sentence attempts to erase Wesley's subjective presence entirely, ceding center stage to the action of the earthquake itself, as it were, at least until the abrupt intrusion of the first person voice in the penultimate sentence.[60] For the Reverend Mr. Wesley, it seems, events speak for themselves, and merit minimal editorial supervision by the journalists reporting them.

An appeal to fact with its apparently transparent meaning constitutes the *Journal*'s and the Reverend Mr. Wesley's chief mode of argumentation. An early part of the *Journal* relates how the Reverend Mr. Wesley replied to a heckler who asked him

whether his preaching had done any good: "I [i.e., Wesley] appealed to matter of fact. He allowed (after many words), 'People are better for the present,' but added, 'To be sure, by and by, they will be as bad, if not worse than ever.' "[61] Even though the heckler is allowed to have the last word, it is clear that the Reverend Mr. Wesley's economical appeal to fact carried the day over ignorant and prejudiced speculation in this debate – in the universe constituted within the *Journal*, "matter of fact" appears irrefutable. It always puts "vague, uncertain hearsays" offering "no proof or shadow of proof" to rout.[62] The *Journal* promoted its notion of objectivity by maintaining a faulty separation of experiment from hypothesis and thus fact from interpretation. For Wesley, readers infer, facts of all kinds are simply out there, like so many pebbles on a strand, awaiting collection and display by energetic observers who take their truth to be self-evident. As a set of data, facts may be more or less complete, but as certain knowledge they are always fully correct in whatever amount they comprise. For example, upon reading Joseph Priestley's *History and Present State of Electricity with Original Experiments* shortly after its first publication, Wesley remarked, "He seems to have accurately collected and well digested all that is known on that curious subject. But how little is that all! Indeed, the use of it we know; at least, in some degree. We know it is a thousand medicines in one: in particular that [it] is the most efficacious medicine in nervous disorders of every kind which has ever yet been discovered. But if we aim at *theory*, we know nothing. We are soon 'Lost and bewildered in the fruitless search.' " It is no surprise therefore that Wesley found Pascal's *Pensées* a disappointing argument for Christianity: to him, it lacked an empirical basis.[63]

Besides a foolproof mode of argumentation, the self-evident certainty of factual knowledge provided the Reverend Mr. Wesley with a "common sense" – as opposed to an "out of sense" or "non sense" – basis for cultural discrimination. Wesley's taste in literature is notorious among modern critics for its literalism. Consider for example the *Journal*'s report of the Reverend Mr. Wesley's reading of Sterne's *Sentimental Journey*:

> I casually took a volume of what is called *A Sentimental Journey through France and Italy*. Sentimental! What is that? It is not English. He might as well say, *Continental*. It is not sense. It conveys no determinate idea. Yet one fool makes many. And this nonsensical word (who would believe it?) is become a fashionable one! However, the book agrees full well with the title: for one is as queer as the other. For oddity, uncouthness, and unlikeness to all the world beside, I suppose the writer is without rival![64]

or his reading of *Orlando Furioso*:

> Ariosto had doubtless an uncommon genius, and subsequent poets have been generally indebted to him. Yet it is hard to say which was most out of his senses, the hero or the poet. He has not the least regard even to probability: his marvellous transcends all conception. Astolpho's shield and horn and voyage to the moon; the lance that unhorses everyone, the all-

penetrating sword, and I know not how many impenetrable helmets and coats of mail; leaves transformed into ships, and into leaves again; stones into horses, and horses into stones – are such monstrous fictions as never appeared in the world before, and one would hope, never will again. O who that is not out of his senses, can compare Ariosto with Tasso![65]

By contrast, when the Reverend Mr. Wesley offers praise, as he did for Bacons's *Sylva Sylvarum*, he cites the subject-matter's inherent curiosity and practical utility. But the acme of excellence, in Wesley's opinion, is precision. Of James Anderson's *Account of the Present State of the Hebrides and the West Coasts of Scotland*, he notes, "How accurate and sensible a writer!"[66]

Furthermore, the *Journal*'s regard of non-verbal art is similarly mundane. Of "the design and execution" of a biblical 'virgin and child' study painted by Rubens then hanging at Hampton Court, which the Reverend Mr. Wesley had the privilege to view, the *Journal* notes, "The passions are surprisingly expressed, even in the children. But I could not see either the decency or common sense of painting them stark naked. Nothing can defend or excuse this; it is shockingly absurd, even an Indian being the judge. I allow, a man who paints thus may have a good *hand*, but certainly *cerebrum non habet*."[67] On a different occasion, of Benjamin West's "Raising of Lazarus," the evangelist complained that "the colours in general were far too glaring, such as neither Christ nor his followers ever wore. When will painters have common sense!"[68] Music was subject to similar complaints and, when necessary, censorship: the Reverend Mr. Wesley reports that he arrived at the Sunday service at Warrington, "just in time to put a stop to a bad custom that was creeping in there. A few men who had fine voices sang a psalm which no one knew, in a tune fit for an opera, wherein three, four or five persons sung different words at the same time! What an insult upon common sense! No *custom* can excuse such a mixture of profaneness and absurdity."[69] Such aggressive dismissals as these may be the reason modern scholars underrate the *Journal*'s literary quality: anyone expressing such prosaic judgment cannot possibly write well himself.

