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## TRANSFIGURATIONS: SOUTHWORTH AND HAWES, REPRODUCED IMAGES AND THE BODY<sup>1</sup>

In 1839, the critic Jules Janin predicted of the new medium of photography that: “We shall shortly have only to send our boy to the Musée, and bid him in three hours bring back a picture of Raphael and of Murillo.”<sup>2</sup> And indeed in the Houghton Library at Harvard University is Southworth & Hawes’ silvery daguerreotype of Raphael’s celebrated *Transfiguration*.<sup>3</sup> Or rather – and very importantly – it is a daguerreotype of an engraving by Raphael Morghen after Raphael’s painting.<sup>4</sup> From its inception, photography has been involved with image reproduction of both unique works and multiples in other media (engravings, plaster casts of sculpture, etc).<sup>5</sup> Whereas reproductive printmaking normally seeks to produce multiples of a unique

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<sup>1</sup> I first encountered the Southworth and Hawes Raphael plate during research as an Eleanor M. Garvey Fellow in Printing and Graphic Arts at the Houghton Library, and I owe warm thanks to the Library and its staff for that opportunity. I am indebted to Louise Rice for sharing her knowledge of collaboration in reproductive printmaking, and engaging in lively discussion with me about this project.

<sup>2</sup> A translation of Jules Janin’s, “Le Daguerrotype,” (originally published in 1957 in *L’Artiste, Journal de la Litterature et des Beaux-Arts* (Paris) series, 2:11 (27 January 1839): 145-48.2 and signed “BS” appeared in *Court and Lady’s Magazine, Monthly Critic and Museum* (London), Vol. 17 (October 1839), pp. 436–439.

<sup>3</sup> Engravings of the *Transfiguration* were produced on multiple occasions, including renditions by Nicolas Beatrizet (1541), Cornelius Cort (1573), Giulio di Antonio Bonasone (1574), Simon Thomassin (1680) and Raphael Morghen (1811) and Auguste Gaspard Louis, Baron Boucher-Desnoyers (1839), among others.

<sup>4</sup> Although many engravings from the *Transfiguration* exist, close study convinces me that it is Morghen’s which was the subject of the daguerreotype. Details such as the edges of the ground plane of the scene at center and the treatment of the eyes of the two figures at the lower right make this particularly apparent.

<sup>5</sup> For more on the close entanglement of photographic and non-photographic processes throughout the medium’s history, see M. Henning, “With and Without Walls: Photographic Reproduction and the Art Museum”, *Museum Media*, part 4. “Extending the Mu-

original, daguerreotype reproductions open a space of transmedial ambiguity between the categories of original and reproduction, since they are also unique objects. Although highly detailed, the daguerreotype's highlights obscure the source-print's syntax, and, – as is true of all daguerreotypes – the image is elusive unless the plate is held at precisely the correct angle.<sup>6</sup> Raphael's stately color blocking of the registers of figures is elided first by the engraving and then by daguerrian monochrome, and the daguerreotype's dimensions are drastically reduced from those of both original and intermediate engraving. Much is lost in this translation, but what is gained? If the reproduction of paintings normally renders the singular multiple, what happens when a painting is reproduced as a unique image? Why was this daguerreotype created? Southworth & Hawes specialized in portraits of celebrities and considered themselves artists; they were hardly Janin's errand boys.<sup>7</sup> So why did they make a daguerreotype of an engraving of a painting? And why do so for *this* painting? Evidently, it was a significant subject for them, since they reproduced it at least three times.<sup>8</sup> This image of an image is at once simply duplicative and a meditation on photography itself – an expanded conception of photography that figures it as spiritual and conceptual practice, as can be seen in other confluences of image reproduction and transfiguration in Southworth & Hawes' oeuvre as well.

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seum". December 5, 2013, available online: <<https://doi.org/10.1002/9781118829059.wbihms996>>.

<sup>6</sup> For more on embodied viewing of photographs, see E. Handy, "Dancing with Images: Embodied Photographic Viewing", *Open Arts Journal* 2019, issue 7, Summer, available online: <<https://openartsjournal.org/issue-7/article-2/>>.

<sup>7</sup> Southworth later echoed Janin's point in an 1871 "Address to the National Photographic Association of the United States", printed in *The Philadelphia Photographer* 1871, VIII (October), p. 332, saying "the treasures of the artistic world are laid upon our tables; ancient and modern art we can study at our leisure; the fashions and patterns of the manufacturer, of things namable and to be named, are thrust before us and surround us, by means of the photographic art."

<sup>8</sup> In addition to the Houghton Library and Historic New England plates, a half plate daguerreotype is in the Drapkin Collection. *Young America: The Daguerreotypes of Southworth and Hawes*, eds. G.B. Romer and B. Wallis, New York 2005, p. 483. Romer and Wallis quote a document in the George Eastman Museum manuscript collection describing the making of a "Copy of a transfiguration with mirror smallest aperature [sic] ... White cloth on the floor and curtains at the side time 14 minutes ... no sun tho very bright for absence of sun. 3 to 5-P.M."



