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THE POPULAR IMAGES OF JOHN BROWN AND THOMAS “STONEWALL” JACKSON

by

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B.S., Slippery Rock University of Pennsylvania, 2003

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements  
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## ABSTRACT

This study examines the evolution of the popular images of John Brown and Thomas “Stonewall” Jackson. It begins by analyzing the historiography of each man. The second and third chapters are biographies of each man. The fourth, fifth, and sixth chapters examine the popular images of the two men in print media, visual media, and monuments. This thesis concludes with appendices which contain reproductions of songs, photographs, and paintings referred to in the chapters.

This study finds that the myth of the Lost Cause has kept Thomas Jackson’s popular image consistently positive and heroic since his death in 1863. At the same time, this myth has contributed to an ever-changing image of Brown, though other issues, such as race and terrorism, have played significant roles as well. Brown has at various times been considered a madman, a saint, and merely a product of his times. Because the Lost Cause continues to pervade popular memory of the Civil War, Jackson’s image is unlikely to change quickly. Because race and the fear of terrorism continue to pervade American society, Brown’s image is likely to remain controversial.

To my mother, *Patricia R. Minner*, for always believing in me even when I wanted to stop believing in myself.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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## CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

David S. Reynolds phrased it best when he said that the debate over the popular images of Civil War-era figures goes deeper than the men themselves. Rather, he observes, the debate “involves competing interpretations of the Civil War.”<sup>1</sup> Reynolds was referring to John Brown, but his quote holds true for other figures, including Thomas “Stonewall” Jackson. As this study shows, the images of John Brown and Thomas Jackson are shaped not only by competing interpretations of the Civil War, but also by Americans’ attempts to understand their world. Consequently, these emotion-charged debates have led to the mythologizing of Brown and Jackson as both their supporters and their detractors jockey for acceptance of their particular point of view. This study examines the development of the popular images of John Brown and Thomas Jackson, including how some of the myths began, how the images evolved, and where the debate currently stands regarding each man.

I came to this topic by accident. For a graduate course on the Civil War that I took in the fall of 2004, I chose to complete a historiography of John Brown; having grown up in Kansas, I have always been fascinated by Brown. While I was researching the historiography, I realized how much Brown had in common with another famous Civil War figure, Thomas “Stonewall” Jackson. Both men were a bit tall for the nineteenth century; John Brown was five foot nine, and Thomas Jackson was about six feet. Both of their mothers died by the time they reached the age of eight. Both were Calvinists who at some point in their lives considered entering the ministry, and both believed that God had sanctioned their militant actions. To top it all off, both were present at John Brown’s execution: Brown as the obvious victim, and Jackson as the commander

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<sup>1</sup> David S. Reynolds, *John Brown, Abolitionist: The Man Who Killed Slavery, Sparked the Civil War, and Seeded Civil Rights* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2005), 138.



of a contingent of Virginia Military Institute cadets assigned to keep order. But what struck me even more than the similarities between two men from opposing sides were the contradictory ways in which the two men currently are remembered. An abolitionist, John Brown fought to end slavery, which most Americans today would agree was an evil institution. Thomas Jackson, on the other hand, fought on behalf of the South, which wanted to keep slavery. Most Americans today regard this view as wrong. However, it seemed to me that these same Americans view John Brown as a crazy fanatic and wistfully revere Stonewall Jackson. In undertaking this thesis, I set out to discover how and why these contradictory images came to fruition.

This study concludes that while John Brown's image has continually evolved since his execution in 1859, Thomas Jackson's image has been fairly consistent since his death in 1863. Immediately after John Brown's 1859 attack on the federal arsenal at Harpers Ferry, detractors labeled him a madman, a view which persisted in the scholarly debate until the middle of the twentieth century and still has a strong hold in popular memory, though some Northerners did hold him in high regard as a martyr for black freedom. This argument is obfuscated, however, by the ambiguous definition of the term "insanity." In the nineteenth century, the term described any behavior or condition that was either atypical or could not be otherwise medically explained. As a result, "insanity" included conditions such as premenstrual syndrome, bipolar disorder, and epilepsy. Today, only the legal community defines the term; the psychological and psychiatric communities abandoned it decades ago in favor of specific diagnoses. Therefore, this study will use the term "insanity" only in the current legal sense, which applies only to persons who at the time of committing a crime were unable, due to a severe mental defect or disease, to understand the nature, quality, and consequences of their wrongdoing. By this definition, Brown was not insane because, as this study will show, he was fully aware of what he was doing and the results

he hoped to get from both the Pottawatomie Massacre and the raid on Harpers Ferry. Partly as a result of this change in definition, historians in the last thirty-five years have viewed Brown in a more moderate light as a complex product of the tumultuous times in which he lived. Thomas Jackson, meanwhile, has been consistently revered by Americans both North and South.

Why?

The answer lies partly in the myth of the Lost Cause. This myth, created by Confederates Jubal Early and Jefferson Davis and perpetuated by groups of southerners ever since, claims that the South was a noble culture that stood up to the aggressive, domineering North despite insurmountable odds. It denies slavery as a cause of the war and claims that African Americans were insignificant to the history of the glorious Old South. Abolitionists who advocated an end to slavery, and John Brown, who believed in the humanity of blacks and advocated equality with whites, sat in direct opposition to this mindset, making it much easier for detractors to argue that John Brown *must* have been a fanatical madman.

The Lost Cause also cemented Jackson's illustrious reputation. Drawing on the general's best qualities and glossing over his faults, the Lost Cause paints a picture of a tragic hero cut down in his prime. A hero, who given the chance, might have prevented the Confederacy's defeat. Despite the North's opposition to the structure of the antebellum South, namely slavery, the Lost Cause, and consequently, the positive view of Jackson, flourished on both sides of the Mason-Dixon Line. The South's organization in memorializing the war is greatly responsible for the Lost Cause's success in the North. Shortly after the end of the war, white southern women organized Ladies' Memorial Associations to commemorate the Confederate dead. This mission, which will be discussed in more detail in Chapter Seven, transformed into one of rewriting history to show the South in a positive light. The North had no counterpart for these

organizations, and the southern women were so good at accomplishing their mission that the Lost Cause mythology successfully infused the North as well. The period of reconciliation, which is discussed in Chapter Two, also played a key role in making the Lost Cause palatable to the North. During this period, Americans emphasized the reunification of the country and ignored the divisive causes of the war. In these ways, the South's view of the war survived nearly uncontested in the North and helped to shape John Brown's image.

Though the Lost Cause is more or less solely responsible for Jackson's image, other factors have contributed to shape John Brown's image. Apart from opposing many tenets of the Lost Cause, Brown also embodies the issues of race and terrorism. Racial issues in the United States obviously did not end with the Civil War. Since Brown's execution, and especially during the Civil Rights Movement of the 1960s, Americans have continued to struggle with race and its place and meaning in American society. John Brown reminds us of the lengths some people will go to in order to defend their views of race. Sometimes dubbed the "father of American terrorism," Brown also raises questions of the morality of vigilante justice and terrorism, even if committed in the name of a supposedly "good" cause. This essay uses Merriam-Webster's definition of terrorism to mean "the systematic use of terror, especially as a means of coercion." "Terror" is defined as "violent or destructive acts committed by groups in order to intimidate a population or government into granting their demands."<sup>2</sup> By these definitions, Brown's raid was an act of terrorism, committed to coerce slaveholders into setting their slaves free. Recent acts of terrorism around the world, though on a greater scale than Brown's raid, cause Americans to revisit – and sometimes reinterpret – Brown's image.

Another influence on Jackson's and Brown's images is that one man wore a military uniform and the other did not. Jackson's being a soldier, albeit it for the "wrong" side, makes

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<sup>2</sup> Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary, <<http://www.merriamwebster.com>>.

him easier to commemorate than Brown. Especially during the period of reconciliation, one could make the argument that “they were all brave men,” regardless of which side a soldier fought for. Brown, on the other hand, was a vigilante. Even for people who agreed with his cause, Brown was difficult to commemorate because he took the law into his own hands instead of operating through legal channels. Finally, Jackson’s home state asked him for his service, and he answered the call. John Brown, however, took action without being asked to do so. Americans can respect Jackson for nobly accepting his home state’s request for his service. But in the fiercely independent culture of the United States, Brown elicits a disdainful “Who asked you?” response because no one explicitly asked for his help.

This study begins with a historiographical examination of selected scholarly works regarding John Brown and Thomas Jackson. Instead of undertaking the impossible task of including every work ever published on the two men, I have included representative works from each stage of each man’s image development. For this reason, Chapter Two examines more works on Brown than on Jackson. Because Jackson’s image has been fairly consistent, many scholarly works on him reach similar conclusions; therefore, including additional works on Jackson would have been redundant. Contrary to Jackson’s image, Brown’s image has not solidified since his death, so I included works that represent each view of this ongoing debate.

Chapters three and four offer biographies of Brown and Jackson, respectively. These chapters are lengthy, but I felt it was important to provide a thorough examination of the lives of each man so the reader can better understand the image analyses in the later chapters. Much of each man’s image relies on nuances and idiosyncrasies, so a thorough examination was necessary. Because these chapters are purely biographical, and historians have already so

thoroughly researched the lives of Brown and Jackson, I rely almost entirely on secondary sources in these chapters.

In Chapter Five, I discuss images found in print media, including poems, songs, testimonies written by family and friends of each man, and Brown's and Jackson's personal writings. Of especial importance are Brown's prison letters, which he used to create a kind of Lost Cause myth for himself, and Thomas Jackson's book of maxims, which his admirers use as proof of his outstanding morality. Chapter Six examines visual images of Brown and Jackson, including photographs, paintings, and films. Finally, in Chapter Seven, I examine monuments and memorials erected to each man, including Stone Mountain in Georgia, Monument Avenue in Virginia, and statues of Brown in Kansas.

Through its examination of these images, this thesis suggests that the popular images of these men often reveal more about the time period in which the images were created than they do about the men themselves. John Brown especially embodies this concept. The leader of a doomed military action supposedly intended to set men free, Brown strikes a chord with many modern Americans; major biographies of Brown appeared at times of other doomed military actions supposedly intended to set men free, such as Stephen Oates's *To Purge This Land With Blood*, written during the Vietnam War, and David S. Reynolds's *John Brown, Abolitionist*, written during the recent conflict in Iraq. Sometimes dubbed "The Father of American Terrorism," Brown gained particular relevance again after the September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks on the American East Coast. It appears that Americans turn to studying John Brown when they are attempting to make sense of violence in their own lives. Likewise, Americans turn to heroes to renew their hope, and the popular image of Thomas Jackson fits this description nicely. Dying on the heels of his greatest military victory, Thomas Jackson is the quintessential

tragic hero, who fought and died for his homeland, just as good a soldier should. At the same time, efforts to memorialize Jackson have often been met with criticism because of the racist society he was helping to preserve. These criticisms remind us that many of the causes of the Civil War are still with us.

Because Brown and Jackson embody many of the issues with which Americans continue to struggle, they have remained important to us despite the passage of time. Regardless of how their popular images came to be, they continue to inspire debate, criticism, and admiration, while at the same time revealing to us much about ourselves.

## CHAPTER TWO: HISTORIOGRAPHY

The historiographies of John Brown and Thomas Jackson reveal the major debates regarding the perceptions of the two men. The evolution of Brown's image began at his trial on October 27, 1859. During the trial, his lawyers produced several documents that would lay the groundwork for future debate of Brown's character. Brown's attorney Lawson Botts introduced a telegram from A.H. Lewis of Akron, Ohio, who claimed he had observed Brown and his family as they lived in the Akron area for many years. Lewis claimed that insanity was hereditary in the Brown family and that one of Brown's maternal aunts had died of it. He also claimed that a daughter of that aunt had been living in a lunatic asylum for the past two years, a son and daughter of a maternal uncle had also been in an asylum, and another son of that uncle was currently insane and "under close restraint." Botts added that Brown had admitted instances of insanity on his mother's side but denied that anyone from his father's side had been afflicted. Brown also had confessed that his first wife had exhibited symptoms, as had two of their sons, Frederick and John Jr.<sup>3</sup>

Most historians agree that Botts did not believe that Brown truly suffered from mental illness; rather, he was trying to save Brown's life by having him declared insane and placed in an asylum. Brown himself vehemently denied insanity. At his trial, he said,

I look upon it [the insanity plea] as a miserable artifice and pretext of those who ought to take a different course in regard to me... Insane persons, so as my experience goes, have but little ability to judge their own sanity; and if I am insane, of course I should think I know more than the rest of

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<sup>3</sup> Stephen B. Oates, *To Purge This Land with Blood: A Biography of John Brown* (New York: Harper and Row, 1970), 324.

the world. But I do not think so. I am perfectly unconscious of insanity, and I reject, so far as I am capable, any attempt to interfere in my behalf on that score.<sup>4</sup>

After this, the question of insanity never again arose at the trial.

During the month before Brown was hanged, however, his lawyers made a last, desperate attempt to save his life. They hoped that if they showed Virginia Governor Wise proof of Brown's insanity, then the governor would commit Brown to an asylum rather than execute him. To gather evidence, one of the lawyers traveled to Ohio and collected affidavits from nineteen of his friends and family, alleging Brown's insanity. Many of these affidavits repeated the earlier claims of insanity on Brown's maternal side and that Brown himself suffered from hereditary insanity. His grandmother, Ruth Humphrey Mills, was said to be insane during the last six years of her life, and one or two of his mother's brothers and three of her sisters supposedly were insane. Brown's sister and his brother Salmon also were thought to have periodic spells of insanity. Some of the affidavits recounted Dianthe's emotional disturbances, as well as those of sons John Jr. and Frederick.<sup>5</sup>

As for Brown himself, the affidavits disagreed on the degree of his insanity. Many stated that while he was honest and deeply religious, he had always possessed an "excitable mind" when it came to religious matters and slavery. One of the old friends, George Leach, suggested that Brown had been a "monomaniac" in his business affairs. Jonathan Metcalf, a physician from Hudson, Ohio, wrote that he had always believed Brown had "fits of insecurity" and was at times "completely insane."<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Quoted in Zoe Trodd and John Stauffer, eds., *Meteor of War: The John Brown Story* (Maplecrest, NY: Brandywine Press, 2004), 132.

<sup>5</sup> Oates, 329-330; Oswald Garrison Villard, *John Brown, 1800-1859: A Biography Fifty Years After* (Gloucester, Mass.: Peter Smith, 1965), 506-507.

<sup>6</sup> Quoted in Oates, 330.



Most historians agree that these affidavits must not be considered as objective records of Brown's character. They were, first and foremost, a desperate attempt to save Brown's life. They also contained no clinical evidence; even Jonathan Metcalf's affidavit was based on casual observation and not clinical study. Also, Brown himself feared that being declared insane would undo all his work by rendering it merely the actions of a madman.<sup>7</sup> Brown, in fact, wanted to hang. He wrote, "I am worth inconceivably more to *hang* than for any other purpose." He knew his death would make him a martyr, and he beseeched his friends not to attempt to break him out of jail.<sup>8</sup>

Biographies of Brown began appearing within months of his execution. Fifty years later, readers still clamored for more. As part of his *The American Crisis Biographies* series, historian Ellis Paxson Oberholtzer in 1904 commissioned black activist W.E.B. Du Bois to write a biography of Brown. Oberholtzer believed a new biography was important because, decades after the Civil War ended, Americans could look "calmly and dispassionately at the issue [of the Civil War] and see both sides without the prejudice of the War Time."<sup>9</sup> Oberholtzer's hopes for an objective study of Brown, however, went unfulfilled. A black Progressive, writing in the era of Jim Crow racism, Du Bois used his biography of Brown as an opportunity to use history as a rhetorical device to voice his demands for true black freedom and equality.

Before the publication of his biography, *John Brown*, Du Bois told a colleague and fellow Brown historian that he did not feel he could contribute any new information about Brown. He, therefore, decided to produce an interpretation and not go very deeply into the sources.<sup>10</sup> The

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<sup>7</sup> Oates, 332-333; Villard, 507.

<sup>8</sup> Quoted in Oates, 335, and Reynolds, 370.

<sup>9</sup> Ellis Paxson Oberholtzer, quoted in John David Smith "Historical Biography as Social Activism," in W.E.B. Du Bois, *John Brown: A Biography* (New York: M.E. Sharpe, Inc., 1997), xii.

<sup>10</sup> W.E.B. Du Bois, quoted in John David Smith, "Historical Biography as Social Activism," in W.E.B. Du Bois, *John Brown: A Biography* (New York: M.E. Sharpe, Inc., 1997), xiii.

work Du Bois published in 1909 is hagiographic and is filled with factual errors. Oswald Villard, who published a biography on Brown in 1910, referred to Du Bois's Brown biography as "a most inferior and faulty piece of work."<sup>11</sup> Steeped in passion and moralism rather than research, Du Bois mythologizes and romanticizes Brown as a martyr for black freedom and writes that Brown was "the man who of all Americans has perhaps come nearest to touching the real souls of black folks" – laying the groundwork for John Stauffer's *The Black Hearts of Men*, which was published nearly a century later and will be discussed later in this chapter.<sup>12</sup> Du Bois goes so far as to argue that the five men murdered in 1856 along the Pottawatomie Creek in Kansas were "the cost of freedom."<sup>13</sup>

Unlike other Brown biographers, who would argue that Brown's motivation for Pottawatomie and the raid on Harpers Ferry was either religion, insanity, or both, Du Bois argues that Brown's sole motivation was black freedom. Du Bois, however, does point to Brown's religious upbringing and beliefs as the reason for Brown's imperturbable anti-slavery stance. Du Bois argues that Brown viewed his personal trials, such as the death of his first wife and several young children, as God's punishment for not doing more to help others and improve the world. Brown was thus inspired to take arms against slavery.

Du Bois's scholarship becomes suspect when he recounts a black minister's 1839 visit to Brown. According to Du Bois, Brown swore to the minister that he and his family would labor for emancipation, then fell to his knees and asked God to bless this endeavor. But this tale of Brown's solemn vow to fight slavery is questionable. First, this incident does not appear in any

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<sup>11</sup> Oswald Garrison Villard, quoted in Merrill D. Peterson, *John Brown: The Legend Revisited* (Charlottesville, VA: University of Virginia Press, 2002), 101

<sup>12</sup> W.E.B. Du Bois, *John Brown: A Biography, A New Edition with Primary Documents* (New York: M.E. Sharpe, Inc., 1997), xxv; John Stauffer, *The Black Hearts of Men: Radical Abolitionists and the Transformation of Race* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2002).

<sup>13</sup> Du Bois, 68.

of the other works cited in this essay. Second, most other historians view the 1837 murder of anti-slavery editor Elijah Lovejoy as the event that turned Brown to immediate emancipation.<sup>14</sup>

Despite Du Bois's errors, *John Brown* is notable for being perhaps the only biography of Brown written solely to examine his role as a social activist. Though Du Bois touches on Brown's religiosity, he ignores the debate over Brown's sanity to focus only on Brown's work as a freedom fighter. In this manner, Du Bois opened the way for later historians, such as John Stauffer, to examine more thoroughly Brown's abolitionism without automatically assuming Brown was either a religious fanatic or insane.

A more accurate biography of Brown appeared in 1910. Many Brown historians, including Merrill Peterson, consider Oswald Garrison Villard's *John Brown, 1800-1859: A Biography Fifty Years After* to be the "great" biography of Brown. Unlike Du Bois, Villard delved deeply into trial records, Brown's letters, and other primary sources, to get as complete a picture of Brown as possible. At 738 pages, Villard's work certainly provides information on nearly every aspect of Brown's life, including detailed accounts of the Pottawatomie Massacre and the raid on Harpers Ferry.

Although Villard promises in his preface a bias-free biography that shows Brown as more than merely a criminal, it becomes apparent within the first chapter that Villard obviously revered Brown and wanted to portray him as a martyr for abolition. He compares Brown's death on the gallows to that of the Old Testament hero Samson, who pulled a building down on top of himself in order to kill the large group of Philistines who were also in the building; Brown's Philistines were pro-slavery activists.<sup>15</sup> A grandson of William Lloyd Garrison, Villard had a deep sympathy toward the abolitionist cause and was one of the founders of the National

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<sup>14</sup> Ibid., 41.

<sup>15</sup> Villard, 8.

Association for the Advancement of Colored People. It is, therefore, not surprising that Villard's work sympathizes with Brown and portrays him positively.<sup>16</sup>

Despite Villard's apparent bias in favor of John Brown's cause, he willingly engages the developing debate of whether Brown was insane, insisting from early in the book that Brown was not insane. Unlike Du Bois, who implies that Brown moved to Kansas in 1855 only to be with his sons and attack slavery in some manner, Villard argues that John Brown arrived in Kansas with a definite plan to fight a prolonged battle there against slavery. No insane man could develop such a definite plan. Villard also points out that Brown felt he was acting out of self-defense at Pottawatomie. Using testimony by Brown's son, Jason, Villard argues that Brown and some members of his company feared that Border Ruffians would attack and slaughter them at any time.<sup>17</sup>

In an interesting paradox, Villard refuses to attribute Brown's actions solely to religious convictions. As he explains, "Into this field of theological speculation the historian unfortunately cannot enter; he is limited to judging or recording human motives, particularly as this theory of divine inspiration has for centuries been the excuse for many of the most terrible crimes in history."<sup>18</sup> Villard, however, often alludes to Christianity while describing Brown's actions and motives, such as in the previously mentioned comparison to Samson. Villard also quotes extensively from interviews with Brown, taken shortly after his arrest at Harpers Ferry. In these interviews, Brown justifies his actions "Upon the golden rule." Brown continues, "I pity the poor in bondage that have none to help them; that is why I am here; not to gratify any

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<sup>16</sup> Merrill D. Peterson, *John Brown: The Legend Revisited* (Charlottesville, VA: University of Virginia Press, 2002), 86.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, 151.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, 181.

personal animosity, revenge, or vindictive spirit. It is my sympathy with the oppressed and the wronged, that are as good as you and as precious in the sight of God.”<sup>19</sup>

Though Villard makes this rather convincing, though apparently unintentional, case for Brown’s religious beliefs motivating him to shed blood, he waters down his earlier defense of Brown’s sanity by appealing romantically to his readers’ emotions. Villard argues that Brown could not possibly have been insane because of the eloquence of the letters he wrote during his imprisonment prior to his execution. Villard writes, “No lunatic ever penned such elevated and high-minded, and such consistent epistles.” Drawing from this conclusion, Villard passionately argues that

If John Brown was insane on the subject of slavery, so were Lucretia Mott and Lydia Maria Child, while Garrison and Phillips and Horace Greeley should never have been allowed to go at large.... If John Brown was the victim of an *idée fixe*, so was Martin Luther, and so were all the martyrs to freedom of faith.<sup>20</sup>

Though his romanticization of Brown damages Villard’s credibility, Villard’s biography is significant for its thoroughness due to new sources available to the author. For several decades after Brown’s execution, many of his co-conspirators, including the Secret Six and several of Brown’s own children, were afraid to reveal what they knew about Pottawatomie and Harpers Ferry for fear of legal consequences. Many also did not want to damage the public’s memory of Brown as a martyr for abolition and racial equality. Fifty years after Harpers Ferry, however, two participants, Henry Thompson and Brown’s son Salmon Brown, shared their memories of the raid. These testimonies, along with Villard’s careful documentation of numerous other primary sources, aided future historians in researching John Brown.

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<sup>19</sup> John Brown, quoted in Villard, 459.

<sup>20</sup> Villard, 509-510.

As often happens with John Brown, another author used the same sources as Villard and reached nearly opposite conclusions. Published in 1929, poet Robert Penn Warren's *John Brown: The Making of a Martyr* was the first significant biography of Brown to be published in the wake of Villard's work.<sup>21</sup> Drawing heavily upon Villard's work, Warren argues for the possibility of insanity being the impetus for Brown's bloody form of abolition.

Throughout the first chapter, Warren, like Villard, portrays Brown as a zealously religious man, but the similarities end there. Rather than portraying Brown as a freedom fighter, Warren argues that Brown used abolitionism as an excuse to commit murder. Parallel with this argument are Warren's assertions that John Brown most likely suffered from some form of mental illness. Warren writes that Brown had no plan when he arrived in Kansas; rather, Brown moved to Kansas to "see if something would not turn up to his advantage."<sup>22</sup> Moreover, Brown came to Kansas only at the request from one of his sons that he bring them more weapons to protect themselves against Border Ruffians. This spontaneity could imply mental instability. Warren also argues against Brown's proclamations to his men that they could be murdered by Border Ruffians at anytime. Warren writes, "If news had come of an impending attack by pro-slavery forces, it was strange that it should have been confided to John Brown alone when there were many others in camp whose homes were equally unprotected."<sup>23</sup>

Warren's belief in Brown's insanity comes through most strongly during his discussion of Brown's trial. Warren emphasizes the nineteen affidavits Governor Henry Wise of Virginia secured after Brown rejected the insanity plea at his trial. Nine of these affidavits, Warren points out, recorded cases of insanity in John Brown's immediate family on his mother's side. Warren states that these records build a strong case for paranoia in Brown. Warren explains, "The matter

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<sup>21</sup> Peterson, 117.

<sup>22</sup> Robert Penn Warren, *John Brown: The Making of a Martyr* (New York: Payson and Clarke, Ltd., 1929), 106.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, 160.

of heredity; the ‘steady strong desire to die’ in the earlier years of his life; his talent for putting other people in the wrong by adopting the part of an abused and deceived victim; and his egotism, his conviction of being an instrument of Providence, and his delusions of grandeur” all point to some form of mental illness.<sup>24</sup> Even if John Brown was not certifiably insane, Warren argues, he was, at least, abnormal.

Forty years passed before another author published a full-scale biography of John Brown. Stephen B. Oates’s *To Purge This Land with Blood: A Biography of John Brown* was also the first full-scale biography of Brown since Villard’s 1910 biography to draw upon original research. In the preface to his book, Oates explains that he believes historians shied away from Brown for so long because of his controversial nature. Oates writes,

Because he is controversial, anybody who ventures forth with a study of his life – no matter how objective and well-researched it may be – is going to encounter a number of readers, critics, and professional historians who have already made up their minds that Brown was either (1) a vicious fanatic, a horse thief, and a maniac or (2) the greatest abolitionist hero in history, and who will furiously attack any book that does not argue their point of view.<sup>25</sup>

When Oates wrote *To Purge This Land with Blood* in the late 1960s, the United States was engaged in a controversial military action that supposedly was meant to set people free, i.e., the Vietnam War. This war was highly contested in its time and deeply divided the country. It is no coincidence that Oates chose to write about the man behind another controversial military action that supposedly was meant to set people free, yet deeply divided the country. It is possible that Oates wrote about John Brown to draw a parallel to the battles raging in his own time. Oates also was probably influenced by the Civil Rights Movement of the 1960s, which brought to the foreground issues of race and, sometimes, violence in the pursuit of equality.

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<sup>24</sup> Ibid., 420.

<sup>25</sup> Oates, ix.

Oates attempted to understand Brown in the context of his time and to explain Brown's actions without either condemning or praising him.<sup>26</sup> Drawing from Brown's Calvinistic upbringing, Oates argues that Brown was not insane; he was merely devoutly religious. Oates explains that Brown was motivated by what he saw as the paradox of American slavery: "A man of 'powerful religious convictions,'" Oates writes, "who believed to his bones that slavery was 'a sin against God,' he [Brown] was profoundly disturbed that a nation which claimed to be both Christian and free should condone, protect, and perpetuate that 'sum of villainies.'"<sup>27</sup> Indeed, punishing slavery with violence was not a stretch for Brown's imagination or morals. Oates points out that as a child, Brown often was punished for infractions such as lying with beatings. Oates explains, "The rod became for him [Brown] a symbol of the pain and terror – the inevitable doom – that awaited one who strayed from the path of righteousness."<sup>28</sup>

Oates also questions the credibility of the affidavits alleging Brown's insanity. First, the affidavits vary in their claims as to the degree and nature of Brown's supposed mental instability. Some said Brown had always been excitable on the subject of slavery, while others said that they thought the death of his son Frederick and a lifetime of illness had caused Brown to go slightly mad. Second, much of the information was based on hearsay, not on any directly known mental conditions of Brown and his family members. Finally, the term "insanity" is itself "a vague, emotion-charged, and clinically meaningless term."<sup>29</sup> To use it to define a man's legacy, according to Oates, is, at best, unfair. "Insanity" was used at the time to describe everything from merely odd behavior, to epilepsy, to mental retardation. No record exists of the exact disorders Brown's various family members suffered, so historians cannot interpret the use of

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<sup>26</sup> Ibid., x.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid., 333-334.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid., 8.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid., 331.



“insanity” to mean psychotic or maniacal. As Oates emphasizes, Brown’s family members could have been epileptics or mentally retarded. Most importantly, historians must remember that the affidavits were an attempt to save Brown’s life and may have been exaggerated.

Apart from exposing the unfairness of the insanity claims, Oates emphasizes that historians must not overlook the genuine sympathy Brown felt for the plight of slaves and free blacks. To dismiss Brown as insane, Oates writes, “is to disregard the fact that at a time when most Northerners and almost all Southerners were racists who wanted to keep the Negro at the bottom of society, John Brown was able to treat America’s ‘poor despised Africans’ as fellow human beings.”<sup>30</sup> In other words, to label Brown insane is to dismiss the fact that he was actually more humane than most men of his time.

In his 2002 work, *Fire From the Midst of You: A Religious Life of John Brown*, Louis DeCaro Jr. agrees with Oates. He writes, “As black people have long realized, their famous ally is considered fanatical and insane largely because he presumed their humanity in a society North and South that categorically dehumanized them.”<sup>31</sup> DeCaro argues that Brown was not insane, and instead, that historians have misinterpreted his religious beliefs. Historians today cannot possibly understand Brown’s religious beliefs, DeCaro explains, because they live in a post-Christian society that does not embrace such strong beliefs, though DeCaro obviously has overlooked the burgeoning fundamentalism in the United States today. DeCaro argues that Brown’s actions in Kansas and at Harpers Ferry need no further justification because “John Brown’s war on slavery was undoubtedly an extension of the Christian legacy of his family.”<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> Ibid., 333.

<sup>31</sup> Louis DeCaro, Jr., *Fire From the Midst of You: A Religious Life of John Brown* (New York: New York University Press, 2002), 3.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid., 4.

As his title suggests, DeCaro emphasizes Brown's Calvinistic upbringing. He says that Brown and his family were "biblical egalitarians" – dissenters from the common Christian beliefs on race at the time. He points out Brown's daily Bible readings and prayer, as well as his letters to his wife and children, urging them to look to God for guidance. DeCaro also explains a crucial element of Brown's religion: as an evangelical Christian, Brown read the Bible not only as God's word, but as God's word directly to John Brown. Therefore, anything the Bible said regarding slavery, Brown read as a direct order for him to take action.<sup>33</sup>

Because he focuses solely on Brown's religious life, DeCaro is not obligated to discuss the allegations of insanity. He does, however, allude to this debate in his discussion of Brown's attacks along the Pottawatomie. He argues that Brown, his followers, and their families may very well have been in danger of an attack by Border Ruffians, so the men were motivated by a sense of self-defense after all. DeCaro also removes some of the responsibility from Brown by arguing that Brown held no magical spell over his followers, as some historians have argued. At the end of his chapter on Pottawatomie, DeCaro argues that instead of asking how, given his devout religious beliefs, Brown could have possibly justified the murders in Kansas, scholars should ask what circumstances would "drive exceptionally moral and religious people like the Browns to such desperate measures."<sup>34</sup>

In 2001's *The Black Hearts of Men: Radical Abolitionists and the Transformation of Race*, John Stauffer portrays Brown as one of the few white abolitionists who understood what it was like to be black. Stauffer argues that only four abolitionists, Gerrit Smith, John Brown, James McCune Smith, and Frederick Douglass, understood this concept, and of those four, only Gerrit Smith and Brown were white. Brown even went so far as to publish a paper, *Sambo's*

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<sup>33</sup> Ibid.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid., 236.

*Mistakes*, from the perspective of a black man. *The Black Hearts of Men* primarily describes the friendship among these four men, but Stauffer does delve into the question of Brown's sanity. As Stauffer points out, William Lloyd Garrison dubbed all radical abolitionists "madmen" at least four years before Brown's Harpers Ferry raid. From this perspective, Stauffer views Brown's attack as aligned with the violent methods the four men supported and as Brown's effort to completely align himself with his black comrades. For his part, Gerrit Smith really did go "insane" and spent two months in the Utica Insane Asylum. The irony of this, as Stauffer mentions, is that "John Brown was widely considered to be mad but vehemently denied it.... Gerrit Smith went mad, but was widely accused of faking his madness to avoid being indicted for his complicity in Brown's raid." Regardless, Stauffer does not view Brown as actually having gone mad but rather attempting to lose his whiteness and do what he believed blacks should do by rebelling against the white government that kept them in bondage.<sup>35</sup>

Though not a biography of John Brown, Merrill D. Peterson's *John Brown: The Legend Revisited* traces the development of Brown's popular image. As Peterson explains, the book is "an extended meditation on the life of John Brown and his place in American thought and imagination from the time of his death in 1859 to the near-present."<sup>36</sup> Part historiography, part history of Brown's public image, Peterson's book traces the development of the various debates regarding Brown through many of the biographies discussed above. Most notably, Peterson explains the current paradoxical images of Brown. At the same time the public is recognizing that Brown may have been more religiously overzealous than crazy, many people are also comparing Brown's acts to modern acts of terrorism, such as Timothy McVeigh's 1995 bombing

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<sup>35</sup> John Stauffer, *The Black Hearts of Men: Radical Abolitionists and the Transformation of Race* (Cambridge, Mass: University of Harvard Press, 2001), 42-43.

