



**From Beyond the Grave:
The Affective Power of
James VII & II's Relics**

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Abstract: Twenty-five hours after the death of the exiled James VII and II in 1701, his body was eviscerated, and the remains divided between five ecclesiastical institutions in France. This distribution of James's physical remains to religious communities promoted a message of his virtuous piety, and through him, the sanctity of the Stuart dynasty and its claim to the Scottish, English and Irish crowns. They were intended to advertise the righteousness of the Jacobite cause and secure support. In death, James's physical presence increased in geographical reach, the distributed presence of these bodily relics joining the numerous snippets of hair, clothing, and touchpieces associated with him circulating in continental Europe and the British Isles. This paper explores the affective affordances of such personal relics and their containers, relating to the exiled Stuart monarchy, in inspiring emotion, devotion and loyalty, and sustaining memory. It also considers the persistent power of the royal touch imbued in the Jacobite touchpieces that the exiled Stuart kings dispensed to their faithful, sustaining those connections, and in promoting the Jacobite cause in their physical absence, or after death. Coming into the twenty-first century, James's reach continues to extend temporally through the work of succeeding generations of relic custodians, arguably widening given the public display of such relics in museums and religious institutions.

Keywords: Jacobite; Jacobitism; relics; reliquaries; material culture; affect; touch; James VII and II; touchpieces

In the palace at St Germain-en-Laye, at 3.30pm on 16 September 1701, the exiled James VII and II breathed his last. Twenty-five hours later, his body was eviscerated, and the remains divided between five ecclesiastical institutions in France.¹ The body itself was entombed in a triple-skinned sarcophagus, covered

¹ *Deceds du Roy d'Angleterre* from the parish register of Saint-Germain-en-Laye, with transcription in French, at Association Frontenac-Amériques, accessed 31 March 2023, <http://www.frontenac-ameriques.org/louis-de-frontenac/article/la-ville-de-saint-germain-en-laye>. My research into the James VII and II locket is indebted to work by Matthew Martin, in his chapter "Infinite Bodies: The Baroque, the Counter-Reformation Relic, and the Body of James II."

with black embroidered velvet, and laid to rest on Louis XIV's orders in St Edmund's Chapel in the English Benedictine church in Rue St Jacques in Paris. In unrealised anticipation of the Stuart monarchy's restoration, James was not buried, on the assumption that his remains would eventually be transferred to Westminster Abbey.² This distribution of James's physical remains to religious communities promoted a message of his virtuous piety, and through him, the sanctity of the Stuart dynasty and its claim to the Scottish, English and Irish crowns. They were intended to advertise the righteousness of the Jacobite cause and secure support. Arguably in death, James's physical presence increased in geographical reach, the distributed presence of these bodily relics joining the numerous snippets of hair, clothing, and touchpieces associated with him circulating in continental Europe and the British Isles.

Other than those interred at St Germain, none of James's physical remains still exist in their original burial places, relocated or lost in the political unrest of later eighteenth-century France. Several relics associated with them have made their way into museum collections in England and Scotland. The focus of this article is the significant and representative collection of particular memorabilia which claimed bodily or haptic connections with the Stuart dynasty at the National Museum of Scotland (hereafter NMS) from James's father Charles I to his grandson Prince Charles Edward (whilst acknowledging the much wider surviving material culture of Jacobitism impossible to include within this article's scope).³ One amongst these objects is of particular interest here: a silver heart shaped locket reputedly containing James's *pericardium* (the skin of the heart), or possibly the *praecordia* (upper abdomen close to the heart), acquired by NMS in 2019 and now on display alongside commemorative lockets and medals for Charles I and Charles II. The National Collection also includes numerous mementoes for the Stuart princes in exile, but the James VII and II heart locket is the only one purporting to carry a body part, other than hair. It is inscribed on the obverse with the initials I.R., surmounted by a crown, and with a somewhat naïvely drawn heart below; this inscription is encircled by a cartouche with radial sunrays, and framed by oak leaves (fig. 1). On the reverse is the cypher I.H.S. for Jesus (*Iesus Hominum Salvator*), above iconography associated with Christ's Crucifixion in the

² Martin, "Infinite Bodies," 170.