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1. Albert Sands Southworth and Josiah Johnson Hawes, *Raphael's "Transfiguration"*, (1847?) daguerreotype, whole plate 35.8 x 28.1 x 6 cm, Department of Print and Graphic Arts, the Houghton Library, Harvard University, gift of Harrison D. Horblit

2. Raphael Morghen, *Transfiguration*, 1811, engraving, plate 79.5 x 53.1 cm, Harvard Art Museums/Fogg Museum, Gift of William Gray from the collection of Francis Calley Gray

3. Raphael Sanzio, *The Transfiguration*, 1516–1520, tempera grassa on wood, 410 x 279 cm, Musei Vaticani

## SOUTHWORTH AND HAWES, THE TRANSMEDIAL IMAGE AND THE BODY

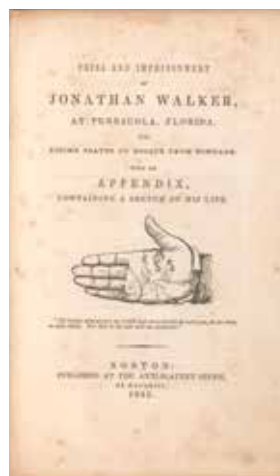
Sarah Kate Gillespie's study of the early American daguerreotype indicates that by 1850 daguerreotyping works of art was not unusual, though more commonly these plates depicted painted portraits or sculptures. So even amidst a visual culture of image replication that included the daguerreotype medium, a copy of a print of a painting was unusual.<sup>9</sup> Southworth & Hawes did photograph a wide range of subjects over their 20-year-long partnership, but like most daguerreotypists, they were primarily in the portrait business. Theirs was a high-end trade, producing costly, technically impeccable images of sitters in stylish poses. Almost all art historians discussing Southworth & Hawes' work to date have emphasized the aesthetic ambition of their portrai-

<sup>9</sup> S.K. Gillespie, *The Early American Daguerreotype: Cross-Currents in Art and Technology*, Cambridge, MA 2016, pp. 70–81.

ture and the celebrity of their sitters.<sup>10</sup> All of which is to say that the partners are renowned for the power and sophistication of their use of photography in reproducing the world, not other images. Within the practice of mid-nineteenth century image reproduction, a unique image would typically be reproduced in multiple form, rather than a multiple image like an engraving being reproduced as a unique image such as a daguerreotype.<sup>11</sup> But the logic of the Southworth & Hawes *Transfiguration* becomes less of a conundrum when considered in relation to two other daguerreotypes, dissimilar though their subjects may at first seem. One of these depicts a single body part as a portrait of an individual; the other presents a living man in the guise of a classical sculpture. Translation, transfiguration, body, soul and image are closely imbricated in all three daguerreotypes.



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4. Albert Sands Southworth and Josiah Johnson Hawes, *The Branded Hand of Captain Jonathan Walker*, 1845, daguerreotype, visible image 6.5 x 5.5 cm, The Massachusetts Historical Society

5. Title page of *Trial and Imprisonment of Jonathan Walker* with engraving by J. Andrews after daguerreotype by Southworth & Hawes, 1846, woodcut, published in Boston by the Anti-Slavery Office, Rare Books and Manuscripts Library, Columbia University

<sup>10</sup> For instance, Grant B. Romer and Brian Wallis remark that “unlike many early practitioners, Southworth & Hawes developed portraiture to a high art form”, in: *Young America*, p. 10.

<sup>11</sup> Wendy Wick Reaves and Sally Pierce, “Translation from the Plate: the Marketplace of Public Portraiture”, in: *Young America*, pp. 89–103.

In 1845, Jonathan Walker visited Southworth & Hawes' Boston studio at the request of the abolitionist Dr. Henry Ingersoll Bowditch. The result was a closely framed, tiny daguerreotype image of his right palm. It depicts the scarred flesh which had been branded "SS" as part of Walker's sentence for the crime of "slave stealing", that is, for unsuccessfully attempting to help seven enslaved men to escape bondage by sailing them to the British West Indies. The image detaches its subject from context, transforming it from manual appendage to spiritual emblem. It plays with the replication of text upon skin as both searing injury and as a form of printing.<sup>12</sup>

Walker's wounded body was recognized by his audiences on the abolitionist lecture circuit as the outward and visible sign of his virtue and conviction, a form of stigmata.<sup>13</sup> The act of branding made his hand a text inscribed by the state, and turned an obscure fishing boat captain into a secular saint among the abolitionist activists who constituted the church militant of Transcendentalism.

John Greenleaf Whittier's 1846 poem joined Southworth and Hawes' image in immortalizing Walker's hand, rewriting the branded inscription's meaning as the description of a spiritual mission rather than of a crime against property:

Then life that manly right-hand, bold ploughman of the wave!  
Its branded palm shall prophesy, "Salvation to the Slave!"  
Hold up its fire-wrought language, that whoso reads may feel  
His heart swell strong within him, his sinews change to steel.<sup>14</sup>

In the daguerreotype, the camera's inherent lateral image reversal makes it appear that it is Walker's left hand which was branded. The double Ss are reversed in the image, though actually they were correctly oriented on Walker's

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<sup>12</sup> K. Fein's article, "White Skin, Silvered Plate: Encountering Jonathan Walker's Branded Hand in Daguerreotype", *Oxford Art Journal* 2021, 44, no. 3, pp. 357–377 explores the complexity of this image in relation to the complexity and contradictions of the anti-slavery movement.

<sup>13</sup> S. O'Neill, "The Rebranding of Jonathan Walker", *Michigan Historical Review* 2020, vol. 46, no. 1 (Spring), pp. 121–165. M.A. Berger's short essay offers an excellent account of the preoccupation of White Abolitionists with Walker's fate rather than that of the enslaved men he failed to rescue: "White Suffering and the Branded Hand", *Mirror of Race*, n.d., <<http://mirrorofrace.org>>. The creation and circulation of this daguerreotype image is a notable example of the fixation of White audiences upon damage done to one White abolitionist's body rather than upon slavery as a violence perpetrated upon multitudes of Black bodies, but that topic lies outside the scope of this paper.