<sup>36</sup> Peterson, xi.

of the McMurry Federal Building in Oklahoma City; they have issued Brown the moniker, “Father of American Terrorism.”<sup>37</sup>

Even more recently, David S. Reynolds in 2005 published his work on John Brown titled *John Brown, Abolitionist: The Man Who Killed Slavery, Sparked the Civil War, and Seeded Civil Rights*. In this work, Reynolds seeks to place Brown within the context of the tumultuous times in which he lived to show that Brown’s attack on Harpers Ferry was a natural result of the slave revolts, guerilla warfare, and revolutionary Christianity of the day. In doing so, Reynolds credits Brown with a variety of accomplishments, namely those in the title of the work. He points out that Brown did not end slavery – the Thirteenth Amendment did that. But he argues that Brown “loosened the roots of the slave system,” helping to cause its collapse. Reynolds admits the Civil War would have come to fruition with or without Brown but that Brown hastened its onset by violently pitting North against South. Finally, Reynolds argues that Brown’s actions seeded the Civil Rights Movement of the 1950s and 1960s by demanding political and social equality for blacks.<sup>38</sup>

Reynolds begins *John Brown, Abolitionist*, by describing Brown’s Puritan roots. Brown was, in fact, a Puritan of the old school who admired Jonathan Edwards and patterned himself after Oliver Cromwell; he never subscribed to the revised Calvinism of the nineteenth century. Reynolds points out that Brown shared many similarities with Cromwell. Both men have been viewed both as terrorists and saintly liberators, depending on one’s point of view. Reynolds also reveals that Brown inherited a pioneer spirit from his father and probably felt that in promoting abolition he was blazing another new path for his nation.<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> Ibid., 169.

<sup>38</sup> Reynolds, ix.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid., 19, 30.

Reynolds places strong emphasis on the effect of Nat Turner's 1831 slave rebellion in Virginia on Brown's violent abolition. Reynolds quotes one of Brown's daughters saying that Nat Turner was one of her father's black heroes. As Brown and his men would do twenty-five years later in Kansas, Turner and his followers used swords and axes to kill men, women, and children as they slept. Both men retreated into the wilderness after their attacks, and both were composed and calm throughout their trials and on the way to the gallows. After describing these similarities, Reynolds explains why Brown embraced the kind of violence that drove other abolitionists to pacifism. In the spirit of John Stauffer's *The Black Hearts of Men*, Reynolds argues that Brown became an insurrectionist because "he was thoroughly open to all aspects of the black experience, including the violence of slave rebels." In other words, Brown had a "black" heart.<sup>40</sup>

Reynolds does, however, contend that the Pottawatomie Massacre and the attack on Harpers Ferry were not defensible actions. In committing these crimes, and crimes they certainly were, Brown proved himself to be an anomaly because he was an abolitionist who not only believed in violence but also actually made war. But, as Reynolds argues, these actions "were explainable, given John Brown's makeup as it intersected with special conditions of time and place, and given the long-term social tensions that led to these conditions."<sup>41</sup> Brown went to Kansas when the territory was already in a state of war. In another time and place, Reynolds argues, Brown may never have done anything to draw attention to himself.

Finally, Reynolds insists, Brown was the victim of gross misinterpretations in both the North and the South. After Harpers Ferry, the South quickly transformed Brown into a representative of the antislavery North, which Brown most certainly was not. In the North,

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<sup>40</sup> Ibid., 52-56.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid., 139.

Brown and the raid were initially sharply denounced, but the Transcendentalists, especially Ralph Waldo Emerson and Henry David Thoreau, salvaged his image, elevating Brown to the philosophical level of the Founding Fathers.<sup>42</sup> Regardless of interpretation, however, Reynolds sums up best why Brown's image remains controversial. He writes, "The debate concerns more than John Brown. It involves competing interpretations of the causes of the Civil War."<sup>43</sup> At the time Reynolds wrote his book, other authors were publishing new interpretations of the war that ran counter to the Lost Cause. One such work, Tony Horwitz's *Confederates in the Attic: Dispatches from the Unfinished Civil War*, exposed and strongly opposed the Lost Cause ideology.

Unlike Brown's image, Thomas Jackson's image has changed little since the general's death. Many myths surround Jackson, such as his strange habits regarding his health, but overall admiration for him has not dissipated since 1863. A popular southern interpretation of the Civil War, the myth of the Lost Cause has played a key role in preserving Jackson's image, especially the overwhelming admiration for him. The Lost Cause's key points are: 1. Robert E. Lee was the best and most admirable general of the war; 2. Confederate armies mounted a gallant, heroic resistance in the face of overwhelming odds; 3. Thomas "Stonewall" Jackson was second only to Lee among the great generals of the war; and 4. slavery was not a cause of the war and African Americans are inconsequential to Southern history. This belief system arose immediately after the end of the Civil War, when many elite white southerners realized that their military defeat tarnished the reputation of the South. Jubal A. Early, one of Robert E. Lee's principal lieutenants, understood the power of the written word to manipulate popular perceptions of historical events, so he set out to create a written record celebrating the Confederacy and its

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<sup>42</sup> Ibid., 335. For an examination of the Transcendentalists' contributions to Brown's image, see Chapter Four: The Men in Print.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid., 138.

resistance to “northern aggression.” This record gained favor among Southerners who did not wish to be villainized, and the Lost Cause was born. It is also partly responsible for the negative images of John Brown. Brown’s attack at Harpers Ferry asserted that slavery was a cause of the Civil War, thereby making blacks an integral part of history. These are two claims the Lost Cause argues strongly against.<sup>44</sup>

The Lost Cause is persistent partly because it is grounded in fact. Robert E. Lee undoubtedly was a gifted soldier who inspired his army to accomplish impressive feats on the battlefield. Confederate armies often did fight at a disadvantage in numbers and supplies. Stonewall Jackson earned his reputation as a superb lieutenant, and many people at the time of the war, both North and South, viewed Virginia as the most important arena of the war. The Lost Cause’s distortions occur when Early and other Lost Cause devotees denied that Lee had faults, ignored Confederate advantages, denied Ulysses S. Grant any virtues, and noticed Confederate activity outside the eastern theater only when convenient to distract attention from failures in Virginia.<sup>45</sup>

In his 2001 work, *Race and Reunion: The Civil War in American Memory*, David W. Blight adds a few elements of his own to the Lost Cause. He argues that the three most important keys to spreading the Lost Cause are “the movement’s effort to write and control the *history* of the war and its aftermath; its use of *white supremacy* as both means and ends; and the place of *women* in its development.”<sup>46</sup> The roles of race and women in Lost Cause culture will be discussed later; what is pertinent here is Blight’s assessment of the movement’s attempts to control the history of the war. Blight acknowledges Jubal Early’s role in initially developing the

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<sup>44</sup> Gary Gallagher, “Jubal A. Early, the Lost Cause, and Civil War History: A Persistent Legacy,” in *Lee and His Generals in War and Memory* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1998), 207.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, 211-212.

<sup>46</sup> David W. Blight, *Race and Reunion: The Civil War in American Memory* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2001), 259.

myth of the Lost Cause, but he places much more emphasis on Jefferson Davis as a main proponent. In his two-volume 1881 work, *The Rise and Fall of the Confederate Government*, Davis argued that by seceding, the South was merely protecting its natural rights against the despotic federal government. Blight describes this massive vindication of the South as "...what may be the longest and most self-righteous legal brief on behalf of a failed political movement ever done by an American."<sup>47</sup>

Jackson's widow and nephew wrote the earliest biographies on the general, and these and are discussed in Chapter Four because they are primary sources. By the time secondary biographies of Jackson began to appear, the period of reconciliation had enhanced the Lost Cause. This period began in the late nineteenth century and lasted until World War II. During this time, Americans generally ignored the causes of the Civil War, especially slavery, and focused instead on the fact that the Union had survived and Americans reunited. The reconciliationists, historian Gary Gallagher writes, "celebrated the manly virtues and honest patriotism of soldiers in both armies."<sup>48</sup> Southerners especially needed to focus on reconciliation to deal with the horrible ramifications of their decision to secede. Thus, many Lost Cause diehards believed they could still win the war politically with a renewed commitment to white supremacy.<sup>49</sup>

Alan T. Nolan concurs and takes the argument a step further. Nolan asserts that the North accepted the Southern interpretation of the war, which insisted that slavery was not a cause of the conflict, because to argue that slavery *was* the cause of the Civil War would be to introduce a divisive element, which would retard reunification. The period of reconciliation was

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<sup>47</sup> Ibid., 259.

<sup>48</sup> Gary W. Gallagher, "Battlefields, the Lost Cause, and the Legacy of the Civil War," in *Lee and His Generals in War and Memory* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1998), 269.

<sup>49</sup> Blight, 265-266.



necessary for the nation to rebuild itself. To promote reconciliation, Nolan explains, “The essential thrust of the reunification effort was that ‘both sides were right.’ If the war had concerned freedom (for slaves), both sides could not have been right. Therefore, the involvement of freedom had to go.” This interpretation made blacks historically irrelevant. The memory of the Civil War would thereafter be one of elite white southerners.<sup>50</sup>

In 1928, Allen Tate published a biography of Jackson that was heavily influenced by the Lost Cause and reconciliation. This was during the same period in which the southern agrarians published *I’ll Take My Stand: The South and the Agrarian Tradition*, in which southern poets lamented the loss of the antebellum agrarian culture in the South. In the same vein, in *Stonewall Jackson*, Tate unabashedly praises the general with distinctly pro-Confederacy rhetoric and Lost Cause ideology. Tate claims that the New England abolitionists wanted to “destroy democracy and civil liberties in America by freeing the slaves. They were not very intelligent people.” Also true to the Lost Cause, Tate emphasizes how kind Jackson was toward his own slaves. He never mentions Jackson’s falling asleep during the Seven Days Battle and insists that Jackson did not move because he had received no word from his fellow generals that there was a battle going on. Often drawing on legends and hearsay, Tate’s work is best classified as hagiography, but it is a good example of the hero-worship Jackson often inspires.<sup>51</sup>

In 1954, Burke Davis published *They Called Him Stonewall: A Life of General T.J. Jackson, C.S.A.* In this volume, Davis begins to separate Thomas Jackson the myth from Thomas Jackson the man. Davis, by this point freed from the interpretive shackles of the period of reconciliation, sheds light on some of Jackson’s faults, as well as his triumphs. He makes no

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<sup>50</sup> Alan T. Nolan, “Considering *Lee Considered*: Robert E. Lee and the Lost Cause,” in *New Perspectives on the Civil War: Myths and Realities of the National Conflict*, ed. John Y. Simon and Michael E. Stevens (Madison: Madison House Publishers, 1998), 36-37.

<sup>51</sup> Allen Tate, *Stonewall Jackson: The Good Soldier* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1928), 25, 172.

attempt to excuse Jackson's sluggish movements during the Seven Days' Battle and directly states that during this series of battles "the Valley army had failed to shine."<sup>52</sup> Contradictorily, Davis still adheres to the Lost Cause image of Jackson as the infallible soldier and folk hero. While describing the South's reaction to Jackson's death, Davis writes, "The unlettered in the ranks and back home knew unerringly that the greatest Yankee-killer of them all had gone, and they feared the future without him."<sup>53</sup>

It is no surprise that Davis's biography appeared in 1954. That year, the Supreme Court handed down its decision in *Brown v. Board of Education*. This decision obliterated the concept of "separate but equal" public schools for blacks and whites and in effect made integration mandatory. Whites across the South protested this ruling because they were angry that blacks were gaining more equal footing, thus challenging whites' political and economic power in the South. Davis's biography gave these whites the opportunity to celebrate a hero who had given his life to maintain white supremacy in the South.

More recent scholars have also sought to separate the exaggerations, false information, myths, and outright tall tales about Jackson from the truth. In his 1997 monograph *Stonewall Jackson: The Man, the Soldier, the Legend*, James Robertson Jr. seeks to separate Jackson from the legends and show him as a pious, schedule-oriented man who liked everything in his life to unfold with military precision. Robertson also goes deeper into Jackson's personal life to show a side of the man many historians have missed: the romantic, affectionate husband who loved children and desperately wanted a child of his own.

Robertson admits that Jackson had many strange mannerisms, but like most Jackson biographers, Robertson explains the reasons behind these mannerisms to show that they were not

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<sup>52</sup> Burke Davis, *They Called Him Stonewall: A Life of Lieutenant General T.J. Jackson, C.S.A.* (New York: Fairfax Press, 1954), 232.

<sup>53</sup> Davis, 446.

the result of mental illness or eccentricity. For example, even during his lifetime, Jackson's obsession with his health was no secret. He adhered to a strict diet and exhibited odd habits, such as sitting bolt upright to ensure that his internal organs "hung" properly. Robertson describes the intense gastrointestinal pains Jackson suffered beginning at age fifteen and persisting for most of the rest of his life, leaving little wonder that Jackson monitored his health closely. Likewise, Robertson discusses the oddities Jackson exhibited both while a professor at the Virginia Military Institute and as an officer in the Civil War. At VMI, Jackson was unswervingly punctual and adhered rigorously to even the most minor of rules. These traits, along with his rigid teaching practices and strict diet, led cadets to label him "Tom Fool." During the Civil War, his adherence to the rules and remarkable self-discipline reinforced these old stories that followed him from VMI. Robertson, obviously an admirer of Jackson, goes to great lengths to dispel the notion that there is any truth to the image of Jackson as eccentric. He insists that "popular appeal always surrounds a subject who personifies the adage, 'Genius comes wrapped in strange packages.'" He also argues that VMI students exaggerated Jackson's idiosyncrasies to rationalize the poor grades they received in Jackson's classes. Finally, Robertson notes that tales of Jackson's oddities stem from first impressions. He writes that Jackson's reputation as a strange professor began in his early years at VMI, just as stories of his oddities as a commander stem from the first year of the Civil War. According to Robertson, Jackson was just socially awkward. Once he settled into a situation, he no longer stood out as strange.<sup>54</sup>

Like John Brown's obsession with his own form of Calvinism, Jackson's strict adherence to Presbyterianism has shaped his popular image. However, Robertson notes that, as a man who had no stable family as a child and had seen horrific sights during the Mexican War, this strict

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<sup>54</sup> Ibid., 125-132.

adherence to religion is understandable. Undoubtedly, Jackson was drawn to the routine and precise ceremonies of the nineteenth-century Presbyterian church.

An aspect of Jackson that Robertson emphasizes is his love for his wife and his love of children. Jackson lost two children shortly after birth. The first, born to his first wife, was stillborn. The second, born to his second wife, died of liver disorder at the age of one month. After these deaths, Jackson became very aware of and affectionate toward children. He grew close to his nephew, who came to stay with Jackson and his second wife in Lexington, Virginia, for a time. He also was very affectionate toward his second wife, Anna, on whom he enjoyed playing pranks. Robertson points out these qualities to enhance Jackson's image, for how could such a loving man be anything but good?

Robertson often defends Jackson where other historians have found fault. For example, during the Seven Days Battle, Jackson's failure to take action caused considerable difficulties for the Confederate Army. Robertson, however, points to evidence to absolve Jackson of responsibility. First, due to the demands of his position, Jackson had slept only eight hours over the previous three days and was, therefore, extremely fatigued. Second, Robertson claims that Lee's orders to Jackson were imprecise and that Jackson did not understand his mission. Later in the battle, Jackson failed to engage the enemy, despite his being able to hear a battle raging nearby. Robertson again defends Jackson, arguing that Jackson had not received direct orders to enter a battle, so it is unrealistic to expect Jackson's men to have marched "another three miles over unfamiliar roads in order to reinforce an attack that was not part of Lee's stated battle plan."<sup>55</sup>

Robertson's admiration for Jackson carries through to the end of his massive work when he wistfully describes Jackson's final march at Chancellorsville, his wounding, and his death.

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<sup>55</sup> Ibid., 470-473.

Robertson shows a dashing Jackson urging his tired men onward during the march around General Hooker's flank, then a stoic Jackson putting on a brave face for his men after he was wounded. He shows a broken-hearted Major Sandie Pendleton, one of Jackson's aides, sobbing outside Jackson's tent after the general's arm was amputated. Finally, Robertson shows a large crowd of civilians and soldiers gathered outside the Chandler House, where the dying general lay, to prayer and stand vigil. To explain Jackson's cryptic last words, "Let us cross over the river and rest under the shade of the trees," Robertson switches to a fictional narrative. He imagines that Jackson saw the major scenes of his life flash before his eyes in reverse order and realized that his entire life was a pilgrimage to the throne of God. Then, as Jackson spoke his final words, Robertson imagines he saw the bend in the West Fork River where he had lived as a child and he wanted to cross the river to a grove a white poplars on the other side that had been a refuge for him.<sup>56</sup>

Robertson spends little time discussing the aftermath of Jackson's death. He describes Jackson's death as the turning point for the Army of Northern Virginia and the greatest personal loss the Confederate States of America experienced. To support this claim, he cites examples of soldiers exclaiming that Jackson's death was the beginning of defeat for the Confederacy. Robertson ends his massive work by expressing that Jackson's death left a void the Confederacy was unable to ever fill.<sup>57</sup>

As the historiography makes plain, Thomas Jackson's image, even in scholarly works, has remained fairly constant since his death. John Brown, however, continues to be a subject of contention, especially at times when the events occur that reawaken the issues Brown stood for,

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<sup>56</sup> Ibid., 719-753.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid., 754-762.

such as race and terrorism. As we will see in subsequent chapters, popular images of John Brown and Thomas Jackson run parallel to this scholarly discussion.

## CHAPTER THREE: JOHN BROWN

Over time, three images of John Brown have come to dominate debates on the man's life. The first, promoted by Brown's supporters and Brown himself, is that Brown was a martyr for both Christ and blacks. The second, promoted by Brown's detractors, is that Brown was a fanatical madman at best, a terrorist at worst. Finally, modern historians have struck a more moderate position, imaging Brown as a complex, contradictory man who can be understood only in the context of the mid-nineteenth century. To understand these images, however, one must first understand the man behind them.

John Brown's paternal ancestry reaches back to early Puritan times, either to the carpenter Peter Brown, who arrived on the *Mayflower* in 1620, or to another Peter Brown who settled in Connecticut around 1650.<sup>58</sup> Regardless, John Brown was of New England Puritan heritage, and his paternal grandfather, Captain John Brown was a regimental commander of Minute Men during the American Revolution and died of dysentery while in service on September 3, 1776. He left behind a widow, Hannah Brown, and eleven children, among them Owen, who was born in West Simsbury, Connecticut, in 1771.<sup>59</sup>

In 1782, as a result of the religious revivals that blazed across Connecticut, eleven-year-old Owen became a devout Calvinist.<sup>60</sup> In the late 1780s, the Reverend Jeremiah Hallock of West Simsbury offered him religious and personal advice and introduced him to the fierce

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<sup>58</sup> Reynolds, 19-20.

<sup>59</sup> DeCaro, 20.

<sup>60</sup> Oates, 4; Reynolds, 20-21.

abolitionism that would come to define the Brown family. Owen became an outspoken opponent of slavery and later a reliable agent for the Underground Railroad.<sup>61</sup>

On February 13, 1793, Owen Brown married Ruth Mills. In 1799, Owen, Ruth, and their infant daughter moved to West Torrington, Connecticut. On May 9, 1800, Ruth gave birth to a son, whom they named John Brown, in honor of Owen's father and grandfather.<sup>62</sup> In 1805, the Browns moved to Hudson, Ohio, about twenty-five miles south of Cleveland, where Owen hoped to help to win the "savage" frontier for the Lord. In Hudson, the Browns encouraged five-year-old John to embrace peoples of all races, so John spent much of his childhood playing with Indian children in the area. Young John had a wild streak. Later in life, he wrote that he had a penchant for lying as a youth and enjoyed rough play, which often resulted in his father's harsh punishment.<sup>63</sup>

Harsh punishment was common in John Brown's upbringing, as it was in the rearing of many children in conservative Christian households in the nineteenth century. The Browns viewed corporal punishment as a "living reminder and model of God's love for his children as well as proof of the imperfect but sincere and godly love of the human parent."<sup>64</sup> John Brown would use physical punishment with his own children, and such severe punishments also foreshadowed his 1859 raid on the federal arsenal at Harpers Ferry – an attempt on his part to punish slaveholders for disobeying the word of God. As Stephen Oates writes in his 1970 biography of Brown, "The rod became for him a symbol of pain and terror – the inevitable doom – that awaited one who strayed from the path of righteousness."<sup>65</sup>

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<sup>61</sup> Oates, 5-6; Reynolds, 23.

<sup>62</sup> Oates, 6-7; Reynolds, 23; DeCaro, 22-23.

<sup>63</sup> Zoe Trodd and John Stauffer, eds., *Meteor of War: The John Brown Story* (Maplecrest, NY: Brandywine Press, 2004), 37-38; Oates, 8-9; Reynolds, 30-32.

<sup>64</sup> DeCaro, 46.

<sup>65</sup> Oates, 8.



On December 9, 1808, John Brown's mother died during childbirth, devastating both eight-year-old John and his father. Owen Brown soon remarried, and John's new stepmother would also inflict harsh punishment on him.

During the War of 1812, young John Brown helped his father drive cattle to General William Hull's Army on the Detroit front. On one cattle drive, John saw a family abusing a slave boy they owned. The act disgusted him because his parents had taught him that the Golden Rule applied to people of all races. Later in life, he recognized this event as a main factor in the process that made him a determined and vicious abolitionist.<sup>66</sup>

John briefly attended theological school in Connecticut, where he had hoped to train for the ministry, but he had to return home when he developed a persistent eye inflammation that made studying impossible. He quickly tired of living in his father's crowded house (Owen had eight additional children with a second wife) and of taking orders at his father's tannery. He and his adopted brother set up their own tannery just outside Hudson, Ohio, and lived in a log cabin near the tanning yard. By now, Brown had reached his adult height of five feet, nine inches. By keeping his black hair short and combed straight back, his gray eyes stood out as the most memorable feature on his disproportionately small head. He was a tense, serious young man, who never bent his ways for anyone.<sup>67</sup>

By this time, Brown was an ardent abolitionist. The American Colonization Society appeared in 1817, but it was not especially successful. It did, however, lead some who were involved to develop new abolitionist organizations. The best known was William Lloyd Garrison's American Anti-Slavery Society, which protested the colonization idea, calling it racist and impractical. Brown agreed because he did not consider blacks to be inferior beings who

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<sup>66</sup> Reynolds, 32-33; Oates, 11-12; Trodd and Stauffer, 39.

<sup>67</sup> Oates, 14.

should be excluded from America but rather as equals who should be integrated into white society – a truly remarkable conviction for that day. Like his father, John Brown often invited blacks into his home and worked as an agent for the Underground Railroad from 1817 to about 1837.<sup>68</sup>

Brown’s religious beliefs were no less fervent. He was unique among nineteenth-century Calvinists because he did not subscribe to the modified Calvinism that was prevalent in the mid-nineteenth century. Like his father, John Brown strictly adhered to the Calvinist doctrines of the Puritans, including predestination, total depravity of human beings, and God’s absolute sovereignty. The newer, modified Calvinism allowed for human agency in attaining God’s grace – a belief John Brown never accepted; he believed humans were *absolutely* helpless in the face of God’s *absolute* sovereignty.<sup>69</sup>

These convictions, as well as his commanding position at the tannery, kept Brown too busy for housework, so he hired a housekeeper, Mrs. Amos Lusk. A widow, Lusk moved into Brown’s cabin, bringing along her 19-year-old daughter, Dianthe. Brown was immediately taken with Dianthe, whom he described as “a *remarkably plain*; but industrious & economical girl; of excellent character; earnest piety; & good practical common sense...”<sup>70</sup> He proposed as soon as she applied for membership in the Hudson church, where the couple married on June 21, 1820. On July 21, 1821, Dianthe gave birth to the couple’s first child, a son, whom they christened John Brown, Jr. Dianthe would bear Brown six more children before dying during childbirth in 1832. Five of her seven children – John Jr., Jason, Owen, Ruth, and Frederick – would survive to adulthood.

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<sup>68</sup> Reynolds, 36-37; Oates, 15.

<sup>69</sup> Reynolds, 25; Oates, 2-3.

<sup>70</sup> Trodd and Stauffer, 41.

Brown's reputation in Hudson grew quickly, and his business prospered. Two more children were born: Jason, on January 19, 1823, and Owen, on November 4, 1824. Like his father before him, Brown engaged his young sons in regular religious lessons and punished them often with physical force for even minor infractions.<sup>71</sup>

During this period, Dianthe began exhibiting emotional instability. Her exact condition is unknown, but two of her sons – John Jr. and Frederick – also suffered from what friends called “bouts of insanity.” Unfortunately, in the nineteenth century, the term “insanity” described everything from serious mental illnesses, such as bipolar disorder and schizophrenia, to premenstrual syndrome. Partly in hopes that a change of scenery would help Dianthe and partly because he had inherited his father's fondness for the frontier, Brown moved his family to northwestern Pennsylvania in 1826. They settled on 200 acres in Crawford County, where Brown became the area's first businessman and postmaster, as well as the founder of its first school and church, where he often preached the Sunday sermons himself.<sup>72</sup>

At this point, Brown's religious beliefs began to shape his political outlook. A strong supporter of John Quincy Adams, he deeply distrusted Andrew Jackson and Henry Clay (as well as all their supporters) because both were slaveholders. Jackson and Clay were also Masons – a fact which inspired Brown to turn his back on his own Masonic lodge in 1826 and get caught up in anti-Masonic fervor. But that fervor faded after Jackson's re-election when the Antimasons joined with Clay's National Republicans and Southern slaveholders to form the Whig Party. This development led Brown to believe that American politics were controlled by slaveholders

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<sup>71</sup> Oates, 17.

<sup>72</sup> Reynolds, 38, 44; Oates, 17, 19, 22; DeCaro, 71.

and, therefore, were a lost cause, which explains why later in life he would use violence rather than politics to end slavery.<sup>73</sup>

Despite Brown's strict watchfulness, the wilderness conditions in which the family lived took their toll. An ailing Dianthe delivered three more children between 1827 and 1830, and in 1831, due to lack of customers and some bad investment decisions, Brown's business began to deteriorate. That year and continuing into 1832, Brown, Dianthe, and several of the children contracted malaria, further damaging Brown's business fortunes and Dianthe's already frail health. Despite her failing health, Dianthe became pregnant again, and died on August 10, 1832, just shortly after giving birth to a son, who also died.<sup>74</sup>

Still weak from his own bout of malaria, Brown could not care for his five remaining children and simultaneously attempt to salvage his business. He hired a housekeeper, whose 16-year-old sister Mary Day occasionally came along to spin cloth. Mary captured Brown's attention, and after virtually no courtship, Brown proposed. The two were married June 14, 1833 – less than a year after Dianthe's death.<sup>75</sup>

During this period, abolitionism swept through New England and the surrounding states, beginning with the very generation that encompassed Brown himself: the young New Englanders who had been raised in strict religious households. These young evangelicals gave birth to a militant abolitionist movement. They realized that many of the societal traits they were hoping to reform, including gambling, drinking, sexual abuse, and dueling, were characteristic of slaveholders. Therefore, they decided that opposition to slavery was certainly the most solid affirmation of a Christian identity and a commitment to a life of evangelical involvement.

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<sup>73</sup> Oates, 21; Reynolds, 50.

<sup>74</sup> Oates, 24-25; Reynolds, 48.

<sup>75</sup> Oates, 26; Villard, 24-25.

These young activists, including William Lloyd Garrison, also were reacting to increasing conflicts between slaves and slaveholders. The 1830s saw Nat Turner's rebellion in Virginia, a slave uprising in Jamaica, and slaveholders in South Carolina threatening to secede from the Union during the Nullification Crisis. These events led the young evangelicals to believe that the only way to reform the United States was to eradicate slavery entirely. These new abolitionists eschewed their ancestors' ideas of gradual emancipation or manumission and demanded immediate emancipation for all slaves.<sup>76</sup>

Into this paradigm landed John Brown. Even in the North, this idea of immediate emancipation was extremely radical for the time because the immediatists demanded that hundreds of millions of dollars' worth of slaves convert instantly to millions of black American citizens. The immediatists, however, truly believed they were supporting a conservative endeavor. They saw their attacks on slavery as natural extensions of their evangelical religious beliefs, which were deeply rooted in traditional conservatism. Also, unlike many radical groups, they were not advocating violent revolution. Apart from opposing racism, they were completely aligned with traditional Protestant values. Unfortunately, these immediatists were politically naïve and made a miscalculation which would later cost John Brown his life: believing that other Northerners were not racist and would rise up to help them in the cause of immediate emancipation.<sup>77</sup>

In the early 1830s, however, John Brown was still two decades away from this fatal mistake and was quickly caught up in emancipation fever. During this decade, he began reading William Lloyd Garrison's *The Liberator*. Brown enjoyed Garrison's vehement denunciations of slavery, and the periodical had a profound effect on Brown. Brown later credited Garrison with

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<sup>76</sup> James Brewer Stewart, *Holy Warriors: The Abolitionists and American Slavery* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1976), 42-45.

<sup>77</sup> Stewart, 49-50.

converting him fully to the abolitionist cause, though he never became a Garrisonian. By 1837, Garrison had transformed from abolitionist to Christian perfectionist, hoping to create a perfect world under God. A hardnosed Calvinist, Brown rejected the idea that man could be perfected in this way, since only God was perfect. Later in life, Brown also dismissed Garrison's nonviolent approach to abolition. While Brown preferred a peaceful solution to the sectional tension over slavery, he knew it was highly unlikely.<sup>78</sup>

Though the background for his later activities was forming in the 1830s, Brown had more pressing personal concerns. His family was still growing; five more sons were born between October 1835 and December 1840. Brown's business in Crawford County deteriorated so badly that he had to move his brood back to Ohio in 1835. With so many mouths to feed, his debts piled up, forcing him to declare bankruptcy in September 1842.<sup>79</sup>

Back in Ohio, Brown still assisted slaves on the Underground Railroad, which utilized Hudson as an important stop. But in November 1837, the murder of antislavery editor Elijah Lovejoy transformed Brown's part-time commitment to abolition into a violent obsession. At a memorial prayer meeting for Lovejoy in Hudson, the minister's words about Lovejoy's sacrifice so moved Brown that he suddenly rose to his feet, raised his right hand, and announced, "Here, before God, in the presence of these witnesses, from this time, I consecrate my life to the destruction of slavery!"<sup>80</sup> Brown at this same time openly announced his commitment to antislavery violence and persuaded his family members to pledge themselves to armed warfare against slavery.<sup>81</sup>

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<sup>78</sup> Oates, 30-31; Reynolds, 51, 53.

<sup>79</sup> Oates, 34-36, 45-50.

<sup>80</sup> Quoted in Reynolds, 65.

<sup>81</sup> Reynolds, 65.

The glowing embers of Brown's fury against slavery were stoked in 1846 when Brown moved to Springfield, Massachusetts, to start a wool-selling business. While in New England, he continued reading radical abolitionist publications and made several immediate abolitionist friends in town. In 1848, Brown published an essay entitled "Sambo's Mistakes," in which he wrote as a black man named Sambo, who writes down all of his life's mistakes in the hopes that other blacks will learn from them. Sambo's biggest mistake, according to Brown, was submitting to white oppression instead of assuming his masculine, God-given responsibilities, by which one can assume Brown meant rising up against slaveholders to protect black families.<sup>82</sup>

The following years witnessed Brown increasingly entrenching himself in abolitionist activities. In November 1847, Brown met with Frederick Douglass and told him of his plan to destroy the value of slave property in the Allegheny Mountains by supplying men there with guns and ammunition. These men would periodically sneak into the nearby fields and persuade the slaves there to join them, thereby weakening slaveholders' power over their slaves and the entire slavery institution in that area.<sup>83</sup> In May 1848, the Browns moved to North Elba, New York, where wealthy abolitionist Gerrit Smith had set up a community for blacks to learn farming. Brown taught the blacks there how to farm and care for livestock.<sup>84</sup> In January 1851 to protect his black friends in Massachusetts from being captured and dragged back into slavery under the new Fugitive Slave Law, Brown officially organized forty-four black men and women into the League of Gileadites, whose purpose was to protect fugitive slaves from being recaptured, violently, if necessary. There is no evidence that the league ever committed violence, but Brown soon began talking about attacking the federal arsenal at Harpers Ferry.<sup>85</sup>

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<sup>82</sup> Oates, 54-60; Reynolds, 81, 85.

<sup>83</sup> Oates, 61-63; Reynolds, 103-104, 111.

<sup>84</sup> Oates, 67; Reynolds, 89.

<sup>85</sup> Oates, 73-75; Reynolds, 112; 121-122.

The attack, however, would have to wait. In late 1850, Brown was in financial ruin yet again. He took his family back to Ohio and spent the next three years traveling between Ohio and the East, trying to eke out a living and work out another round of lawsuits. During these three years, the Browns were almost constantly ill, first with measles, then with whooping cough, which killed a baby boy in May 1852 – the ninth child Brown had lost. Brown himself contracted malaria. About this same time, Frederick developed dementia, and Jason and John Jr. both turned to agnosticism. By 1854, virtually penniless and frustrated at home, Brown grew restless and desperate for an opportunity to escape.<sup>86</sup>

Opportunity knocked in 1854 with the passage of the Kansas-Nebraska Act, which divided unorganized western territory into the separate territories of Kansas and Nebraska without legislation regarding slavery. This overturned the Missouri Compromise, which had banned slavery there. Senator Stephen Douglas planned to allow popular sovereignty to dictate slavery in these territories and, hopefully, to maintain peace between North and South. John Brown was apoplectic that Congress would allow even the possibility of slavery in these territories. William H. Seward of New York shared Brown's ire and issued this general statement to southerners: "Come on, then, gentlemen of the Slave States; since there is no escaping your challenge, I accept it in behalf of the cause of freedom. We will engage in competition for the virgin soil of Kansas, and God give the victory to the side that is stronger in numbers as it is in right."<sup>87</sup>

Here was an opportunity for a restless man like John Brown. In October 1854, three of Brown's sons, Owen, Salmon, and Frederick, departed for Kansas to be counted among the antislavery settlers there. In the spring of 1855 they established "Brown's Station" near the

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<sup>86</sup> Oates, 76-79; Reynolds, 93.

<sup>87</sup> Quoted in Oates, 80.