³ For this, see work by Guthrie, *The Material Culture of the Jacobites*; Pittock, *Material Culture and Sedition*; Sankey and Szechi, "Elite Culture and the Decline of Scottish Jacobitism 1716–1745"; Monod, "Dangerous Merchandise: Smuggling, Jacobitism, and Commercial Culture in South East England, 1690–1760"; and on specific types of objects, for instance by Seddon on the huge amount of Jacobite glassware, *The Jacobites and their Drinking Glasses*.

three upward slanting arrows; these are enclosed in a similar circular cartouche and oak-leaf frame as the front (fig. 2). The obverse also shows two crossed arrows or lances, between James's initials, again recalling Christ's martyrdom. The inclusion of such religious iconography on the locket links James to the Crucifixion and makes explicit the saintliness being suggested of his life and remains.



Figures 1a, 1b: James VII and II reliquary locket, obverse, inscribed with the initials I.R. for *Iacobus Rex*, with a heart below, and surmounted by a crown; reverse, inscribed with the initials I.H.S., with the three arrows relating to Christ's crucifixion below, silver, human remains, early eighteenth century, 30 x 33 mm. NMS, X.2019.365.1 © National Museums Scotland.

Stuart princes, such as Mary, Queen of Scots and James VI and I, had been long adept at image-making in perpetuating memory of themselves. They imprinted themselves on coins, jewels and touchpieces, promoting their image in intricate miniatures and larger scale portraits, and the etchings and prints made of them.⁴ These carried the version of the living prince that they wished to communicate. After their death, these objects helped to perpetuate that image through their cultural afterlives, repurposed by successive owners to recall not just the dead, but the living successor too. This article considers, within this wider material culture of Jacobitism, the part played by Stuart relics and their containers, the reliquaries, in supporting the Stuart challenge to Williamite and later Hanoverian rule, and the type of connections they facilitated between loyal Jacobites and their absent monarchs, whether alive or dead. It explores the affective and haptic affordances of such personal relics and reliquaries in inspiring emotion, devotion, and loyalty, considering

⁴ Guthrie, *The Material Culture of the Jacobites*; Pittock, *Material Culture and Sedition*.

work on how such material culture sustained memory.⁵ How did these items work as "emotional objects?"⁶

Through their materiality, these objects suggest the personal characteristics of those they memorialise. Simultaneously, such reliquaries enabled a tangible connection to the absent Stuart kings in the proximity of royal human remains to the devotee's own skin. This suggests a belief in the persistent, penetrative, and therapeutic power of the royal touch, as exemplified by that transmitted through the touchpieces dispensed by reigning and exiled Stuart kings to their faithful. The article will also evaluate the significance of these examples in relation to existing scholarly characterisations of relic hierarchies, showing that something does not have to be a physical remnant of the commemorated for it to be considered a relic, nor does it have to be from a religious figure.⁷ As Alexandra Walsham observes, what makes a relic is a "consequence of the beliefs and practices that accumulate around them."⁸ That said, the Stuarts' claim to divinely ordained kingship imbued royal mementoes and relics like these with quasi-religious or sacral status, as well as commemorative and restorative.

In similar vein, soon after James VII and II's entombment, rumours began to spread of the miraculous benefits of visiting his remains, and the black velvet in St Edmund's Chapel disappeared as snippets of it were taken as mementoes or relics. Although nothing was to come of it, these miracles were investigated as evidence for the potential canonisation of James. James's remains had achieved, for some, religious status. His relics were to continue to act as vehicles for emotional and devotional experiences for those who saw, wore, owned, and revered them, connecting Jacobite loyalists through these evocative objects to James and his Stuart kinsmen long after his death, and the ending of the Jacobite cause. For Matthew Martin, the "body-part relic facilitated a near infinite spatial expansion of the human body, each bodily fragment of a holy person, no matter how tiny, manifesting the same power and presence as the whole"; in the divinely therapeutic powers claimed of James, such spatial attributes can also be attributed to the distribution of James's remains.⁹

⁵ Vullings, "A Crown of Everlasting Glory," 25, 29; Turkle, "Introduction: The Things that Matter," and "What Makes an Object Evocative." Kwint, "Introduction: The Physical Past."