Yet the *Journal* is far from artless, and the Reverend Mr. Wesley himself far from dull. The *Journal* is especially clever at depicting its author as both a subject and object of empirical curiosity, for on every page it calculatingly performs surveillance of a figure surveying his surroundings. As a documentary text, the *Journal* enables readers to witness its subject's delight in seeing "natural curiosit[ies]," large: "the largest elm I ever saw; it was twenty-eight feet in circumference – six feet more than that which was some years ago in Magdalen College walks at Oxford"; and small: "...I saw one of the greatest curiosities in the vegetable creation, *the nightly Cereus*." The Reverend Mr. Wesley describes the British Museum as "an immense field...for curiosity to range in! One large room is filled from top to bottom with things brought from Tahiti; two or three more with things dug out of the ruins of Herculaneum! Seven huge apartments are filled with curious books, five with manuscripts, two with fossils of all sorts, and the rest with various animals!"[70] At the

same time, the *Journal* documents its subject's preoccupation with his own public presence as an object of others' curiosity, thereby enabling readers to witness the evangelist witnessing others witnessing him. Leaving his place in the choir at the end of Sunday services at Christ Church in Dublin one day in 1747, the Reverend Mr. Wesley discovered himself to be the focus of much interest: "I could not but observe the whole congregation drawn up in rows in the body of the church, from one end to the other. I walked through the midst of them. And they stared their fill. But scarce one spoke either good or bad." At another time, "When I landed at the quay in Hull it was covered with people, inquiring, 'Which is he? Which is he?' But they only stared and laughed, and we walked unmolested to Mr. A——-'s house."[71] Prior to 1760, it was remarkable when he wasn't a centre of attention. At Oxford in 1751, readers of the *Journal* find, "I was much surprised, wherever I went, at the civility of the people – gentlemen as well as others. There was no pointing, no calling of names, as once; no, nor even laughter. What can this mean?"[72]

The Reverend Mr. Wesley's notoriety as an object of public curiosity was not a condition the *Journal* merely documented, however. Rather, it was a condition the *Journal* deliberately constructed, especially in the early parts containing narratives of the evangelist's encounters with unruly crowds. The composition of these passages in particular was likely laboured over so that each effectively drew readers into a scenario so vivid that it might seem to be real, and positioned the protagonist as the passive focal point or calm centre of a storm of activity. At Pensford, for instance, on 19 March 1742, the *Journal* reports,

> The place where they desired me to preach was a little green spot near the town. But I had no sooner begun than a great company of rabble, hired (as we afterwards found) for that purpose, came furiously upon us, bringing a bull which they had been baiting, and now strove to drive in among the people. But the beast was wiser than his drivers, and continually ran, either on one side of us or the other, while we quietly sang praise to God and prayed for about an hour. The poor wretches, finding themselves disappointed, at length seized upon the bull, now weak and tired, after having been so long torn and beaten by both dogs and men, and by main strength partly dragged and partly thrust him in among the people. When they had forced their way to the little table on which I stood, they strove several times to throw it down, by thrusting the helpless beast against it, who of himself stirred no more than a log of wood. I once or twice put aside his head with my hand, that blood might not drop upon my clothes, intending to go on as soon as the hurry should be a little over. But the table falling down, some of our friends caught me in their arms and carried me right away on their shoulders; while the rabble wreaked their vengeance on the table, which they tore bit from bit. We went a little way off, where I finished my discourse without noise or interruption.[73]

The most fascinating detail in this narrative is the offhand notice of the preacher coolly shoving aside the bull's bloody head, to avoid soiling his attire. While it does nothing for the plot, this gesture subtly operates to enhance the Reverend Mr. Wes-

ley's public image, since it is the bit most likely to be repeated, with emphasis, in the oral recounting of this tale. As he appears in the pages of the *Journal*, the evangelist is a plain and ordinary man, the complete opposite of a witch or some other figure of monstrous proportions; yet in subtle ways his ordinariness is made to seem spectacular. Consider as a last example the *Journal*'s account of a near-fatal accident one afternoon leaving Bristol:

> I was riding by the wall through St. Nicholas Gate..., just as a cart turned short from St. Nicholas Street and came swiftly down the hill. There was just room to pass between the wheel of it and the wall, but that space was taken up by the carman. I called him to go back, or I must ride over him. But the man, as if deaf, walked straight forward. This obliged me to hold back my horse. In the meantime the shaft of the cart came full against his shoulder, with such a shock as to beat him to the ground. He shot me forward over his head, as an arrow out of a bow, where I lay, with arms and legs, I know not how, stretched out in a line, close to the wall. The wheel ran by, close to my side, but only dirtied my clothes. I found no flutter of spirit, but the same composure as if I had been sitting in my study. When the cart was gone I rose. Abundance of people gathered round, til a gentleman desired me to step into his shop. After cleaning myself a little I took horse again and was in Wick by the time appointed.[74]

The Reverend Mr. Wesley did not walk on water – at least the *Journal* failed to mention any such incident – but in the pages of the *Journal* he appeared artfully endowed with a superhuman deportment, which was capable of engrossing a disparate mass of anonymous readers.