Pottawatomie Creek, eight miles west of the town of Osawatomie and not far from the Missouri border. Jason and John Jr. and their families arrived soon after. Their letters to their father spoke of the buildup of proslavery forces in their area and asked Brown to raise money for guns, which he did readily and delivered the weapons personally. He took with him his daughter Ruth's husband, Henry Thompson, and his sixteen-year-old son, Oliver. The trio arrived at Brown's Station in October.<sup>88</sup>

Political turmoil rocked Kansas that winter. In January 1856, the Browns heard rumors that the Missourian "border ruffians" were conspiring to force slavery on Kansas through violence and subterfuge. Violent conflict between free soilers and slavery supporters broke out in the streets of Kansas towns. On their way to help defend Lawrence from a proslavery army that had arrived with cannon in late May, Brown, his sons, and a few other men learned of Rep. Preston Brooks's brutal beating of Senator Charles Sumner in retaliation for Sumner's speech "The Crime Against Kansas," in the U.S. Senate. On May 23, an enraged Brown told his men his plan to sweep the Pottawatomie Creek of its influential proslavery leaders by dragging them from their homes and executing them with the broadswords he had carried with him since leaving the East. Using his fiery rhetoric, Brown persuaded them all to join him. Five Browns would participate in this mission: John Brown, Frederick, Oliver, Salmon, and Owen.<sup>89</sup>

Brown's bloody rampage began the night of Saturday, May 24, 1856, and spilled over onto the Sabbath. That night, Brown's men hacked to death James P. Doyle, a prominent proslavery leader in the Pottawatomie area, and his two oldest sons; Allen Wilkinson, another proslavery leader; and William Sherman. Though the carnage was Brown's idea, he did not actually kill anyone that night. He reportedly put a bullet into James Doyle's head, but only after

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<sup>88</sup> Oates, 85, 88-89; Reynolds, 135-137.

<sup>89</sup> Oates, 121, 123, 126-133; Reynolds, 157-158, 171; Villard, 51, 153.

Doyle was already dead. When their work was finished, Brown and his men rejoined John Jr.'s command just north of the Pottawatomie Creek.<sup>90</sup>

The Browns had to go into hiding because both free-state and proslavery settlers were angry with them, albeit for different reasons. Proslavery settlers naturally were upset that Brown had murdered five of their own, and the free soilers were angry that Brown had resorted to such violence. Even John Jr. and Jason were not safe. Though they had taken no part in the murders, they were suspected because they were John Brown's sons. Both were soon captured and incarcerated. Jason was released in June, but John Jr. remained imprisoned until early September.<sup>91</sup> Throughout the summer, the Browns participated in skirmishes and guerilla warfare against proslavery Missourians all across the southeastern part of the Kansas Territory.<sup>92</sup> Early on August 30, a Missourian shot and killed Frederick Brown. Kansas was now too dangerous for Brown, so he returned to the East and mounted a fundraising campaign for a new scheme.<sup>93</sup>

Just after New Year's 1857, Brown met with several prominent Bostonians, who along with Gerrit Smith would become Brown's "Secret Six" – the financial backers for his Harpers Ferry raid. They were Franklin Sanborn, a twenty-five-year-old supporter of immediate emancipation; Theodore Parker, a fiery preacher who liked Brown's vehement exhortations about slavery; Dr. Samuel Gridley Howe, a militant abolitionist who was terrified that Missourians would raid Kansas again; George Luther Stearns, a close friend of Charles Sumner;

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<sup>90</sup> Reynolds, 171-173; Villard, 158-164; Oates, 135-136.

<sup>91</sup> Oates, 139-140, 145; Reynolds, 180-181.

<sup>92</sup> Oates, 147, 163-173; Reynolds, 189; Villard, 179, 185.

<sup>93</sup> Oates, 168-169; Reynolds, 200-208.

and Thomas Wentworth Higginson, one of New England's angriest and most outspoken abolitionists.<sup>94</sup>

In mid April, Brown slipped up to North Elba for a brief visit with his family and to collect Owen, the only son who still wished to participate in his father's campaign. The pair traveled to Kansas, where they discovered the slavery issue was slowly reaching a peaceful resolution there, thanks to a fair and diplomatic new governor. To occupy his time, John Brown began laying out more concrete plans for his Harpers Ferry raid. On August 9, he wrote to his friend and drillmaster Hugh Forbes, describing the Harpers Ferry plan earnestly.<sup>95</sup>

Brown wanted execute a direct attack on a slave region, and he estimated that 200 to 500 blacks would join them within the first twenty-four hours of the attack. Half of these freed blacks would take over the federal armory at Harpers Ferry, while the other half would split into groups and raid plantations, freeing additional slaves, who would also join them. They could then retreat into the Allegheny Mountains, from whence the invasion would spread south along the mountains, deep into other slave states, and throw the institution of slavery into such instability that Southerners would willingly abandon it.<sup>96</sup>

The two men eventually reached a compromise plan that did not leave so much responsibility in the hands of liberated blacks, whom Forbes did not trust to act responsibly. Forbes also made plans for a military school to train Brown's recruits in Kansas. Forbes, however, angrily departed Brown's company in November 1857 when Brown could pay him only \$60 for three months' work. Quietly, because he was not sure to whom Forbes may have revealed his whereabouts, John Brown returned to Kansas November 5 and quickly recruited

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<sup>94</sup> Oates, 181-189; Reynolds, 208-209; Villard, 271-273.

<sup>95</sup> Reynolds, 237-240.

<sup>96</sup> Ibid., 240-241.

nine men, including his son Owen, and took them to Iowa, where he told them their ultimate destination was Virginia.<sup>97</sup>

In February and March 1858, Brown met with the Secret Six and discussed his plan for the raid and his Provisional Constitution, which would create a new government for the territory he conquered. This constitution would establish a new state in which blacks would organize a complete community with farms, workshops, schools, and churches. The Provisional Constitution was an only slightly revised version of the U.S. Constitution; the main difference being that Brown's constitution called for the equality of all races, though its rules for citizens' behavior limited free speech and civil liberties.<sup>98</sup> The men also agreed that violence was their only remaining option against slavery because Kansas slaveholders were using political channels to protect slavery in the territory. They agreed to raise funds for Brown's "experiment."<sup>99</sup>

Brown knew the success of his experiment depended on his gathering support. He knew most abolitionists would not go along with him because the North opposed slavery, but it was also virulently racist; Northerners opposed slavery but favored laws limiting the freedoms of blacks. Brown needed angry young white men, and he began by recruiting his own sons in North Elba. Oliver and Watson agreed to join him, as did Dauphin and William Thompson, brothers of Brown's son-in-law Henry Thompson.<sup>100</sup>

In late April Brown gathered his recruits from Iowa and took them to Chatham, Canada, where he addressed a convention of forty-six black men. In his address, Brown revealed his Harpers Ferry plan and said he was certain Southern slaves were ready for a revolt. The convention delegates unanimously approved and signed Brown's provisional constitution and

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<sup>97</sup> Oates, 212-223; Reynolds, 244-245; Villard, 307-309.

<sup>98</sup> Oates, 229-232; Reynolds, 252-255.

<sup>99</sup> Oates, 235-236; Reynolds, 258.

<sup>100</sup> Oates, 240-241; Reynolds, 294.

chose Brown as Commander-in-Chief. This convention, however, produced only one black man who would fight at Harpers Ferry: Osborne Perry Anderson, a mulatto who had been born free in Pennsylvania.<sup>101</sup>

Invigorated by the convention, Brown wanted to launch his attack immediately, but a still-angry Hugh Forbes had spoken to several politicians and partially revealed Brown's plot. Anxious, one senator wrote to Samuel Gridley Howe, asking him what he knew of Brown's plans. Howe immediately alerted the five other members of the Secret Six, who feared that Forbes may have implicated them. The Six persuaded Brown to return to Kansas as a diversionary tactic and promised Brown they would give him more money for the Harpers Ferry maneuver if he stayed in the territory until the spring. Brown complied, and his men disbursed to find work until the spring.<sup>102</sup>

Brown was disappointed by how much Kansas had calmed in his absence; on August 2, 1858, Kansas voters defeated the proslavery constitution 11,300 to 1,788, thereby settling the slavery question in the territory for good. On the night of December 20-21, Brown and another man led separate columns into Missouri and ransacked two planters' homes, shooting one of the planters dead. Brown and his men liberated eleven slaves and confiscated wagons, horses, mules, and other property before slipping back across the border into Kansas.<sup>103</sup> This expedition nearly started another civil war along the tense Kansas-Missouri border, and President James Buchanan offered a \$250 reward for Brown's capture. Brown decided that Kansas had experienced enough bloodshed on his behalf, and having held up his end of the bargain with the Secret Six, he was ready to move his war back East.<sup>104</sup>

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<sup>101</sup> Oates, 241-246; Reynolds, 260-261, 264; Villard, 330-332.

<sup>102</sup> Oates, 247-252; Reynolds, 264-267.

<sup>103</sup> Oates, 2658-262; Reynolds, 276-279; Villard, 367-369, 374.

<sup>104</sup> Oates, 264; Villard, 378.

On January 20, 1859, Brown led his men, the eleven freed slaves, and all the confiscated livestock and wagons out of Kansas and headed east, confident that God would ensure his eventual triumph in the South. Brown traveled first to North Elba for some rest and a visit with his family. On June 16, Brown bid farewell to his wife and children and rode out of New York for the last time. On June 23, Brown, accompanied by Oliver, Owen, and a friend named Jeremiah Anderson, crossed into Pennsylvania and headed toward Harpers Ferry, where Brown's son Watson and William and Dauphin Thompson would join them later.<sup>105</sup>

Even today, Harpers Ferry is a small town. In 1859, only 2,551 people lived there: 1,212 whites, 1,251 free blacks, and 88 slaves. But Brown was not interested in numbers. He focused on the main buildings in town: the federal armory, the federal arsenal, and a rifle works. Brown's colleague, John E. Cook, had arrived in Harpers Ferry the year before and had taken a job on a canal just across the Potomac River. In his spare time, Cook studied the layout of the federal buildings and the rifle works.<sup>106</sup>

When the Browns and Jeremiah Anderson arrived at Harpers Ferry on July 3, 1859, Cook knew the lay of the land by heart. Brown rented a two-story farmhouse about seven miles away from town on the Maryland side of the Potomac. There, Brown studied maps and Cook's reports while his recruits trickled in: William and Dauphin Thompson, Watson Brown, Charles Tidd, Aaron Stevens, William Henry Leeman, Albert Hazlett, Osborne Anderson, brothers Barclay and Edwin Coppoc, Stewart Taylor, and Dangerfield Newby, a 48-year-old free mulatto who hoped to liberate his wife and children during the raid. Brown's Secretary of War, John Henri Kagi,

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<sup>105</sup> Oates, 272-273; Reynolds, 293-294; Villard, 401-402.

<sup>106</sup> Oates, 275; Reynolds, 295-296.

was in Chambersburg, Pennsylvania, guarding their weapons cache and preparing to move it to the farmhouse.<sup>107</sup>

In August, Brown revealed to his recruits his plan to attack Harpers Ferry and capture the government armory and arsenal and the rifle works. Once they controlled the town, they would hold it until dissident whites and slaves from the area rose up and joined them. Brown knew that Maryland and western Virginia held many people who opposed slavery, and he believed many of them would join him once the attack began.<sup>108</sup>

Once Brown had all the guns at the armory and arsenal, he would move quickly southward, sending armed parties to liberate more slaves, confiscate arms and provisions, take hostages, and generally spread terror throughout Virginia. Brown no longer dreamt of taking refuge in the mountains and striking plantations sporadically; now he envisioned an all-out war on slavery. After liberating Virginia's slaves, he and his men would continue on to the Deep South, with tremendous slave support in Tennessee, Alabama, Mississippi, Georgia, and the Carolinas. If the United States Army attempted to intervene, he believed he could easily defeat it through guerilla warfare.<sup>109</sup>

Brown wanted to wait for the perfect timing to attack Harpers Ferry. His weapons and several additional recruits did not arrive until late September. On October 15, three more recruits tracked Brown down at the farmhouse. They were John Copeland and Lewis Leary, blacks from Oberlin, Ohio, and Francis Jackson Meriam, a white man who contributed \$600 in gold. Finally, Brown was ready. He announced the attack would begin on Sunday, October 16. As in Kansas, Brown had chosen the Sabbath to perform his bloody work.<sup>110</sup>

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<sup>107</sup> Oates, 275-276; Reynolds, 297.

<sup>108</sup> Oates, 277-278.

<sup>109</sup> Ibid., 278-279.

<sup>110</sup> Oates, 281-288; Reynolds, 298, 304-306.

The morning of October 16, Brown led his men, comprising sixteen whites and five blacks, in a final worship service before revealing his final plan. Owen, Barclay Coppoc, and Francis Meriam would stay behind at the farmhouse as a rear guard, eventually moving the guns and pikes to a schoolhouse near the Potomac where Brown expected slaves and dissident whites would join them. The other eighteen men would march with Brown to the Ferry, cutting telegraph wires and taking prisoner the watchman at the Ferry Bridge. Watson and Taylor would guard the Potomac Bridge until morning with pikes and rifles, and Oliver and William Thompson would do the same on the Shenandoah Bridge. Once the bridges were secure, Jerry Anderson and Dauphin Thompson would take over the engine house on Potomac. Hazlett and Edwin Coppoc would seize and hold the armory, while Kagi would assist Copeland in taking over the rifle factory. Stevens and Anderson would then go into the surrounding countryside, liberate slaves to send back to Brown at the Ferry, and take the slaveholders captive.<sup>111</sup>

Brown was not picky about who his hostages were, save one: Colonel Lewis Washington, great-grandnephew of the first president. Brown insisted that Washington be taken hostage and forced to turn over to Osborne Anderson the sword that Frederick the Great had presented to George Washington. Brown fully understood the symbolism of this act. As Reynolds writes, “He (Brown) wanted a patriotic weapon of white America, associated with the Revolution, to be given to a black man by a descendent of George Washington.”<sup>112</sup>

Brown encouraged his men not to shed blood needlessly, but not to hesitate to defend themselves, either. All the men knew they might be killed in the attack, but they felt their cause was worth the sacrifice. Brown himself realized the raid stood a strong chance of failure, but even if it failed, the attempt would provoke such a great sectional crisis that, Brown hoped, a war

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<sup>111</sup> Oates, 288; Reynolds, 307.

<sup>112</sup> Reynolds, 307.



would break out that would obliterate slavery in the United States forever. Brown believed that no matter what happened, God would use the attack to suit His purpose.<sup>113</sup>

At eight p.m., John Brown, with his flowing white beard, faced his army and said, “Men, get on your arms; we will proceed to the Ferry.” Then the group departed.<sup>114</sup>

The raid began as planned. Brown’s men captured the Potomac and Shenandoah bridges without incident and successfully cut the telegraph wires. The men swiftly took over the armory and the arsenal, easily pinning down the only watchman on guard. The men also took hostage a few people in the street and led them to the engine house near the gate while Brown led a small detachment up a hill, seizing Hall’s rifle works and capturing yet another prisoner.<sup>115</sup>

After securing the rifle works, the men who were to seize hostages from the surrounding countryside successfully captured Colonel Washington, along with the famous sword. Upon receiving the sword, Brown said to Washington, “I wanted you particularly for the moral effect it would give our cause having one of your name, as a prisoner.” Brown then buckled the sword at his waist and would wear it in battle the next day.<sup>116</sup>

Now Brown’s grand scheme hit a snag. His men had barely finished barricading the railroad bridge at the Potomac when an express train from Wheeling came barreling down the track. The men stopped the train, and in the commotion that ensued, one of the raiders shot and killed Heyward Shepherd, the station’s baggage master and a free black, who had innocently come down the trestlework looking for the night watchman. Ironically, his was the first blood spilled in Brown’s war against slavery.<sup>117</sup>

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<sup>113</sup> Oates, 288-289.

<sup>114</sup> Quoted in Oates, 289, and Reynolds, 308.

<sup>115</sup> Oates, 291; Reynolds, 311.

<sup>116</sup> Quoted in Oates, 291-292.

<sup>117</sup> Oates, 292; Reynolds, 316.

The gunfire at the tracks aroused the townspeople, who quickly gathered in the streets with whatever weapons they could muster, some arriving with rifles and some with only kitchen knives. They thought a slave insurrection had sprung up, and several panic-stricken townspeople fled into the hills with their families. Brown had succeeded in terrorizing the town, but he had gone too far: he had also terrorized the very people he wanted to join him. Many blacks cowered in the midst of the white crowd, every bit as terrified as the whites.<sup>118</sup>

Word of the attack spread much more quickly than Brown had anticipated. Brown's men foolishly had allowed the express train to continue on its journey, and it quickly spread the news to Monocacy and Frederick, and from there to Richmond, Baltimore, and Washington, D.C. The news also quickly reached the nearby towns of Charles Town, Shepherdstown, and Martinsburg, where men formed militias and rushed to aid the Ferry.<sup>119</sup>

By eleven a.m. Monday, October, 17, a full-fledged battle raged at Harpers Ferry. Armed farmers and militiamen pummeled both the rifle works and the engine house of the armory, where Brown and a dozen of his men took cover. Kagi sent Brown a stream of messages from his position at the rifle works, begging Brown to call off the raid and allow the men to flee into the hills while they still could. For some reason, Brown ignored Kagi's pleas. Survivors of the raid later admitted they did not know what Brown was waiting for. Several of them reported that Brown looked confused. Some scholars believe that Brown was puzzled that no slaves had risen up to join him and was at a loss for what to do. It is also possible that Brown had decided to make a martyr of himself and wanted to be defeated.<sup>120</sup>

While Brown wasted time, militia from Charles Town arrived on the Maryland side of the Potomac and routed Oliver Brown and the other raiders on guard at the bridge, cutting off

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<sup>118</sup> Oates, 292-293.

<sup>119</sup> Oates, 293; Reynolds, 317.

<sup>120</sup> Oates, 293-294; Reynolds, 315, 318-319.

Brown's only route back to his rear guard at the farmhouse. Oliver and another sentinel returned to the armory, but Dangerfield Newby died from a sniper's bullet partway there. Outraged townspeople sliced off Newby's ears as souvenirs, brutally pummeled his body with sticks, and left the body in the gutter for a pack of hogs to ravage.<sup>121</sup>

Brown now had to admit he could not wait for white or slave reinforcements. He was cut off from anyone who could help him, so he decided to negotiate a ceasefire, using his hostages as leverage. He sent Will Thompson out of the engine house under a flag of truce, but the angry mob outside shot Thompson in the head and dumped his body into the Potomac River. Desperate, Brown sent Aaron Stevens and Watson out under another white flag, but the mob gunned both of them down as soon as they stepped out of the protection of the engine house. Watson managed to crawl back to the engine house, where he collapsed at his father's feet. One of Brown's hostages volunteered to leave the engine house and carry Stevens to the railroad station, where he received medical attention.<sup>122</sup>

After these shootings, Brown's small army fell apart. By two p.m. Monday, militia had stormed the rifle works, shot and killed Kagi, Leary, and William Leeman, and had taken Copeland prisoner. Meanwhile in Washington, D.C., President Buchanan heard reports that 700 whites and blacks had invaded Harpers Ferry. He sent ninety U.S. Marines to Harpers Ferry, where Brevet Colonel Robert E. Lee of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Cavalry took command, assisted by Lieutenant J.E.B. Stuart of the 1<sup>st</sup> Cavalry. Lee found the situation was not as bad as the president had feared. Brown was trapped inside the engine house, and reports from the townspeople let Lee know that he was certainly not up against 700 men.<sup>123</sup>

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<sup>121</sup> Oates, 294; Reynolds, 319-320.

<sup>122</sup> Oates, 294-297; Reynolds, 320-321.

<sup>123</sup> Oates, 295-298; Reynolds, 321.

Inside the engine house, Brown paced. Watson and Oliver, who had been shot shortly after the mayor was killed, lay side-by-side on the floor in intense pain. Oliver died sometime during the night. When Tuesday morning broke, Brown remained in the engine house with only Edwin Coppoc, Jeremiah Anderson, Dauphin Thompson, and Shields Green. They took their places at gun holes in the walls, Brown keeping one hand on Watson's fading pulse all the while.<sup>124</sup>

Early that morning, sensing Brown's fading strength, Lee sent Stuart to the engine house with a note for Brown, calling for the old man's unconditional surrender. As Lee expected, Brown refused, saying he would surrender only on terms that allowed him and his men to escape. Stuart told Brown that Lee would agree only to the terms on the note, then jumped away from the door and signaled the Marines to rush the engine house.<sup>125</sup>

The raiders fired at the onslaught, but killed only one Marine. The rest of the Marines charged through the broken-down doors, killing Jeremiah Anderson and Dauphin Thomas. When Colonel Washington identified Brown, Lieutenant Israel Green struck Brown with his light dress sword before the old man could turn and fire his rifle. Green tried to run Brown through, but his thrust struck either bone or Brown's belt buckle and the flimsy sword bent double. Nevertheless, Brown fell from the blow, and Green beat him with the hilt of his sword until he was unconscious. Brown and the other dead or wounded insurrectionists were carried outside. After being examined by a doctor, Brown was locked up in the paymaster's office of the armory, where Aaron Stevens lay gravely wounded. Shields Green, Edwin Coppoc, and

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<sup>124</sup> Oates, 299-300; Reynolds, 326-327.

<sup>125</sup> Oates, 300.

Watson Brown were locked in the watch room of the engine house, where Watson died Wednesday morning, October 19.<sup>126</sup>

John Brown's war on slavery had lasted thirty-six hours and cost seventeen lives: two slaves who had joined the rear guard in Maryland, three townsmen, a slaveholder, one Marine, and ten of Brown's men had been killed or fatally wounded, including two of Brown's sons. Five of the raiders, John and Watson Brown, Aaron Stevens, Shields Green, and Edwin Coppoc had been captured. The rest escaped into the Maryland mountains, though two were captured in Pennsylvania several days later. Not a single slave had come to Harpers Ferry of his own volition. Those whom Brown had "liberated" refused to fight once the shooting began. Brown's attack on Harpers Ferry had failed.<sup>127</sup>

After Brown's capture, a column from the Baltimore militia raided the schoolhouse where Owen Brown had been waiting for reinforcements. The schoolhouse was abandoned, but the militia found boxes of revolvers and carbines. Later that morning, a detachment searching Brown's rented farmhouse discovered a carpetbag full of incriminating documents, including a copy of Brown's Provisional Constitution, a document titled, "Vindication of the Invasion," in which Brown defended his decision to attack Harpers Ferry, and several personal letters. Virginia Governor Henry A. Wise had all the evidence he needed to prosecute Brown.<sup>128</sup>

Early Tuesday afternoon, Governor Wise, Senator James M. Mason of Virginia, and Representative Clement L. Vallandigham of Ohio, along with a slew of officers, newspaper reporters, and other U.S. congressmen, descended on Harpers Ferry. Mason interrogated Brown, who refused to name any financial backers for the raid. Brown cautiously avoided saying anything that would implicate any of his sympathizers, but within two days of Brown's capture,

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<sup>126</sup> Oates, 300-302; Reynolds, 327-328.

<sup>127</sup> Oates, 301; Reynolds, 314.

<sup>128</sup> Oates, 301.

several newspapers, including *New York Times* and *New York Herald*, published the letters Lee's men had retrieved at the Maryland farmhouse. These letters implicated all the members of the Secret Six, as well as Senator Henry Wilson. On October 27, the *Herald* called for the arrest of Smith, Frederick Douglass, Sanborn, and Howe.<sup>129</sup>

In the face of this call for his arrest, Gerrit Smith suffered a mental collapse and spent two months in an insane asylum, but not before he destroyed documents in his possession that linked him to Brown. For the rest of his life he vehemently denied ever being affiliated with Brown. Frederick Douglass, Franklin Sanborn, Samuel Gridley Howe, and George Stearns all fled to Canada. Douglass continued to England, from whence he sent a letter to Northern newspapers in which he denied any involvement with Harpers Ferry. Sanborn destroyed all the documents he had linking him to Brown, and Howe later publicly denied any involvement with Brown. Of the Six, only Thomas W. Higginson and Theodore Parker defended the raid.<sup>130</sup>

Meanwhile in Virginia, Governor Wise knew Brown had to be tried quickly, otherwise angry Virginians most likely would lynch him before he could be brought to justice. Though Brown had attacked and seized federal property, Governor Wise chose to prosecute Brown in Virginia, because he was afraid federal courts would move too slowly.<sup>131</sup> A grand jury in Charles Town on October 26 charged Brown with murdering four whites and one black, for conspiring with slaves to rebel, and for committing treason against Virginia. Brown's court-appointed lawyers argued that Brown could not have committed treason against the state of Virginia because he was never a resident of the Commonwealth and, therefore, owed it no allegiance. Most historians agree that Brown certainly should have been tried in federal court

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<sup>129</sup> Oates, 312; Reynolds, 340-341.

<sup>130</sup> Oates, 312-315; Reynolds, 341-343.

<sup>131</sup> Oates, 307-308; Reynolds, 337.

and not in Virginia. Brown pleaded “not guilty” to the charges, and the jury set his trial to begin the next day.

Brown was tried separately from the other raiders, and due to his wounds, he lay on a cot in full view of the courtroom. He maintained his composure throughout most of the trial, despite a surprise from his attorneys. At the beginning of the trial, one of Brown’s attorneys introduced a telegram from a man who claimed he had observed Brown and his family as they lived in and around Akron for many years. He claimed that insanity was hereditary in the Brown family and that one of Brown’s maternal aunts died of it. He also claimed that a daughter of that aunt had been living in a lunatic asylum for the past two years, two other first cousins had also been in an asylum, and another first cousin was currently insane and “under close restraint.” To this telegram, Brown’s attorney added that Brown had admitted instances of insanity on his mother’s side and that his first wife had exhibited symptoms, as had two of their sons, Frederick and John Jr.<sup>132</sup>

Current historians agree that Brown’s attorney did not believe Brown was mentally ill, but was trying to save Brown’s life by having him placed in an asylum. Brown did not exhibit any of the symptoms that modern psychiatrists associate with mental illness, such as disturbed sleep patterns, severe mood swings, loss of concentration, or persistent sadness. Brown himself vehemently denied insanity, and the issue never again arose at the trial.<sup>133</sup>

Brown maintained his relaxed demeanor during all of the prosecution witnesses’ testimonies, getting angry only when Harry Hunter, a relative of the special prosecutor, took the stand. Hunter graphically described how he and a saloonkeeper shot William Thompson and flung his body into the river. Enraged, Brown rose from his cot and argued that this was not a

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<sup>132</sup> Oates, 324; Reynolds, 350; Villard, 489-490.

<sup>133</sup> Oates, 324; Reynolds, 351.

fair trial and he did not have proper counsel. Brown's attorneys withdrew from the case and were quickly replaced by Samuel Chilton of Washington and Hiram Griswold of Cleveland. The trial continued without allowing the new lawyers any preparation time.<sup>134</sup>

On October 31, the defense and prosecution gave their summations. The jury took only forty-five minutes to decide and declare that Brown was guilty as charged. On November 2, Judge Parker sentenced Brown to hang on December 2.<sup>135</sup>

In the month before Brown's execution, his lawyers made a last attempt to save his life by persuading Governor Wise that Brown was insane and should be placed in an asylum, but affidavits from Brown's friends and family alleging his insanity did nothing to sway the governor. When Governor Wise received the affidavits he did not investigate Brown's mental stability. Wise had no doubts that Brown was perfectly sane, and he refused to stay Brown's execution. Brown, in fact, wanted to hang. He wrote, "I am worth inconceivably more to *hang* than for any other purpose." He knew his death would make him a martyr, and he beseeched his friends not to attempt to break him out of jail.<sup>136</sup>

Brown spent most of his final month of life writing letters to friends and family, asking them not to grieve for him because he was fulfilling God's plan. On November 30, he wrote his last letter to Mary and his children, giving his advice on how to live their lives after his death. He told them to love and fear God, study their Bibles, and abhor slavery. He also asked them not to be ashamed on his account. He felt blessed to be executed for carrying out God's work.<sup>137</sup>

On December 1, Mary came to see her husband for the last time. The couple had dinner together and calmly discussed Mary's plans for her life after Brown's execution. Brown kept

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<sup>134</sup> Oates, 325; Reynolds, 352-353; Villard, 491-492.

<sup>135</sup> Oates, 327; Reynolds, 357; Villard, 499.

<sup>136</sup> Quoted in Oates, 335, and Reynolds, 370.

<sup>137</sup> Trodd and Stauffer, 157-159.



control of himself until Mary had to leave. He wanted her to stay with him during his last night, but Governor Wise had ordered that Mary must return to Harpers Ferry. Brown momentarily lost his temper, then checked himself. He was composed when he bid Mary goodbye, then watched as she departed for Harpers Ferry to await his coffin. She did not want to witness the execution, preferring instead to stay at her hotel until it was over and to accompany her husband's body by train to North Elba for burial on the Brown farm.<sup>138</sup>

Brown awoke at dawn on December 2, read his Bible, and wrote a last note to Mary. His execution was scheduled for eleven a.m. When the guard removed him from his cell, Brown walked out without hesitation. He gave his Bible to the guard and his silver watch to the jailer, both of whom had been kind to him. As he walked down the jail's corridor, he bid farewell to the other captive raiders, saying, "God bless you, my men. May we all meet in Heaven." Then the guards escorted him into the street.<sup>139</sup> On his way out of the jail, Brown handed one of the guards a final message: "I John Brown am now quite *certain* that the crimes of this *guilty, land:* will never be purged *away*; but with Blood. I had *as I now think: vainly* flattered myself that without *very much* bloodshed; it might be done."<sup>140</sup>

Brown's execution took place in a thirty-five acre field at the southeast end of Charles Town. Brown rode there in the back of a wagon, sitting atop his own coffin. Professor Thomas J. Jackson, in command of a group of cadets from the Virginia Military Institute, later wrote that as Brown approached the scaffold he saw only "unflinching firmness" in Brown's manner. Professor Jackson and his cadets represented only a fraction of the total military presence there that day. About 3,000 soldiers were on hand to keep order, including Major General Robert E. Lee and a young John Wilkes Booth. No strangers were allowed to enter the town that day, and

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<sup>138</sup> Oates, 349; Reynolds, 390-391; Villard, 549-550.

<sup>139</sup> Oates, 349-351; Reynolds, 393.

<sup>140</sup> Quoted in Oates, 351; comes from John Brown Papers; Chicago Historical Society.

due to the large military presence, civilians could not witness the execution. Two lines of soldiers surrounded the scaffold, and behind that, sentries stood fifty feet apart. Additional soldiers trained cannon on the prison, the road to the execution, and the scaffold itself.<sup>141</sup>

On the platform, Brown stared straight ahead as the jailer removed his hat, adjusted the noose around his neck, and pulled a white linen hood over his head. The sheriff guided Brown onto the trap door, hooked the rope to the beam overhead, and tied Brown's ankles together. He asked Brown if he would like a signal when he cut the rope, but Brown declined. He requested only that he not be kept waiting too long, but Brown had to wait about ten minutes as all the military personnel scurried around the scaffold, trying to find their assigned positions. Finally the troops were in place, and the sheriff sliced the rope with a single blow from his hatchet, the platform fell, and Brown plummeted through the opening. He convulsed for about five minutes, but did not seem to fight death as most hanging victims do. When Brown stopped struggling, a VMI cadet called out, "So perish all such enemies of Virginia! All such enemies of the Union! All such foes of the human race!" Brown's body hung from the scaffold for about thirty-five minutes, after which a team of physicians examined the body to confirm death. They placed Brown's body in the black walnut coffin and sent it to the North Elba.<sup>142</sup>

Even before Brown's funeral on December 8, his raid and execution set off the final sectional crisis that would lead to the Civil War. On December 5, Southern Democrats in Congress blamed the Republican Party for Harpers Ferry and said they would break the Union apart before they would surrender a single Southern right. One Southern representative became so enraged that he attempted to stab Thaddeus Stevens of Pennsylvania with a Bowie knife in the middle of the House of Representatives. Meanwhile, the Southern Democrats in the Senate set

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<sup>141</sup> Oates, 351; Reynolds, 392-393; Villard, 555-556.

<sup>142</sup> Oates, 352-353; Reynolds, 396-398; Villard, 556.

up a special investigation committee to determine whether Republicans were involved in Brown's raid. Though the committee eventually announced that no Republicans conspired to aid Brown, the South as a whole was never fully convinced that the Republicans had nothing to do with the raid. In 1860, rumors swirled through the South that "Black Republicans" were going to invade. Abraham Lincoln's election that fall seemed to confirm their fears, and the Secession Winter began.<sup>143</sup>

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<sup>143</sup> Oates, 359-361.

## CHAPTER FOUR: THOMAS “STONEWALL” JACKSON

A product of Scots-Irish heritage, Thomas Jackson was born January 21, 1824. The third child of Jonathan and Julia Jackson, he had his mother’s brown hair and his father’s blue eyes. The parents christened him Thomas in honor of his maternal grandfather.<sup>144</sup> His childhood was difficult. In 1826, Julia Jackson was approaching her time of delivery of her fourth child when typhoid fever struck Thomas’s six-year-old sister, Elizabeth, who died on March 6. Jonathan Jackson also caught the disease and died March 26. The next day, Julia gave birth to a daughter, whom she named Laura Ann. Within three weeks, Julia Jackson had lost both her husband and her firstborn child. Only twenty-eight years old, she found herself a widow with a new baby and two young sons to care for.<sup>145</sup>

On November 4, 1830, after struggling for four and a half years to care for her children, Julia Jackson married Blake B. Woodson in Clarksburg. Woodson had a small law practice in Clarksburg, but he had eight children scattered about who were under his care, so he rarely had much money. His meager income could not provide for two adults and three additional children. He became verbally abusive to Warren, Thomas, and Laura, blaming them for his economic woes. He even encouraged the children to find other homes. Meanwhile, Julia became pregnant and her health deteriorated due to tuberculosis.<sup>146</sup> In 1831, Julia’s failing health rendered her unable to care for her children. Ten-year-old Warren was sent to live with Uncle Alfred Neale in Parkersburg, and Laura and Thomas went to Jackson’s Mill, despite Thomas’s pleading not to be

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<sup>144</sup> Robertson, 7; Tate, 20

<sup>145</sup> Robertson, 7; Tate, 20-21.