<sup>14</sup> J.G. Whittier, "The Branded Hand", 1846, available online: <<https://www.bartleby.com/372/260.html>>.

right hand, and indeed, there would be little purpose in the court's marking him with an illegible inscription. The reversed camera image can be reversed again to return it to the natural orientation by fitting the camera with a mirror or prism, and by 1852, Southworth & Hawes were boasting in print that "We are perfectly at home in every dept of Daguerreotype copying, without reversing." So either they had not yet mastered that skill by 1845 (unlikely), or by leaving the image uncorrected they chose to emphasize its construction rather than transparently rendering the subject.<sup>15</sup> When later the daguerreotype image was translated for publication, the engraver returned it to the correct orientation.<sup>16</sup> The daguerreotype of the engraving of the *Transfiguration* is also correctly oriented; Southworth & Hawes carefully mirror-reversed their camera image to reproduce the original correctly, just as Morghen had done in making his plate.



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6. Albert Sands Southworth and Josiah Johnson Hawes, *Southworth as Classical Bust*, c. 1845–1850, daguerreotype, visible image 11.8 × 8.5 cm, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Gilman Collection, Gift of The Howard Gilman Foundation, 2005

7. William Henry Fox Talbot, *Bust of Patroclus*, before February 7, 1846, salted paper print from paper negative, 7.8 × 16 cm, J. Paul Getty Museum

<sup>15</sup> A.S. Southworth, "Daguerreotype Likenesses No. III", *Boston Daily Evening Transcript* 1852, April 15, 1.

<sup>16</sup> *Trial and Imprisonment of Jonathan Walker*, Boston: Anti-Slavery Office, 1846, title page.

Southworth and Hawes' exploration of the liminal point at which the human body becomes a disembodied image continues with the remarkable 1845–50 portrait study of Southworth's undraped torso, elevated by the camera to an emblem of the absolute. The transformation of the sturdy body of a tradesman to the simulacrum of a classical bust and a type of the classical ideal made Southworth a living analog to the *Bust of Patroclus* in William Henry Fox Talbot's series of calotypes. Talbot's Patroclus seems animated and almost about to speak. However, while Southworth's inward reverie removes him from the possibility of engagement with the viewer. Among the earliest of photographic fine art reproductions, those calotypes are, like Southworth & Hawes' *Transfiguration*, reproductions of reproductions, since Talbot photographed a plaster cast rather than an original marble.

Copies of copies were a significant aspect of the many photographic inventors' concepts; this was particularly true for Nicéphore Niépce, Louis Jaques Mandé Daguerre and Talbot. Yet during most of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, histories of photography emphasized the medium as a window on the world rather than a duplicative system, so the widespread phenomenon of photographic reproduction of works of art in other media was long neglected as an active area of research. Art history typically has privileged image-objects as originals rather than as links in transmedial chains. Yet as Anthony Hamber observed, while photographs of architecture and sculpture are easily accepted as works of art in their own right, photos of two-dimensional works have largely categorized as humdrum reproductions, so fundamental questions about them remain to be explored.<sup>17</sup> Steve Edwards' term "image-thing amalgam"<sup>18</sup> proves useful in countering what Patrizia Di Bello has described as the tendency of scholars to look *through* art reproductive photographs to the works they depict as if photography had made itself invisible.<sup>19</sup> We can scarcely look through a daguerreotype; its mass and apparatus of protective packaging call our attention to the materiality of the encounter. The seemingly miraculous detail of the images and the embodied viewing practices required by the medium render

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<sup>17</sup> A. Hamber, "The Photography of the Visual Arts, 1839–1880, part I", *Visual Resources* 1989, 5, no. 4, Winter, p. 293. Interest in reproductive modes in contemporary art has accelerated since Georges Didi-Huberman's exhibition "L'empreinte" at the Centre Georges Pompidou in 1997.

<sup>18</sup> S. Edwards, "Making a Case: Daguerreotypes", *British Art Studies* 2020, issue 18, November, available online: <<https://doi.org/10.17658/issn.2058-5462/issue-18/sedwards>>.

<sup>19</sup> P. Di Bello, "The Greek Slave and Photography in Britain", *Nineteenth-Century Art Worldwide* 2016, 15, no. 2 (Summer), available online: <<https://www.19thc-artworldwide.org/summer16/di-bello-on-the-greek-slave-and-photography-in-britain>>.



daguerreotypes more suitable as devotional objects than as transparent panes through which we project our gaze.

Image reproduction raises many questions, including and exceeding those famously posed by Walter Benjamin.<sup>20</sup> Daguerreotype reproductions are particularly problematic: reproductions but not multiples, they confound Benjamin's presumption about the destruction of aura and present art reproduction as a type of transfiguration. Their flashing, lambent images have haptic as well as visual impact as one holds the heavy plates in one's hands in viewing. The intimacy of their scale pulls the viewer into the image, accentuating the relationships of image, object, body and vision. Reproduction of paintings normally renders the singular multiple, but what happens when a painting is reproduced as a unique image? The daguerreotype copies that Janin predicted would democratize paintings for easy consumption and wide distribution actually failed at the task through their inability to be duplicated further, their fragility and their cost, and indeed it is only very recently that the art of photomechanical reproduction has achieved truly effective facsimiles of works in other media.<sup>21</sup> Nevertheless, although daguerreotypes of paintings are not rare,<sup>22</sup> their production posed practical problems, and as Stephen Pinson has pointed out, Janin himself swiftly came to question the value of the complicated daguerreotype process given the resultant small, fragile, monochrome, unique images, even suggesting that the process's true function might in fact be providing source images for Raphael Morghen to translate as engravings.<sup>23</sup> In that case, the near instantaneous three-hour timeframe Janin had initially estimated would thereby expand to take at least as long as reproductive printmaking always had done, and in Morghen's case that could be years.