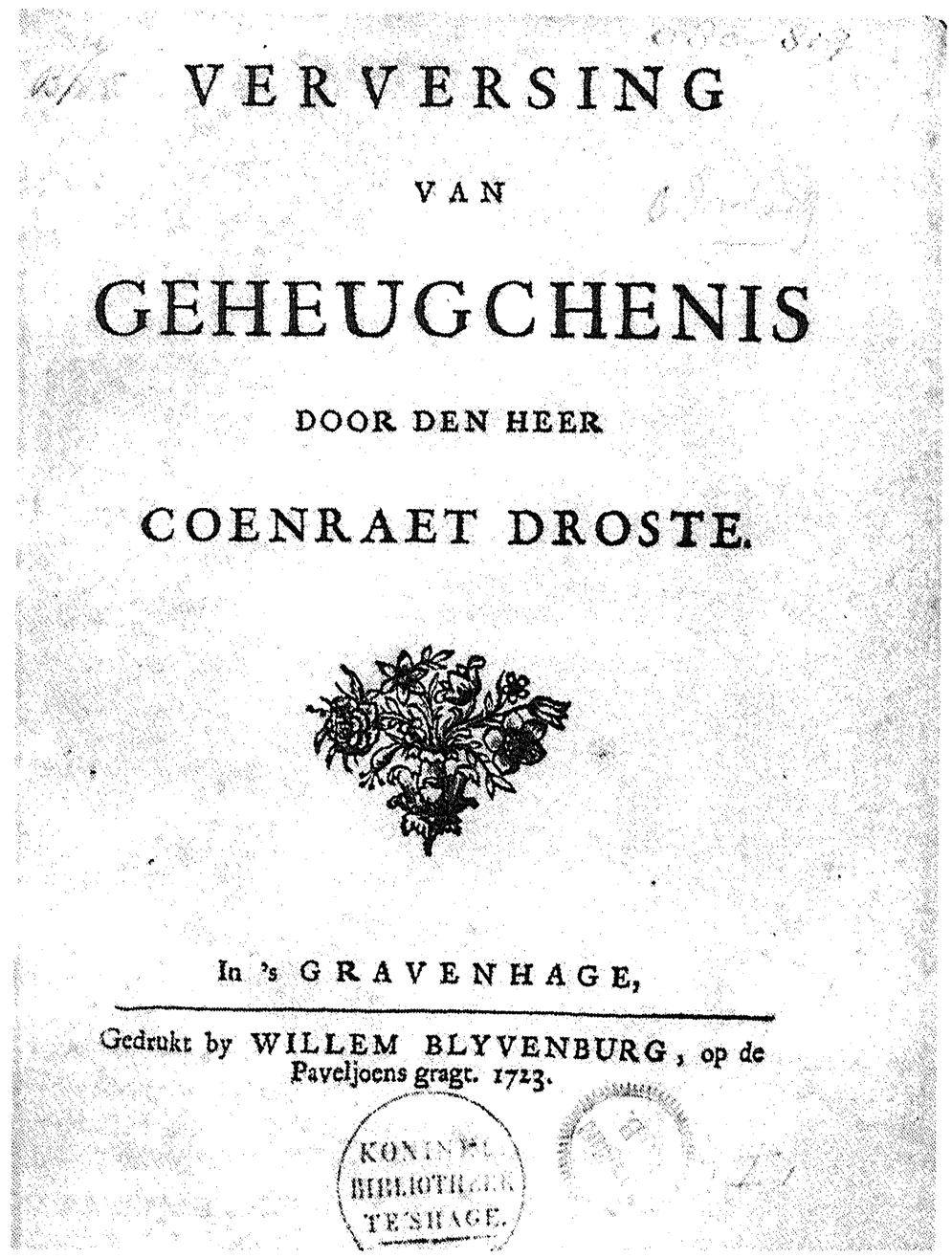
A CULTURE OF FANATIC CURIOSITY

By engrossing so many virtual followers of the Reverend Mr. Wesley so routinely, the *Journal* contributed immensely to the popular intelligence of Methodism, and of Wesley, in particular. By the time of his death in 1791, the evangelist had become a genuine celebrity. According to James Lackington, who was present at the scene, Wesley's corpse was viewed by forty or fifty thousand people as it lay on display in his chapel before interment. "The concourse of people was so great," Lackington wrote, "that many were glad to get out of the crowd without seeing him at all."[75] A copy of a Wesley sermon or print, distributed gratis at the funeral, would have to suffice. At the same time, Methodism had become a religious institution. The *Journal* was not alone responsible for these two developments, but it was essential nonetheless, and its function as a textual object cannot be grasped independent of its fundamental role as an innovative evangelical tool, the progeny of which we can observe in today's religious television.