<sup>146</sup> Robertson, 8-9; Tate, 22.

sent away. The goodbye was painful, and Julia never recovered from having to part from her children, especially Thomas, who as an adult could never discuss the farewell.<sup>147</sup>

At Jackson's Mill, Thomas and Laura quickly bonded with their six bachelor uncles, who ranged in age from twenty-nine to ten years old, and their step-grandmother, Elizabeth Brake Jackson. In November 1831, Thomas and Laura rushed back to Fayette County to be with their dying mother, who succumbed to tuberculosis on December 4, after giving each of her children a final farewell and blessing. Thomas and Laura returned to Jackson's Mill before their mother was buried, and Blake Woodson erected no stone marker over his wife's grave, which was in an open space in the forest. Within eighteen months, Woodson himself died, and Thomas and Laura found themselves in the permanent care of their uncle, Cummins Jackson.<sup>148</sup>

Cummins Jackson was, at best, a big brother figure to Thomas and not much of a role model. He loved to sue in court, was uneducated, saw no need for religion, and loved gambling, horse racing, and drinking. Thomas had few moments of true boyhood, spending much of his childhood performing various tasks around the mill, such as cutting trees, caring for livestock, farming, and jockeying at his uncle's racetrack.<sup>149</sup>

On August 19, 1835, Elizabeth Brake Jackson died, leaving the two children with no maternal figure at the mill. With only the bachelor uncles left to care for the children, the family decided the mill was no longer a suitable environment for Thomas and Laura. Laura went to Parkersburg to live with the Neale family, and Thomas went to live with his father's sister Polly and her husband Isaac Brake on a farm near Clarksburg. After about a year of verbal and physical abuse at the hand of Isaac Brake, Thomas snuck away and walked to Jackson's Mill,

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<sup>147</sup> Robertson, 9; Frank E. Vandiver, *Mighty Stonewall* (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Co., 1957), 4.

<sup>148</sup> Robertson, 10-11.

<sup>149</sup> Robertson, 12-14; Vandiver, 7.

where his uncles welcomed him back joyfully. Thomas felt he was at home, and only once over the next seven years would he be absent from Lewis County for any extended period.<sup>150</sup>

Thomas wanted a formal education so he could escape dependence on his relatives. To support his nephew, Uncle Cummins persuaded a Lewis County man with a better-than-average education to start a school for boys at Jackson's Mill. At this school, Thomas discovered he loved learning, exhibited a natural talent for arithmetic, but had difficulty with all other subjects. To compensate, he spent hours studying one particular concept until he had mastered it – a characteristic that would persist later in life.<sup>151</sup>

After exhausting his available resources at the Jackson's Mill school, Thomas attended a school in Weston, where he met one of his closest teenage friends, Joseph A.J. Lightburn. They remained close companions until they became generals on opposite sides of the Civil War. The Lightburn family invited Jackson to accompany them to Broad Run Baptist Church, where Thomas got his first taste of religion. Christianity touched Jackson profoundly at this impressionable point in his life. By 1841, he prayed nightly. Like John Brown, he considered becoming a minister, but, uncomfortable with public speaking, he eventually abandoned the idea.<sup>152</sup>

In November 1840, Jackson took a job as a schoolteacher, teaching a three-month term in a log cabin near Jackson's Mill. A pay stub from this job is the first recorded instance of Jackson using the middle initial "J." in his name. Also around this time, the sixteen-year-old Jackson developed gastrointestinal pains that would plague him periodically for the next twenty years.

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<sup>150</sup> Robertson, 15-16; Vandiver, 5-6.

<sup>151</sup> Robertson, 17; Vandiver, 8.

<sup>152</sup> Robertson, 18-19; Vandiver, 10.

He even suffered a brief paralysis in 1841, but refused to accept a doctor's grim opinion that he would not survive to manhood.<sup>153</sup>

When Jackson was seventeen, one of his former teachers, now a justice of the peace for Lewis County, appointed Jackson a constable, a position he held for ten months. He did not especially enjoy the job, but it provided him long periods of free time to visit Laura in Parkersburg. On these trips, he would attend the Presbyterian church in Clarksburg, which he preferred to the Baptist church in Weston.<sup>154</sup>

In October 1841, Jackson traveled to Upshur County, where his brother Warren lay dying, partly because of the malaria he had contracted on a river trip he and Thomas had taken five years earlier. His death a month later left Laura as Jackson's only remaining immediate family member.<sup>155</sup>

That year, Lewis County resident and relative by marriage Samuel L. Hays entered the U.S. Congress and announced he would interview candidates for appointment to the United States Military Academy at West Point, New York. Jackson desperately wanted the appointment. West Point would provide the quality education he longed for, as well as a career. After extensive interviews and testing, Jackson lost the appointment to Gibson J. Butcher.<sup>156</sup>

Butcher, however, lasted only one day at West Point. He arrived June 3, 1842, and by June 4, was on his way back to Weston. The academy was too disciplined for his taste, and he disliked the cold climate. Several citizens of Weston immediately petitioned Congressman Hays to appoint Jackson. Endorsements in hand, Jackson appeared unannounced at Hays's congressional office in Washington, D.C. Hays had not yet heard that Butcher left West Point,

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<sup>153</sup> Robertson, 19.

<sup>154</sup> Robertson, 21; Tate, 24.

<sup>155</sup> Robertson, 22.

<sup>156</sup> Robertson, 22-23; Tate, 25-26; Vandiver, 12.

but he was familiar with Jackson's background and appointed him immediately. Jackson departed for West Point, arriving around noon on June 19. Three days after his arrival and perspiring profusely, Jackson took his admissions exam. He passed, but narrowly. He name appeared last on the list of "duly qualified" cadets, making him a member of the "Immortals" – the weakest section of the class.<sup>157</sup>

Because of his rural upbringing, and consequential lack of social training, Jackson stuck out among his classmates, who included some of the nation's most cultured young men. His classmates thought the shy and withdrawn orphan was, as one cadet put it, "a jackass" because he was so serious and humorless. Due to his gangling appearance and social awkwardness, however, the older cadets generally left him alone during the brutal hazing that was the tradition at West Point. The upperclassmen preferred instead to harass the gregarious and pompous George McClellan, who would also rise to fame during the Civil War.<sup>158</sup>

Jackson's academic life proved much more difficult than his social life. West Point academics were harsh and inflexible; cadets at Jackson's time had to pass at least ten subjects, nearly three-fourths of which were mathematics, science, and engineering. Learning took place mostly through memorization, and Jackson's first year was brutal. In his first semester he took French and three mathematics courses. As a child, he had excelled at arithmetic, but had never encountered algebra, geometry, and trigonometry, which vexed him to no end. He also had never had any exposure to foreign languages. Jackson limped through his coursework, keeping pace with his class only with the help of an older cadet. Part of Jackson's problem was his refusal to move on to the next lesson until he had mastered even the most mundane parts of the previous lesson. This practice often left him unprepared for the next day's classes and forced

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<sup>157</sup> Robertson, 24-29; Tate, 26-28; Vandiver, 13-14.

<sup>158</sup> Robertson, 27-30.



his professors to mark him low. In January 1843, Jackson barely passed the semiannual exams that determined whether first-year plebes stayed at West Point. On February 20, his probationary period ended, and Jackson signed an oath of allegiance to the United States and became a full-fledged cadet.<sup>159</sup>

That spring, Jackson's persistence paid off as he began improving slowly in academics. His improvement continued through his second year at the academy. He soon had a commanding grasp of geometry and calculus, and he ranked near the top of his class in mathematics. By the end of his third year, he ranked in the top third of his class, though he struggled with horsemanship. The former child jockey was awkward on horseback when it came to cavalry maneuvers, and he would never develop gracefulness atop a horse.<sup>160</sup>

Jackson had few close friends, but admiration for him among the cadets was widespread, despite what his classmates saw as eccentricities. Sometime around 1844 or 1845, Jackson's dyspepsia flared up again, and he developed several strange habits in an attempt to maintain good health. He refused to bend his body, especially while studying, fearing the compression would squash his internal organs and increase the risk of disease, and he often took long, rapid walks. Afraid that he might again be stricken with paralysis, he would pump his arms in the air for minutes at a time. His classmates, who were used to Jackson's quiet and sometimes strange ways, found these habits endearing.<sup>161</sup>

On May 27, 1846, the soon-to-graduate cadets learned that the United States had declared war on Mexico. Most of the class of 1846 would go directly from the academy into combat, and Jackson fervently hoped to be among them. When final grades were released in mid-June, they showed that Jackson had one of the most amazing West Point records ever. Starting near the

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<sup>159</sup> Robertson, 35-37.

<sup>160</sup> Ibid., 36-43.

<sup>161</sup> Robertson, 43-44; Tate, 32; Vandiver, 16.

very bottom of his class, Jackson had risen nearly to the top. Several classmates remarked that if the program had lasted a fifth year, Jackson would have graduated at the very top of the class. In any case, at graduation, Jackson received his desired assignment to the First Artillery Regiment with a total annual stipend of about \$1,000.<sup>162</sup>

Jackson hoped to distinguish himself as a soldier in Mexico, but he did not see action until the spring of 1847. At the battle of Chapultepec in September 1847, Jackson finally made his mark. Commanding a section of battery, Jackson and his men came under fire from Mexicans who were atop the walls of the castle at Chapultepec. While his men took cover in a nearby ditch, Jackson walked back and forth in the line of fire, calling to his men that there was no danger and that they should come out and fight. At one point, Jackson was standing with his legs wide apart when a cannon ball flew between them. Jackson was unscathed, making his men believe his was invincible. Finally, an old sergeant worked up the courage to leave the ditch. He and Jackson loaded and fired the one remaining usable gun. Fearing for Jackson's safety, the commanding general ordered him to fall back, but Jackson replied that with one company of regulars he could take down the Mexican works. Impressed, the general sent out an entire brigade, and the Americans poured over the Mexicans' walls, forcing the Mexican army to retreat. Jackson was brevetted a major for his actions.<sup>163</sup>

This battle held significance for Jackson beyond mere promotion. During Chapultepec, Jackson discovered that he transformed somehow during battle. He had better control of himself while under fire than he did normally. He was relieved that he could count on himself to make the right decisions when battle thickened.<sup>164</sup>

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<sup>162</sup> Robertson, 44-46; Tate, 36; Vandiver, 15, 19.

<sup>163</sup> Robertson, 60, 65, 67, 69; Tate, 43; Vandiver, 38, 40.

<sup>164</sup> Robertson, 68; Vandiver, 41.

During his leisure time in Mexico, Jackson grew serious about religion. He studied Catholicism vigorously for a time but found it too ornate and complicated. He read the Bible, prayed, and examined his own soul. Also during this time, Jackson developed his love for fruit that would distinguish him later in life. Because Mexican custom did not include lunch and the main meal does not come until after sunset, Jackson bridged the gap by eating fruit throughout the day. Jackson also used his free time to finally develop social skills. He learned Spanish, which helped him develop friendships with some of Mexico's notable families. Despite his general lack of coordination, he became a capable dancer and often attended Sunday night balls, where he danced with various señoritas.<sup>165</sup>

The Mexican War ended in March 1848, and Jackson returned to the United States in July. He and the rest of Company K reported to Fort Hamilton on Long Island, New York. That fall, Jackson took a three-month furlough to visit Laura, whose three-year-old son, Thomas Jackson Arnold, quickly stole Jackson's heart. His entire life Jackson exhibited a shameless love of children; they were drawn to the gangly officer, and Jackson spoiled and played with them. Though Jackson enjoyed his nephew, he was concerned about his sister's growing agnosticism. He struggled over the next few months to reclaim her for the Lord.<sup>166</sup>

Back in Fort Hamilton in early 1849, Jackson again found himself preoccupied with his health. Jackson worried most about his health when he had no important tasks to occupy his time. He felt his best when engaged in combat, and when left to mundane peacetime duties at posts, he always imagined he had terrible diseases and disorders. At this period, Jackson believed that every one of his organs was malfunctioning to some degree. He self-treated, trying every fad cure he discovered. He used a variety of compresses, inhaled glycerine and silver

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<sup>165</sup> Robertson, 71-74, 143; Tate, 45-46; Vandiver, 43-44.

<sup>166</sup> Robertson, 79-80; Tate, 47; Vandiver, 45-47, 52-53.

nitrate, and ingested various ammonia mixtures. Moving from physician to physician, he eventually decided that his major maladies were a combination of rheumatism and neuralgia, weak eyesight, and dyspepsia. He also complained that one arm and leg were heavier than on the other side of his body, so sometimes he would hold that arm straight up in the air to allow the blood to flow back into his body and equalize the weight. To treat his dyspepsia, he adhered to a strict eating schedule and an odd diet, which consisted mostly of stale bread and ripe fruit. Fortunately, these oddities amused the people of the Fort Hamilton area. His strict diet often annoyed hostesses, but for the most part, the people liked him.<sup>167</sup>

In December 1850, Jackson transferred to Company E of the First Artillery at Fort Meade on Tampa Bay in Florida to help settle the last bits of violence left over from the Seminole Wars. Jackson disliked Florida; the climate was bad for his health, there was no church for him to attend, and the post was exceptionally boring. He decided the army held no future for him. He loved campaigning but could not stand being assigned to posts during peacetime.<sup>168</sup>

In March 1851, Jackson received a letter from Colonel Francis H. Smith, superintendent of the Virginia Military Institute in Lexington, asking whether Jackson would be interested in becoming VMI's Professor of Natural and Experimental Philosophy and Artillery Tactics. Jackson certainly was interested in the position. Teaching would give him something meaningful to do, and being at VMI would keep him active in the military community and in a good position for high rank should the country go to war again. Being at the school would enable him to continue his own studies, and the town of Lexington held many social

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<sup>167</sup> Robertson, 84-87, 92; Tate, 48-49.

<sup>168</sup> Robertson, 93-97; Tate, 48; Vandiver, 57.

opportunities. The board of directors at VMI accepted his application, and Jackson left the army on May 21, 1851, and reported for a tour of VMI in July.<sup>169</sup>

The Virginia Military Institute had a military atmosphere, but it was not a true military school like West Point. VMI cadets and professors wore uniforms, but the cadets did not receive military commissions upon graduation. The curriculum, heavy in mathematics and science, generally prepared cadets for civilian careers, but VMI did not lag far behind West Point in many regards. VMI cadets trained in infantry and artillery, discipline was strict, and drills were precise.<sup>170</sup>

This rigid, orderly atmosphere suited Jackson perfectly, though he was ill-suited for his professorship. He understood his subject, a conglomeration of physics, astronomy, mechanics, and a few other sciences, but did not know how to teach so cadets could understand the material. He memorized his lectures the night before and recited them word-for-word in class. If a student did not understand a concept, Jackson was unable to teach it a different way; his only recourse was to recite the lecture again. This strict, unbending approach to teaching made him unpopular among the cadets, and his peculiar personal habits made him easy fodder for cadets' ridicule. More than one cadet was dismissed from VMI for playing a practical joke on Professor Jackson.<sup>171</sup>

Teaching difficulties aside, Jackson fell in love with the town of Lexington. He liked the people and enjoyed riding through the nearby Shenandoah Valley. The townspeople included VMI faculty in most social affairs, and Jackson had to work hard to learn the proper manners for these occasions. He improved, but he never became a true socialite. He was no good at small talk, and because of his natural shyness, he resorted to military discipline at social gatherings,

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<sup>169</sup> Robertson, 97-102; Tate, 49; Vandiver, 57-65.

<sup>170</sup> Robertson, 114-115; Vandiver, 74.

<sup>171</sup> Robertson, 118-121; Tate, 52; Vandiver, 77-78.

making himself appear stern and unapproachable. Despite his rigid demeanor, the townspeople – and even most VMI cadets – generally admired Jackson’s dignity, honesty, determination, and integrity.<sup>172</sup>

During these early years in Lexington, Jackson finally found his Christian denomination. After careful study and lengthy discussions with the local minister, Jackson chose Presbyterianism, a Calvinist denomination. He liked the simple style of Presbyterian worship, and he agreed with all its tenets except infant baptism and predestination. Jackson joined the Presbyterian Church in Lexington on November 22, 1851. Joining the church affected every aspect of Jackson’s life. He vowed never to violate the will of God, and he adopted a strict code of conduct so he could live his religion every second of the day. He read his Bible, tithed, and vowed never to smoke, drink, or gamble. Jackson was very serious about his religion, but unlike with John Brown, people who knew Jackson never called him a “fanatic.”<sup>173</sup>

As his faith grew, Jackson became better acquainted with the Reverend Doctor George Junkin, president of nearby Washington College, and especially Junkin’s daughter Elinor. “Ellie” caught Jackson’s fancy, and he soon began courting her. They married August 4, 1853, at the Junkin home. His entire life Jackson had longed for a family and a home, so now he was happier than he had ever been.<sup>174</sup> Late in the winter of 1854, Ellie became pregnant. Jackson was ecstatic; he had always wanted children of his own. On October 22, 1854, Ellie went into labor. The child, a son, was stillborn, and about an hour later, Ellie hemorrhaged uncontrollably and died. Jackson was devastated.<sup>175</sup>

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<sup>172</sup> Robertson, 127-132; Vandiver, 84.

<sup>173</sup> Robertson, 134-139; Vandiver, 87, 99.

<sup>174</sup> Robertson, 144-149; Tate, 50; Vandiver, 96, 99.

<sup>175</sup> Robertson, 162-164; Vandiver, 105-108.

Duties helped take Jackson's mind off his grief. A new school year began in August, and Jackson also began teaching a Sunday school for blacks. He did this not out of a sense of abolitionism, but simply because blacks had souls to save. Their subordinate position in society did not trump their need for salvation. Teaching such a class was on the edge of Virginia law, which disallowed teaching blacks to read or write anything, but Jackson threw himself into the work and only led religious services. The Sunday school took his mind off Ellie, strengthened his own faith, and gave him insight into the institution of slavery.<sup>176</sup>

In autumn 1856, after a summer tour of Europe, Jackson began corresponding with Mary Anna Morrison, whom he had met at a friend's house shortly before he married Ellie. The couple wed on July 16, 1857. By the end of their honeymoon, Anna was pregnant. The baby, Mary Graham Jackson, arrived April 30, 1858, but died May 25 of a liver disorder.<sup>177</sup>

In the fall of 1859, Jackson began his ninth year as a VMI professor. Though his teaching technique had changed little since his first year, cadet opinion of him had improved markedly. Jackson had no reason to believe this year would be different than any other, but on October 20, Lexington received word of John Brown's attack at Harpers Ferry. VMI cadets immediately exaggerated the rumors that Brown had 300 men; they believed that any day they might be ordered to protect Virginia from another invasion. The president of VMI quickly organized the upperclassmen under the various professors, including Jackson, in case the school was asked to provide assistance with keeping order at Brown's execution. The request came on November 25, and the VMI contingents immediately set out for Charles Town. Though hoping

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<sup>176</sup> Robertson, 168-169; Tate, 53; Vandiver, 110-111.

<sup>177</sup> Robertson, 174-188; Tate, 51; Vandiver, 112-116, 120-123.

the execution would go peacefully, Jackson was excited over his first field service in eight years.<sup>178</sup>

On December 2, Jackson's artillery section lined up directly in front of the execution scaffold outside Charles Town. Few people had a better view of John Brown's execution than Jackson and his cadets. Jackson entertained mixed feelings that day. He felt that because Brown had committed murder, which was a sin against both man and God, then he must pay the penalty of death, but he respected Brown for waging war against what Brown thought was a sin against God. Jackson also respected the calm, dignified manner in which Brown met death. Jackson wrote to Anna that just before the moment of Brown's execution, he offered up a silent prayer for his salvation, though he feared Brown would spend eternity in Hell.<sup>179</sup>

Back in Lexington, citizens feared that the town's arsenal would make it the target of another attack. The presidential campaign of 1860 also increased discontent in Virginia as a whole. At this time, Jackson still pledged loyalty to the Union, but he did not believe the federal government should keep a state in the Union by force. He was not, however, a true secessionist. He felt states should fight for their rights within the Union rather than without, but when Lincoln won the election, Jackson knew the Union's days were numbered.<sup>180</sup>

South Carolina's secession on December 20, 1860, deeply divided the citizens of Lexington. Most townspeople wanted to stay in the Union, but the brash young students at VMI and Washington College wanted to secede. Secession flags and pro-Confederate paraphernalia sprang up all over VMI's campus, much to Jackson's dismay. The professor saw no reason to exacerbate an already tense situation. Discipline at the school deteriorated. On April 13, 1861,

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<sup>178</sup> Robertson, 197-198; Vandiver, 125.

<sup>179</sup> Robertson, 198-199; Trodd and Stauffer, 164-165; Vandiver, 125.

<sup>180</sup> Mary Anna Jackson, *Life and Letters of General Thomas J. Jackson (Stonewall Jackson)* (Harrisonburg, VA: Sprinkle Publications, 1995), 139; Robertson, 204-205.



the same day Fort Sumter fell to Confederate forces, an armed contingent of VMI cadets had a standoff with local Unionists. Only Jackson, pacing back and forth in front of the cadets and staring them down, was able to cool the situation before a battle broke out in the streets.<sup>181</sup>

On Wednesday, April 17, 1861, Virginia seceded. Jackson loved the Union but knew what he had to do. His wife later wrote,

He deplored the collision most earnestly... He loved the Union as only one who had fought under the flag could love it. He would have died to have saved it in its purity and its just relations. But he believed that the constitutional rights of the States had been invaded, and he never had a doubt as to where his allegiance was due. His sword belonged to his State.<sup>182</sup>

Jackson believed victory would come to the side that followed God most closely. He believed God clearly meant for the Confederate States to flourish as an independent nation. On April 21, Jackson was ordered to report to VMI to lead a cadet march to Richmond, where he would be given his own assignment. He left immediately.<sup>183</sup>

When Jackson and his cadets reached Richmond, the cadets dispersed, and Jackson taught artillery at the military camp in Richmond, where he and other trained military men worked to convert civilians into soldiers. On April 25, Jackson was appointed a major in Virginia's topographical engineers. The appointment disappointed Jackson. Drawing had been one of his worst subjects at West Point, and it was an office job that would waste his talent for commanding a battlefield. Fortunately, some of Jackson's influential friends urged military officials to appoint Jackson to a more condign position. On April 26, Jackson was

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<sup>181</sup> Robertson, 208-210; Vandiver, 130.

<sup>182</sup> *Philadelphia Weekly Times*, April 7, 1877.

<sup>183</sup> Robertson, 213-214; Tate, 63; Vandiver, 131.

commissioned a colonel of the Virginia Volunteers and given independent command at Harpers Ferry.<sup>184</sup>

John Brown's raid had exaggerated Harpers Ferry's actual military value. When Virginia forces swarmed the town following Virginia's secession, the Union garrison there set fire to a number of buildings, destroying about 10,000 weapons at the armory, thereby rendering it useless. The junction of the Potomac and Shenandoah rivers creates a natural channel through which both the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad and the Chesapeake and Ohio Canal passed. Both the railroad and the canal were major lifelines between Washington, D.C., and the West, but overall, Harpers Ferry's advantage was mainly psychological because it lies northwest of Washington, D.C., making it the northernmost point in the Confederacy.<sup>185</sup>

When Jackson arrived at Harpers Ferry the first week of May, one of his duties was to gauge how the northwestern portion of the state felt about secession and to determine whether the Confederate Army could rely on the region to supply troops. Excepting a few former VMI cadets, Jackson initially did not impress the men at Harpers Ferry. He wore his faded blue VMI uniform with his old cadet cap pulled down so low over his blue eyes that the visor nearly brushed his nose. Jackson made no grand speeches and held no parades. He was all business.<sup>186</sup>

Jackson's recruits spent seventeen hours a day in military training. Unlike most Civil War field officers, Jackson placed heavy emphasis on the usefulness of the bayonet, and his men spent many long hours practicing with the weapon. Most of the recruits were young and impressionable and responded well to Jackson's patient instruction; the colonel seemed to have found in Harpers Ferry an aptitude for teaching that had eluded him at VMI.<sup>187</sup>

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<sup>184</sup> Robertson, 219; Tate, 65; Vandiver, 134.

<sup>185</sup> Robertson, 219-222; Tate, 65; Vandiver, 135.

<sup>186</sup> Robertson, 220, 223-224; Tate, 66-67; Vandiver, 138.

<sup>187</sup> Robertson, 227-228, 231, 235; Tate, 68; Vandiver, 137.

During this time, Jackson acquired the horse that would become his favorite mount during the war. He originally purchased two sorrel horses – a large gelding for himself and a smaller gelding, which he intended to give to Anna. Within a day, however, he realized that the big sorrel had an awkward gait and was too skittish to be a warhorse. The small sorrel, however, had a smooth pace and an even temper. Despite the horse’s diminutive size, Jackson prized the animal, whom the soldiers dubbed “Little Sorrel.”<sup>188</sup>

Jackson’s staff also came together at the Ferry. On May 4, Assistant Surgeon Hunter H. McGuire became medical director of Harpers Ferry. McGuire and Jackson became fast friends, and McGuire served with Jackson until Jackson’s death. On May 10, Lieutenant Colonel J.E.B. Stuart reported to Jackson for duty. Despite being nearly complete opposites – Stuart was extroverted, flashily dressed, and self-confident – the two men grew close. Jackson admired Stuart’s penchant for action, his love of Virginia, and his abstinence from alcohol, tobacco, and pessimism. Jackson placed him in charge of all cavalry in the Harpers Ferry district.<sup>189</sup>

Jackson was unaware that while he assembled his staff he had been removed from command. On May 2, Virginia officials had approved the Confederate Constitution, making Virginia a part of the Confederacy. Its military affairs transferred from the governor of Virginia to the Confederate War Department. In late May, command of Harpers Ferry transferred to Brigadier General Joseph E. Johnston. Johnston admired Jackson’s strict adherence to procedure, and placed Jackson in command of all Virginia regiments at the post. Jackson now commanded most of the infantry and was Johnston’s principal lieutenant.<sup>190</sup>

Jackson and his First Virginia Brigade watched over Harpers Ferry from Bolivar Heights at the rear of town. Jackson enjoyed being away from the paperwork of a post command and

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<sup>188</sup> Robertson, 230; Vandiver, 142.

<sup>189</sup> Robertson, 231-232, 235.

<sup>190</sup> Robertson, 237-239; Tate, 70-71; Vandiver, 143-145.

back in the field preparing troops for battle. The new position also gave him more time to write to Anna and Laura, who Jackson soon learned had become an outspoken Unionist. Jackson regretted this decision, as well as Laura's decision to turn from God, and no further correspondence passed between the siblings.<sup>191</sup>

Unlike Jackson, General Johnston disliked Harpers Ferry. Like John Brown, he found it indefensible and asked permission to abandon it. On June 13, Johnston received orders to destroy everything in Harpers Ferry and fall back toward Winchester, about twenty-five miles to the southwest. Jackson's troops torched the armory buildings, depot, telegraph offices, and machine shops. The engine house where John Brown was captured was one of the few buildings to survive.<sup>192</sup>

Johnston set up his defenses along Bunker Hill, about ten miles north of Winchester, which controlled all the major roads into the Shenandoah Valley. On June 19, Jackson's brigade began destroying the B&O Railroad shops in nearby Martinsburg, so the Union army could not use the rails. A few days later, while Jackson's men were finishing the job, Jackson wanted to engage a column of Union soldiers who were heading toward Martinsburg, but Johnston told him it was not yet time to engage the enemy. Jackson must have been frustrated. He believed the war would be shortest if the South attacked quickly and on Union territory. Instead of fighting, Jackson's Shenandoah Valley regiments spent the next two weeks camped north of Martinsburg, where they trained rigorously.<sup>193</sup>

On Tuesday, July 2, Jackson finally got the battle he longed for. Union General Robert Patterson had crossed the Potomac River, and he and his men were less than five miles from Martinsburg. Jackson's brigade engaged them at Falling Waters, in present-day West Virginia,

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<sup>191</sup> Robertson, 233, 239-241.

<sup>192</sup> Robertson, 241-243; Vandiver, 145.

<sup>193</sup> Robertson, 245-247; Tate, 72; Vandiver, 148-149.

on a bend of the Potomac. Jackson's men fought bravely, but the Union forces greatly outnumbered them, and they had fall back to their camp. Despite the Union's victory, the Confederates suffered few casualties and had successfully delayed the Union advance into Martinsburg. Jackson himself had performed well. He had handled untested men calmly and patiently, transforming them into soldiers; he had accepted combat without hesitation; he had withdrawn when he realized how badly he was outnumbered; and he had taken no unnecessary risks or made any foolish mistakes. For his performance at the Battle of Falling Waters, also known as the Battle of Hoke's Run, Jackson was promoted to brigadier general.<sup>194</sup>

After the Battle of Falling Waters, both North and South turned their attention to Manassas Junction. Two important railroad lines met at Manassas Junction, making it a critical strategic location for both sides. In mid-July, General McDowell made an offensive move toward the junction, where General P.G.T. Beauregard commanded a line of Confederate defense near Bull Run Creek. On July 18, General Johnston received orders to assist Beauregard. Jackson and his brigade departed for Manassas that day.<sup>195</sup>

Jackson disliked the move to Manassas because it left his home region unguarded, but, on July 19, he and his men boarded freight and cattle cars on the Manassas Gap Railroad line and rode the rails to the junction in one of the first times in history that railroads took part in a large-scale movements of troops to battle. By late evening on July 20, it was obvious that General McDowell planned to attack the next day. On July 21, Jackson was up and praying hours before dawn. The day held great significance for him. Not only was it Anna's thirtieth birthday, but it was also Sunday. Like John Brown, Jackson found Sunday a fitting day to fight for God.<sup>196</sup>

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<sup>194</sup> Robertson, 247-251; Tate, 72-73; Vandiver, 149-151.

<sup>195</sup> Robertson, 253-254; Vandiver, 154.

<sup>196</sup> Robertson, 256-257, 259; Tate, 80; Vandiver, 155.

Jackson's brigade engaged the enemy around 4 a.m. About 9:30 a.m., Jackson received word that Federals were pressing in on the Confederate left, where his brigade was needed to guard a stone bridge that crossed the creek. Jackson and his men arrived there before 11 a.m. Jackson and the First Virginia were now near the strategic Henry House Hill. The Confederate Army had to hold the hill, or the Federals would turn their flank, and they would lose the battle. Jackson lined his men up on the back side of the hill, out of view of the Union troops, and prepared to make a stand to assist General Barnard Bee, whose South Carolina regiments were falling apart. The wooded backside of Henry House Hill provided Jackson's men some cover while for nearly three hours Union artillery fired on them. During this time, a bullet or a piece of shrapnel struck and fractured Jackson's middle finger on his left hand. He quickly wrapped his handkerchief around it and continued encouraging his men.<sup>197</sup>

Shortly after Jackson's injury, General Bee rode up to Jackson and reported that his line had finally collapsed. Jackson grimly told him to use the bayonet on the Federals. Back at his own line, Bee shouted to his men something like, "Look, men, there is Jackson standing like a stone wall! Rally behind the Virginians!" This statement generally is assumed to be one of admiration, but some sources disagree, suggesting that Bee's words were more along the lines of an exasperated "Oh, look at Jackson standing there like a damned stone wall!" Either way, the legend of "Stonewall" Jackson was born, and the men who served with him that day became known as the fiercely proud "Stonewall Brigade."<sup>198</sup>

Jackson waited until the advancing Federal infantry were close, then his infantry and artillery together unleashed a hail of gun and cannon fire. Part of Jackson's instructions to both

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<sup>197</sup> Robertson, 260-263; Tate, 87; Vandiver, 161.

<sup>198</sup> Douglas Southall Freeman, *Lee's Lieutenants: A Study in Command*, vol. 1 (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1942), 81-83, 733-734; James M. McPherson, *Battle Cry of Freedom: The Civil War Era* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988), 342.

the regiments were to “yell like furies” as they fired. The men obliged, and the world heard its first “Rebel yell.” The battle raged for about another thirty minutes, but the Confederates now had the momentum and at approximately 4:40 p.m., McDowell ordered a retreat. The Union troops, panicked by retreating under fire, ran pell-mell back toward Washington, entangling themselves with civilian spectators who had come with picnic baskets from the Union capital to watch the war end. Jackson was frustrated by the Confederate Army’s failure to pursue the Union Army all the way to Washington and capture the city. He knew a prolonged war would mean defeat for the Confederacy.<sup>199</sup>

In October, Jackson received another promotion, this time to major general and division commander of the army’s new Valley of Virginia district. Jackson was glad to have semi-independent command of his native region, but he also realized that he would be in command of a vast territory with very few troops and almost no supplies. The promotion also meant he had to leave behind his beloved Stonewall Brigade. On November 4, Jackson bid his brigade an emotional farewell, and then he and his staff boarded a train for Winchester.<sup>200</sup>

The parting of commander and brigade was short. Upon arriving in Winchester, Jackson realized he needed more men, so Secretary of War Judah P. Benjamin immediately ordered the Stonewall Brigade to join its former commander in the Valley. Jackson spent November drilling his men for an upcoming campaign in the town of Romney, which was an important railroad hub. Jackson hoped to capture the town, gaining control of the railroads there and perhaps provoking General McClellan to attack. Before he could execute his plan, however, Jackson

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<sup>199</sup> Robertson, 266-269; Tate, 88; Vandiver, 166.

<sup>200</sup> Robertson, 278-283; Vandiver, 173-178.

needed another reinforcement. He asked for and received General William W. Loring's Army of the Northwest.<sup>201</sup>

When Loring finally arrived around Christmas, Jackson prepared for the Romney expedition. On New Year's Day, 1862, he and his men departed Winchester. They reached Romney January 14 and easily took control of the town; Federal troops had evacuated when they heard the Confederates were closing in on the city. Leaving Loring's three brigades to hold Romney, Jackson and his other men returned to Winchester.<sup>202</sup>

On January 31, Jackson received orders from Secretary Benjamin to order Loring's army back to Winchester. Astonished and angry that Benjamin would interfere with his command, Jackson tendered his resignation. What had happened was that eleven of Loring's officers, annoyed at being left behind in Romney, had petitioned Benjamin to withdraw them to Winchester. After much correspondence among officials who did not want to lose Jackson's service, Benjamin shifted Loring out of Jackson's district. Satisfied, Jackson withdrew his resignation.<sup>203</sup>

Jackson spent the rest of the winter and most of the spring positioning himself strategically in the Shenandoah Valley. By May, it did not seem the Confederacy had long to live due to losses in the Western theater, including the loss of Fort Henry and Fort Donelson in Tennessee. In addition, General George McClellan's army of 100,000 men advanced close enough to Richmond to hear the city's church bells. Hoping to save the Confederacy, Robert E. Lee, who would soon take command of the Army of Northern Virginia, conceived a plan to use Jackson to create a diversion in the Shenandoah Valley. Lee hoped that unleashing Jackson

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<sup>201</sup> Robertson, 288-289, 294-296; Vandiver, 178-186; Tate, 105.

<sup>202</sup> Robertson, 304-313; Vandiver, 186-190.