⁶ Randles, "Signs of Emotion," 45.

⁷ Hooper, "A cross-cultural theory of relics: on understanding religion, bodies, artefacts, images and art,"; Walsham, "Introduction: Relics and Remains," and "Skeletons in the Cupboard," and Rublack, "Grapho-relics: Lutheranism and the materialization of the word."

⁸ Walsham, "Introduction: Relics and Remains," 11, 13, quotation at 14.

⁹ Martin, "Infinite Bodies," 169.

Coming into the twenty-first century, James's reach continues to extend temporally through the work of succeeding generations of relic custodians. Indeed, it could be argued that his reach is wider than ever before given the public display of such relics in museums and religious institutions.

From ruling dynasty into exile: the Jacobite cause

In June 1688, the Catholic James and his second wife, the similarly Catholic Mary of Modena, celebrated the birth of a son, James Francis Edward (who assumed the titles James VIII and III). For many in England and Scotland, this was an alarming threat to the safety of Protestantism. Young James's arrival displaced his elder Protestant sister, Mary, and her Protestant husband, William of Orange, in the succession to the Stuart crowns of England, Scotland, and Ireland. Simultaneously, King James's movements towards greater toleration for Catholics and non-Conformist Protestants signalled the strengthening of Catholicism, and monarchical interference in the Church of Scotland; and in issuing a Declaration of Indulgence without the assent of the Scottish parliament, a challenge to its power.¹⁰ These religious and political concerns led ultimately to James's overthrow and exile, triggering the Jacobite cause.¹¹

In England, this rebellion became known as the "Glorious Revolution," an assertion of constitutional rights in a relatively peaceable manner. At the invitation of the English parliament, William arrived with a small force in November 1688, and James fled to France on 23 December. In February 1689, the English parliament offered the crown jointly to William and Mary, James being perceived to have abandoned it.

In Scotland, the replacement of James underwent a somewhat different process. There, the 1681 Succession and Test Acts had allowed for a king regardless of any difference in his religion.¹² This apparent tolerance had perhaps made James overconfident: he installed new silver altarware for Catholic worship at Holyroodhouse (now on display at NMS), and in 1688 six Jesuit priests were in residence.¹³ However, this overt Catholicism,

¹⁰ Raffe, *The Culture of Controversy*, 38.

¹¹ Relevant histories, see Mann, *James VII: Duke and King of Scots*; Harris and Taylor, eds., *The Final Crisis of the Stuart Monarchy*; Lenman, *The Jacobite Risings in Britain, 1689–1746*; Szechi, *The Jacobites: Britain and Europe*; Wormsley, *James II: The Last Catholic King*.

¹² *The Records of the Parliaments of Scotland to 1707*, 1681/7/18, 1681/7/29, accessed 13 September 2024.

¹³ McRoberts and Oman, "Plate Made by King James VII and II for the Chapel Royal of Holyroodhouse in 1686," 285. James VII's silver altarware at Holyroodhouse, c. 1686, on display at National Museums Scotland, includes a silver chalice, paten, sanctus bell, monstrance and ciborium: IL.2009.16. On loan from the Scottish Catholic Heritage Collections Trust.

and his acts as king after 1685, stimulated determined opposition.¹⁴ On 10 December 1688, a riotous crowd invaded Holyroodhouse, destroyed the chapel, and burnt religious paraphernalia.¹⁵ Then, in January 1689, in contrast to the English abdication, a Scottish Convention formally deposed King James "being a professed Papist" for violating the principles of contractual monarchy in his arbitrary "subversion of the Protestant religion," conflating its religious fears with the defence of parliament's constitutional powers.¹⁶ Despite John Graham, Viscount Dundee's success on James's behalf at the battle of Killiecrankie in August 1689, his cause never recovered. After defeat at the battle of the Boyne in July 1690, James spent the rest of his life in France in a notably pious manner. In 1690, an Act of Settlement established Presbyterianism as the Church of Scotland.