Because the *Journal* was an integral component of Wesley's evangelical mission, it can also be held responsible along with the other aspects of the evangelist's ministry for Methodism's troubled social and cultural legacy, which became apparent in the decades immediately after Wesley's death, if not before. On the one hand, as

E.P. Thompson explains, Methodism "did offer to the uprooted and abandoned people of the Industrial Revolution some kind of community to replace the older community-patterns which were being displaced....Men and women felt themselves to have some *place* in an otherwise hostile world when within the Church."[76] More than an existential grounding, physical and metaphysical, the Methodist community also offered material resources, such as loans and education. Reading, in particular and not surprisingly, given Wesley's publishing activities and his motto that 'Reading Christians will be knowing Christians,' was strongly advocated and practiced by many Methodists. Lackington, for one, was encouraged and taught to read by the Methodist family to which he was once apprenticed.[77] It is evident that the *Journal* facilitated both the development of the Methodist community and the well-being of its members. On the other hand, there is also Methodism's pitiless ideology of work. Thompson has forcefully argued that Methodism contributed to the making of the English working class by helping to develop its "inner compulsion" to submit to the discipline of the industrial machine. It constituted, in Thompson's words, "a ritualized form of psychic masturbation": "Energies and emotions which were dangerous to the social order, or which were merely unproductive...were released in the harmless form of sporadic love-feasts, watch-nights, band-meetings or revivalist campaigns....These Sabbath orgasms of feeling made more possible the single-minded weekday direction of these energies to the consummation of productive labour."[78] Lackington corroborates this claim also; writing with some knowledge of Methodists and Methodism, "since I was many years in connexion with Mr. Wesley's people," he observed that, "the very best of the Methodists are like children, elated or depressed by mere trifles."[79]

If we are to be thorough in our assessment of the *Journal*'s social and cultural functions and effects, then we must also locate it among the several varieties of Methodist "masturbation" identified by Thompson. Even though it belongs to the early period of Methodism, when working-class consciousness was in an embryonic state, the *Journal* undoubtedly compromised the working class's revolutionary potential in maturity. For although it enabled the acquisition of reading skills for a generation or two, showing aspirants how and what to read, it taught them also to read only at the most literal level, leaving out the figurative dimension altogether. Thus it trained readers to focus exclusively on superficial, indeed often trivial details of experience. In this way, the *Journal* radically limited its readers' perspective of the world, even as it fuelled their curiosity about it. The *Journal* functioned therefore as a hegemonic filtering device. It naturalized a certain way of seeing that, among other things, made exploitative capitalist social and economic relations appear normal and self-evident. The historian C. John Sommerville has recently drawn attention to the negative effects of the estrangement and hyperbolic distortion of mundane events caused by an inundation of daily periodical information in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries in England.[80] Although it was not a daily, in this respect Wesley's *Journal* contributed to the social and cultural transforma-


VERVERSING

VAN

GEHEUGCHENIS

DOOR DEN HEER

COENRAET DROSTE.

In 's GRAVENHAGE,

Gedrukt by WILLEM BLYVENBURG, op de Paveljoens gragt. 1723.

Publication of an autobiography during the lifetime of the author was exceptional in the eighteenth century. The Dutch author Coenraet Droste (1642-1734) was successful with his Overblijfsels van geheughenis *published in 1723 and again in 1728 (with new title), and reedited by R. Fruin in 1879). (Koninklijke Biblotheek, The Hague).*

tion Sommerville describes. Moreover, ironically, the *Journal* trivialized the persona of the man whom Lackington recognized as "father of the Methodists," the Reverend Mr. Wesley himself. Without meaning to, Wesley's publication cultivated its readers' preoccupation with such trifling matters as Wesley's diet, his attire, the colour and texture of his hair, his relations with women, and the precise amount of his annual income and charity (this last, an obsessive concern of Lackington's). Such fanatic interest is apparent not only in Lackington's incessant anecdotal chatter about Wesley and Methodism in his own life story, but also in the description of Wesley composed by the notorious poet-printseller and madam to the literary lights of London and Dublin, Laetitia Pilkington, who was herself a colossal celebrity at the time of her brief but noteworthy encounter with the evangelist.

In a passage laden with Pilkington's specialty, innuendo and double entendre, she described how at a London print-shop one day she observed "a formal stiff fellow in black, with his own lank hair" who turned out, upon inquiry, to be "the great Dr. W-s-y." The proprietor of the shop introduced the two celebrities, and invited both to dinner. "As my curiosity was up," Pilkington confided, "I consented to the invitation; but tho' I started every subject that could possibly seduce him into general conversation, yet I could not, for the soul of me, wrench a sentence from him, more than it would

Portrait of Laetitia Pilkington, from Iris Barry, ed., Memoirs of Mrs Letitia Pilkington 1712-1750 written by herself (London, 1928). (Koninklijke Bibliotheek, The Hague).