<sup>203</sup> Robertson, 317-321; Tate, 109; Vandiver, 192-195.



would prevent General McDowell's corps from reinforcing McClellan near Richmond, thereby relieving some of the pressure on the Confederate capital.<sup>204</sup>

In early May, Jackson led 9,000 men over the mountains to the tiny village of McDowell, where on May 8 they fought and defeated a Union force half their size. On May 23, Jackson and Ewell's forces at Front Royal overwhelmed a division of Federals led by Nathaniel Banks. Jackson pursued Banks and captured his wagon train and its valuable supplies the following day. When Banks' men reached Winchester on May 25, they turned to fight. But the Confederates forced them to retreat to the Potomac, thirty-five miles away. His infantry exhausted, Jackson could not pursue Banks further, but his victories at Front Royal and Winchester had netted him 2,000 prisoners, 9,000 rifles, and large food and medical stores. Most importantly, his campaign had successfully relieved pressure on Richmond; after hearing of Jackson's attacks, President Lincoln ordered troops headed for Richmond to divert to the Valley.<sup>205</sup>

Jackson had to withdraw from the Valley, but his campaign there had been significantly useful to the Confederacy. It had diverted 60,000 Union soldiers from other tasks and had disrupted two major strategic movements: Frémont's campaign into east Tennessee and McDowell's connection with McClellan near Richmond. Psychologically, the campaign had a huge effect in the North. Jackson's victories made Jackson and the Stonewall brigade seem invincible to many Northerners, and Jackson's legend began to grow outside the Confederacy.<sup>206</sup>

From June 26 to July 1, Jackson and his men participated in the Seven Days' Battle along the Chickahominy River near Richmond. During this series of battles, Jackson displayed uncharacteristic mediocre leadership. On June 26, Jackson showed up late to the battle, which he was supposed to lead off. On June 29, Jackson delayed in fording the river, leaving a fellow

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<sup>204</sup> McPherson, 454-455; Vandiver, 234, 239.

<sup>205</sup> Freeman, 735-739; McPherson, 455-457; Robertson, 374-377, 393-409; Vandiver, 229-230, 246.

<sup>206</sup> McPherson, 460.

general with too few men to push back the Union force he faced. On June 30, Jackson fell asleep in the middle of the battle, and his staff was unable to get orders from him to assist generals Longstreet and A.P. Hill, whose troops consequently took a brutal beating. Sources are unclear why Jackson failed in his leadership during this campaign, but most scholars point to extreme fatigue. Jackson had led his men on a grueling march to reach the site of the Seven Days' Battle, and in the three and a half days leading up to June 26, Jackson got only about eight hours' sleep. The Confederacy gained a strategic victory in this campaign, despite Jackson's poor leadership.<sup>207</sup>

The Stonewall Brigade participated admirably in three other battles that summer: Cedar Mountain, Second Manassas, and Antietam. As summer gave way to autumn, Jackson's men began to think about settling in to winter camp, but Jackson had other issues on his mind. On November 28, he received word that Anna on November 23 had given birth to a daughter, Julia Laura Jackson. Upon hearing of his daughter's birth, Jackson fell to his knees and tearfully thanked God for the safety of his wife and child.<sup>208</sup>

At the Battle of Fredericksburg on December 13, the Stonewall Brigade held up heartily despite the cold weather. After the Confederate victory at Fredericksburg, Jackson and his men settled into winter camp until late April. The spring of 1863 was wet and depressing for Jackson and his men until on April 20, Anna brought five-month-old Julia to meet her father. On April 23, Jackson's entire staff attended Julia's baptism. Jackson spent every free moment with Anna and Julia, until on April 29, he received word that General Hooker had crossed the

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<sup>207</sup> McPherson, 465-471; Robertson, 470, 472, 488, 495.

<sup>208</sup> McPherson, 526-532; Robertson, 465; Vandiver, 418-419.

Rappahannock River and was moving south to cut Lee's supply lines. Jackson immediately sent Anna and Julia back to Richmond for their own safety.<sup>209</sup>

On April 30, Hooker had 70,000 infantry near a crossroads mansion called Chancellorsville, nine miles west of Fredericksburg in the middle of a dense forest, known locally as the Wilderness. On May 1, Lee sent all but 10,000 of his infantry westward from Fredericksburg to the Wilderness, where they clashed with Hooker's advance guard just east of Chancellorsville. Though he held the advantage, Hooker ordered his units back to a defensive position. That night, Lee conferred with Jackson. While they were discussing their next move, J.E.B. Stuart brought word that Hooker's right flank was in the air, meaning that it was anchored on no geographical feature.<sup>210</sup>

Not wanting to miss this opportunity, Jackson chose a risky gamble. Early on May 2, screened by Stuart's cavalry, Jackson's 30,000 infantry and artillery began a 12-mile roundabout march to Hooker's right flank. This maneuver put Lee in a vulnerable position; he was left with only 15,000 men to confront Hooker's main force if the general decided to attack. As Jackson's men crossed the enemy's front, their columns stretched thin, leaving them vulnerable to attack as well. Back in Fredericksburg, General Early was also in danger if Hooker realized how few men Lee had left behind there and sent troops back east. But Lee bet that Hooker would do nothing while Jackson completed his march, and he was not disappointed. Hooker did not move.<sup>211</sup>

At approximately 5:15 p.m., Jackson's grizzled veterans broke from the forest with a high-pitched Rebel yell and attacked Hooker's right flank. They handily rolled up the flank for two miles. Determined to keep the Union on the run, Jackson and several officers that night rode ahead of their lines to check for renewed attacks. Nervous members of the 7<sup>th</sup> North Carolina

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<sup>209</sup> McPherson, 571, 639; Robertson, 649, 653-654, 667-697; Vandiver, 433-454.

<sup>210</sup> McPherson, 640; Robertson, 701-702, 709-713; Vandiver, 459.

<sup>211</sup> McPherson, 641; Robertson, 714-715; Vandiver, 465, 468.

mistook Jackson's entourage for Union soldiers and fired at the group, striking Jackson twice in the left arm and once in the right hand. For the first and only time, Little Sorrel bolted, and Jackson was nearly thrown from the saddle before his officers got control of the horse. They immediately applied tourniquets to Jackson's wounds and sent for Dr. McGuire and an ambulance to meet them at the end of the road.<sup>212</sup>

Jackson wanted to walk the half mile to the end of the road, but he was too weak, and his officers carried him out on a litter. Jackson fell from the litter twice when Union soldiers began firing on his litter-bearers. Finally, they reached the ambulance, which bore Jackson to the Chancellors' house, where Dr. McGuire met them. After checking Jackson's tourniquets, McGuire had the general loaded back into the ambulance to be taken to the field hospital, four miles away. The ambulance reached the field hospital around 11 p.m. McGuire administered chloroform so he could examine Jackson's wounds painlessly. Before going under, Jackson agreed that if his left arm needed to be amputated, then Dr. McGuire should do so immediately.<sup>213</sup>

McGuire's examination revealed a .57 caliber ball in Jackson's right hand, just under the skin. It had passed through his palm, broken two fingers, and stopped against the skin on the back of the hand. It was a painful wound, but not a dangerous one. McGuire easily extracted the ball and moved on to the left arm. The first ball had splintered bone and tendons three inches from Jackson's left shoulder before exiting the arm. The second ball entered his left forearm an inch below the elbow and had exited on the other side, just above the wrist. The arm could not be saved, so McGuire amputated it about two inches below the shoulder.<sup>214</sup>

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<sup>212</sup> McPherson, 642; Robertson, 727-730; Vandiver, 478.

<sup>213</sup> Robertson, 732-736; Vandiver, 481-484.

<sup>214</sup> Robertson, 729, 736-737; Vandiver, 484.

The day after the amputation, Jackson appeared to be on the road to a quick recovery. He seemed upbeat, wanted food, and asked Dr. McGuire how long it would be before he would be back in the field. Jackson was interested in what was happening on the battlefield, and he continued giving orders to officers who came to see him at the hospital. May 3, 1863, at Chancellorsville turned out to be the second bloodiest day of the Civil War; only Antietam exceeded its casualties total. As the fighting that day drew closer to the field hospital, General Lee ordered that Jackson be moved to safer quarters. The surgeons once more loaded Jackson into an ambulance for a twenty-seven-mile ride to Guiney Station, where he would stay in the office building at Fairfield, the estate of Mr. and Mrs. Thomas Chandler, who had met Jackson in December. The building was well suited as a makeshift hospital, and Guiney Station had an important railhead in case Jackson needed to be evacuated quickly.<sup>215</sup>

On the night of May 6-7, after three days of improvement, Jackson fell ill with pneumonia. Anna arrived at Fairfield that afternoon not knowing whether to believe the reports of her husband's improvement or those of his decline. When she saw him, she tried to hide her sadness, but Jackson sensed her anguish and told her to cheer up.<sup>216</sup>

Jackson's condition grew steadily worse, and on Saturday, May 9, Dr. McGuire told Anna that her husband would not recover. Anna insisted on telling Jackson; he would want time to prepare himself spiritually. Jackson took the news in stride, insisting that it was God's will for him to die now. On May 10, Anna brought Julia to him. Jackson brightened immediately upon seeing his daughter, who cooed happily to him.<sup>217</sup>

Anna also passed along to her husband the surgeons' grim consensus that Jackson would not survive the day. Jackson merely responded, "It is the Lord's day. My wish is fulfilled. I

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<sup>215</sup> Robertson, 739-742; Vandiver, 489.

<sup>216</sup> Robertson, 747; Vandiver, 492.

<sup>217</sup> Robertson, 749-751; Vandiver, 492-494.

have always desired to die on a Sunday.” Unbeknownst to Jackson, at that time approximately 1,800 soldiers had gathered at a worship service nearby to pray for him. By noon, a crowd of soldiers and civilians had gathered outside the makeshift hospital. As Jackson declined, Dr. McGuire tried to ease his final hours by giving him watered-down brandy, but Jackson refused it. He insisted that liquor would only slow his death and addle his mind; he wanted clarity until the very end, if possible. Shortly after, he slipped into a deep coma, occasionally shouting orders to A.P. Hill as if he were still on the battlefield. At 3:15 p.m., Jackson uttered his last words: “Let us cross over the river, and rest under the shade of the trees.” Then he died.<sup>218</sup>

Enlistees and officers alike burst into tears upon hearing of Jackson’s death. Jackson’s staff sadly accompanied their general’s body to Richmond. The Stonewall Brigade requested permission to go along as well, but Lee could spare no soldiers in the aftermath of Chancellorsville. Upon arriving in Richmond, Jackson’s body lay in state in the Capitol for public viewing. On Wednesday, May 13, his remains were loaded on a train for Gordonville, where the body was put on a canal boat to Lexington. The night of May 14, Jackson lay in state in his old classroom at VMI. General Jackson’s funeral was at 10 a.m. the following day, after which he was buried beside his first daughter and not far from Ellie and her stillborn son. Anna lived to the age of eighty-three, when on March 24, 1915, she, too, succumbed to pneumonia and was buried next to Jackson in Lexington.<sup>219</sup>

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<sup>218</sup> Robertson, 752-754; Vandiver, 494.

<sup>219</sup> Robertson, 755-761.

## CHAPTER FIVE: THE MEN IN POPULAR WRITING

Since the lives and deaths of both John Brown and Thomas Jackson, print media has played an important part in shaping popular perceptions of the two men. While these perceptions have evolved over time, elements in them persist. Initially thought to be either a fanatical madman or a religious martyr, John Brown today is often cast as a complex product of the tumultuous times in which he lived. Thomas Jackson's image, however, has changed little in popular literature. In mainstream culture, he is still often cast as an infallible Southern folk hero second only to Robert E. Lee.

Both men had a hand in shaping their own images, but Brown had a unique advantage over Jackson: Brown knew when his death would come and used his remaining time to create his own position in American memory. This advantage is very important. If Brown had died during his Harpers Ferry raid, he most likely would have faded into historical obscurity. His attack, if remembered at all, would have been viewed as nothing but the crazy act of a madman. But Brown survived and ensured that he would not be forgotten.

Brown began crafting his image immediately upon his arrest. At the end of Brown's first interview immediately after his capture, a newspaper reporter asked Brown if he had anything else he would like to say. Realizing the potential of this opportunity to secure his martyrdom, Brown replied:

I have nothing to say, only that I claim to be here in carrying out a measure I believe perfectly justifiable, and not to act the part of an incendiary or ruffian, but to aid those suffering great wrong. I wish to say, furthermore, that you had better – all you people at the South – prepare yourselves for a settlement of this question, that must come up for settlement sooner than you are prepared for it. The sooner you are prepared the better. You may dispose of

me very easily, - I am nearly disposed of now; but this question is still to be settled – this negro question I mean; the end of that is not yet....<sup>220</sup>

Brown also used the letters he wrote while awaiting his execution to create the image he desired for himself. During his month in prison, Brown wrote dozens of letters to family, friends, and supporters. In these letters, Brown carefully positioned himself as a blameless warrior for God. Many of the images associated with Brown, such as his being a martyr, a Christ-like figure, and a disciple of Christ, come directly from his prison letters.

Though he was responsible for the deaths of seventeen men at Harpers Ferry, including two of his own sons, as well as the five murders in Kansas, Brown wanted America to remember him as a victim and a martyr. He accepted responsibility for the raid's failure, but he insisted that his subsequent criminalization resulted from a class conflict. He writes that had he launched an attack on behalf of the rich and powerful, rather than the poor and oppressed, he would have been treated as a hero instead of a criminal. But Brown also claimed that his failure at Harpers Ferry was God's will, and that God's cause, i.e. freeing the slaves, would be furthered more by Brown's death than by his life. In a letter to his children on November 22, 1859, Brown writes, "As I trust my life has not been thrown away, so I also humbly trust that my death will not be in vain. God can make it to be a thousand times more valuable to his own cause than all the miserable service (at best) that I have rendered it during my lifetime."<sup>221</sup>

Prominent in Brown's prison letters are his comparisons – both direct and indirect – to Christ's apostles, specifically Peter and Paul. In a November 1, 1859, letter to a friend in Rhode Island, Brown states, "You know that Christ once armed Peter. So also in my case I think he put a sword into my hand, and there continued it so long as he saw best, and then kindly took it from

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<sup>220</sup> *Herald* (New York), 21 October 1859; in Trodd and Stauffer, 123-129.

<sup>221</sup> John Brown, Charles Town, Virginia, to his children, North Elba, New York, 22 November 1859, John Brown/Boyd B. Sutler Collection, West Virginia State Archives, Charleston, West Virginia.



me.”<sup>222</sup> In another letter, Brown connects himself directly to Paul, drawing this analogy, “I think I feel as happy as Paul did when he lay in prison. He knew that if they killed him it would greatly advance the cause of Christ; that was the reason he rejoiced so.”<sup>223</sup>

In this letter, Brown also indirectly compares himself to Paul by copying the style of Paul’s own prison letters and the apostle’s admission that his death would yield greater gain to his cause than his life would. In Paul’s letter to the Philippians, he states, “. . . now as always Christ will be exalted in my body, whether by life or by death. For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain.”<sup>224</sup> Brown copies Paul in many other instances. Brown closes the November 22 letter to his children thus: “The God of my fathers take you for his children.”<sup>225</sup> He ends an October 31 letter to his wife with “God Almighty (sic) bless you all: & make you ‘joyful in the midst of all your tribulations.’”<sup>226</sup> Likewise, Paul ended each of his prison letters with a wish for God’s blessings on his friends. He ends the book of Ephesians with: “Peace to the brothers, and love with faith from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. Grace to all who love our Lord Jesus Christ with an undying love.”<sup>227</sup> Paul closes both Philippians and Philemon thus, “The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit.”<sup>228</sup>

After Brown’s execution, Osborne Perry Anderson, a black man who was one of the few of Brown’s men who escaped after the Harpers Ferry raid, wasted little time making his contribution to Brown’s image. In 1861, Anderson published a short book with a long title, “A Voice from Harper’s Ferry: A Narrative of Events at Harper’s Ferry with Incidents Prior and

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<sup>222</sup> Trodd/Stauffer, 139.

<sup>223</sup> Ibid., 150.

<sup>224</sup> Philippians 1:20-21 NIV (New International Version).

<sup>225</sup> John Brown, Charles Town, Virginia, to his children, North Elba, New York, 22 November 1859, John Brown/Boyd B. Sutler Collection, West Virginia State Archives, Charleston, West Virginia.

<sup>226</sup> John Brown, Charles Town, Virginia, to Mary Brown, 31 October 1859, John Brown/Boyd B. Sutler Collection, West Virginia State Archives, Charleston, West Virginia.

<sup>227</sup> Ephesians 5:23-24 NIV.

<sup>228</sup> Philippians 4:23 NIV; Philemon 25 NIV.

Subsequent to Its Capture by Captain Brown and His Men,” which tells the story of the raid from Anderson’s point of view as one of the raiders. Stuffed with inaccuracies and embellishments, Anderson’s work is less a reliable factual source and more a vindication of both John Brown and his failed attack at Harpers Ferry and, therefore, is a good example of glorifications of Brown that were typical immediately after his capture and execution.<sup>229</sup>

From the beginning of his book, Anderson deifies Brown. He gives Brown full credit for the free-soil status of the new state of Kansas and immediately compares him to the Old Testament hero Moses, who freed the Israelites from slavery in Egypt. Anderson writes, “...in comparing the noble old man (Brown) to Moses, and other men of piety and renown, who were chosen by God to his great work, none have been more faithful, none have given a brighter record.”<sup>230</sup> Like many others, Anderson portrays Brown as a Christ-like figure. When he describes how Hugh Forbes revealed part of the Harpers Ferry plot, nearly ruining the entire campaign, Anderson refers to Forbes as “Judas,” the disciple who betrayed Christ, and labels Forbes’s treachery as his “sins against John Brown.”<sup>231</sup>

Anderson continues his Christ comparison with his descriptions of the worship service Brown held the morning of the Harpers Ferry raid. Anderson relates that Brown rose early and called the men to worship. He read from the Bible and then prayed that God would assist them in liberating the slaves. Anderson describes the effects of Brown’s worship on his men thus:

The services were impressive beyond expression. Every man there assembled seemed to respond from the depths of his soul, and throughout the entire day, a deep solemnity pervaded the place. The old man’s usually weighty words were invested with more than ordinary importance,

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<sup>229</sup> Osborne Perry Anderson, *A Voice from Harper’s Ferry: A Narrative of Events at Harper’s Ferry with Incidents Prior and Subsequent to its Capture by Captain Brown and His Men* (Boston: Printed for the author, 1861; reprint, Freeport, NY: Books For Libraries Press, 1972).

<sup>230</sup> *Ibid.*, 7.

<sup>231</sup> *Ibid.*, 17.

and the countenance of every man reflected the momentous thought that absorbed his attention within.<sup>232</sup>

Anderson alludes here to Christ's last supper with his disciples on the night Judas Iscariot betrayed him. After eating and worshipping together, Christ and his disciples went out to the Garden of Gethsemane on the side of the Mount of Olives that faces Jerusalem. In Gethsemane, Jesus offered fervent prayers to God to spare him from crucifixion, though he was willing to suffer death to free humanity from sin. The morning of the Harpers Ferry raid, John Brown prayed that God would make him successful at the Ferry, but he would accept defeat if it would help abolish slavery.

The Transcendentalists were nearly as eager as Brown himself to preserve an untarnished, Christ-like image of Brown. The Transcendentalists focused only on Brown's virtues and none of his violent tendencies, regarding Brown as a heroic martyr. The nation's leading intellectuals at the time of Brown's raid and execution, the Transcendentalists had a strong impact on Brown's image. Three of Brown's Secret Six, Sanborn, Higginson, and Parker, were devout followers of the philosophy. Famous Transcendentalists Ralph Waldo Emerson and Henry David Thoreau wrote many essays and gave many speeches in support of Brown. Perhaps the best example is Thoreau's essay "A Plea for Captain Brown," in which Thoreau claims to make a plea for Brown's life, but what he actually makes is a plea for the sanctity of Brown's image.<sup>233</sup>

Thoreau begins his essay by comparing Brown to "the best of those who stood at Concord Bridge once, on Lexington Common, and on Bunker Hill." Thoreau, however, draws this comparison to argue that Brown was a better man than any of those revolutionaries; Ethan

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<sup>232</sup> Ibid., 28.

<sup>233</sup> Reynolds, 214-216.

Allen was a lesser warrior than Brown, according to Thoreau, because “They [the revolutionaries] could bravely face their country’s foes, but he [Brown] had the courage to face his country herself, when she was in the wrong.” Thoreau augments these arguments by also comparing Brown to Oliver Cromwell, who, except in Ireland, was sometimes regarded as a hero of liberty. Thoreau refers to Brown’s group of men as “a perfect Cromwellian troop,” and argues that comparing Brown’s eloquent speeches to those given in Congress is “like the speeches of Cromwell compared with those of an ordinary king.”<sup>234</sup>

Thoreau also works to improve Brown’s image by reversing common thought as to why more men did not join Brown’s crew. Rather than suggesting most men had more sense than to join Brown, Thoreau argues that Brown’s followers were few because few men could meet Brown’s exacting standards. Thoreau even suggests that thousands of men wanted to join Brown, but that their inferior morals precluded Brown from selecting them. In Thoreau’s essay, Brown is no longer a crazed fanatic with a wild scheme; he is a noble warrior to whom none could compare and few were worthy to be disciples.

Thoreau rejects the insanity plea, arguing that it is highly unlikely that Brown, six of his sons, a son-in-law, and at least twelve other men would all be struck simultaneously with insanity. He laments the negative press coverage Brown received, suggesting that it was due to newspaper editors’ being used to dealing with politicians – “men of an infinitely lower grade,” according to Thoreau. In a later essay, “The Last Days of John Brown,” Thoreau argues that if Brown’s raid had succeeded, then the editors would have “called it by a more respectable name,”

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<sup>234</sup> Henry David Thoreau, “A Plea for Captain John Brown,” in *The Writings of Henry D. Thoreau: The Higher Law: Thoreau on Civil Disobedience and Reform*, ed. Wendell Glick (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1973), 113, 115.

rather than calling Brown's attack crazy.<sup>235</sup> Finally, Thoreau draws the inevitable comparison between Brown and Christ, emphasizing that Brown loved his fellow man so much that he was willing to lay down his own life for him.

Better known than the Transcendentalists' essays, the song "John Brown's Body" has permeated Brown's popular image. Sung by Union troops as they marched to battle, the song positions Brown's crusade to free the slaves as the inspiration for the North's involvement in the Civil War, and it also casts Brown as a martyr both for abolitionism and for God. Originally a religious camp meeting melody, Union soldiers revised the lyrics to claim that "John Brown's body lies a-mouldering in the grave. His soul is marching on," and "He's gone to be a soldier in the army of our Lord."<sup>236</sup> Verses added later described Jefferson Davis hanging from a tree. Southern soldiers retaliated with a version that had John Brown hanging from said tree.<sup>237</sup>

Through the song, Brown's name was now synonymous with patriotism and self-sacrifice. In 1862, after hearing Union soldiers sing the popular marching song, Julia Ward Howe, wife of Samuel Gridley Howe, one of Brown's "Secret Six," wrote new lyrics to the tune, celebrating the rightness of the Union cause. Today, the song is known as "The Battle Hymn of the Republic."<sup>238</sup>

In 1928, another lyricist contributed an epic poem casting John Brown as a religious martyr for abolition. In his 377-page poem, *John Brown's Body*, Stephen Vincent Benét shows Brown committing his violent acts only because God instructed him to do so. In the opening scenes of the epic, Benét shows Brown praying to God before attacking Harpers Ferry. In his

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<sup>235</sup> Henry David Thoreau, "The Last Days of John Brown," in *The Writings of Henry D. Thoreau: The Higher Law: Thoreau on Civil Disobedience and Reform*, ed. Wendell Glick (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1973), 149.

<sup>236</sup> For complete lyrics from the Library of Congress, see Appendix A.

<sup>237</sup> Library of Congress Web site, *John Brown's Body: The Battle Hymn of the Republic*, 23 Aug. 2006 <<http://www.loc.gov/teachers/lyrical/songs>>.

<sup>238</sup> Franny Nudelman, "'The Blood of Millions': John Brown's Body, Public Violence, and Political Community," in *The Afterlife of John Brown*, Andrew Taylor and Eldrid Herrington, eds. (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2005), 27.

prayer, Brown reveals that he committed murder in Kansas only because God commanded him to. In a section entitled “John Brown’s Prayer,” Benét writes, “I heard Thee when Thou bade me spurn/ Destruction from my hand/ And, though all Kansas bleed and burn,/ It was at Thy command.”<sup>239</sup> Using romantic figurative language, Benét adds several biblical allusions to the prayer, likening Brown to the warrior Joshua, King David, and various saints. Benét ignores the image of Brown as a fanatical madman in favor of the image of Brown as a martyr.

More recently, novelists have contributed to the popular image of Brown. In 1995, Bruce Olds published his novel *Raising Holy Hell*, in which he tells Brown’s story from the points of view of Brown and several people who knew him, including some of his children and his wives. Instead of casting Brown as solely a hero/martyr or solely as a crazed terrorist, Olds presents Brown as a mixture of both, accurately representing the conflicted attitude many people have toward Brown today: Were John Brown’s acts the result of a chemical imbalance in his brain or the natural result of a slave economy in a country that declared “all men are created equal”? Olds describes these conflicting images of Brown when he writes,

Many found him needlessly cruel. Others thought him the most coldhearted man they had ever met. Some were positive he was irredeemably mad. Yet he could cradle a sick lamb in his arms all night long, go without sleep for days while he nursed a feverish wife, dandle a colicky child on his knee and coo baby talk until it fell asleep. Not even his worst enemies doubted his nerve.<sup>240</sup>

To establish Brown as a hero, Olds describes the harshest aspects of slavery, such as the brutal Middle Passage and the virulently racist attitudes of prominent Americans, including the Founding Fathers. In one especially graphic chapter, Olds describes various punishments used

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<sup>239</sup> Stephen Vincent Benét, *John Brown’s Body* (New York: Doubleday, Doran, and Co., 1928), 32. For the full lyrics of “John Brown’s Prayer,” see Appendix A.

<sup>240</sup> Bruce Olds, *Raising Holy Hell* (New York: Henry Holt and Co., 1995), 44.

on slaves around the time of Nat Turner's 1831 rebellion. In describing whipping, a common punishment, Olds writes,

When applied to the flesh of the human back... the object was to slice open grooves and rip up divots in the skin (accompanied by the appropriate flying arabesque of flesh and blood) that weeks later appeared as a ridged mass of roughage, scar tissue running neck to waist, as if the skin of the back had been chopped up and left to heal in a carapace of weals, a vast cicatrix.<sup>241</sup>

Olds also describes other harsh punishments, such as catclawing (scraping the flesh of a slave's back raw with a cat's severed claws and then dousing the exposed flesh with brine, alcohol, kerosene, or turpentine), maimings and mutilations (including digging healthy teeth out with an awl, gouging out eyes with spoons or spatulas, and severing noses, fingers, and toes), coerced sex, branding, hamstringing, amputation, castration, and clitoridectomy.<sup>242</sup> These graphic descriptions of horrific acts leave little wonder that slavery drove Brown to murder in order to free people from such torture; obviously, Brown was a hero and martyr. Olds lets Brown confirm this conclusion when he writes from Brown's point of view,

After the affair on the Pottawatomie, they called me a murderer. After the debacle at the Ferry, they called me a terrorist. At my trial, and thenceforward, they decided that surely I must be a lunatic. These were nothing but convenient labels conjured up by discomfited people who wished to avoid facing the unpleasant truth. The unpleasant truth was, I never was any of those things. The unpleasant truth was, I was right, slavery was wrong, and no violence I ever committed, no blood I ever spilled, no madness I ever participated in can compare to the violence, bloodshed, and madness not only perpetrated against the millions of poor Negroes held in bondage, but visited upon the country in the years following my death.<sup>243</sup>

Olds balances this view, however, with "testimonies," written from the points of view of people who knew Brown, including several of his children. These passages portray Brown as a

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<sup>241</sup> Olds, 58.

<sup>242</sup> Ibid., 58-60.

<sup>243</sup> Ibid., 209.

vicious, vindictive man. Through the voices of John Brown Jr. and Jason Brown, Olds recounts the brutal whippings Brown laid upon his children for typical childhood transgressions, such as daydreaming. Speaking from beyond the grave, Brown's first wife, Dianthe Lusk Brown, blames Brown for her premature death when she says, "I shared the man's bed everyday for eleven years, and if the best of him was a dotish father and a loyal husband, the rest of him was a natural-born sonofabitch whose hard, hard ways drove me mad afore they kilt me dead."<sup>244</sup> Brown's daughter Ruth gives perhaps the most poignant testimony about her father and his ability to commit cold-blooded murder. She says that when talking about the evils of slavery "he became another person. Not my father at all, the one of marbles and squirrels and ewe lambs, but some stranger fleeing his past, blinded by hate, utterly beyond the reach of a human touch or voice or kindness. The sort of man, I had no difficulty believing, who was capable of absolutely anything."<sup>245</sup>

Olds also uses Ruth's voice to portray Brown as insane. Ruth testifies that her father took his hatred of slavery so personally that he truly hated the *slaveholders* even more than the institution of slavery itself. She asserts, "It is said that each of us has our own cross to bear. But Father had taken the suffering of the whole world for his own. And it was slowly driving him mad."<sup>246</sup> Olds also uses a quote from Robert E. Lee to assert Brown's alleged insanity: "The result [of the Harpers Ferry raid] proves that the plan was the attempt of a fanatic or madman which could only end in failure."<sup>247</sup> These are strong assertions of Brown's insanity, but when combined with the other testimonies of Brown's cold-blooded nature, as well as evidence that he was a hero, they leave behind today's ambivalent, confused image of a complex man.

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<sup>244</sup> Ibid., 30.

<sup>245</sup> Ibid., 84.

<sup>246</sup> Ibid., 85.

<sup>247</sup> Ibid., 299.



While Brown's image continues to evolve, Jackson's image has remained steadfast since his death due to the influence of Lost Cause mythology, which was discussed in Chapter One. Jackson is generally viewed as a blameless warrior, tragically cut down in his prime. One of Jackson's personal records has been especially helpful in proving this viewpoint. While at West Point, Jackson began keeping a book in which he wrote down moral and ethical maxims. He made most of the entries during his early years at VMI, when he focused intently on improving his spirituality, intellect, and social skills. He organized his proverbs and sayings under three general headings: choice of friends, rules of conversation, and general principles or personal maxims. The most extensive of these is rules of conversation, because Jackson particularly wanted to improve his social skills. Jackson neither authored nor claimed authorship of these maxims. He merely wrote down quotes he found helpful. For example, one of his "choice of friends" maxims is the familiar saying "A man is known by the company which he keeps." Other examples include "If you speak in company, speak late," and "Endeavor to be at peace with all men."<sup>248</sup>

Strangely, though many people knew of Jackson's maxims after his death and throughout the twentieth century, the book itself disappeared after the general's death in 1863. Much to his surprise, Jackson scholar James I. Robertson in the late 1980s uncovered the book in the special collections at Tulane University while conducting research for a Jackson biography. Jackson enthusiast and Tulane alumnus Charles E. Davis around the turn of the twentieth century had amassed a large collection of papers regarding Jackson, which he eventually donated to the university. Nestled among the papers was Jackson's famous notebook.<sup>249</sup>

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<sup>248</sup> Robertson, 36, 153-156; Thomas J. Jackson, *Stonewall Jackson's Book of Maxims*, ed. James I. Robertson (Nashville: Cumberland House, 2002), 29, 44, 65.

<sup>249</sup> James I. Robertson, "Introduction," in Thomas J. Jackson, *Stonewall Jackson's Book of Maxims*, ed. James I. Robertson (Nashville: Cumberland House, 2002), 23.

Because Jackson, unlike Brown, did not know his death was imminent, he did not leave behind much of a personal written record, beyond his book of maxims, which he never intended to make public. After his death, the people who had known him best undertook memorializing him in print. In 1892, Jackson's widow, Mary Anna Jackson, published her own memories of her husband. In her book *Life and Letters of General Thomas J. Jackson (Stonewall Jackson)*, Anna Jackson aligns with Early's image of the South and its generals and portrays her husband as an outstanding general and a righteous, loving man. She accomplishes this not so much by exaggerating Jackson's triumphs, but by skillfully glossing over his faults. She describes her husband's criminal great-grandfather as "true and upright, active and energetic, of quiet but determined character..."<sup>250</sup> A man who stole from his employer most likely could be described as active, energetic, and determined, but "true" and "upright" John Jackson was not. Likewise, Anna Jackson describes Stonewall Jackson's father's enormous debt and financial mismanagement as "pecuniary misfortunes."<sup>251</sup> Quite possibly, Anna Jackson was attempting to make her husband's family name match his illustrious reputation.

Anna Jackson's flowery, almost pompous tone in her book helped promote Early's image of Jackson as a flawless general and upstanding man by emphasizing the best parts of his personality and ignoring or glossing over most of his faults and shortcomings. Though she admits her husband was grossly unprepared to be a West Point student, she makes no mention of how unprepared he was for his teaching career at VMI. She focuses instead on his determination to keep ahead of his classes and his strict adherence to the school rules, no matter how small.

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<sup>250</sup> Mary Anna Jackson, *Life and Letters of Thomas J. Jackson (Stonewall Jackson)* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1892; reprint, Harrisonburg, VA: Sprinkle Publications, 1995; page references are to the reprint edition), 1.

<sup>251</sup> *Ibid.*, 11.

She also lovingly describes his playfulness with her around the house, often startling her just so he could sweep her up in his arms and smother her with kisses.<sup>252</sup>

Anna Jackson's description of her husband's war record is no less admiring. Like any good disciple of the Lost Cause, she insists her husband fought for states' rights, not to preserve slavery. She writes, "He therefore accepted slavery, as it existed in the Southern States, not as a thing desirable in itself, but as allowed by Providence for ends which it was not his business to determine. At the same time, the negroes had no truer friend, no greater benefactor."<sup>253</sup> In this passage, Anna Jackson appeals to both northern and southern readers, both of whom already admired Jackson. Not only did the general support the superior Southern way of life, but he also befriended and cared for the slaves.