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<sup>20</sup> W. Benjamin, "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction", 1936, in: *Illuminations*, edited by H. Arendt, trans. by H. Zohn, New York 1969.

<sup>21</sup> R. Benson, *The Printed Picture*, New York 2008. All art historians old enough to recall the prevalence of textbooks illustrated only with black and white images, the use of University Prints' smudgily reproduced color halftone collections, and other twentieth century unfaithful modes of art reproduction will recognize the truth of this assertion.

<sup>22</sup> Gillespie, *The Early American Daguerreotype*.

<sup>23</sup> "[M]ais quel est le graveur de ce m asonde, s'appelât-il Raphaël Morghen, qui puisse jamais reproduire, même de loin, cette perfection idéale, ce ciel, ces eaux, toute cette nature vivante et sereine, doucement éclairée par cette lumière élyséenne?" quoted in S. Pinson, "Trompe l'oeil: Photography's Illusion Reconsidered", *Nineteenth-Century Art Worldwide* 2002, vol. 1, no. 1, Spring, <<http://www.19thc-artworldwide.org/spring02/195-trompe-loeil-photographys-illusion-reconsidered>>.



In a viewing, Southworth & Hawes' *Transfiguration* impresses itself on the eye as a revelatory experience in an instant, much as the original painting does, whereas Morghen's engraving is an atlas of slowly accreted visual information codified by means of the engraved syntax. Viewing its dense detail demands a scanning motion akin to reading, building up an impression of the meaning of the image as if a sentence at a time. This is intensified by the presence of the text block below the image, which must literally be read. Without the painting's color, the separation of lower and upper registers in the engraving was less emphatic, but the turning, kneeling figure in the foreground became more prominent, and then much less so in the daguerreotype of the print.

The daguerreotypes of the *Transfiguration* and of the branded hand have the informational value of documents as well as their subtler meanings as meditations upon the transfigurations they represent or upon photographic representation itself. But the portrait of Southworth as a classical bust is purely fanciful, a reproduction of an imagined work of art. Its luminosity owes much to Southworth & Hawes' ingenuity in installing a skylight in their top floor studio, the first used by any Boston photographer.<sup>24</sup> The light from the skylight falls behind Southworth's head and onto his left shoulder, at once producing a robust plasticity of form and emphasizing the slightly awkward posture of chest turned toward camera, head lifted and gaze directed away. The oily gleam of the unruly pompadour and the scruffiness of the chin whiskers announce the materiality of the body, while the sorrowing upturned eyes and the halo-like vignetting of light behind the head proclaim a spiritual presence. The deeply marked shadows under the eloquent eyes suggest firsthand acquaintance with mortality but are countered by the fine modeling of the sensitive lips. Southworth wears his own nudity like a costume indicating his elevated role as a classical sculpture, yet the poignant imperfection of the soft flesh of his shoulder and the mole at the base of his neck fall short of the classical ideal. The powerfully plastic modeling of the image exemplified the characteristic "beautiful effects of light and shade ... giving depth and roundness together with a wonderful softness or mellowness" praised by fellow daguerreotypist Marcus Aurelius Root, and necessarily not evident in the *Transfiguration* and *Branded Hand* plates given their planar subjects.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> T.H. Cummings, *Photography: Its Recognition as a Fine Art and a Means of Individual Expression*, Boston 1905, p. 3.

<sup>25</sup> M.A. Root, "A Trip to Boston – Boston Artists", *Photographic and Fine Art Journal*, 1855, August, n.p.

Margo L. Beggs has written about the relationship between the daguerreotypes Southworth and Hawes made of classical sculptures and of bare-shouldered women in similar attitudes. Beggs reads those sitters' display of their "flawless, white skin" and emulation of the marble sculptures as positioning them "at the crux of contentious beliefs about race in a deeply divided nation prior to the American Civil War."<sup>26</sup> While the sitters certainly occupied that position which may be foremost in our engagement with the images today, their similarity to the daguerreotype of Southworth emphasizes the role of the artist and the creation of the image itself as a meditation upon the act of artistic representation, and the relationship of art and life.

Southworth understood the portrait photographer's art to be a spiritual practice in which the camera is addressed to the soul of the sitter. As he put it: "The artist is conscious of something besides the mere physical, in every object in nature. He feels its expression, he sympathizes with its character, he is impressed with its language; his heart, mind, and soul are stirred in its contemplation. It is the life, the feeling, the mind, the soul of the subject itself."<sup>27</sup> Charles Leroy Moore commented that "In their semi-mystical search for revelation, painting and daguerreotypy could become allies in a common quest. This, at least, is how Southworth and & Hawes and their contemporaries understood the two arts," and that certainly is true as well for sculpture and daguerreotypy.<sup>28</sup>

## SACRED SUBJECTS AND PHOTOGRAPHY

That cameras may be wielded as much with faith and hope as with scientific objectivity is clearly evident in the plentiful occurrence of sacred subjects in photography. These vary from the deliberately constructed tableaux arranged for the camera by Julia Margaret Cameron to F. Holland Day's touchingly literal imitation of Christ. For Cameron, ordinary sitters and props could be deployed to attain the picture held in her mind's eye. She recruited friends, family, cooks, parlor maids and foundlings for roles as prophets, saints, queens and

<sup>26</sup> <sup>9</sup> M.L. Beggs, "(Un)Dress in Southworth & Hawes' Daguerreotype Portraits: Clytie, Proserpine, and Antebellum Boston Women", *Fashion Studies* 2019, vol. 2, no. 1, 1, available online: <[https:// www.fashionstudies.ca/undress-in-southworth-and-hawes](https://www.fashionstudies.ca/undress-in-southworth-and-hawes)>, <[https:// doi.org/10.38055/FS020111](https://doi.org/10.38055/FS020111)>.