Significant support for the Stuart dynasty, however, had not disappeared, amongst Catholics and particularly non-juring Episcopalians in Scotland, who became known as Jacobites (after *Jacobus*, Latin for James). In 1714, the succession to the British throne of the Protestant George, elector of Hanover and James VI and I's great-grandson, prompted a pro-Stuart uprising in Scotland. Its defeats at Sheriffmuir and Preston in 1715, and James VIII and III's return to France after only two months in Scotland, set a pattern for the ultimate failure of the Jacobite challenge to the Hanoverian regime. A planned invasion in 1719 failed to materialise and the small rebellion was quickly suppressed at the Battle of Glen Shiel. In 1745, early Jacobite successes ended in irredeemable failure at the Battle of Culloden, and brutal repression by the Duke of Cumberland.

French support for the Stuart cause had dissipated after 1715, and James had moved on to the Papal States in 1719 settling in Rome where successive popes provided monetary support and palaces to live in until his death in 1766. These "courts-in-exile," for James, and then Prince Charles Edward Stuart, became the focus for English and Scottish Jacobites in exile, and a popular destination.¹⁷ Here the Stuart kings dispensed to their supporters the touchpieces that memorialised their visit (see fig. 7). These coins were tangible evidence of contact with the Stuart kings-in-waiting; in Hanoverian Britain, this was a potential treasonous political connection.

¹⁴ Raffe, *Scotland in Revolution*, 20, 31.

¹⁵ Adamson, "The Holyrood riot," fol. 241v.

¹⁶ RPS, 1689/3/108, accessed 13 September 2024.

¹⁷ Corp, *The Stuart Court in Rome: the Legacy of Exile*; Monod, Pittock, and Szechi, *Loyalty and Identity*; Baccolo and Cunningham, "The Stuarts in Italy, 1766-1807: a Court in Perpetual Pretence."

Commemorating the Stuarts

Due to the political context of its creation and consumption, pieces of Jacobite memorabilia circulating in later seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Britain have been termed by Murray Pittock as "treacherous objects."¹⁸ Jacobite iconography was imprinted onto multiple wares: a sunflower embroidered on a valance; glasses engraved with the Scottish thistle recalling the Stuarts' ancient royal lineage, while the flowering rose and moth symbolised hopes of restoration; rosebuds signalled the succession in James VIII and III's two sons, Charles Edward and Henry Benedict.¹⁹ These objects were no mere expressions of romantic sentiment, although they did express affection. Their expression of loyalty to the proscribed dynasty was an explicit challenge to the Hanoverian regime, and its parliaments. However, where the memento claimed the touch of the prince, or even more compellingly, contained some bodily remnant, they were not simply dangerous declarations of loyalty but, for their owners, offered tangible links to the absent Stuart princes.

This section considers the commemorative, affective and haptic affordances of such intimate objects (beyond expressions of political loyalty or religious affiliation), in facilitating emotional connections to individual Stuarts within a wider associational, if secretive, culture of Jacobitism. For Marius Kwint, "objects serve memory," "furnish recollection," and "form records: analogues to living memory beyond individual experience": these were all attributes that the Jacobite campaign of material culture made full use of.²⁰ For Sherry Turkle, the objects she finds in her "memory closet" facilitate connections to loved ones, now gone.²¹ In a similar way, the memorabilia that claimed bodily or haptic connections with the Stuarts helped to stimulate loyal affection to the exiled dynasty, and to promote a cultural memory of the Stuarts that continues to survive. For Pittock, objects like these "are public memory: they create and inform cultural memory, and they compose" what and how it is remembered.²² What is suggested further in this article, is the haptic and affective affordances of Jacobite mementoes that trigger

¹⁸ Pittock, "Treacherous Objects: Towards a Theory of Jacobite Material Culture."

¹⁹ Set of white linen wall hangings and valances embroidered with the crowned cypher "IRCR / 1719" for "Jacobus Rex Clementina Regina," within a sunflower, for the marriage of James Francis Stuart and Clementina Sobieska. Scottish, 1719, A.1988.263 C. For examples of subsequent objects, from NMS collections, see below.

²⁰ Kwint, "Introduction: The Physical Past," 2.

²¹ Turkle, "Introduction: The Things That Matter," 4, 10.