Anna Jackson also insists her husband did not support secession. Though he would become a great general, Stonewall Jackson, according to his wife, wanted peace more than anything else. While describing their final prayer together before Jackson left for the war, Anna Jackson writes, "...one of his most earnest petitions was that 'if consistent with His will, God would still avert the threatening danger and grant us peace!'"<sup>254</sup>

Anna Jackson positions her husband's battle record according to the image she had already set up for him. Of his leadership at the Battle of First Manassas she writes, "...it was well known that his brigade saved the day, the credit of which was justly given to its commander." By emphasizing the important role her husband played in this inaugural clash of armies, Anna Jackson credits him as the man who showed the Union that the Confederacy would not be easily defeated. In discussing the Seven Days' Battle, she omits General Jackson's

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<sup>252</sup> Ibid., 33-34, 81-83, 120-121.

<sup>253</sup> Ibid., 143.

<sup>254</sup> Ibid., 145.

failures as a commander and never addresses why her husband slept through crucial parts of the battle.<sup>255</sup>

Surprisingly, Anna Jackson writes little about her husband's greatest military feat: marching around Joseph Hooker's army and launching a surprise attack on his exposed flank at Chancellorsville. While this event could have enhanced her husband's popular image as an ingenious military mind, Anna Jackson instead focuses on the tragic qualities of his untimely death. She calls his wounding "a mistake" and places no blame on the North Carolina unit whose members were responsible. More importantly, Anna Jackson focuses on her husband's bravery in confronting his injuries. She writes, "Amidst all his sufferings he uttered no complaint, and answered all questions in a perfectly calm and self-possessed tone."<sup>256</sup>

For the remainder of her book, Jackson carries this theme of bravery and enhances the image of her husband as a courageous and religious man. She writes that it was very difficult to extract his final wishes "because he had never, from the time that he first rallied from his wounds, thought he would die, and had expressed the belief that God still had work for him to do, and would raise him up to do it."<sup>257</sup> She writes that she was grateful her husband died on a Sunday, as he desired, but she emphasizes the image of a hero tragically cut down in his prime when she writes, "Yet how unspeakable and incalculable was his loss to me and that fatherless baby! Dead! in the meridian of his grand life, before he had attained the age of forty years! But 'alive in Christ,' for evermore!"<sup>258</sup> Anna Jackson's work certainly mythologizes her husband, but during the Victorian Era in which the book was published, few critics would have refuted the

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<sup>255</sup> Ibid., 178.

<sup>256</sup> Ibid., 442.

<sup>257</sup> Ibid., 469.

<sup>258</sup> Ibid., 472.

memoirs of a widow, especially a young one, and Anna Jackson's image of her husband stood as fact.

Thomas Jackson's nephew, Thomas Jackson Arnold, who had lived with the general and his wife for a time after their first child was stillborn, published his own memoirs of the general in 1916. Titled *Early Life and Letters of General Thomas J. Jackson, "Stonewall Jackson,"* Arnold's book does for Jackson what John Brown did for himself; it uses Jackson's personal letters to shape his image. The work also reflects the spirit of the period of reconciliation during which the book was published by echoing Anna Jackson's insistence that Jackson desperately wanted peace between the sections, not war. Arnold quotes a letter his uncle wrote him in January 1861, three months before he was called to war: "I am in favor of making a thorough trial for peace... I desire to see the state use every influence she possesses in order to procure an honorable adjustment of our troubles..."<sup>259</sup> To further enhance Jackson's image as a kindred spirit to the North, Arnold writes that Jackson "was popular with slaves" and quotes one of Jackson's friends calling him "the black man's friend."<sup>260</sup> With these descriptions, Arnold diverts attention from the racial side of the Civil War and separates his uncle from the stigma of fighting to keep slaves in bondage.

Throughout the rest of the book, Arnold projects a pristine image of his uncle, emphasizing the general's best qualities and glossing over or ignoring his faults. Describing Jackson's tenure at West Point, Arnold mentions only his uncle's steady rise in academics and fails to mention how close Jackson came to expulsion for poor grades. Arnold, of course, echoes the remark that had the West Point curriculum lasted a fifth year, Jackson would have graduated at the very top of his class. Arnold also raises his uncle's status by describing his entire class at

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<sup>259</sup> Thomas Jackson Arnold, *Early Life and Letters of General Thomas J. Jackson, "Stonewall Jackson"* (New York and Chicago: Fleming H. Revell Co., 1916), 294.

<sup>260</sup> *Ibid.*, 338.

West Point as “a large and distinguished one,” which included such future Civil War personalities as George McClellan, A.P. Hill, and George Pickett.<sup>261</sup>

Using melodramatic language, Arnold also romanticizes Jackson’s experiences in the Mexican War. Describing the Battle of Chapultepec, in which Jackson first distinguished himself, Arnold writes, “To stand alone, in the foreground of the fight, defying the terrors from which others shrank, was the situation which of all others he coveted; and under the walls of Chapultepec, answering shot for shot and plying sponge and hand-spike with desperate energy, the fierce instincts of the soldier were fully gratified.”<sup>262</sup>

Arnold does not specifically address myths surrounding his uncle’s image, but he does address and refute some negative accusations launched at Jackson, such as that Jackson was a fanatic and a bigot. Because he was writing during the period of reconciliation, Arnold tried to smooth over these divisive issues. To contradict the accusations, Arnold writes,

Of those who did not know General Jackson, some have classed him as a fanatic, some as a bigot, some as an enthusiast, and still others as a fatalist. Those who knew him best did not so estimate him. He was entirely free from bigotry, being the last person to believe that no one could enter the kingdom of heaven except by the particular path that he had selected.... He was not a fanatic, for he did not have hatred for those opposed to him. The fanatic is not only the bigot, but he seeks to compel all who differ with him to travel his path. General Jackson was incapable of persecuting his fellow-man for entertaining opinions at variance with his own religious views. He was not an enthusiast, for that is a form of fanaticism.... He was not a fatalist.... Everything that preparation, care, forecast, and self-sacrificing toil could do to prepare and earn success he did.... General Jackson was simply a very earnest Christian, he was deeply consecrated, his whole soul was in his belief. He lived his religion every hour of the day.<sup>263</sup>

It would appear in this passage that in referring to and describing fanatics and fatalists, Arnold alludes to John Brown, thereby making a subtle jab at the North for producing a fanatical revolutionary while the South produced a righteous man like Jackson.

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<sup>261</sup> Ibid, 61-76.

<sup>262</sup> Ibid., 108.

<sup>263</sup> Ibid., 16-19.

The relatives were not alone in mythologizing Jackson. Songwriters also paid homage. During the Battle of Antietam in September 1862, John Williamson Palmer, a physician, poet, and newspaper correspondent, wrote the poem “Stonewall Jackson’s Way.” An unknown composer soon put it to music, and Jackson’s men sang the new song during the eight remaining months of Jackson’s life. The song’s lyrics uphold the image of Jackson as a pious and brave general, beloved by men who would follow him anywhere. Referring to Jackson as “Blue Light,” Palmer writes, “Silence! ground arms! kneel all! caps off!/ Old Blue Light’s going to pray;/ Strangle the fool who dares to scoff;/ Attention; it’s his way!” After describing the fervent way in which Jackson prayed, Palmer contrasts that aspect of Jackson with the general’s penchant for determined, effective battle. He writes, “The foe had better ne’er been born,/ That gets in Stonewall’s way.”<sup>264</sup>

Poets corroborated this musical image of Stonewall Jackson in the 1860s. John Greenleaf Whittier, a Quaker from Massachusetts, immortalized Jackson as a compassionate, noble, and honest man in his 1864 poem “Barbara Frietchie.” In the poem, ninety-year-old Barbara Frietchie waves a Union flag at General Jackson and his troops as they march through Frederick, Maryland, in September 1862. Waving the flag furiously, she yells to the Confederates from her window, “Shoot if you must, this old gray head,/ but spare your country’s flag,’ she said.” Apparently so moved by the old woman’s courage and loyalty to her country, Stonewall Jackson replies, “Who touches a hair of yon gray head/ Dies like a dog! March on!’ he said.” Though the poem is clearly pro-Union, Whittier asks his readers that for Barbara Frietchie’s sake to shed a tear for Jackson.<sup>265</sup>

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<sup>264</sup> John Williamson Palmer, “Stonewall Jackson’s Way,” 30 August 2006, <<http://www.civilwarpoetry.org/confederates/songs>>.

<sup>265</sup> John Greenleaf Whittier, “Barbara Frietchie,” in Brenda Wineapple, ed., *John Greenleaf Whittier: Selected Poems* (New York: The Library of America, 2004), 94-97.

Recent literature involving Jackson is less ambivalent than that regarding Brown, and it caters to the romantic, Lost Cause image of the general. Perhaps the most popular mass market novel regarding Thomas Jackson, Jeff Shaara's 1996 work *Gods and Generals* depicts all of the myths surrounding Jackson that Robertson in his 1997 biography had worked hard to dispel, especially Jackson's strange mannerisms regarding his health and his strict piety.<sup>266</sup>

Shaara especially focuses on the general's legendary adherence to Presbyterianism. In his introduction, Shaara describes Jackson as seeing "every aspect of his life, every act, as only a part of his duty to please God."<sup>267</sup> When Jackson attends John Brown's execution, Shaara shows Jackson praying for Brown's soul and becoming inwardly angry that some members of the crowd condemned Brown to Hell. Shaara writes, "He [Jackson] looked back to Brown's lifeless body, thought, Perhaps it is meant for him to pass below, into the fires of Hell. Jackson clenched his fists. He could not bear that, could not believe that men could be judged to be so wicked, and that others would be so eager to condemn their brothers to a flaming eternal death."<sup>268</sup> This scene contributes not only to Jackson's image as a pious, devout Christian, but also to his image as a man compassionate even to his enemies.

Shaara, however, also shows the soldierly side of Jackson – the side that could fight with unbridled fury and that led filmmaker Ken Burns to describe the general as "a pious, blue-eyed killer."<sup>269</sup> From Robert E. Lee's point of view, Shaara describes Jackson's military capabilities thus: "...if left alone, Jackson held nothing back, would operate with a fury and an anger that was simple and straightforward. He was given credit for military genius... though Jackson never

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<sup>266</sup> Jeff Shaara, *Gods and Generals* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1996; reprint New York: Ballantine Books, 1998); Robertson, 71.

<sup>267</sup> *Ibid.*, 5.

<sup>268</sup> *Ibid.*, 52-53.

<sup>269</sup> Ken Burns, *The Civil War*, produced and directed by Ken Burns, PBS Home Video, 1990.



seemed to pay attention to that kind of praise.”<sup>270</sup> Here, Shaara solidifies Jackson’s image as a impetuous fighter who thought only of his duty, never of the glory that might follow.

Shaara treats Jackson’s death with the traditional awe and reverence his popular image demands. Immediately after Jackson’s wounding, Shaara shows him talking only to God and fighting to maintain his senses despite intense pain – exactly as a heroic general should. Despite factual evidence to the contrary, Shaara’s Jackson tries to refuse chloroform while doctors examined his wounds and subsequently amputated his arm. And, of course, the Confederate Army in Shaara’s romantic retelling is lost without Jackson’s leadership and all its fighting after he is wounded is done to make him proud. Even Shaara’s Robert E. Lee seems confused and unable to function properly without Jackson and prays continually for God to save the general. When Jackson dies, Shaara shows Lee questioning his own, typically solid, faith in God.<sup>271</sup>

*Gods and Generals* ends only ten pages after Jackson’s death, with Lee preparing to invade Pennsylvania. At the end of the novel, the remaining Confederate characters, including Jackson’s staff and General Lee, question how they will continue without Jackson. The book closes on a foreboding note regarding the Confederacy’s odds for victory at Gettysburg, and Shaara opens his afterword with an excerpt from the benediction given by Father Hubert of a Louisiana brigade at the unveiling of the Jackson monument in New Orleans in 1881. Hubert says, “...And Thou knowest O Lord, that when Thou didst decide that the Confederacy should not succeed, Thou hadst first to remove Thy servant, Stonewall Jackson.”<sup>272</sup> Shaara hereby aligns with the myth of the Lost Cause and positions Jackson as the man the Confederacy could not succeed without. This quote also reinforces Jackson’s image as the general who single-handedly kept the Confederacy afloat, and it suggests that had Jackson survived to return to the

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<sup>270</sup> Shaara, 222.

<sup>271</sup> Ibid., 435-460.

<sup>272</sup> Ibid., 483.

battlefield the Confederacy would have won the war. As a final touch, the quote also reinforces Jackson's pious image.

As these examples indicate, Brown and Jackson both had a hand in securing their own images through print media, Brown intentionally and Jackson unintentionally. Because Jackson was unable to consciously craft his own image, his wife and nephew did it for him, aligning themselves with the myth of the Lost Cause and the period of reconciliation. Songwriters, poets, and novelists also contributed to show John Brown as a complex man whose image and motives are difficult to pinpoint with any precision and to show Jackson as a blameless, righteous warrior, beloved by both North and South. Though some biographers have attempted to dispel these popular perceptions, these are the images that prevail today in mainstream culture.

## CHAPTER SIX: VISUAL IMAGES

The old saying “A picture is worth a thousand words” holds especially true for the popular images of John Brown and Stonewall Jackson. Though historians have developed the perceptions of the two men through biographies and academic debate, the visual images, photographs, paintings, and films, of Brown and Jackson have been especially permanent in popular memory.

One of the more famous paintings of Brown is Thomas Hovenden’s 1884 work, *The Last Moments of John Brown*. Hovenden’s painting depicts a famous, though untrue, legend of Brown. According to the legend, Brown, hands in shackles, leaned over to kiss a black baby as he descended the jailhouse steps on the way to his execution. At least three painters depicted the scene, with Hovenden’s becoming the most famous, and Currier and Ives created lithographs. Many Victorian homes displayed a copy of one of these works.<sup>273</sup>

The baby-kissing legend originated in a press report in the *New-York Tribune* and appeared in many speeches, poems, and essays about Brown. In 1882, a reporter in Louisville claimed he had found the child Brown had kissed. The mother of the child, now an adult, claimed the story was true, however several reliable sources discredited the story. Captain John Avis, the jailer who had befriended Brown and accompanied him the entire way from the jail to the scaffold, denied the story’s truth. Andrew Hunter, who was also with Brown the whole time, denied the story as well. Finally, Edward F. Underhill, the reporter who wrote the original *Tribune* story, eventually revealed he had not been in Charles Town the day of Brown’s

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<sup>273</sup> Thomas Hovenden, “The Last Moments of John Brown,” painting, 1884, as reproduced by John Brown/Boyd B. Stutler Collection, West Virginia State Archives, Charleston, West Virginia. For a reproduction of the work, turn to Appendix B.

execution. He had written the story from the newspaper's New York office using secondhand reports. Even without the accounts from Underhill, Avis, and Hunter, this story's validity would be doubtful. Due to the sheer number of military personnel in town and the other security around Brown that day, any civilian would have had tremendous difficulty getting close enough to the condemned man to hold a baby up to him.<sup>274</sup>

But the baby-kissing legend remains strong, most likely because it corresponds with the martyr mythology Brown's supporters created regarding him. Also, as David Reynolds points out in his biography of Brown, the scene Hovenden immortalized is "an imaginative coupling of John Brown's stated desires with truth." Brown failed in his real-world attempt to free the slaves, but at least in the realm of Hovenden's painting, he succeeded. In the painting's realm, Brown truly is a tenderhearted martyr for black freedom and not the wild-eyed madman his detractors claim he is.<sup>275</sup> Perhaps the painting and its legend have remained popular because they answer why Brown turned violently against his own government; such a horrific act is easier to understand and accept when it is viewed as an attempt to end something evil, such as slavery. This painting and its legend run counter to the Lost Cause, however, because they show that slavery was the cause of John Brown's actions, thereby making blacks an important part of history.

Another popular version of the baby-kissing legend also portrayed the martyr image of Brown. In 1870, Currier and Ives published a lithograph of the scene, entitled "John Brown – The Martyr." In the lithograph, Brown stands on the steps of the Charles Town jail on the way to his execution. Currier and Ives obviously modeled their image of Brown from the 1859 photograph by James Wallace Black. Brown looks down on a black woman who is sitting on the

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<sup>274</sup> Reynolds, 394-395; Merrill D. Peterson, *John Brown: The Legend Revisited* (Charlottesville: The University of Virginia Press, 2002), 45-46.

<sup>275</sup> Reynolds, 395.

steps below him and is holding a baby. The baby stares up at Brown and reaches up a hand to him. Next to the mother and child, an angry-faced soldier stares at Brown and points toward the lithograph's viewer, as if directing Brown toward the gallows.

This lithograph comprises a couple of interesting elements, the first of which is Brown's stance and expression. Currier and Ives did not shift Brown's sideways stance from the 1859 photograph, so Brown's body actually faces away from the mother and child, though his head is turned slightly toward them. Also, Brown's expression is emotionless. It is difficult to tell whether Brown is smugly satisfied, slightly angry, or simply bored. He is certainly not the affectionate, joyful man that Hovenden portrayed him as. Second, the mother in the image certainly is black, but her child is much lighter-skinned than she, and could pass as a white child. Perhaps Currier and Ives were attempting to make the image more palatable for a nineteenth-century audience by softening this image of Brown as a martyr for black freedom. The fact that the mother is black does not matter; black women often nursed and cared for white babies, so such a role would have been acceptable to the lithograph's intended audience.<sup>276</sup>

During his lifetime, Brown sometimes was known as the "Cyclone of Kansas." In 1937, Regionalist painter and Kansas native John Steuart Curry visually linked Brown to this violent weather phenomenon, so common on the Kansas prairie. In June 1937, the state of Kansas commissioned Curry to paint murals in the Kansas Statehouse. Curry consented, saying he wanted to portray the war between Kansans and nature, as well as his feelings as a native Kansan. He planned the murals in three acts. The first shows the settlement of Kansas, including the Spanish Conquistadores, the plainsmen, and John Brown; the second act shows the life of homesteaders, and the third shows modern Kansas with farms and industry. Painted

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<sup>276</sup> Currier and Ives, "John Brown – The Martyr," lithograph, 1870, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C. To view the lithograph, see Appendix B.

between 1937 and 1942, part of Curry's first act draws the most attention from the general public.<sup>277</sup> The foreground of *Tragic Prelude* shows a ten-foot-tall, bearded, wild-eyed John Brown standing with legs extended and arms outstretched, as if forming a cross. His mouth gapes open, as if he is either preaching enthusiastically or howling with rage. In his right hand he holds a Sharps rifle, and his left hand clutches an open Bible. Two fallen soldiers, one wearing gray and the other wearing blue, lie dead at his feet. Behind him, Confederate and Union soldiers clash in battle while both a tornado and a wild prairie fire rage in the background. Apparently oblivious to the ensuing chaos, a wagon train rolls by in the background, bringing new settlers to the frontier.<sup>278</sup>

Curry's painting clearly portrays Brown's actions as sparking the Civil War. Showing the soldiers dead at Brown's feet and fighting behind him, Curry positions the Civil War as the inevitable consequence of the Pottawatomie Massacre, thereby asserting that slavery was in fact a cause of the war. Though scholars generally agree the Civil War would have occurred without John Brown, many Kansans agreed with Curry's interpretation at the time. That did not mean they liked it, however. When the portrait was unveiled, Kansans did not readily praise it. Though the work is now considered a masterpiece of American art, Kansans at the time worried that the painting would cast Kansas in a poor light because it showed the freaks and not the refinements of the state. As State Senator Martin Van Buren DeMarks of Concordia remarked, "John Brown was just a crazy old coot. He was nothing but a rascal, a thief, and a murderer... whose memory should not be perpetuated."<sup>279</sup> Indeed, Curry's painting perpetuates the myth of

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<sup>277</sup> John Stauffer and Zoe Trodd, "Meteor of War: The John Brown Cycle," in *The Afterlife of John Brown*, eds. Andrew Taylor and Eldrid Herrington (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2005), 127-128; and "John Steuart Curry: A Kansas Portrait" (Topeka: Kansas State Historical Society, 2006), available online at [http://www.kshs.org/portraits/curry\\_john.htm](http://www.kshs.org/portraits/curry_john.htm).

<sup>278</sup> John Steuart Curry, "Tragic Prelude," painting, 1937-1942, Kansas Statehouse murals, Topeka, Kansas. For a reproduction of the work, see Appendix B.

<sup>279</sup> Quoted in Peterson, 134.

Brown as a madman. The gaping mouth, the unkempt beard, and the wild eyes of Curry's Brown all point toward a man who is not sane.

In light of the many glorifications of Brown following his death, Curry's interpretation may seem odd, but the John Brown debate was changing among historians at this time. The earlier twentieth-century hagiographies of Brown by DuBois and Villard were being replaced in the historiography by more critical works, such as Robert Penn Warren's biography, in which he contends Brown was insane.<sup>280</sup> It may also seem odd that Kansans would commemorate a madman in their state capitol. As noted above, many prominent Kansans objected to Brown's inclusion in the murals. However, by depicting Brown as a madman, Kansans show that Brown was an oddity, perhaps so that other Americans will not use him as a generalization for the entire state.

Photographs also have played an important role in creating the legend of John Brown. The earliest known portrait of Brown is an 1847 daguerreotype by Augustus Washington. This portrait shows a stern-looking Brown staring directly into the camera and raising his right hand, as if taking an oath. In his left hand he grasps an unidentifiable flag, which historians guess may be the standard of the Subterranean Passway, a route Brown hoped to create through the Appalachian Mountains to guide slaves to freedom. Taken by perhaps the earliest known black daguerreotypist, the portrait sets up the image of Brown as a religious martyr for black freedom and seems to allude to Brown's 1837 declaration of war against slavery. That year, an Illinois antislavery editor, Elijah Lovejoy died of a gunshot wound while trying to protect his printing press from an angry mob. At a memorial prayer meeting for Lovejoy in Hudson, the minister's words about Lovejoy's sacrifice so moved Brown that he suddenly rose to his feet, raised his right hand, and announced, "Here, before God, in the presence of these witnesses, from this time,

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<sup>280</sup> For an analysis of these works, see Chapter One.

I consecrate my life to the destruction of slavery!”<sup>281</sup> According to family legend, Brown at this same time openly announced his commitment to antislavery violence and persuaded his family members, most notably his sons John Jr. and Jason, to pledge themselves to armed warfare against slavery. Viewing the daguerreotype, in which Brown’s right hand is raised, one can easily imagine this scene.

The photograph of Brown that he and his supporters liked best was taken in 1859 and usually attributed to photographer James Wallace Black of Boston. The three-quarters photo shows a calm Brown standing with hands in pockets and bearded face turned slightly toward the camera. Brown stares intently into the camera, but appears neither angry nor insane. Brown had the portrait printed onto autograph cards, which he handed out to friends. It is no wonder that Brown’s supporters preferred this portrait after Brown’s execution. The benign figure in the portrait stands in stark opposition to the madman Brown’s detractors ranted about.<sup>282</sup>

Though favored by Brown and his supporters, the 1859 photograph did not connect with public the way the 1847 daguerreotype and Hovenden’s painting did, most likely because it does not show the intense emotions that the daguerreotype and the painting reveal. In September 1990, filmmaker Ken Burns used the latter two images of Brown to define the man and his attack on Harpers Ferry for a new generation in his documentary film *The Civil War*. Combining photographs, lithographs, period newspapers, paintings, letters, and period songs, Burns delivered an eleven-hour series that drew the attention of forty million Americans, shattering PBS’s viewing record for an educational series.<sup>283</sup> Due partly to Burns’s talent as a filmmaker and partly to Americans’ ongoing fascination with the Civil War, the documentary made a huge

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<sup>281</sup> Quoted in Reynolds, 65; and Peterson, 163.

<sup>282</sup> Peterson, 75. To view the portrait, see Appendix B.

<sup>283</sup> This number represents the number of Americans who watched at least one of the nine episodes.



impact on the general public, prompting scholars to call it “perhaps the best modern American example of film’s potential to teach history on a mass scale.”<sup>284</sup>

Reflecting popular academic thought on Brown in the early 1990s, Burns portrays Brown as a complex, self-contradicting character. He picks up with Brown at the 1837 meeting in which Brown declared war on slavery. Describing Brown as “a strange, gaunt man” and a “radical abolitionist,” Burns quotes Brown as saying, “Here before God in the presence of these witnesses, I consecrate my life to the destruction of slavery,” while on the screen he displays the 1847 daguerreotype of Brown staring intensely into the camera with his right hand raised. Skipping ahead to the attack on Harpers Ferry, Burns describes Brown as “an inept businessman who had failed twenty times in six states and defaulted on his debts. Yet he believed himself God’s agent on Earth.” Though this statement is accurate, the tone implies the image of Brown as a madman. Burns balances this, however, with a quote from William Lloyd Garrison giving his opinion on Harpers Ferry: “In firing his gun, John Brown has merely told what time it is. It is High Noon, thank God.” This quote expresses the relief many abolitionists and Brown supporters felt after the attack because finally someone was doing something active to end slavery.<sup>285</sup>

While discussing Brown’s execution, Burns covers the spectrum of feelings about Brown by his contemporaries. He relays Ralph Waldo Emerson’s likening of Brown to Christ, while Nathaniel Hawthorne declared “No man ever more justly hanged.” Herman Melville merely observed that Brown was “The meteor of the war.” But Burns ends his discussion of John Brown with a definite bias in support of Brown. Burns concludes with the text of John Brown’s

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<sup>284</sup> Robert Brent Toplin, “Introduction,” in *Ken Burns’s The Civil War: Historians Respond*, ed. Robert Brent Toplin (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), xv, xxvi.

<sup>285</sup> Ken Burns, *Ken Burns’s The Civil War, Episode One: The Cause*, prod. and dir. Ken Burns, PBS Home Video, 1997, videocassette.

final message, stuffed into the hand of a guard as he left Charles Town jail for the gallows: “I John Brown am now quite certain that the crimes of this guilty, land: will never be purged away; but with Blood. I had as I now think: vainly flattered myself that without very much bloodshed; it might be done.” This quote supports the myth of Brown as a Christ-like or prophetic person because it accurately predicts the Civil War. While quoting this message, Burns slips in another positive image of Brown: Thomas Hovenden’s painting *The Last Moments of John Brown*, which displays on the screen throughout Brown’s so-called “last prophecy.” Burns leaves his audience with this positive image of Brown as a martyr and kind-hearted abolitionist, thus aligning with the historiographical debate at the time, which was trying to balance the negative images of John Brown.<sup>286</sup>

Because he was compiling a documentary of the entire Civil War, Burns could touch only briefly on John Brown. Ten years after Burns’s documentary, another filmmaker created an entire documentary solely about Brown. In 2000, PBS aired Robert Kenner’s film *John Brown’s Holy War*. The ninety-minute presentation, driven mostly by interviews with historians, explores the myths regarding Brown and examines the contradictions of his character. The film opens with the narrator explaining the opposing views of Brown. He says, “To abolitionists, John Brown was a hero, a saintly man who killed for his beliefs. But others saw him as the embodiment of evil.” This is the current view of Brown as a complex, contradictory man. Kenner examines these and other Brown myths in turn. First, he examines the image of Brown as a Christ-like figure. While discussing Brown’s role as a father, author Bruce Olds describes an incident in which Brown gave John Jr. only one-third the lashes the boy should have received for disobedience and then ordered the boy to give him the remaining lashes. As Olds observes, “You have the son in the role of sinful mankind whipping the father, who is playing the Christ

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<sup>286</sup> Ibid.

figure.” Author Russell Banks concurs, saying that when Brown moved his family to the Pennsylvania wilderness, he was “not that different from an Old Testament chieftain going off into the wilderness and carving out a community.”<sup>287</sup>

The historians in the film agree, however, that the images of Brown that endure to this day were born in Kansas, where Brown first gained national attention. While Curry’s mural is displayed on screen, author Edward J. Renehan Jr. comments, “Kansas is the birth of the messianic Brown. It’s the birth of the Moses-like Brown. It’s the birth of the terrorist Brown. It’s the birth of the murderer Brown.” Subsequent commentators agree, and true to the current academic thought on Brown, they show both sides of the issue regarding the Pottawatomie Massacre. Historian Dennis Frye denounces the massacre as cold-blooded murder because Brown killed based on anger and vengeance. Russell Banks agrees but takes a slightly different approach. He says, “It (the massacre) was in response to extraordinary frustration and despair (regarding the pro-slavery takeover of the Kansas territorial government). I really think he was like Samson trying to pull down the temple. I don’t mean to condone it... but there is a context, a progression, and we have to take... an imaginative leap into his time and see the world as he saw it.”<sup>288</sup>

The myth of Brown as a martyr – both for Christ and for slaves – figures prominently in the film’s discussion of the Harpers Ferry raid. Russell Banks argues that Brown’s refusal to escape the Ferry while he still could was a “deliberate, resigned act of martyrdom.” This is very likely, since Brown refused to evacuate the engine house when Kagi urged him to. The commentators agree that Brown’s relevance was the direct result of his having survived the Harpers Ferry attack, and he knew it. Had Brown died during the raid, he would have faded into

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<sup>287</sup> *John Brown’s Holy War*, prod. and dir. Robert Kenner, PBS Home Video, 2000, videocassette.

<sup>288</sup> *Ibid.*

historical obscurity, a footnote at best. Because Brown survived, reporters descended on Harpers Ferry, and Brown became an instant celebrity with, as Olds says, “the ear of the nation.” Historian Paul Finkelman concurs and points out that Brown understood the value of the newspapers in getting his ideas across to the public. All the historians agree that Brown carefully manipulated the media to craft his own image as a martyr for his cause. Brown appears as a martyr, they agree, but mostly due to his own conscious actions.<sup>289</sup>

Finally, *John Brown’s Holy War* examines the image of Brown as a madman. Unlike many manifestations of this image, which usually end without drawing a definite conclusion, Kenner’s film implies that Brown was sane. Bruce Olds admits that Brown was obsessed and psychologically unbalanced, but not necessarily insane. James O. Horton goes a step further and introduces the racial side of the argument for declaring Brown insane. He says, “We should be very careful about assuming that a white man who was willing to put his life on the line for black people is of necessity crazy.” Paul Finkelman agrees and adds that being a bad tactician and a bad general do not of necessity make Brown crazy.<sup>290</sup>

At the end of the film, Kenner recaps the opposing views of Brown and offers one last comment from author Russell Banks, explaining why Brown continues to be relevant in the twenty-first century. Banks says, “His (Brown’s) life raises very basic and ongoing questions about politic violence – violence in the service of an idea, a principled cause. And that... makes him so tragically revealing and emblematic of our history and our culture and of our nature today.” Perhaps historians continue to debate Brown’s life and purpose not to understand why Brown acted the way he did but to understand acts of political violence in their own time. Brown’s attack on Harpers Ferry raised unsettling questions as to why someone would resort to

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<sup>289</sup> Ibid.

<sup>290</sup> Ibid.

an act of terrorism, and recent terrorist attacks around the globe have raised the same questions, making Brown's attack strike a very emotional chord with many people. The September 11, 2001, attacks on New York City were committed by men who believed, as Brown did, that they were carrying out God's work. The centuries-old violence in Northern Ireland is the result of a group of people believing, as Brown did, that their political system is unjust and another group of people believing, as slaveholders did, that their political system is fair. Frequent suicide bombers in Afghanistan and the Middle East attempt to make martyrs of themselves, just as John Brown did. While it is certainly true that Brown's raid was nothing compared to the scale of the 9/11 attacks, the Troubles of Ireland, or the political quagmire of Afghanistan and the Middle East, the comparison rings true all the same, keeping the debate over Brown's image fresh. It is impossible to judge with certainty whether Brown suffered from mental illness, but it is unfair to write off his actions as nothing but the work of a fanatic. In a calmer time period, Brown might not have been stirred to violence like he was in the agitated pre-Civil War period. In another day and age, Brown very well may have lived and died in obscurity.

Images of Stonewall Jackson, however, are a less inflammatory debate topic than those of John Brown. And as with Brown's images, photographs have helped to shape Stonewall Jackson's image. Perhaps the two most famous photos of Jackson are his two war-time photos, taken in 1862 and 1863. Though the differences between the two portraits are not as vast as the differences between Brown's 1847 daguerreotype and his 1859 portrait, the two photographs of Jackson show the two different sides of his character: the gentle, loving husband, and the stern-looking soldier. Both images, however, reflect the Lost Cause's view of Jackson.

Mary Jackson favored the 1862 portrait, taken in Winchester in November. She writes that this full-face view “has more of the beaming sunlight of his *home-look*.”<sup>291</sup> Indeed, this portrait of Jackson shows a man with a kind face and gentle eyes, the type of man who would shower affection on his wife and enjoy playing with children. Jackson’s soldiers, however, preferred the general’s final portrait, taken in 1863 in Fredericksburg. The three-quarters view of Jackson’s head and torso shows a different side of the man than the 1862 portrait. The 1863 portrait shows the stern-looking general, successful in battle and respected by his men. Put together, these two portraits represent both sides of Jackson’s character as the Lost Cause projects it.<sup>292</sup>

Like images of John Brown, paintings of Jackson became integral pieces of the mythology surrounding him and also of Lost Cause memorabilia. Indeed, most all Jackson paintings promote Lost Cause ideology. One of the most famous paintings depicting Jackson is E.B.D. Julio’s *The Last Meeting of Lee and Jackson*. Completed in 1872, the work shows Lee and Jackson, both on horseback, on May 2, 1863. Lee, on the left, is pointing off to his right, as if directing Jackson to battle. Prints of this work were immediately popular with southerners, but the work is perhaps more important for what it says about Lee and Jackson. In the painting, Lee is clearly the statelier of the two men. His uniform is crisp and neat, in sharp contrast to Jackson’s dingy coat and pants. Lee’s hat perches smartly on his head, while Jackson appears to have misplaced his ever-present cadet cap. Clearly, being the commanding general, Lee understood there was a certain standard which he had to live up to. Jackson, being the general in the thick of battle, was less concerned about appearance. Even the generals’ horses reflect the dispositions of their masters. Little Sorrel paws impatiently at the ground, eager to get to battle,

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<sup>291</sup> Mary Anna Jackson, 427.

<sup>292</sup> To view the portraits, see Appendix B.

while Traveller stands calmly and gazes in the direction Lee's hand is pointing. Painted during Reconstruction, *The Last Meeting* aligns appropriately with the developing Lost Cause ideology of its time. Lee clearly is the commanding general giving orders to Jackson.