<sup>27</sup> Southworth, "An Address to the National Photographic Association of the United States", p. 332, available online: <<https://chnm.gmu.edu/aq/photos/texts/8pp315.htm>>.

<sup>28</sup> Ch.L. Moore, "Two Partners in Boston: the Careers and Daguerrian Artistry of Albert Sands Southworth and Josiah Hawes", PhD diss., University of Michigan, 1975, p. 318.

madonnas – they need not become their roles, but simply perform them. By contrast, only Day himself could serve as the model for his crucifixion studies, the photographic documentation of a spiritual exercise. They depict the striving of a soul toward the divine through emulation of Christ's bodily suffering, using the photograph as an instrument of transfiguration. Cameron's sitters probably suffered from the long exposures, awkward poses and compositional caprices of her work, but neither their suffering nor their spiritual states were relevant to the resulting images. The three daguerreotypes by Southworth & Hawes discussed here each exemplify a different relation to their sacred themes.



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8. Julia Margaret Cameron, *A Study after the Manner of Francia*, 1865, albumen silver print from wet plate collodion on glass negative, 34.4 x 41.6 cm, Victoria and Albert Museum, Royal Photographic Society Collection

9. F. Holland Day, *The Seven Words: Father Forgive Them; They Know Not What They Do*, 1898, platinum print from gelatin dry plate glass negative, approximately 14.0 x 11.5 cm, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Alfred Stieglitz Collection

The Transfiguration as recounted in scripture is both uncanny and sublime. On the one hand, such a change of state is more cinematic than pictorial, yet it's also as much an image as a narrative. Transfigured, Christ became radiant in glory, suspended between heaven and earth upon a mountain top, embodying the point where the human meets the divine. Raphael's concep-

tion of this event is stately: the dramatic and intensive episode resolves in serene equipoise in his composition, or as Oberhuber put it, "Raphael is the mediator of polar opposites."<sup>29</sup> Once Raphael's image was twice translated from color to monochrome, the formal unity of the image rather than the opposition of spheres represented in the daguerreotype was accentuated. That unity across the plane of the composition is consonant with the more diffuse world view of Transcendentalism, while still adhering to the scriptural narrative. By contrast, *The Branded Hand* and *Southworth as a Classical Bust* allude to the spiritual realm through representation of the soul's transcendence of the suffering body rather than direct reference to scripture. But what constitutes a sacred subject in Transcendentalism? The *Branded Hand* detaches the subject from the context of the body as a whole; Walker's wound appears in the image as the silvery trace of the price paid for his abolitionist conviction, the man's identity concentrated in this representation which rendered a conventional portrait of his countenance unnecessary. And the portrait of Southworth separates an individual man's identity from the more allegorical presence, while presenting the suggestions of sorrow in his countenance as emblem of spiritual elevation.

#### RAPHAEL, THE *TRANSFIGURATION*, REPRODUCTION AND TRANSCENDENTALISM

Praised by Vasari as Raphael's most beautiful work, the *Transfiguration* was once widely considered the most famous painting in the world, a renown in part indebted to the prolific production of reproductions of the work which became ubiquitous throughout Europe and, in time, the United States. Including a mosaic version in the Vatican, at least 68 copies are known to have been produced by the early 20<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>30</sup> The outlines of the painting's history are relevant to a consideration of how it became known and by whom it could be seen. Commissioned in 1516 by Cardinal Giulio de Medici after he was appointed Bishop of Narbonne in 1515, for presentation to the cathedral of Narbonne, it never arrived there. Raphael was still at work on the painting when he died in 1520, and it was subsequently displayed in the Palazzo della Cancellaria until 1523, when Giulio became Pope Clement VIII. He then gave the painting to the Church of San Pietro on the Janiculum Hill, arranging

<sup>29</sup> K. Oberhuber, "Style and Meaning", in: Fogg Art Museum, *A Masterpiece Close-up: The Transfiguration by Raphael*, Cambridge, MA: Fogg Art Museum 1981, p. 15.

<sup>30</sup> S. Dohe, *Leitbild Raffael – Raffaels Leitbilder. Das Kunstwerk als visuelle Autorität*, Petersberg 2014, pp. 288–315.

for a copy to be made for Narbonne, which, however, was also never received there. The *Transfiguration* remained in San Pietro until 1797, when Napoleon took it to Paris, where it arrived in 1798, and was displayed in the Louvre. In 1815, Canova arranged for its return to the pope, and it arrived at the Vatican in 1816.<sup>31</sup> Thus, the well-traveled painting had been available in multiple contexts to disparate audiences by the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century, but translation into print circulated the image far more widely.

Raphael is credited with being the first artist to engage directly with the production of reproductive prints of his work, and Lisa Pon's discussion of the collaborations between Renaissance engravers, inventors, and publishers of images, as well as between viewers and images provides an expanded field in which to consider fine art reproduction of other periods as well.<sup>32</sup> But can we consider Southworth and Hawes to have collaborated with Raphael, across a divide of more than three centuries? Or even with Morghen, whose print was made forty-some years before the daguerreotype? Southworth and Hawes' photographic image reproductions can both afford virtual travel through time and space, and can stop time to create a suspended world of their own. Although the daguerreotypists' engagements with Raphael and Morghen are emphatically not literal partnerships between contemporary individuals, they do require interpretation, and they inflect analyses of the status of original, copy and viewer.