give him all imaginable pleasure if he could prevail on me to go and hear him preach." To which she answered that "...it would be a hard matter now to make a Methodist of me." Wesley then requested her "to let me wait on you at your house," where "we will then, over a dish of tea, converse of this matter." Pilkington invited Wesley to breakfast the next morning, where he appeared, at eight, "a sprightly young fellow," in stark contrast to his "flatness" of the day before. The two exchanged confidences that sufficiently informed readers – those who followed the news of (and by) these two public figures – would understand as severely compromising to Wesley's sexual and evangelical sanctity, after which, according to Pilkington, Wesley "talked of books, plays, painting, statuary; and in short every subject that could convince me he was a man of taste and true breeding....I never received more satisfaction from the discourse of any divine in my life, nor ever knew one who was half so honest and ingenious. Upon the whole...I saw no difference between this prophet and other gentlemen, but that he drank for breakfast milk and warm water, instead of tea and milk."[81] For his part, the Reverend Mr. Wesley offered a rather different, in many respects inverted, report of these events in the *Journal*:

> Thur. 12 [April 1750] I breakfasted with one of the society and found she had a lodger I little thought of. It was the famous Mrs. Pilkington, who soon made an excuse for following me upstairs. I talked with her seriously for about an hour. We then sung, 'Happy Magdalene'. She appeared to be extremely struck. How long the impression may last, God knows.[82]

Here we have two versions of a kind of celebrity "kiss-and-tell," each of which relies for its effect on public intelligence of the subjects concerned. From "the famous Mrs. Pilkington" we obtain a rare view of the effect produced on the popular imagination by news of "the great Dr. W-s-y": she was "struck" enough to gossip about him, producing with a verbal sleight of hand all the significant details suggested by their conspicuous absence in the evangelist's curiously impersonal account of events. Pilkington's finely embroidered tale I think more or less accurately conveys the tenor of popular interest in the evangelist during his height of fame: a frivolous yet keen scrutiny of the sort reserved for the private lives of personalities "known" at a distance – celebrated movie stars, supermodels, musicians, athletes, politicians, and even some academics today.

Despite – or perhaps because of – his best journalistic efforts to maintain an objective perspective, Wesley laid the groundwork of the very sort of "monstrous fiction" he deplored: his public image, "the Reverend Mr. Wesley." In its tantalizingly terse presentation of the facts pertaining to its eponymous persona, the *Journal* helped to create and sustain a virtual social body of compliant consumers of trivial information, easily distracted and aroused by the slightest bit of "news."

NOTES

1 According to the editors of *Rolling Stone* magazine, what the ex-Beatle actually said was, "Kids are more influenced by us than Jesus." See *Loose Talk: The Book of Quotes from the Pages of* Rolling Stone *Magazine*, compiled by Linda Botts (New York, 1980), 71. But cf. the Lennon capsule biography on the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame website (http://www.rockhall.com/exhibitions/featured.asp?id=954), which cites a London *Evening Standard* interview of March 1, 1966, reporting Lennon's statement that the Beatles are "more popular than Jesus now."

2 Wesley is quoted in Frank Cumbers, *The Book Room: The Story of the Methodist Publishing House and Epworth Press* (London, 1956), 78; see the obituary of Wesley in *The Gentleman's Magazine*, March 1791, reprinted in Richard P. Heitzenrater, *The Elusive Mr. Wesley*, 2 vols. (Nashville, 1984), II, 151-6.

3 For attempts to estimate Wesley's income and charity, see L. Tyerman, *The Life and Times of John Wesley*, 3 vols. (New York, 1872), III, 615-16.

4 My thinking is influenced by Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, revised and expanded edition (London and New York, 1991), especially ch. 2; and S. Paige Baty, *American Monroe: The Making of a Body Politic* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1995), in particular 3-27; see also Anthony P. Cohen, *The Symbolic Construction of Community* (London, 1985).

5 Frank Baker, "The Birth of John Wesley's Journal," *Methodist History* 8 (1970), 32, 25; *idem.*, "Introduction," in *John Wesley: Contemporary Perspectives*, John Stacey, ed. (London, 1988), 5.

6 W. Reginald Ward, "Introduction," *The Works of John Wesley*, vol. 18, *Journals and Diaries I (1735-38)*, *idem.* and Richard P. Heitzenrater, eds. (Nashville, TN, 1988), 83ff.

7 George Lawton, *John Wesley's English: A Study of His Literary Style* (London, 1962), 257, 260.

8 These views are quoted in A. Skevington Wood, "Wesley as a Writer," in *John Wesley*, Stacey, ed., 193-95.

9 *The Journal of John Wesley: A Selection*, Elizabeth Jay, ed. and intro. (Oxford, 1987), xi, xv.

10 Besides the negative critical reception, attention to the *Journal* for nearly the entire twentieth century was discouraged by the cumbersome "corrected" standard modern edition produced by Nehemiah Curnock (*The Journal of John Wesley*, 8 vols., London, 1909-16), which attempted to interpolate the "extracts" published by Wesley with surviving manuscript documents, including diaries and letters, and exhaustive scholarly annotations. Jay rightly remarks that this edition is "inordinately complicated to follow" (Oxford paper edn., xxix). Worse, it fabricates a text that has no historical or literary basis, since the printed *Journal*, the diaries, the unpublished letters, and other materials Curnock wove together to make his text were each originally discrete, autonomous texts whose form and meaning depends in part on their physical separation from each other. In the end, the anxiety of compounding any original "error" of Wesley's through misreading Curnock's muddle probably discouraged all but the most determined

readers. Certainly very few were likely to have sought out Curnock's edition for entertainment. This unfortunate situation is being changed by the preparation of a new text for scholars by the aforecited (in note 6 above) W. Reginald Ward and Richard P. Heitzenrater, as part of the Abingdon Press's Bicentennial Edition of the works of John Wesley. To date, 19 of the total 21 parts of the published *Journal* are in print, with related manuscript materials included as appendices. See *The Works of John Wesley*, Albert C. Outler, *et al.*, eds., vols. 18-23 (Nashville, TN, 1988-95), hereafter cited as *Works*. In his introduction to the *Journal*, Ward blames Curnock for adopting "the very worst solution" to his editorial problem, see *Works* 18, 87.