Though later evidence revealed that Lee was not mounted at the time of his and Jackson's final meeting, it is not surprising that Julio chose to show both men on horseback. Living in St. Louis at the time he created the painting, Julio no doubt was influenced by Southern sympathizers in the city and developed some of the adoration for Jackson that was prevalent then. Images of powerful men carrying out war-related roles upon a magnificent steed were common in the art of the ancient world, and as a trained artist, Julio naturally would have included Lee's and Jackson's horses as crucial aspects of his work. Julio also was most likely drawing a parallel to the many portraits of George Washington sitting regally atop a powerful horse during the Revolutionary War, most notably Rembrandt Peale's *Washington Before Yorktown*.<sup>293</sup>

Other paintings show a different side of the Lee/Jackson relationship. In 1994, painter Mort Künstler produced his version of "The Last Meeting" with a painting of the same name. An avid painter of Civil War scenes, Künstler researched the final meeting between Lee and Jackson and discovered it was much different than the scene Julio depicted. Lee was standing alongside the road when Jackson rode by on his way to perform his famous Chancellorsville flanking maneuver. Künstler's painting shows not two great war generals coordinating battle plans, but rather a concerned father figure looking slightly anxious as he sends a favorite son off to war. In this painting, Lee looks up at Jackson with concern as he reaches out and rests his hands on Jackson's right stirrup. Jackson, looking determined, points off to his left, as if

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<sup>293</sup> Estill Curtis Pennington, *The Last Meeting's Lost Cause* (Spartanburg, S.C.: Robert M. Hicklin Jr., Inc., 1988), 25-28.

showing Lee where he and his men were about to march.<sup>294</sup> This painting reverses Julio's image. Jackson now appears to be in charge, and Lee seems helpless and powerless to stop him. Though Lost Cause ideology celebrates Lee as the war's greatest general and acknowledges that Jackson was subordinate to him, Künstler's painting still aligns with this ideology by showing Jackson being confident in his plans and unafraid to express his plans to his commanding officer. It also reflects the image of Lee as a compassionate general who cared deeply about Jackson and agonized over the prospect of Jackson being killed in battle.

Less revealing of Jackson's true character and leaning toward a vilification of the general is Ken Burns's documentary, *The Civil War*. The first time Burns's narrator mentions Jackson, he refers to him as "a pious, blue-eyed killer, utterly untroubled by the likelihood of death." Jackson certainly was pious and untroubled by the time of his death, but to refer to Jackson as a killer is to imply that he enjoyed causing the deaths of others. On several occasions, most notably just before his departure from the Virginia Military Institute in 1861, Jackson prayed that North and South would solve their differences peaceably, averting war entirely.<sup>295</sup>

Like most popular manifestations of Jackson, Burns's film tells the legend of Jackson's nickname, praises his 1862 Shenandoah Valley campaign, and omits mention of Jackson's failures during the Seven Days Battle. In telling the story of Jackson's work during the Battle of Fredericksburg, however, Civil War author Shelby Foote reveals only a vicious side of Jackson. When Confederate soldiers entered Fredericksburg and saw the massive damage the Union Army had inflicted on the town, a soldier asked Jackson how the Confederate Army should prevent future ransacking. Foote quotes Jackson's reply: "Kill them. Kill them all." While it is true that Jackson had a vicious side when it came to war, quotes such as Foote's mythologize Jackson in

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<sup>294</sup> James I. Robertson, Jr., *Lee and Jackson: Legends in Gray, The Paintings of Mort Künstler* (Nashville: Rutledge Hill Press, 1995), 104-105. To view Julio's painting, see Appendix B.

<sup>295</sup> Mary Anna Jackson, 145; Arnold, 294.



such a way that the unwitting viewer may come to believe that Jackson had no other side to him except brutality.

Burns opens the last segment of Jackson's life by saying, "In 1863, Confederate General Stonewall Jackson would become a terror to the Union Army and a legend North and South." While discussing the aftermath of Jackson's flanking maneuver at the Battle of Chancellorsville, Burns's narrator says that Jackson and his men rode out after dark because Jackson was "eager to fight on." When set in the context of Burns's earlier remarks about Jackson being a "blue-eyed killer," this quote makes Jackson appear bloodthirsty. Burns omits mention of the possibility that Jackson was trying only to keep the Union Army on the run; he was not necessarily trying to slaughter them all. By emphasizing Jackson as a killer, Burns ran against the grain of mainstream thought on the general. Jackson certainly was a determined fighter, but few scholars would argue he was bloodthirsty and vindictive.

In recounting Jackson's death, however, Burns mythologizes Jackson in a way other than branding him a killer and returns again to the Lost Cause view. Burns describes how tragic Jackson's death was for General Lee and the Confederate Army. He ends his discussion of Jackson with a true Lost Cause quote. While an image of a group of mourning women shows onscreen, a woman's voice, fittingly, laments, "The death of our pious, brave, and noble General Stonewall Jackson is a great blow to our cause."<sup>296</sup>

More recently, a feature film showed the more popular Jackson and placed him in the midst of a celebration of Lost Cause ideology. Ronald F. Maxwell's 2003 film, *Gods and Generals*, based on Jeff Shaara's novel of the same name, changes the focus of the novel from generals Lee and Hancock at the Battle of Fredericksburg to an almost exclusive focus on Stonewall Jackson. Beginning with Jackson leaving the Virginia Military Institute and ending

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<sup>296</sup> Burns.

with his death, the film places such strong emphasis on the general that a viewer with no prior knowledge of the Civil War would think Jackson was the only general of any significance during the conflict.

From the opening credits, *Gods and Generals* drips with Lost Cause ideology. Before the credits begin rolling, Maxwell displays the text of a quote from George Eliot:

A human life, I think, should be well rooted in some spot of a native land, where it may get the love of tender kinship for the face of the earth, for the labors men go forth to, for the sounds and accents that haunt it, for whatever will give that early home a familiar, unmistakable difference amidst the future widening of knowledge. The best introduction to astronomy is to think of the nightly heavens as a little lot of stars belonging to one's own homestead.

This quote sets up the belief that southerners fought to protect their homes from an aggressive, unwarranted Northern invasion. The film's first scene corroborates this idea, as General Robert E. Lee, played by Robert Duvall, turns down the generalship of the Union Army in favor of protecting his homeland of Virginia. A few scenes later, after Virginia has voted for secession, the film shows a family from Fredericksburg sending its two oldest sons off to fight for the Confederacy. In this scene, the family's black housekeeper, a slave, bids the sons a fond farewell, hugging and kissing each one on the cheek and telling them to return home to her safely. This housekeeper shows the Lost Cause version of a slave woman totally devoted to her master and his family – not one wishing for freedom. Based on this scene, the war had nothing to do with slavery.<sup>297</sup>

Into this vat of Lost Cause mythology, Maxwell drops Thomas Jackson. Like Lee, Jackson insists that he loves the Union, but his first duty is to his home state of Virginia. Maxwell sets up Jackson's deep religious convictions early by showing him reading the Bible

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<sup>297</sup> *Gods and Generals*, written and dir. Ronald F. Maxwell, Warner Bros Home Video, 2003, DVD.

with Anna before departing for war. And, true to Lost Cause mythology, Maxwell's Jackson is second only to Lee as the war's most important general, even at the very beginning of the war when Jackson was an underling at Harpers Ferry. Nowhere during the Harpers Ferry scenes does Maxwell even hint that Jackson had a commanding officer there. Jackson appears to be in complete control of everything that happened at the Ferry.<sup>298</sup>

The film moves quickly to the First Battle of Bull Run/Manassas. The scene begins with Jackson praying for God's protection over his wife and saying that he is ready to fight and die if it is God's will. Skipping over most of the battle, Maxwell goes directly to the point in the battle where Jackson and his brigade assist General Bee. Triumphantly, not sarcastically, Bee shouts to his men the famous line about Jackson standing like a stone wall, and Jackson instructs his men to "yell like furies" when they charge the Union lines. Jackson is the unquestionable hero of the battle. While surveying the aftermath of the fight, one of Jackson's men asks him how he stays so calm in the midst of battle, and Maxwell uses this as an opportunity to show how deeply ingrained Jackson's religious beliefs were. Jackson fatalistically replies, "My religious belief teaches me to feel as safe in battle as in bed. God has fixed the time of my death. I do not concern myself with that, but to be always ready whenever it may take me." Several times throughout the film, Maxwell returns to Jackson's religiosity and the important role it played in his life.<sup>299</sup>

Also aligning with the Lost Cause take on Jackson, Maxwell omits any mention of Jackson's and the Confederacy's failures. After showing Jackson's success at the First Battle of Manassas, Maxwell skips neatly to the Battle of Fredericksburg a year and a half later, effectively omitting Jackson's failures during the Seven Days Battle and the Confederacy's

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<sup>298</sup> Ibid.

<sup>299</sup> Ibid.

failure at Antietam. Despite being the bloodiest single day in American history, Antietam does not earn even a passing mention in Maxwell's film, which was, ironically, produced by a company named Antietam Filmworks. Including Antietam would have clouded the film's theme of Confederate triumph.<sup>300</sup>

One cannot argue that Maxwell omitted Antietam due to time constraints, because Maxwell spends considerable time on non-war-related topics, such as Jackson's love of children and his kindness toward blacks. During the time Jackson and his men spent in and around Fredericksburg, Jackson spent considerable time with the Corbin family, especially the five-year-old daughter, Jane. And Maxwell spends considerable time showing Jackson's relationship with Jane in the film to emphasize Jackson's love of children. The first time Jane appears, she tells Jackson that she has not seen her father for more than a year. Jackson replies, "I've not met your father, but I'm told he's a very good man, very brave man. I'm sure he misses you as much as I miss my daughter." Jackson explains he has not yet met his daughter, who was born only a few days before. Jane throws her arms around Jackson, and from that moment, she and Jackson unofficially adopt each other to replace the family member each is missing. Later in the film, Maxwell shows Jackson ripping the gold trim off his hat and securing it in Jane's hair before he gives her his arm and escorts her back to the big house for tea and biscuits. Most touchingly, one scene shows Jackson stomping, galloping, and whinnying like a horse with Jane on his shoulders. When the little girl dies of scarlet fever a few scenes later, Jackson bursts into tears, astounding his men who remark that he has never cried despite all the losses of friends and students Jackson had endured during the war. Another officer remarks that Jackson was "crying

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<sup>300</sup> Ibid.

for them all.” In this way, Maxwell shows Jackson as an officer who cared deeply for his men, and it broke his heart to see them sacrifice their lives.<sup>301</sup>

Toward the beginning of the film, Jackson hires a black cook named Jim Lewis. Later, as Jackson and his men are approaching Fredericksburg, Jackson orders a short rest break. Lewis pulls a corncob out of his pocket and feeds it to Little Sorrel. Jackson asks Lewis if he has heard from his family lately. Lewis says no, and Jackson immediately starts to pray aloud that God will protect Lewis’s friends and loved ones, “wherever they may be.” Lewis chimes in, asking God for an explanation why so many good people could tolerate slavery. Jackson asks God to speak to both of them. After the prayer, Jackson tells Lewis, “Your people will be free. One way or the other. The only question is whether the Southern government will have the good sense to do it first and soon and in so doing seal the bond of enduring friendship between us.”<sup>302</sup>

At first glance it seems odd that Maxwell would spend so much time on Jackson’s relationships with children and blacks at the expense of a major battle like Antietam, but doing so actually aligns better with Lost Cause ideology than including Antietam would have done. Lost Cause ideology preserves an illustrious image of Jackson’s character, and kindness to children and blacks certainly promotes this image. To maintain the Lost Cause theme of the film, Maxwell had to include the scenes with Jane Corbin and Jim Lewis at the expense of Antietam. Maxwell could have used scenes depicting Antietam to bolster his Lost Cause theme by showing the Confederacy suffering at the hands of superior Union numbers, but including Jane Corbin and Jim Lewis made a stronger argument. Jackson and his men performed well at Antietam, but they did not do anything spectacular, like they did at First Manassas and

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<sup>301</sup> Ibid.

<sup>302</sup> Ibid.

Chancellorsville. Showing Jackson interacting with Jane Corbin and Jim Lewis was much more poignant than showing Jackson performing on an average level.<sup>303</sup>

The film ends as romantically as it begins, with Jackson's tragic death on the heels of his greatest victory. As Jackson and his men depart for their legendary flanking maneuver during the Battle of Chancellorsville, Jackson's chaplain recites the biblical tale of David and Goliath, clearly positioning Jackson as David going up against the Goliath Union Army. Like John Brown, Jackson is cast as an Old Testament hero. Maxwell's portrayal of Jackson's wounding and final days stays true to the known facts, but Maxwell ends *Gods and Generals* with Jackson's funeral procession, as though Jackson's death signaled the end of the Confederacy. Through these images of Jackson, *Gods and Generals* effectively perpetuated Lost Cause mythology in the twenty-first century.<sup>304</sup>

In these ways, Lost Cause mythology continues to haunt Jackson's memory, though even visual images of Jackson that aren't so steeped in the mythology are generally favorable. Brown's images also follow the same pattern as his printed perceptions: either completely insane, completely a martyr, or an ambiguous mixture of both. While the examples set forth in this chapter are certainly not comprehensive, they represent the typical images of Brown and Jackson in popular culture.

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<sup>303</sup> Ibid.

<sup>304</sup> Ibid.

## CHAPTER SEVEN: THE MEN IN STONE

John Brown and Stonewall Jackson have been about equally memorialized through print and visual images, but when counting statues and monuments, Jackson appears hyper-memorialized when compared to Brown. This is most likely due to the fact that Jackson's heroic image has changed little since his death, while Brown's image continues to evolve and is still often hotly debated. Jackson is easily memorialized because there is general agreement in popular culture about his memory. It is difficult to make Brown's image permanent, as in a monument, because his image is constantly changing.

Though Jubal Early and Jefferson Davis initiated the Lost Cause legend, southern women have played a huge role in embellishing and promoting it. Beginning almost immediately after Lee's surrender at Appomattox, elite white southern women organized Ladies' Memorial Associations (LMAs) to honor and memorialize dead Confederate soldiers through Confederate memorial days. As Karen Cox argues in her book, *Dixie's Daughters: The United Daughters of the Confederacy and the Preservation of Confederate Culture*, these LMAs were essential to sustaining the Lost Cause myth from 1865 to 1890, even though their work was primarily memorial and not pedagogical.<sup>305</sup>

In 1894, the LMAs united under a blanket organization, the United Daughters of the Confederacy (UDC). Apart from continuing the memorial activities of the LMAs, the UDC sought both to preserve "Confederate culture," as they referred to the Lost Cause, and to

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<sup>305</sup> Karen L. Cox, *Dixie's Daughters: The United Daughters of the Confederacy and the Preservation of Confederate Culture* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2003), 2.

vindicate the Confederacy from its failed rebellion against the United States.<sup>306</sup> As Cox argues, the UDC raised the stakes of the Lost Cause through transforming the myth into this movement of vindication. The UDC transformed military defeat into a cultural victory, where states' rights and white supremacy survived. This expanded version of the Lost Cause myth, as laid out by historian Cynthia Mills, iterated that the war was fought to defend states' rights and to protect the chivalrous South from northern aggression, omitted slavery as a cause of the war, and argued that slavery was a benevolent institution in which paternal whites provided Christian guidance to a simple people who loved and were loyal to their masters. It also asserted that the South lost the war only because of the industrial might and overwhelming numerical advantages of the North – not because of mistakes, lack of bravery, or a false cause on the part of the South.<sup>307</sup> David Blight agrees. As he writes, “In all their efforts, the UDC planted a white supremacist vision of the Lost Cause deeper into the nation’s historical imagination than perhaps any other association.”<sup>308</sup>

Monument-building was the UDC’s primary force for promoting the Lost Cause, and the organization saw its greatest success and highest volume of monument-building between 1894 and 1919. This period also saw the rise of Jim Crow laws in the South, as well as white violence against blacks in retaliation for blacks’ increased voting and political power during Reconstruction. This period also overlaps with the period of reconciliation, which is discussed in Chapter One and is an important component of the UDC’s ideology.<sup>309</sup> The main objective of the UDC, according to Cox, is to correct history to match their interpretations, and monuments

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<sup>306</sup> In the UDC’s usage, “Confederate culture” refers to the ideas and symbols that believers in the Lost Cause associated with the former Confederacy, such as a hierarchy of race and class and an idealized vision of the Old South as a place where slaves cheerfully served benevolent, white planters.

<sup>307</sup> Cynthia Mills, “Introduction,” in *Monuments to the Lost Cause: Women, Art, and the Landscapes of Southern Memory*, ed. Cynthia Mills and Pamela Simpson (Knoxville: The University of Tennessee Press, 2003), xvii-xviii.

<sup>308</sup> Blight, 273.

<sup>309</sup> Cox, *Dixie’s Daughters*, 6-7, 11.



certainly help them to reach this goal; most UDC monuments read like pro-southern texts. As Cox points out, soldiers illustrated in UDC monuments are not worn and defeated, the slaves are faithful and concerned about their masters, and southerners, especially young, elite white women, make sacrifices. Some monuments acknowledge military defeat, but no other fault on the part of the South.<sup>310</sup>

Sprawling 140 feet wide, Monument Avenue in Richmond is the epitome of Confederate monument-building that does not admit military defeat, and a monument to Thomas Jackson plays a huge role. From its inception, Monument Avenue was designed to draw attention to its five titanic monuments: one each of Robert E. Lee, Thomas “Stonewall” Jackson, J.E.B. Stuart, Jefferson Davis, and Matthew Fontaine Maury. Spread out across fourteen blocks, the monuments each have a wide circle of open space around them. The 260 buildings along the avenue, which was planned to be and has remained an upper-middle-class, white neighborhood, are low-roofed, so as not to detract from the monuments’ impact.<sup>311</sup>

Richard Guy Wilson states that in order to understand fully the impact of Monument Avenue on the myth of the Lost Cause, one must first understand the critical historical juncture at which the monuments were unveiled. In 1890, thirteen years after the official end of Reconstruction, aided partly by the Ladies’ Memorial Associations, the Civil War’s horrific carnage was beginning to fade and be replaced by a romantic nostalgia that would become the myth of the Lost Cause. Cities both North and South were erecting monuments to the Civil War in what became known as the American Renaissance, during which Americans undertook a huge effort to immortalize the American past. As a result of this effort and the monument erected on

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<sup>310</sup> Cox, “The Confederate Monument at Arlington,” 158.

<sup>311</sup> Richard Guy Wilson, “Monument Avenue, Richmond: A Unique American Boulevard,” in *Monuments to the Lost Cause: Women, Art, and the Landscapes of Southern Memory*, ed. Cynthia Mills and Pamela Simpson (Knoxville: The University of Tennessee Press, 2003), 100-104.

Monument Avenue, Lee's reputation underwent a substantial shift. Instead of being remembered as a rebel against the federal government, he became in popular memory a great American hero – a tragic figure caught in a conflict between his state and his nation. Because of Jackson's close connection with Lee, this new paradigm served only to enhance Jackson's already romantically tragic image.<sup>312</sup>

The statue of Jackson shows a serious-faced Jackson sitting atop a horse that is much too large and stately to be the general's beloved Little Sorrel. But mounting Jackson on an awkward little horse would not have conveyed the image of a wise warrior that the Lost Cause promotes; Jackson's image hinged partly on being astride a "noble steed." In the statue, Jackson sits ramrod straight, as Jackson actually did, but the Jackson in the statue has one hand on the horse's reins and the other resting on a small saddlebag. In life, Jackson was known to ride with his left hand raised because he thought it was heavier than the right and he wanted to bleed to flow out of it to equalize the weight. This, however, is one of those odd habits Jackson exhibited that could lead people to think he was eccentric, and such an image would not align with the image of Jackson promoted by the Lost Cause. The inscription bearing Jackson's name on the statue's base projects the Lost Cause image of Jackson itself. Rather than labeling the general "Thomas Jackson," the inscription declares this mounted man to be "Stonewall Jackson." Referring to Jackson as "Stonewall" enhances the image of the brave soldier much more than referring to him as "Thomas" would.

Though Jackson's popular image is generally unchallenged, by the 1990s, many residents of Richmond viewed the monuments as symbols of racism, oppression, and exclusion. At about the same time, former Virginia Governor L. Douglas Wilder, the state's first African American governor, suggested erecting on Monument Avenue a monument to black tennis champion and

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<sup>312</sup> Ibid., 104.

Richmond native Arthur Ashe, sparking a controversy that fiercely divided the citizens of Richmond.<sup>313</sup>

From its inception, Monument Avenue was designed to exclude blacks entirely. The avenue's developers ensured that the avenue's focal points would be the Confederate monuments, and early property deeds ensured that no one but the most affluent white citizens would live along the avenue. Building restrictions included prohibitions against selling or renting to blacks, and numerous back alleys were created so African American servants could enter and leave the elite homes without being seen on the main avenue.<sup>314</sup>

The glorification of these Confederate soldiers upset area blacks even at the time the monuments were unveiled. As Blight writes, "African Americans reacted to the Lee cult generally, and the Richmond monument specifically, with a combination of silence and defiance." Three blacks who still had places on Richmond's city council voted against the city's appropriation for the Lee monument. Frederick Douglass denounced in print both the cult of Lee and the Lost Cause, because he feared that lauding Lee and the Confederacy would increase white violence against blacks. Unfortunately, as Blight points out, in the 1890s, silence and rhetorical condemnation were about the only options available to blacks to protest the actions of white southerners, because, as Blight writes, "Their place in the Confederate commemoration , as well as in the Lost Cause, had become carefully prescribed."<sup>315</sup>

An even more blatant expression of the South's refusal to accept defeat than Monument Avenue, Georgia's Stone Mountain literally towers over Lost Cause nostalgia. Situated in DeKalb County, sixteen miles east of Atlanta, the world's largest mass of exposed granite bears

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<sup>313</sup> Brian Black and Bryn Varley, "Contesting the Sacred: Preservation and Meaning on Richmond's Monument Avenue," in *Monuments to the Lost Cause: Women, Art, and the Landscapes of Southern Memory*, ed. Cynthia Mills and Pamela Simpson (Knoxville: The University of Tennessee Press, 2003), 234-235.

<sup>314</sup> *Ibid.*, 236-237.

<sup>315</sup> Blight, 270.

the world's largest relief carving – a tribute to the heroes of the Confederacy, Jefferson Davis, Lee, and Jackson. Rising 1,683 feet above the surrounding area, Stone Mountain had a long history before the Civil War personalities would change its face forever. Beginning eight thousand to ten thousand years ago, Stone Mountain was home to Native Americans until they ceded it to the state of Georgia in 1821. Never a part of the romanticized “moonlight and magnolias” Old South, the town of Stone Mountain survived mainly through quarrying and subsistence farming. At the outbreak of the Civil War, DeKalb County supported the Union and favored a peaceful resolution to the nation's differences, though the county's residents supported the war effort when Georgia seceded. For the first three years of the war, Stone Mountain was undisturbed. Only when General Sherman laid siege to Atlanta did some small skirmishes break out in the area. After the war, tourism to the area skyrocketed, and Stone Mountain's beautiful landscape became Atlanta's favorite picnic spot.<sup>316</sup>

The most nationally significant event to take place at Stone Mountain was the revival of the Ku Klux Klan on November 25, 1915. The original Klan creator had disbanded in 1869, but folk legends romanticized it for decades. “Colonel” William J. Simmons, son of an original Klan member, latched onto these legends and revived the Klan in 1915 to coincide with the Atlanta release of *The Birth of a Nation*. America's first feature film, *The Birth of a Nation* glorified the Old South and the original Klan. Simmons's Klan enjoyed initial success, but it suffered from internal power struggles which eventually tore the group apart. But for forty years, Stone Mountain was sacred soil for the Klan, which reveled in the glory of the myth of the Lost Cause.<sup>317</sup>

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<sup>316</sup> Freeman, David B. *Carved in Stone: The History of Stone Mountain*. (Macon, Georgia: Mercer University Press, 1997), 1-43.

<sup>317</sup> *Ibid.*, 51-52.

At 190 feet wide and eleven feet deep, the three riders on Stone Mountain also revel in the glory of the Lost Cause. The sculpture covers an area of three acres, making the monument the world's largest piece of sculpture, but the original concept for the monument was much different. The first written record of any concept for a monument to the Confederacy at Stone Mountain was from Francis Tichnor, a nineteenth-century physician and poet who suggested such a monument in one of his poems. The idea did not progress, however, until a May 26, 1914, editorial in the *Atlanta Constitution*. William H. Terrell, an Atlanta attorney and son of a Confederate veteran, recommended that the Sons of Confederate Veterans and the United Daughters of the Confederacy take the lead in such a project. Three weeks later, John Temple Graves, editor of the *New York American*, heard of Terrell's suggestion while visiting Atlanta and wrote a favorable editorial on the topic in the June 14 issue of the *Georgian*. In the editorial, Graves suggested a single seventy-foot-high statue of Lee.<sup>318</sup>

The editorial pieces by Terrell and Graves piqued the interest of C. Helen Plane. A Civil War widow whose husband had died at Antietam, Plane was one of the founders of the Atlanta chapter of the UDC in the 1890s, and she later organized the Georgia State UDC, serving as its first president. By 1914, Plane was eighty-five years old and no longer an active UDC member, but she maintained a strong interest in their work and in preserving the memory of the Lost Cause. Plane contacted Terrell and Graves to notify them of her interest in bringing their idea to fruition, and she also wrote to Samuel Venable, the owner of Stone Mountain, to confirm that he would allow such a monument on his property. At the next Atlanta UDC meeting, Plane proposed a seventy-foot Lee statue, which the chapter approved unanimously. In October 1914,

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<sup>318</sup> Ibid., 55-56.

the Georgia Division also endorsed the project. Plane then organized the UDC Stone Mountain Memorial Association to take charge of the project.<sup>319</sup>

In the summer of 1915, the Association commissioned sculptor Gutzon Borglum, who would later gain fame as the sculptor of Mount Rushmore. Borglum said a single figure would be dwarfed by the size of Stone Mountain and suggested a plan for 700 to 1,000 figures facing east with Jackson, Lee, and Davis leading them. Borglum also proposed a Memorial Hall to be carved into the side of the mountain and dedicated to the women of the Confederacy. In December, at Plane's suggestion, Borglum added a KKK altar to the Memorial Hall plans. The Association dedicated the site on May 20, 1916, and work began shortly after.<sup>320</sup>

From this point onward, the Stone Mountain monument was plagued with problems. The outbreak of World War I shut down work on the monument in April 1917. Work did not resume until June 1923. On January 19, 1924, the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Robert E. Lee's birth, Borglum unveiled the general's finished head. Soon after, however, Borglum's relationship with the Association deteriorated due to squabbles over funding, and the Association canceled Borglum's contract in February 1925. In April, the Association named Henry Lukeman to take over as sculptor. Lukeman developed his own design and began work underneath Borglum's finished head of Lee.<sup>321</sup>

On April 9, 1928, the sixty-third anniversary of Lee's surrender at Appomattox, Lukeman unveiled his sculpture of Lee, which was mostly finished down to the waist. After the unveiling, however, work ground to a halt as the twelve-year lease Sam Venable had granted the Association expired. Venable despised the Association's president, Hollins Randolph, and

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<sup>319</sup> Ibid., 56-57.

<sup>320</sup> Ibid., 59-65.

<sup>321</sup> Ibid., 65-105.

refused to renew the lease to him. Randolph resigned, and Venable agreed to allow work to continue, but the Association was out of funds.<sup>322</sup>

Work on the monument halted for three decades until in 1958 the Georgia General Assembly created a seven-member body called the Stone Mountain Memorial Association to purchase Stone Mountain and finish the monument. The state purchased the mountain as well as a large expanse of the surrounding area to create a 3,200-acre state park. The state hoped to have at least the park minus the completed monument ready to open in 1961, the Civil War's centennial. All park facilities, such as picnic shelters and restrooms, were, of course, segregated.<sup>323</sup>

Work on the carving began again in 1964 with Walker Hancock hired to finish Lukeman's work, though the Association had decided by that point to forgo an epic work of hundreds of characters and instead use the likenesses of only Davis, Lee, and Jackson. This timing is not surprising. In 1964, the Civil Rights Movement was in full swing, and some southern whites were concerned over the stability of their racial power. Even with recent technological advancements in working with stone, the project took him six years to complete. On May 9, 1970, the monument at Stone Mountain was finally dedicated. But even the dedication had its problems. The Reverend Billy Graham was scheduled to give the invocation, but he canceled due to illness. President Nixon was supposed to give the keynote speech, but he canceled as well to deal with matters of state regarding the war in Vietnam. He sent Vice President Spiro Agnew in his stead – a move that aggravated many of the Association members

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<sup>322</sup> Ibid., 116-117.

<sup>323</sup> Ibid., 141-147.

because of Agnew's recent involvement in scandal. The organizers expected 100,000 people to attend the dedication, but only about 10,000 actually came.<sup>324</sup>

The finished carving shows Davis, Lee, and Jackson, all on horseback. Lee's and Davis's horses are about even with each other, perhaps to show that Lee and Davis were of about equal importance to the Confederacy. Davis may have been the elected president, but Lee was the man who ensured he had a nation to be president of, if only for a short time. Lee is in the foreground of the carving with Davis behind him, as if even in memorial Lee is protecting his president. Behind them rides General Jackson, puffing out a much broader chest than he ever had in real life. His cape billows behind him, and his left hand holds securely onto the horse's reins; it does not stick up in the air, for this is a Lost Cause monument, and it must depict the Lost Cause image of Jackson. Like on Monument Avenue, Jackson is depicted as a strong warrior. His placement directly behind Lee and Davis shows that he was unwaveringly devoted to his leaders.<sup>325</sup>

Today, the carving is only one part of Stone Mountain Park. Visitors to the park can learn about nature, including thirty species of rare plants that grow on the mountain, visit a recreated antebellum plantation (though the Stone Mountain area never hosted such a spread in the antebellum period), or see one of the popular laser light shows that occur every evening during the summer. But the monument is controversial. Conceived in the period of reconciliation, the monument valorizes Davis, Lee, and Jackson as tragic heroes who fought for their cause despite overwhelming odds. This is the Lost Cause in all its glory, literally, set in stone.

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<sup>324</sup> Ibid., 165-176.

<sup>325</sup> To view a photograph of the carving, see Appendix C.



Though this glory is typical of Jackson's popular image, not everyone revels in it. Author Grace Elizabeth Hale suggests that southerners wanted to carve the Stone Mountain monument to set racial identity and segregation in stone. By celebrating their heroes in gray, southerners also celebrated the class order of the Old South, including slavery and the general subjugation of blacks. Hale points out that when the Stone Mountain project was initiated in the 1920s, promoters of the monument used the language of the period of reconciliation to gloss over the role slavery played in causing the conflict. Hale argues that efforts in the 1950s to restart work on the carving were an attempt solidify blacks' "place" in a segregated South, just as the nascent Civil Rights Movement began to make whites insecure about the power of their racial status. Hale points to this also as the reason why Stone Mountain Park planners included the recreated plantation.<sup>326</sup>

The recreated plantation jibes with the general themes of Jackson's popular image, including a sanitization of slavery, which is typically quickly glossed over in Jackson biographies. Publications for Stone Mountain Park do not use the word "slave." Instead, they refer to slaves as "hands" or "workers." Hale argues that the inclusion of slave quarters in the plantation "naturalized a hierarchical and yet peaceful antebellum racial order." When the park opened in 1963, park officials even hired a down-and-out Butterfly McQueen to reprise her role as "Prissy" from the film *Gone With the Wind* and greet visitors in the kitchen of the "Big House." McQueen's inclusion, Hale writes, "made Stone Mountain's plantation into *the* southern plantation, Tara," the fictional site of *Gone With the Wind*. In this way, Jackson's image has been used to preserve the Lost Cause in a physical form that people can visit and

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<sup>326</sup> Grace Elizabeth Hale, "Granite Stopped Time: Stone Mountain Memorial and the Representation of White Southern Identity," in *Monuments to the Lost Cause: Women, Art, and the Landscapes of Southern Memory*, ed., Cynthia Mills and Pamela H. Simpson (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 2003), 220-229.

interact with. The monument at Stone Mountain, therefore, is an example of Jackson's image being used to preserve the antebellum racial order.<sup>327</sup>

Other monuments to Jackson have been less controversial, but have also helped to preserve Jackson's tragic hero image. In 1997, dismayed by the deteriorating condition of Stonewall Jackson's only surviving uniform, which has been in the possession of the Virginia Military Institute since 1926, the Virginia Division of the UDC began fundraising to refurbish it. The uniform's shabby condition had prevented its display, and the UDC hoped to make the uniform available to the public. Within a year, the Virginia Division had raised the \$2,100 necessary to restore the trousers. On October 8, 2000, the Virginia Division rededicated the trousers at the VMI Museum. Attention then turned to Jackson's ailing coat, which he had worn as a professor and at the Battle of Manassas. A more complex process, restoration of the coat cost four times as much as that of the trousers. Finally, after having buttons replaced, holes patched, and the lining repaired, the coat was presented on October 10, 2003. Today, the complete uniform is on display at the VMI Museum.<sup>328</sup>

Every bit of Jackson memorabilia is important to preserve the Jackson legend – even the hide of Little Sorrel. After Jackson's death, the awkward-looking little horse lived in North Carolina with Anna Jackson. In 1883, Anna Jackson felt she could no longer care adequately for the horse and sent him to VMI, where he grazed on the parade ground until his death in 1886 at the age of 35. A Pittsburgh taxidermist mounted the horse's hide on a plaster of Paris mold and took the horse's bones as payment. Little Sorrel went on display at the Carnegie Institute Museum in Pittsburgh, the Old Soldier's Home in Richmond, and after World War II, the Virginia Military Institute. VMI reacquired Little Sorrel's bones at about the same time, leaving

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<sup>327</sup> Ibid., 229.