Morghen's version of the *Transfiguration* is more conscientious and subtle than some of its predecessors, and represents as great an accomplishment of posthumous reproductive printmaking as can be imagined. He worked on his print of the *Transfiguration* from 1795 until 1811, dedicating it upon completion to Napoleon, who then invited him to Paris in 1812.<sup>33</sup> Despite specializing in reproductive printmaking rather than the creation of original compositions, Morghen's work was widely admired during his lifetime, gaining him membership of the Institute de France.<sup>34</sup> Yet soon enough, his criti-

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<sup>31</sup> F. Mancinelli, "History and Restoration", in: Fogg Art Museum, *A Masterpiece Close-up: The Transfiguration by Raphael*, Cambridge, MA: Fogg Art Museum 1981, pp. 5–10.

<sup>32</sup> L. Pon, *Raphael, Dürer, and Marcantonio Raimondi: Copying and the Italian Renaissance Print*, New Haven 2004.

<sup>33</sup> F.R. Halsey, *Raphael Morghen's Engraved Works*, New York 1885, available online: <[https://archive.org/stream/raphaelmorghense00hals/raphaelmorghense00hals\\_djvu.txt](https://archive.org/stream/raphaelmorghense00hals/raphaelmorghense00hals_djvu.txt)>; L. Hunt, "Raffaello Morghen", *Catholic Encyclopedia* 1911, vol. 10, New York, pp. 568–569.

<sup>34</sup> H.E. Wright quotes Thomas Roscoe's opinion that "a work of any of the great masters is better in an engraving by Longhi and Morghen than in any ordinary [painted] copy," *The First Smithsonian Collection*, Washington, D.C. 2015, p. 107.

cal fortunes took an abrupt turn for the worse so that already by 1886, Henri Delaborde ranked him as a second-rate artist, his reproductive printmaking skills no longer greatly prized as the etching revival got underway and amidst the growing dominance of photography as the chief purveyor of visual information.<sup>35</sup> But at the time Morghen's *Transfiguration* came into the hands of Southworth & Hawes, both the painting's popular fame and the printmaker's reputation remained great. Morghen's was certainly not the last important engraving after the *Transfiguration*; for instance, Auguste Bouchard Desnoyers' 1839 engraving appeared in the same year as Janin's pronouncement on the potential of photographic reproduction.<sup>36</sup>

Reproduction of Raphael's *Transfiguration* remained a New England preoccupation well into the twentieth century. In 1979, a team from the Polaroid Corporation's research labs teamed up with the Fogg Art Museum to produce unprecedented life-sized color photographs, "faithful in microscopic detail", of the painting for a didactic exhibition at the Fogg.<sup>37</sup> Constructing a substantial tower in front of the painting within the Vatican Museum, they used "marine hardware – lines, pulleys, winches and jam cleats" to suspend the lens and instant print film in exactly the right position for their camera's intimate survey of the painting.<sup>38</sup> The goal of producing a photographic copy on a perfect one-to-one scale is strange in that its huge size makes it unwieldy for many of the usual uses of a photo reproduction, but the desire for absolute accuracy in reproduction is familiar. Bruno Latour and Adam Lowe contend that reproductions secure the fate of originals:

a badly reproduced original risks disappearing while a well accounted for original may continue to enhance its originality *and* to trigger new copies. ... facsimiles, especially those relying on complex (digital) techniques, are the most fruitful way to explore the original and even to help re-define what originality actually is.<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> H. Delaborde, *Engraving: Its Origin, Processes, And History*, trans. by R.A.M. Stevenson, London 1886, pp. 255–256.

<sup>36</sup> I am greatly indebted to one of the anonymous peer reviewers of this text for drawing my attention to Bouchard Desnoyer's print.

<sup>37</sup> J.J. McCann, V.L. Ruzdic, "The Large-Format Polaroid Process", in: *A Masterpiece Close-up: The Transfiguration by Raphael*, Cambridge, MA: Fogg Art Museum 1981, p. 25.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 26.

<sup>39</sup> B. Latour, A. Lowe, "The Migration of the Aura or How to Explore the Original Through its Fac Similes", in: *Switching Codes: Thinking Through Digital Technology in the Humanities and the Arts*, ed. T. Bartscherer, Chicago–London 2011, pp. 275–297, <<http://www.bruno-latour.fr/sites/default/files/108-ADAM-FACSIMILES-GB.pdf>>, pp. 4–5.

This is auspicious for the future of Raphael's work, little in doubt though that might be, and it prompts the thought that were a twenty-first-century digital scanning project of Raphael's *Transfiguration* to be initiated, it would aptly continue the cycle of revisitation and reproduction.