11 Isabel Rivers, "Dissenting and Methodist Books of Practical Divinity," in *Books and Their Readers in Eighteenth-Century England*, Isabel Rivers, ed. (Leicester, 1982), 152.

12 See Frederick Dreyer, "Faith and Experience in the Thought of John Wesley," *The American Historical Review* 88 (1983), 12-30. For a survey of the extensive range of Wesley's publications, from his own pen and the pens of others, see Richard Green, *The Works of John and Charles Wesley: A Bibliography*, second edition, revised (London, 1906).

13 Isabel Rivers, *Reason, Grace, and Sentiment: A Study of the Language of Religion and Ethics in England, 1660-1780, volume 1, Whichcote to Wesley* (Cambridge, 1991), ch. 5.

14 Rivers, *Reason, Grace, and Sentiment*, 219-20.

15 Lawton, *John Wesley's English*, 260.

16 Ward, "Introduction," *Works* 18, 93 n. 77, quotes contemporaries to the effect that the *Journal*'s "price is not considerable," yet it debarred some would-be purchasers of parts.

17 For more on the logistics of the serial book phenomenon in eighteenth-century England, see R.M. Wiles, *Serial Publication in England Before 1750* (Cambridge, 1957).

18 The first editions of each part of the series to date were however reprinted together as part of Wesley's serially-published first collected *Works* (1771-74), as volumes xxvi to xxxii-but the printer accidentally omitted *Journal* 8. Subsequent early editions of the *Works* (1808 and 1828) included complete runs of the entire *Journal* series, with minor editorial omissions and printing mistakes.

19 "Introduction," *Works* 18, 45-6, passim.

20 For a classic statement of this scholarship, see Georges Gusdorf, "Conditions and Limits of Autobiography," James Olney, trans., in *Autobiography: Essays Theoretical and Critical*, James Olney, ed. (Princeton, 1980), 24-48.

21 For commentaries on these works see Lynda M. Thompson, *The 'Scandalous Memoirists': Constantia Phillips, Laetitia Pilkington and the Shame of "Publick Fame'* (Manchester and New York, 2000); Robert Folkenflik, "Gender, Genre, and Theatricality in the Autobiography of Charlotte Charke," in *Representations of the Self from the Renaissance to Romanticism*, Patrick Coleman, Jayne Lewis, and Jill Kowalik, eds. (Cambridge, 2000), 97-116; Michael Mascuch, *Origins of the Individualist Self: Autobiography and Self-Identity in England, 1591-1791* (Cambridge, 1997), ch. 7; Felicity Nussbaum, *The Autobiographical Subject: Gender and Ideology in Eighteenth-Century England* (Baltimore and London, 1989), ch. 8.

22 Frederick Dreyer, "'A Religious Society under Heaven': John Wesley and the Identity of Methodism," *Journal of British Studies* 25 (1986), 65-6.

23 For this context, see Peter Clark, *British Clubs and Societies 1580-1800: The Origins of an Associational World* (Oxford, 2000).

24 For an overview of their origins and functions, see W.M. Jacob, *Lay People and Religion in the Early Eighteenth Century* (Cambridge, 1996), 76-92; and also Clark, *British Clubs and Societies*, 64-7. For their connection to the rise of Methodism, see John Walsh, "Religious Societies: Methodist and Evangelical, 1738-1800," in *Voluntary Religion*, W.J. Shiels and Diana Wood, eds., *Studies in Church History* 23 (Oxford, 1986), 279-302.

25 Samuel Wesley, *A Sermon Concerning Reformation of Manners* (London, 1698); Jacob, *Lay People and Religion*, 81-2; Walsh, "Religious Societies," 281.