<sup>328</sup> Keith E. Gibson, "UDC Raises Funds to Restore Only Uniform of General Thomas J. 'Stonewall' Jackson," *UDC Magazine* 67, no. 3 (2004): 8-9.

them in a storeroom for nearly fifty years. On July 21, 1997, the Virginia Division UDC interred the remains with full honors at the head of VMI's parade grounds in front of the bronze statue of General Jackson. The ceremony included the singing of "Dixie" and a three-round salute as dirt from the battlefields on which Little Sorrel served was pitched into the small grave. In August 2006, after standing in a VMI research library for two years, Little Sorrel's mounted hide was moved into a new climate-controlled case at Jackson Memorial Hall at VMI. The UDC had raised the money for the new case, as well as for bringing a Smithsonian taxidermist to complete conservation work on the hide.<sup>329</sup>

Little Sorrel's mounted hide is not the only unusual tribute to Stonewall Jackson. A short distance from the Chancellorsville battlefield in the Lacy family cemetery lies a chipped, lumpy stone marker bearing the inscription "Arm of Stonewall Jackson, May 3, 1863." When Dr. McGuire amputated Jackson's left arm, Jackson's chaplain, B. Tucker Lacy, carried the limb to his brother's house for burial in the family cemetery, which opened to the public in 1998. The tale gets stranger from there. A marker near the arm's tombstone states, "During a mock battle attended by President Warren Harding in 1921, Marine Corps General Smedley D. Butler exhumed the arm and reburied it in a metal box." Butler apparently disbelieved a local man that Jackson's arm was buried there and dug up the spot to prove the man wrong. Butler found the arm several feet below the surface and, chagrined, reburied it in a metal box as penance.<sup>330</sup> These strange tributes to Jackson illustrate how deeply he has penetrated American memory and identity.

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<sup>329</sup> *Washington Post*, 21 July 1997; *Knight Ridder Tribune Business News* (Washington, D.C.), 18 August 2006; Mona M. Milam, "'Love' to Make Little Sorrel 'Eternal,'" *UDC Magazine* 68, no. 3 (2005): 10-11.

<sup>330</sup> *Washington Post*, 7 August 2001; Tony Horwitz, *Confederates in the Attic: Dispatches from the Unfinished Civil War* (New York: Vintage Books, 1998), 232.

More traditional is the Chandler office building at Guinea Station, Virginia, better known as the “Jackson Shrine” – a moniker even the National Park Service now uses to refer to the site. The shrine is part of the Fredericksburg and Spotsylvania National Military Park, which stands in the midst of a rural area that has changed little since Jackson’s death. The building originally served as the Chandlers’ office, but the family made comfortable accommodations for the ill general. It is the only remaining building from the Chandler plantation. Despite extensive renovations in the 1920s and again in the 1960s, the office is still approximately forty-five percent original material. The shrine comprises the waiting room where Jackson’s physicians discussed their patient; a small room, where Anna Jackson’s baggage most likely was stored; the entrance hall; and the death room, which as its name suggests, is the room in which Jackson died. The original bed frame and one of the same blankets that covered Jackson at the time of his death are on display in the death room. A clock on the mantel, which the Chandlers had set in the room to make it more cheerful, points permanently to 3:15 – the moment of Jackson’s death.<sup>331</sup> The very fact that this building is called a shrine shows how seriously Americans take Jackson. His deathbed has become a place of worship.

In light of the numerous grand tributes to Jackson, memorials to Brown are most notable for their absence. It seems as though no one is certain how to permanently memorialize Brown, so no one has tried. While nearly every structure associated with Jackson has been preserved, sites associated with Brown have been met with indifference. Even at Harpers Ferry, his memory seems comparatively dim. The engine house where Brown made his final stand was the only armory building to survive the Civil War, but in 1891 it was sold, dismantled, and put on display in Chicago. It attracted only eleven visitors in ten days, so it was dismantled again and

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<sup>331</sup> National Park Service, *Fredericksburg and Spotsylvania National Military Park*, <<http://www.nps.gov/archive/frsp/js.htm>>.

left in a vacant lot. In 1894, Kate Field, a Washington, D.C., journalist interested in preserving Brown memorabilia, brought the engine house to donated land on the Murphy Farm, about three miles outside of Harpers Ferry. In 1909, Storer College acquired the building and moved it to its campus, where the building remained until the National Park Service acquired it in 1960. In 1968, the NPS returned the engine house to lower Harpers Ferry. A railroad embankment covered the building's original location in 1894, so the engine house now sits about 150 feet east of its original placement. Whereas the Stonewall Jackson Shrine was cared for since the general's death, no one seemed particularly interested in preserving "John Brown's Fort" until the mid-twentieth century.<sup>332</sup> There are no grand statues, no emotion-evoking monuments. Perhaps at the actual site of Brown's attack his image is too controversial to set, quite literally, in stone.

Charles Town, where Brown was tried and hanged, is equally devoid of tributes to Brown. The Jefferson County Courthouse features an outdoor informational display, half of which features Brown and half of which discusses the 1921 trial of the United Mine Workers of America. The courthouse also has an historical marker, which notes Brown's trial and execution. Despite its historical importance, the small redbrick courthouse attracts few visitors apart from those on official business. Charles Town is a small city that attracts few tourists; nearby Washington, D.C., Harpers Ferry, and Antietam Battlefield draw away most visitors. Today, the historic courthouse faces possible demolition by the County Commission. Yet another piece of John Brown history seems overlooked by a nation that is uncertain how to interpret it.<sup>333</sup>

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<sup>332</sup> National Park Service, *John Brown's Fort*, <<http://www.nps.gov/archive/hafe/jbfort.htm>>; Peterson, 51. For a photo of the engine house, see Appendix C.

<sup>333</sup> West Virginia Division of Culture and History, <<http://www.wvculture.org/shpo/ch/jefferson.html>>.

John Brown's execution site is no better off. The site itself is indistinguishable, tucked away in a residential area of Charles Town, a few blocks from the courthouse. Brick houses and manicured lawns cover the exact location of the scaffold. Near the site of the gallows is an historical marker, about six feet tall, that reads, "Within these grounds a short distance east of this marker is the site of the scaffold on which John Brown, leader of the Harpers Ferry raid, was executed December the second, 1859." Erected in 1932 by the Jefferson County Historical Society of West Virginia, the weather-worn marker looks as though it has not been refurbished in its lifetime. Like the original site of the engine house, the site of the scaffold was not worthy of preservation and was covered over within decades of Brown's death.<sup>334</sup>

Merrill Peterson suggests that the events of the Civil War are to blame for the lack of preservation of many of Brown's landmarks, at least in the eastern United States. Federal troops destroyed most of the armory and arsenal at Harpers Ferry so these resources would not fall into Confederate hands when Virginia seceded. By the end of the war, many of Brown's places, such as the original site of the engine house, had been put to other uses.<sup>335</sup> However, it is also possible that the dynamic nature of Brown's image has precluded his permanent memorialization. Because Brown's image has changed with each generation, it would be nearly impossible for one generation to memorialize Brown in a way that would still ring true with the next generation.

The Kansas State Historical Society, however, has memorialized Brown in a positive light that contrasts sharply with John Steuart Curry's crazy-eyed John Brown depicted in his statehouse mural. In an online exhibit of famous Kansans, KSHS lists Brown in its "Crusaders" category and describes him as an "abolitionist crusader against slavery" who "fought for human

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<sup>334</sup> To view the marker, see Appendix C.

<sup>335</sup> Peterson, 36-37.

rights.”<sup>336</sup> The historical society also administers the John Brown Museum in Osawatomie, near Osawatomie Battlefield, where Brown’s men sometimes skirmished with the Missourians and where Frederick Brown was killed. The museum is inside the preserved log cabin of Samuel and Florella Adair. Florella Adair was Brown’s half-sister, and Brown sometimes stayed with the Adairs in their cabin. Comprising original family furnishings and belongings, the exhibits in the museum are actually better examples of pioneer life in Kansas than they are of John Brown’s life in Kansas, but the museum exudes a positive image of Brown all the same because, as the historical society notes, Brown “fought for the free-state cause.”<sup>337</sup>

This portrayal is not surprising when considering the trauma Brown heaped upon the territory the night of the Pottawatomie Massacre. As Curry’s mural showed, Kansans do not like the view of John Brown as a wild-eyed madman because it casts a negative light on the state as a whole. By emphasizing Brown’s contribution to ending slavery, the Kansas State Historical Society positions Kansas as a vital part of the abolitionist cause.

As with Jackson, much of Brown’s preservation has been the work of women. The Women’s Relief Corps of Kansas in 1909 purchased the battlefield of Osawatomie to preserve it as a public park.<sup>338</sup> Part of the park includes a statue of Brown. The statue echoes the museum’s positive image. It shows a benign Brown standing relaxed with shirt sleeves rolled up to the elbows and one hand behind his back. Absent is any hint of insanity or fanaticism. As with the museum, Kansans here have depicted a positive image of Brown.<sup>339</sup> Similarly, another statue of Brown stands in memorial plaza of the Quindaro-Western University Historical District

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<sup>336</sup> Kansas State Historical Society, “Leading the Way: Famous Kansans,” <<http://www.kshs.org/exhibits/famous/famous9a.htm>>.

<sup>337</sup> Ibid.

<sup>338</sup> Frank W. Blackmar, ed., *Kansas: A cyclopedia of state history, embracing events, institutions, industries, counties, cities, towns, prominent persons, etc.*, Vol. 1 (Chicago: Standard Publication Co., 1912), 241-244; Peterson, 51.

<sup>339</sup> For a photograph of the statue, see Appendix C.

in Kansas City, Kansas. The purpose of the plaza is to commemorate people and events that contributed to the history of African Americans in Kansas. The statue, therefore, depicts a bearded, yet calm, Brown, standing with his left hand on his hip. Erected in 1911, the statue bears a plaque that reads “Erected to the Memory of John Brown by A Grateful People.” Again, Brown is memorialized as a hero, not a terrorist.<sup>340</sup>

Kate Field, the journalist who rescued the engine house, also saved Brown’s North Elba farm from development and obscurity. Mary Brown and some of her children and grandchildren lived there for about four years after John Brown’s burial there, but most of the family then moved to California. A new road granted easy access to the farm and graveyard, and John Brown’s grave began attracting visitors. By 1870, Field had raised \$2,000 to buy the four-room farmhouse, the graveyard, and 244 surrounding acres. The deed was in the name of the John Brown Association, which intended to raise money to erect a monument on the site.<sup>341</sup>

In 1896, the state of New York took over the farm as a park and memorial to Brown. In 1935, the John Brown Memorial Association, then under black leadership, unveiled a ten-foot statue on the site. The leader of the memorial association, Dr. J. Max Barber of Philadelphia, was active in the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, which he considered a direct descendent of John Brown’s League of Gileadites. The monument depicts John Brown in pioneer’s clothes with one arm around a young African-American boy and the other hand pointing toward the land of freedom. This monument brings into sharp relief the role

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<sup>340</sup> Kansas City, Kansas, Public Library, “Quindaro Virtual Tour: John Brown Statue and Memorial Plaza,” <<http://www.kckpl.lib.ks.us/kscoll/lochist/quindaro/TOUR1.HTM>>.

<sup>341</sup> Blackmar, 241-244.



that race has played in Brown's image. It disposes of the image of Brown as a madman and literally sets in stone the image of Brown as a martyr for black freedom.<sup>342</sup>

The conflicting images of Brown as well as the roles of women and race clash at Harpers Ferry. In October 1931, the United Daughters of the Confederacy, the protectors of Stonewall Jackson's image, and the Sons of Confederate Veterans dedicated a memorial at Harpers Ferry to Heyward Shepherd, the free black baggage master who was the ironic first victim of John Brown's raid. The inscription on the 900-pound boulder reads:

On the night of October 16, 1859, Heyward Shepherd, an industrious and respected colored freeman, was mortally wounded by John Brown's raiders. In pursuance of his duties as an employee of the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad Company, he became the first victim of this attempted insurrection. This boulder is erected by the United Daughters of the Confederacy and the Sons of Confederate Veterans as a memorial to Heyward Shepherd, exemplifying the character and faithfulness of thousands of Negroes who, under many temptations throughout subsequent years of war, so conducted themselves that no stain was left upon a record which is the peculiar heritage of the American people, and an everlasting tribute to the best of both races.<sup>343</sup>

Though initially startling that the UDC would erect a monument to a black man, the inscription reveals that the UDC used the Shepherd memorial in an attempt to undermine the impact of John Brown's memory in Harpers Ferry and to suggest the acceptable role of blacks in the New South, much as they did with Stone Mountain in Georgia. The problem with John Brown – at least for the UDC – is that he opposed white supremacy and fought to free the slaves, thereby placing himself in direct opposition to the traditions and proud heritage of the United Daughters of the Confederacy. Though Shepherd was a free black man, a monument to him furthers the ideology of the UDC and the Lost Cause. The Lost Cause conveniently forgets the horrors of slavery and remembers the institution through stories of happy slaves, simple-minded

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<sup>342</sup> New York History Net, "John Brown's Farm," <<http://www.nyhistory.com/gerritsmith/nelba.htm>>; Peterson, 51-52, 131.

<sup>343</sup> Caroline E. Janney, "Written in Stone: Gender, Race, and the Heyward Shepherd Memorial," *Civil War History* 52 (June 2006): 117-141.

“mammies” and “Uncle Toms” who supposedly were part of the family. The UDC for two decades in the early twentieth century campaigned to raise money and support for a “Mammy Monument” in Washington, D.C., which, fortunately, never came to fruition. Though in 1896, Confederate veteran Samuel White permanently enshrined the “faithful slave” image by erecting a monument in Fort Mill, South Carolina. The inscription sums up well the Lost Cause’s perception of slaves and slavery:

Dedicated to the Faithful Slaves who, loyal to a sacred trust, Toiled for the support of the Army with matchless Devotion, and with sterling fidelity guarded our defenseless homes, women, and children during the struggle for the principles of our ‘Confederate States of America.’<sup>344</sup>

Such monuments do not go uncontested, however. Long before the UDC’s monument to Shepherd, blacks had flocked to Harpers Ferry to remember the white man who had fought for their freedom; during the summer of 1906, nearly one hundred delegates to the Niagara Movement, a black civil rights movement recognized as the predecessor to the NAACP, gathered at Harpers Ferry to celebrate John Brown’s Day. Blacks felt a sense of ownership regarding the memory of Harpers Ferry and naturally were opposed to two white organizations, both of whom had long barred blacks from membership, erecting a monument to a black man in the spirit of the “faithful slave.” The students of Storer College, the nearby black college which had purchased Brown’s engine house in 1909 and used it as a museum, did not want such a memorial near their school. For a decade from 1921 until the monument was finally erected in 1931, the UDC struggled to change the sentiment among Harpers Ferry citizens so they would accept the monument. Only the 1929 election of a new mayor, who happened to be the son of a Confederate veteran, turned the tide and allowed the monument to be put in place.<sup>345</sup>

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<sup>344</sup> Blight, 288.

<sup>345</sup> Janney, 128-129.

The controversial saga does not end with the monument's unveiling. The NAACP asked permission from Storer College President Henry McDonald, a white man, to place a plaque on the John Brown Fort as a tribute to Brown; the NAACP thought it would be only fair and fitting for them to be allowed to erect a memorial at Harpers Ferry explaining their interpretation. McDonald agreed on the condition he be allowed to give the inscription his prior approval. The proposed inscription, written by W.E.B. DuBois, read:

Here John Brown aimed at human slavery a blow that woke a guilty nation. With him fought seven slaves and sons of slaves. Over his crucified corpse marched 200,000 black soldiers and 4,000,000 freedmen singing "John Brown's body lies amouldering in the grave, But his Soul goes marching on!" In gratitude, this tablet is erected by the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, May 21, 1932.

McDonald immediately rejected the inscription, saying it was too unhappy and not likely to improve race relations in the area. The NAACP was eventually allowed to unveil the tablet at Harpers Ferry, but it was moved to New York as soon as the enraged NAACP members left town.<sup>346</sup>

While restoring nearby buildings, the National Park Service, which administers the historic section of Harpers Ferry, removed the Shepherd monument in 1976. When it was replaced in 1981, the NPS sheathed it in plywood for fear it would be defaced and divide the community once more. In June 1995, NPS removed the plywood and placed an interpretive sign nearby, explaining the controversy over the monument. Naturally, the UDC and Sons of Confederate Veterans opposed the interpretive sign, and the West Virginia NAACP sent a letter to the secretary of the interior protesting the monument's restoration, but the monument still stands. The irony in all this is, as Janney notes, that an interpretive struggle broke out because a

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<sup>346</sup> Ibid., 133.

pro-Confederate group memorialized a black man, and the NAACP wanted to defend the image of a white one.<sup>347</sup>

As with other manifestations of their images, such as print and film, monuments to Jackson and Brown tell the stories of how their images have or have not evolved. From the beginning, monuments to Jackson have preserved his role as a hero of the Lost Cause, and this image has not changed. Monuments, or rather the lack thereof, to Brown retell the story of his complex and contradictory image that Americans are still trying to decisively determine. Women and race have played an integral role in this evolution and preservation of sites regarding both men, with the United Daughters of the Confederacy often taking the lead. Race, however, is inextricably linked to the UDC and its mission of preserving its view of “Southern life,” and 150 years later, the controversies awakened by these issues continue to persevere.

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<sup>347</sup> *Washington Post*, 19 August 1995; Janney, 134-141.

## APPENDIX A: SONGS AND POEMS

**“John Brown’s Body” (song to the tune of “The Battle Hymn of the Republic”)**

John Brown’s body lies a-mouldering in the grave,  
John Brown’s body lies a-mouldering in the grave,  
John Brown’s body lies a-mouldering in the grave.  
His soul is marching on!

*Chorus*

Glory, Hally, Hallelujah!  
Glory, Hally, Hallelujah!  
Glory, Hally, Hallelujah!  
His soul is marching on!

John Brown’s knapsack is strapped upon his back,  
John Brown’s knapsack is strapped upon his back,  
John Brown’s knapsack is strapped upon his back.  
His soul is marching on!

*Chorus*

His pet lambs will meet him on the way,  
His pet lambs will meet him on the way,  
His pet lambs will meet him on the way.  
They go marching on!

*Chorus*

They will hang Jeff Davis to a tree,  
They will hang Jeff Davis to a tree,  
They will hang Jeff Davis to a tree.  
As they march along!

*Chorus*

Now, three rousing cheers for the Union!  
Now, three rousing cheers for the Union!  
Now, three rousing cheers for the Union!  
As we are marching on!

*Chorus*

**“John Brown’s Prayer” from Stephen Vincent Benét’s work, *John Brown’s Body*, pages 31-33.**

Omnipotent and steadfast God,  
Who, in Thy mercy, hath  
Upheaved in me Jehovah’s rod  
And his chastising wrath,

For fifty-nine unsparing years  
Thy Grace hath worked apart  
To mould a man of iron tears  
With a bullet for a heart.

Yet, since this body may be weak  
With all it has to bear,  
Once more, before Thy thunders speak,  
Almighty, hear my prayer.

I saw Thee when Thou did display  
The black man and his lord  
To bid me free the one, and slay  
The other with the sword.

I heard Thee when Thou bade me spurn  
Destruction from my hand  
And, though all Kansas bleed and burn,  
It was at Thy command.

I hear the rolling of the wheels,  
The chariots of war!  
I hear the breaking of the seals  
And the opening of the door!

The glorious beasts with many eyes  
Exult before Crowned.  
The buried saints arise, arise  
Like incense from the ground!

Before them march the martyr-kings,  
In bloody sunsets drest,  
*O, Kansas, bleeding Kansas,*  
*You will not let me rest!*

*I hear your sighing corn again,*  
*I smell your prairie-sky,*  
*And I remember five dead men*  
*By Pottawatomie.*

Lord God it was a work of Thine,  
And how might I refrain?  
*But Kansas, bleeding Kansas,  
I hear her in her pain.*

*Her corn is rustling in the ground,  
An arrow in my flesh.  
And all night long I staunch a wound  
That ever bleeds afresh.*

Get up, get up, my hardy sons,  
From this time forth we are  
No longer men, but pikes and guns  
In God's advancing war.

And if we live, we free the slave,  
And if we die, we die.  
But God has digged His saints a grave  
Beyond the western sky.

Oh, fairer than the bugle-call  
Its walls of jasper shine!  
And Joshua's sword is on the wall  
With space beside for mine.

And should the Philistine defend  
His strength against our blows,  
The God who doth not spare His friend,  
Will not forget His foes.



APPENDIX B: PHOTOGRAPHS AND PAINTINGS



**Figure 1: *The Last Moments of John Brown*, Thomas Hovenden, 1884. John Brown/Boyd B. Stutler Collection, West Virginia State Archives, Charleston, West Virginia.**

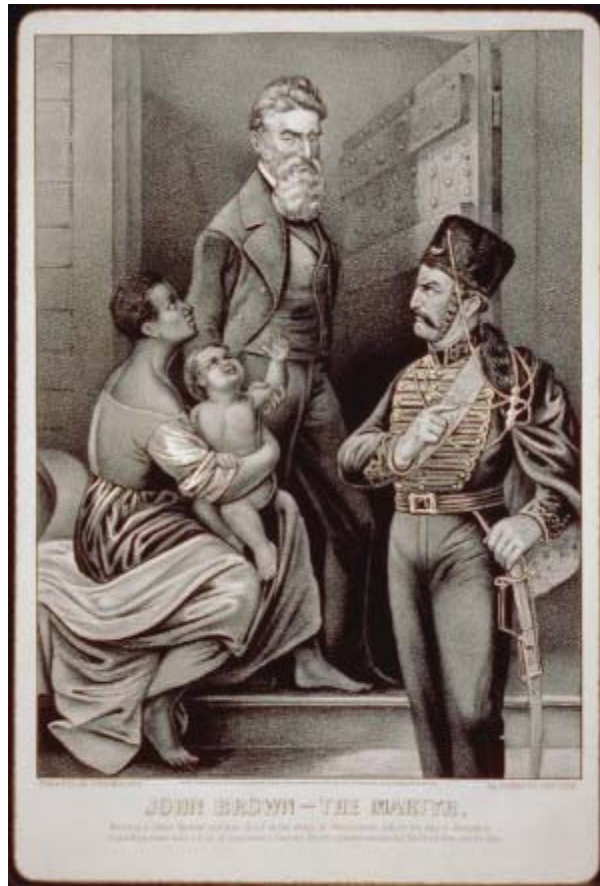
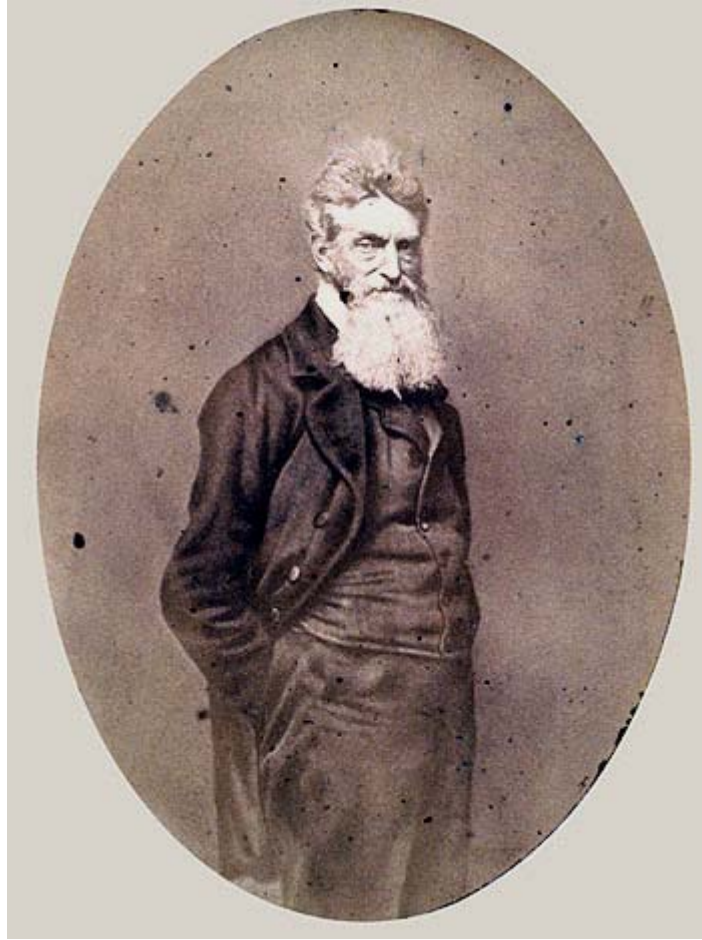


Figure 2: *John Brown: The Martyr*, Currier and Ives, 1870. Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.



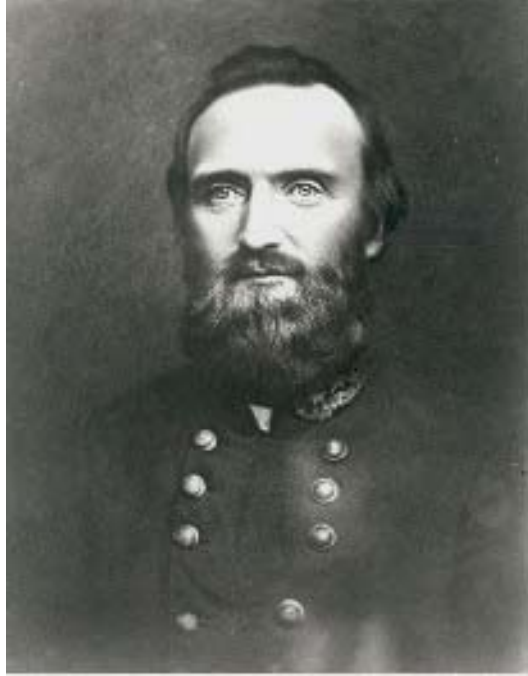
Figure 3: *Tragic Prelude*, John Steuart Curry, 1937-1942. Kansas Statehouse murals, Topeka, Kansas.



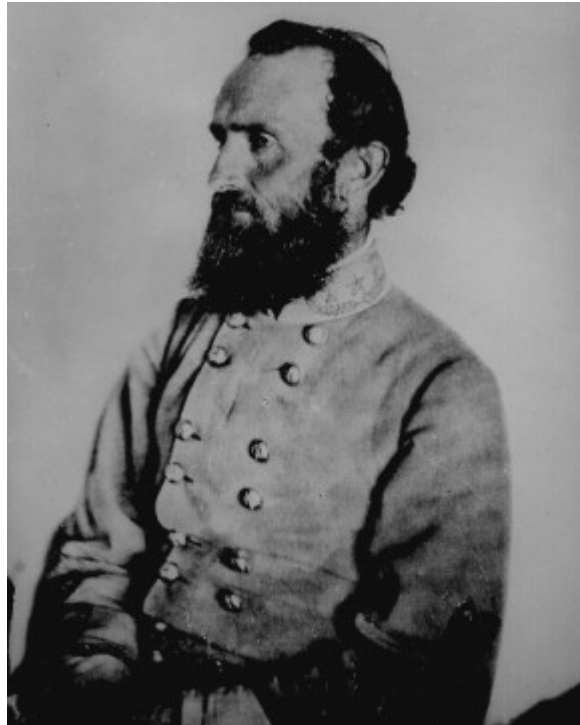
**Figure 4: John Brown, photograph attributed to James Wallace Black, 1859. National Portrait Gallery, Smithsonian Institution.**



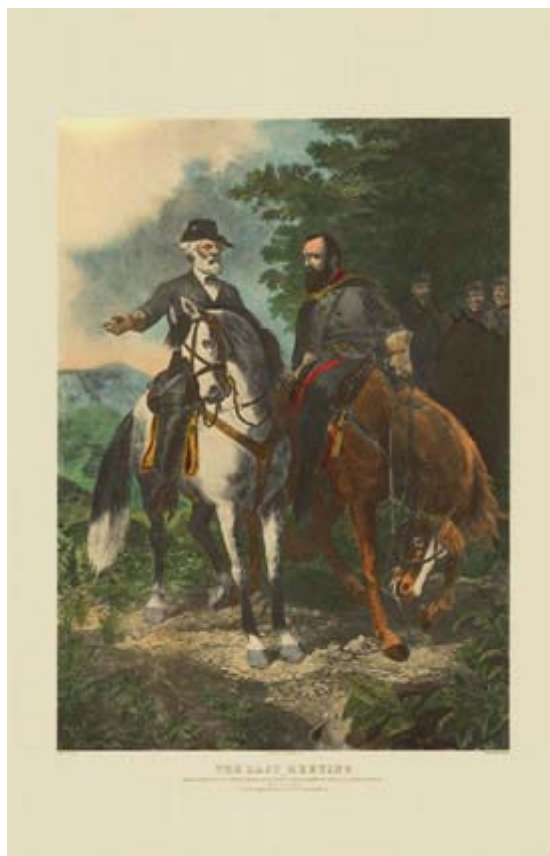
**Figure 5: John Brown, daguerreotype by Augustus Washington, 1847. National Portrait Gallery, Smithsonian Institution.**



**Figure 6: Thomas "Stonewall" Jackson at Winchester, Virginia, November 1862. National Archives. Mary Jackson referred to this picture as her husband's "home-look."**



**Figure 7: Thomas "Stonewall" Jackson near Fredericksburg, Virginia, April 1863. National Archives.**



**Figure 8: *The Last Meeting of Lee and Jackson*, E.B.D. Julio, 1872. Anne S.K. Brown Military Collection, Brown University.**

## APPENDIX C: MONUMENTS AND PLACES





**Figure 9: Stone Mountain Memorial Carving, featuring (l-r) Jefferson Davis, Robert E. Lee, and Thomas "Stonewall" Jackson. Stone Mountain, Georgia. Photo courtesy of Stone Mountain Park. Used with permission.**



**Figure 10: The engine house, a.k.a. "John Brown's Fort," Harpers Ferry, West Virginia. Photograph by the author.**



Figure 11: Informational display in front of Jefferson County Courthouse, Charles Town, West Virginia. Photograph by Richard W. Clark, 2005. Used with permission.



Figure 12: Historical marker outside Jefferson County Courthouse, Charles Town, West Virginia. Photograph by Richard W. Clark, 2005. Used with permission.



**Figure 13: Historical marker near the site of John Brown's gallows, Charles Town, West Virginia. Photograph by Richard W. Clark, 2006. Used with permission.**



**Figure 14: John Brown statue at Osawatimie Battlefield, Osawatimie, Kansas. Photograph courtesy of the city of Osawatimie. Used with permission.**

APPENDIX D: PERMISSION TO USE PHOTOGRAPHS

Richard W. Clark  
132 Harvard Court, Falling Waters, WV 25419

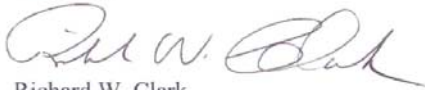
---

March 28, 2007

To Whom It May Concern:

I hereby grant to Sarah E. Clark permission to use any photographs taken by me for inclusion in her thesis "The Popular Images of John Brown and Thomas "Stonewall" Jackson".

Sincerely,

  
Richard W. Clark

## Permission from Stone Mountain Park to use its photograph of the Memorial Carving, Figure .

Print Message

<http://mail.scps.k12.fl.us/Contact/mail/1175712328/jobno=4610b74...>

Printed by : Sarah Clark/scps.middle (04/04/2007 14:45:28)

Subject RE: Contact Form Submission: Other  
Ack Status No Confirmation  
Importance None  
Priority Normal  
Security Normal  
Creator "SMP General Information" <generalinfo@stonemountainpark.com>  
Distribution List From : "SMP General Information" <generalinfo@stonemountainpark.com>  
To : Sarah\_Clark@scps.k12.fl.us  
Created 04/04/2007 14:27:16  
Message Text

Hello Ms. Clark,

Thank you for your e-mail and interest in the Memorial Carving. You may use the image for educational purposes only, it may not be used for resale.

**Mike Duchock**

*Stone Mountain Park Marketing*

**From:** sarah\_clark@scps.k12.fl.us [mailto:sarah\_clark@scps.k12.fl.us]  
**Sent:** Wednesday, April 04, 2007 11:57 AM  
**To:** SMP General Information  
**Subject:** Contact Form Submission: Other

**Site Origin:** Stone Mountain Park  
**First Name:** Sarah  
**Last Name:** Clark  
**Company:** University of Central Florida  
**Address:** 11 Photina Court Apt. 104  
**City:** Winter Springs  
**State:** Florida  
**Country:** UNITED STATES  
**Postal/Zip Code:** 32708  
**Phone:** 4076207623 **Ext:**  
**Fax:**  
**Email:** sarah\_clark@scps.k12.fl.us

**Question Topic:** Other

**Question or Comment:** Hello, I am finishing my master's thesis at the University of Central Florida. The title is "The Popular Images of John Brown and Thomas 'Stonewall' Jackson." As the title suggests, part of my thesis examines images of Stonewall Jackson in mainstream society. I would like to include your site's photograph of the memorial carving at Stone Mountain, but I need written permission. Could I please have permission to use your photograph? Thank you! Sincerely, Sarah Clark

## Permission from the city of Osawatomie, Kansas, to use its photograph of the John Brown statue, Figure 15.

Print Message

<http://mail.scps.k12.fl.us/Contact/mail/1175712421/jobno=4610b74...>

Printed by : Sarah Clark/scps,middle (04/04/2007 14:47:01)

Subject RE: Permission to use photo from Web Site  
Ack Status No Confirmation  
Importance None  
Priority Normal  
Security Normal  
Creator "Ashley Smith" <ozcity@osawatomieks.org>  
Distribution List From : "Ashley Smith" <ozcity@osawatomieks.org>  
To : Sarah\_Clark@scps.k12.fl.us  
Created 04/04/2007 11:59:40

Message Text

Yes, that is fine to use the photo from the website. If you don't mind I think that our museum curator would be very interested to read your paper when you are all finished.

-----Original Message-----

From: Sarah\_Clark@scps.k12.fl.us [mailto:Sarah\_Clark@scps.k12.fl.us]  
Sent: Wednesday, April 04, 2007 10:36 AM  
To: Ashley Smith  
Subject: Permission to use photo from Web Site

Dear Sir or Madam:

I am completing my master's thesis at the University of Central Florida. The title of my thesis is "The Popular Images of John Brown and Thomas 'Stonewall' Jackson." As the title suggests, part of my thesis includes examining images of John Brown that are found in mainstream society. One of my subjects is the statue of Brown in Osawatomie. I would like to include a photo of the statue from your web site. May I please have permission to include the photo in my thesis? I have attached the photo to this email so you know to which one I am referring. Thank you!

Sincerely,  
Sarah Clark

Florida has a very broad Public Records Law. Virtually all written communications to or from School District Personnel are public records available to the public and media upon request. E-mail sent or received on the School District system will be considered public and will only be withheld from disclosure if deemed confidential pursuant to State Law.



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