We may find a clue to the resonance of reproductions of this very Catholic painting for Transcendentalist Boston in Ralph Waldo Emerson's recorded response to it. He viewed it in 1832, when he traveled in Europe following his dramatic renunciation of his role as a minister, and of the organized church.<sup>40</sup> Emerson's journey from Unitarianism to Transcendentalism's austere ecstasies represented his own spiritual transfiguration of sorts. Marking that inward journey by an outward one, he brought his sensibilities to the eternal city. Professing openness to the visual culture of Catholicism in Italy, he was nonetheless determined to encounter it on his own terms, saying that "perhaps the most satisfactory and most valuable impressions are those which come to each individual casually and in moments when he is not on the hunt for wonders."<sup>41</sup> The splendor of Renaissance masterpieces was thus in the individual's unique perception and engagement with them. Emerson perceived an unexpectedly intimate quality in Raphael's *Transfiguration*: "A calm, benignant beauty shines over all this picture, and goes directly to the heart. It seems almost to call you by name."<sup>42</sup> His description anticipates the daguerreotype Southworth and Hawes produced twenty years later as a portable version of the benignant picture, shining with the silver of its plate rather than with the glow of the ineffable produced by Raphael's brush that Emerson detected. The modest scale of the daguerreotype brought the viewer into close relation with its image, whether or not the painting could still offer a personalized salute to the daguerreotype's viewer. Both Emerson and Southworth & Hawes thus remade Raphael, transfiguring his *Transfiguration*.

Southworth & Hawes photographed Emerson in 1846 and again in 1857 in the guise of a sober seer, and sage of Concord. By this time, Emerson's ideas had thoroughly pervaded New England intellectual and artistic circles, some of them having achieved almost the weight of prophecy, as when in 1836, three years before the invention of photography, he wrote the famous passage about the transparent eyeball in "On Nature", in which divine presence and human perception are fused to produce a state of pure observation remarkably

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<sup>40</sup> R.D. Richardson, Jr., "Emerson's Italian Journey", *Browning Institute Studies* 1984, vol. 12, p. 122.

<sup>41</sup> Quoted in Richardson, "Emerson's Italian Journey", p. 127.

<sup>42</sup> R.W. Emerson, "Art", *The Complete Works of Ralph Waldo Emerson in Two Volumes*, vol. I, London 1866, p. 150.





10. Albert Sands Southworth and Josiah Johnson Hawes, *Ralph Waldo Emerson*, 1857, daguerreotype, 23.2 x 30.9 cm, Historic New England (current whereabouts unknown)

like that of the photographic camera.<sup>43</sup> Nathaniel Hawthorne further developed Emerson's idea of the viewer's participation in the work of art in *The Marble Faun*, his 1859 novel about the visual arts:

A picture, however admirable the painter's art, and wonderful his power, requires of the spectator a surrender of himself; in due proportion with the miracle which has been wrought. ... There is always the necessity of helping out the painter's art with your own resources of sensibility and imagination.<sup>44</sup>

When Southworth addressed a body of photographers near the end of his long career in 1871, he used comparably Emersonian language in describing the artist's consciousness of "something besides the mere physical, in every object in nature."<sup>45</sup> Hawthorne and Emerson's sense of the viewer's participation in a work places the viewer *within* it, playing a role rather like that of the kneeling *figura serpentinata* in Raphael's *Transfiguration*, which Jodi Crans-

<sup>43</sup> R.W. Emerson, "Nature", 1836, Boston 1849, available online: <<https://www.gutenberg.org/files/29433/29433-h/29433-h.htm>>.

<sup>44</sup> N. Hawthorne, *The Marble Faun*, New York 1859, p. 272, available online: <<https://archive.org/details/marblefaun00hawtuoft/page/272/mode/2up?q=wonderful>>.

<sup>45</sup> Southworth, "An Address to the National Photographic Association of the United States", p. 332, available online: <<https://chnm.gmu.edu/aq/photos/texts/8pp315.htm>> 23.

ton describes as fulfilling Alberti's prescription of an interlocutor figure who mediates between viewer and subject:

I like there to be someone in the 'historia' who tells the spectators on, and either beckons them with his hand to look, or with an forbidding glance challenges them not to come near, as business to be secret, or points to some danger or remarkable picture, or by his gestures invites you to laugh or weep with them.<sup>46</sup>

But of course, it's the photographer, not the viewer who stands before the work in this role. The camera poised before the engraving is "on the hunt for wonders," unlike the observing eye of the passing philosophical traveler who happens upon the work.

### THE DAGUERRETYPE, REPRODUCTION AND THE REAL

The daguerreotype of the Raphael announces itself as visual metonymy; the transfiguration of Christ in the painting also conveys the transfigurative power of the photographic medium itself. That power depends upon the photographic image's near-miraculous accuracy and detail, and the closeness to reality remarked by all observers when the process was first demonstrated to the public. One such observer called the process a "wonderful creation", because "The light of the sun or moon becomes an engraver, which makes no mistakes; every line is in undeniable proportion, a microscope of the highest power can discover no error. ... This is the Daguerrotype."<sup>47</sup> Pinson describes how "preexisting discourses on painting led to the eventual characterization of the photograph as the "real," whereas the lack of an artist's touch functioned as the initial, serious point of contention between art and photography."<sup>48</sup> But it was precisely the creation of images despite the lack of human touch that provides their more-than-real quality. Photography's kinship to alchemy is in play here as well. Rather than the *lapis philosophorum* rendering base matter as pure gold, the sun's rays in the darkened chamber incite a silvered plate to produce that reliable miracle, the image.<sup>49</sup>

<sup>46</sup> L.B. Alberti, *On Painting*, trans. C. Grayson, London 1991, p. 78, quoted in J. Cranston, "Tropes of Revelation in Raphael's Transfiguration", *Renaissance Quarterly* 2003, Spring, p. 17.

<sup>47</sup> "The Daguerrotype", *Albion, or British, Colonial, and Foreign Weekly Gazette* 1839, 1, no. 14, 6 April, p. 109.

<sup>48</sup> Pinson, "Trompe l'oeil: Photography's Illusion Reconsidered", 2.