26 Walsh, "Religious Societies," 284; Jacob, *Lay People and Religion*, 91-2; Clark, *British Clubs and Societies*, 75.

27 Even the *Philosophical Transactions* was irregular before 1693. It and many of its mostly short-lived imitators such as John Houghton's *A Collection for Improvement of Husbandry* (1692-1703), John Dunton's parody *Athenian Mercury* (1691-97), and his bizarre *Night-Walker* (1696-97), which was addressed to and purported to describe the activities of members of the societies for the reformation of manners, each relied heavily on readers' correspondence, often composed in first-person discourse, making it therefore occasionally quasi-autobiographical. For a large list of such publications, see Adrian Johns, *The Nature of the Book: Print and Knowledge in the Making* (Chicago and London, 1998), 536-7. For more on the social and cultural functions and effects of the *Philosophical Transactions*, see Marie Boas Hall, "Oldenburg, the *Philosophical Transactions*, and Technology," in *The Uses of Science in the Age of Newton*, John G. Burke, ed. (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1983), 21-47, and Michael Hunter, *Science and Society in Restoration Eng-*

land (Cambridge, 1981), ch. 3; for Houghton's *Collection*, see Natasha Glaisyer, "Readers, Correspondents and Communities: John Houghton's *A Collection for Improvement of Husbandry and Trade* (1692-1703)," in *Communities in Early Modern England: Networks, Place, Rhetoric*, Alexandra Shepard and P. J. Withington, eds. (Manchester and New York, 2000), 235-51; for the *Athenian Mercury*, see Gilbert D. McEwen, *The Oracle of the Coffee House: John Dunton's Athenian Mercury* (San Marino, 1972); for the *Night-Walker*, see Mascuch, *Origins of the Individualist Self*, 149-61.

28 The handwritten minute-books of a provincial club that emulated the Royal Society offer a rare view of how such a group's records might look. See *The Minute-Books of the Spalding Gentleman's Society 1712-1755*, Dorothy M. Owen, ed., with S.W. Woodward, *Publications of the Lincoln Record Society* 73 (Fakenham, 1981).

29 Clark, *British Clubs and Societies*, 173-4.

30 C. John Sommerville, *The News Revolution in England: Cultural Dynamics of Daily Information* (New York, 1996), 149.

31 Jacob, *Lay People and Religion*, 83.

32 Susan O'Brien, "A Transatlantic Community of Saints: The Great Awakening and the First Evangelical network, 1735-1755," *American Historical Review* 91 (1986), 811-32.

33 Ibid., 825-7.

34 Ibid., 826-7; see also Susan Durden [O'Brien], "A Study of the First Evangelical Magazines, 1740-48," *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 27 (1976), 255-75; Frank Lambert, *"Pedlar In Divinity": George Whitefield and the Transatlantic Revivals, 1737-1740* (Princeton, 1996), 69-75.

35 For examples, see Helen C. White, *Tudor Books of Saints and Martyrs* (Madison, 1963); and William Haller, *Foxe's Book of Martyrs and the Elect Nation* (London, 1963).

36 See Patrick Collinson, "'A Magazine of Religious Patterns': An Erasmian Topic Transposed in English Protestantism," in *Renaissance and Renewal in Christian History*, Derek Baker, ed., *Studies in Church History* 13 (Oxford, 1977), 223-49; and Michael Mascuch, "The 'Mirror' of the Other: Self-Reflexivity and Self-Identity in Early Modern Religious Biography," in *Von der dargestellten Person zum erinnerten Ich: Europäische Selbstzeugnisse als historische Quellen*, Kaspar von Greyerz, Hans Medick, and Patrice Veit, eds. (Köln, 2001), 55-75.

37 Isabel Rivers, "'Strangers and Pilgrims': Sources and Patterns of Methodist Narrative," in *Augustan Worlds*, J.C. Hilson, M.M.B. Jones, and J.R. Watson, eds. (London, 1978), 189-203; Ian Green, *Print and Protestantism in Early Modern England* (Oxford, 2000), 370-1.

38 Furthermore, far-flung newspaper reporters are still called "correspondents," while all news writers are "journalists."

39 *George Whitefield's Journals*, William V. Davis, ed. (1905; reprinted, Gainesville, FL, 1969), 148.

40 Lambert, *"Pedlar in Divinity"*, 79, 80, 81. For a critical response to Lambert's contextualization of Whitefield's activity in consumer culture, see Susan O'Brien, "Eighteenth-Century Publishing Networks in the First Years of Transatlantic Evangelicalism," in *Evangelicalism: Comparative Studies of Popular Protestantism in North America, the British Isles, and Beyond,1700-1900*, Mark A. Noll, David W. Bebbington, and George A. Rawlyk, eds. (New York and Oxford, 1994), 38-57.

41 For an appreciation of Whitefield's *Journal* in the context of the circulation of evangelical revival narratives, see Frank Lambert, *Inventing the "Great Awakening"* (Princeton, 1999), esp. chs. 3, 4, & 5.

42 Baker, "Birth of John Wesley's Journal," 26-7.

43 Lambert, *Inventing the "Great Awakening,"* 98.

44 Whitefield revised, corrected, and abridged his seven *Journal* parts and published them together with two parallel autobiographical pamphlets, his *Short Account of God's Dealings with the Reverend Mr. George Whitefield...from His Infancy to the Time of His Entering into Holy Orders* (1740) and his *A Further Account of God's Dealings with the Reverend Mr. George Whitefield, from the Time of His Ordination to His Embarking for Georgia* (1747), in 1756 under the title, *The First Two Parts of His Life, with His Journals, Revised, Corrected and Abridged, by George Whitefield.* Whitefield died in 1770.

45 Richard P. Heitzenrater, "Wesley and His Diary," in *John Wesley*, Stacey, ed., 17.

46 *Works* 19, 3.

47 For an explication of the disapproving popular response to Methodism, see John Walsh, "Methodism and the Mob in the Eighteenth Century," in *Popular Belief and Practice*, G.J. Cuming and Derek Baker, eds., *Studies in Church History* 8 (Cambridge, 1972), 213-27.

48 *Fogg's Weekly Journal*, 9 December 1732. A portion of the huge literature attacking Methodists and Methodism in Wesley's lifetime is surveyed in Albert M. Lyles, *Methodism Mocked:The Satiric Reaction to Methodism in the Eighteenth Century* (London, 1960).

49 Green, *John and Charles Wesley: A Bibliography*, sub. item 224, *Journal* 6.

50 For a discussion of this function with specific reference to Methodism, see Colleen McDannell, *Material Christianity: Religion and Popular Culture in America* (New Haven and London, 1995), 43-5.

51 Roger Lee, *Wesleyana and Methodist Pottery: A Short Guide* (London, 1988), 11, 12, 24, 26, passim. On Wedgwood's commercial acumen, see Neil McKendrick, "Josiah Wedgwood and the Commercialization of the Potteries," in *The Birth of a Consumer Society:The Commercialization of Eighteenth-Century England*, Neil McKendrick, John Brewer, and J.H. Plumb (London, 1983), 100-45.
52 Timothy Clayton, *The English Print 1688-1802* (New Haven and London, 1997), 60.
53 John Whitehead, *A Discourse Delivered at the New Chapel in the City-Road...at the Funeral of John Wesley* (London, 1971); Henry Moore, *A Sermon Preached in Bristol, On the Occasion of the Death of John Wesley* (Bristol, 1791); E. R., *An Authentic Narrative of the Circumstances Relative to the Departure of the Late Rev. John Wesley* (Bristol, 1791); John Hampson, *Memoirs of John Wesley*, 3 vols. (London, 1791); Thomas Coke & Henry Moore, *The Life of the Rev. John Wesley, A.M.: Including an Account of the Great Revival of Religion in Europe and America, of which He was the First and Chief Instrument* (London, 1792); John Whitehead, *Life of John Wesley*, 2 vols. (London, 1793 & 1796), *Original Letters of John Wesley*, J. Priestley, ed. (Birmingham, 1791); James Lackington, *Memoirs*, second edition (1792; reprinted, London, 1830), 178.
54 *Letters of John Wesley*, John Telford, ed., 8 vols. (London, 1931), VIII, 6.
55 *Works* 22, 396-7.
56 Ibid., 307-8.
57 Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, 26.
58 *Works* 22, 387.
59 Ibid., 380-1.
60 The distance created by Wesley's prose is further complicated by the fact that the account appears in an entry dated July 10-nearly two and a half months after the events occurred. It seems the passive voice authorizes Wesley to know and describe the earthquake as if he himself witnessed it, though he is likely describing intelligence available in his friend the Methodist preacher John Fletcher's *A Dreadful Phenomenon Described and Improved. Bering a Particular Account of the Sudden Stoppage of the River Severn, and of the Terrible Desolation that Happened...on Thursday Morning May the 27th*, 1773 (Shrewsbury, 1773) or the account in the *Gentleman's Magazine* 43 (1773), 281-2. The failure to clarify his position and cite sources is further evidence of Wesley's belief in the transparent and universal nature of fact.
61 *Works* 20, 77; see also a similar encounter, this time with a drunk, in *Works* 19, 309.
62 *Works* 20, 324, with reference to a description of a sea-serpent.
63 *Works* 22, 117, quoting Joseph Addison's *Cato*; *Works* 20, 441.
64 *Works* 22, 306.
65 *Works* 23, 297.
66 Ibid., 393.
67 *Works* 22, 305-6.
68 *Works* 23, 225.
69 Ibid., 198; for the basis of Wesley's response to harmony, see *Works* 22, 161-2.
70 *Works* 22, 392; *Works* 23, 182, 190. Wesley was a precise judge of museums, too: cf. the account his uninspiring visit to James Cox's "celebrated" museum, in *Works* 22, 361.
71 *Works* 20, 189-90, 419; see also *Works* 19, 63-5.
72 *Works* 20, 377.
73 *Works* 19, 257.
74 *Works* 20, 153.
75 Lackington, *Memoirs*, 178.
76 E.P. Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class*, paper edition (New York, 1966), 379.
77 Lackington, *Memoirs*, 56-7, 64ff.
78 Thompson, *Making*, 368-9.
79 Lackington, *Memoirs*, 195, 63.
80 Sommerville, *News Revolution*, passim.
81 This passage was part of an undated "letter" by Pilkington to Lord Kingsborough. Whether she intended it to be published as part of her serial *Memoirs* is uncertain, since she died suddenly four months after the meeting with Wesley. Pilkington's son came into possession of his mother's literary property after her decease and published her letter as part of his own memoirs, in an obvious attempt to exploit Pilkington's and Wesley's celebrity. See John Carteret Pilkington, *The Real Story of John Carteret Pilkington. Written By Himself* (London, 1760), 260-3.
82 *Works* 20, 330-1.