<sup>49</sup> I am indebted to Lisa Hostetler for her insights about photographic materials in relation to the idea of transfiguration, personal conversation, February 23, 2022.

The Transcendentalists' fusion of the human and the divine through consciousness of nature and photography's harnessing of natural law to produce images are both instances of the miraculous touching the material. Literary theorist Kaja Silverman's premise that photography is inherently analogic, and thus the means by which the world reveals itself to us, prompts the speculation that in the daguerreotype, it is the Raphael that reveals itself to us in like fashion, and that is another way of expressing Latour and Low's assertion that copies reveal and intensify the originality of images.<sup>50</sup> The world revealing itself to us through the image, the image shedding the material form of one medium to inhabit another, and the reproduction securing the future of the original are all species of transfiguration. Josiah Hawes was a devout Christian, who attended the church of Reverend Edward N. Kirk. One of Kirk's sermons characterized the relation of the soul and the material realm in this manner: "the earthly scene is to pass away, the world and its interests are to perish; but the soul and its moral affinities, the soul and its desires, the soul and its habits formed on earth must abide and survive the wreck of matter."<sup>51</sup> Sitting in his pew, hearing this sermon preached, perhaps Hawes reflected upon the power of the daguerreotype image to survive and transcend the inevitable wreck of its subjects, both mortal and artistic.

If, as Cranston suggests, for Vasari "*Raphael's Transfiguration* stands as a double synecdoche for the marvels of the painter and the art of painting," we can in parallel see Southworth & Hawes' *Transfiguration* as a synecdoche for the transformative power of photography.<sup>52</sup> James D. Herbert read Raphael's *Transfiguration* as deploying

resemblance precisely for the sake of exhibiting the limits of depiction, thereby allowing the divine in all its ineffability to flood into the void. ... the imperceptible yet present divinity situated amid all painting – at its center, and everywhere – enabled the swirl of that medium's busy activity of rendering visible the things of this world.<sup>53</sup>

Photography's skill at just such a 'busy activity of rendering visible the things of the world' is one of its defining characteristics, and the play of pres-

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<sup>50</sup> K. Silverman, *The Miracle of Analogy, or The History of Photography*, part 1, Palo Alto, CA 2015.

<sup>51</sup> E.N. Kirk, *Sermons on Different Subjects*, New York 1842, p. 270, available online: <[https://openlibrary.org/books/OL23332044M/Sermons\\_on\\_different\\_subjects](https://openlibrary.org/books/OL23332044M/Sermons_on_different_subjects)>.

<sup>52</sup> Cranston, "Tropes of Revelation in Raphael's *Transfiguration*", p. 3.

<sup>53</sup> J.D. Herbert, "The Son that Does Not Shine in Raphael's *Transfiguration*", *Word & Image* 2008, 24, no. 2, p. 198, DOI: 10.1080/02666286.2008.10405739.

ence and absence in the chain of reproduction from painting to engraving to daguerreotype indicates the limits of depiction as an invitation to the engagement of the viewer with the ineffability of the original. In so engaging, we experience Southworth & Hawes' daguerreotype reproduction of Raphael as a transfiguration in its own terms. In different ways, each of the three daguerreotypes discussed here operate as emblems of the transfigurative potential of photography, asserting that the power of this new medium derives from its shifting position between image and text, original and reproduction, artistic expression and visual information, and its relation to the embodied perception of its viewer.

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## TRANSFIGURATIONS: SOUTHWORTH AND HAWES, REPRODUCED IMAGES AND THE BODY

### Summary

The Harrison Horblit Collection at the Harvard University's Houghton Library contains a remarkable daguerreotype plate by the Boston firm Southworth & Hawes. It reproduces an engraving after Raphael's *Transfiguration*. Whereas reproductive print-making normally seeks to produce multiples of a unique original, daguerreotype reproductions open a space of ambiguity between the categories of original and reproduction since daguerreotypes are unique objects. Much is lost in this translation, but what is gained? If reproduction of paintings normally renders the singular multiple, what happens when a painting is reproduced as a unique image? Why was this daguerreotype created? Southworth & Hawes specialized in portraits of celebrities and considered themselves artists. Why then did they make a daguerreotype of an engraving of a painting? And why *this* painting?

Their image of an image of an image is at once simply duplicative and a meditation on photography itself – an expanded conception of photography that figures it as spiritual and conceptual practice, as is suggested in other confluences of image reproduction and transfiguration within Southworth & Hawes' oeuvre as well. The logic of

the Southworth & Hawes' *Transfiguration* becomes less a conundrum when considered in relation to two of their other images, one of the branded hand of abolitionist Jonathan Walker, the other a self-portrait representing Southworth's torso as a classical sculpture. Translation, transfiguration, body, soul and image are closely imbricated in all three of these daguerreotypes, each produced during the height of New England Transcendentalism.

While Raphael's *Transfiguration* epitomizes the intersection of the human and a divine being as Scriptural drama, *The Branded Hand* and *Southworth as a Classical Bust* allude to the spiritual realm through representation of the soul's transcendence of the suffering body rather than direct reference to scripture. The *Branded Hand* detaches subject from the context of the body as a whole; Walker's wound appears in the image as the silvery trace of the price paid for his abolitionist conviction. The portrait of Southworth separates an individual man's identity from the more allegorical presence, while presenting suggestions of sorrow as emblems of spiritual elevation. But beyond this, the transmedial daguerreotype of the print of the Raphael announces itself as visual metonymy; the transfiguration of Christ in the painting also conveys the transfigurative power of the photographic medium itself.

Keywords:

photo-reproduction, Southworth & Hawes, Raphael, *Transfiguration*, transmedial