²² Davis, *Mediating Cultural Memory in Britain and Ireland*; Pittock, *Material Culture and Sedition*, 13-14.

and sustain this memory. In doing so they worked to sustain support for the exiled Stuart dynasty and, in doing so, maintain an underlying threat to the incoming Hanoverian rulers.

Some types of memorabilia, however, were more visceral in their emotional provocation than others, claiming talismanic or miraculous powers as secular, or perhaps, quasi-religious relics. These have been categorised within a hierarchy of meaning, based on their contiguity with the person commemorated. Objects that were owned or touched are termed "contact" relics, ranked lower in significance than secondary relics that contained hair or blood. Body parts, bones, skin, classified as primary relics, lie at the apex of this ranking. Complicating this, representational or image relics, could be, as Steven Hooper identifies, "equivalent to, and/or substitutes for, the body of a special personage."²³ Sacred relics had long characterised medieval Catholic piety, and were to continue to do so through the Counter-Reformation.²⁴ Even Protestants might revere martyrs' relics, but as Alexandra Walsham and Ulinka Rublack observe, these held a commemorative function rather than sacramental, as vehicles for memory, rather than for miracles. They were secular relics. In contrast, however it has been argued of relics associated with the Stuart dynasty that their divinely empowered royal touch could give these relics a sacral status, that challenges, as Hooper does more generally, an artificial analytical division between nominally "secular" and "religious" relic. For Hooper, the power of objects relating to "special personages" underpinned their relic status.²⁵

The starting point is to consider the affective affordances of objects associated with the Stuarts, no matter their degree of proximity, or the authenticity of the provenance claimed. In this, memory and materiality are inter-linked, the style and design, imagery and symbolism, content and composition, combined with the personal associations of the object to recall the person memorialised, and provoke an emotional response. Jacobite material culture is intrinsically formed of what Turkle has termed "evocative objects," the object's power drawing on the knowledge or memory of the Stuart princes which it commemorates.²⁶ The evocative attributes of these objects prompt the emotions and loyalties of those that make, use, own, see or hold them. The more intimate the connection

²³ Martin, "Infinite Bodies," 175; Hooper, "A cross-cultural theory of relics," 179, 189, 193, quotation at 194.

²⁴ Martin, "Infinite Bodies," 166, 168–170; Lazure, "Possessing the Sacred: Monarchy and Identity in Philip II's Relic Collection at the Escorial."

²⁵ Martin, "Infinite Bodies," 173–174, 175; Walsham, "Introduction," 11–14, 18; Walsham, "Recycling the Sacred," 1124, 1139, 1141, 1154; Rublack, "Grapho-relics: Lutheranism," 145, 158, 163–165; Hooper, "A cross-cultural Theory of Relics," 175, 179, 181, 189–190, 191–192, 195–197.

²⁶ Turkle, "What Makes an Object Evocative," 307; "Introduction: The Things That Matter," 4, 10.

of the object to the Stuart prince, the more evocative they become, and the more visceral the emotion provoked.



Figure 2: Wine-glass with plain stem enclosing a tear, and trumpet-shaped bowl engraved with Jacobite emblems, c. 1745–1750, 145 (height) x 69 (base diameter) mm. NMS A.1936.245 © National Museums Scotland.

At the most distant are objects made to commemorate or support the Stuarts, that do not claim any tangible association with them, but whose iconography displayed Jacobite sympathies: the wine glasses etched with thistles, moths, and rosebuds for example (see fig. 2). While the symbolism conveyed hopes of Stuart restoration, and promoted loyalty to it, it was the glasses' function in toasting the absent princes which gave them their fullest meaning, since this had to be done in secret. Their part in a necessarily secretive associational culture, denoted their owners' membership of an exclusive society; inclusion could carry punitive consequences. Of such glasses perhaps the most explicitly treasonous was the "Amen" glass, inscribed with the Jacobite version of the national anthem culminating in "Amen." There are four of these in the national collection, mid-eighteenth century, all engraved with a crown, the royal cypher "JR VIII" for James VIII and III, "Amen," and two verses of the Jacobite anthem (see fig. 3).²⁷

²⁷ In addition to those in figure 3, there are two further "Amen" glasses in the national collection: one probably earlier, inscribed "God save the King," "God bless the Prince of Wales," and "1716," with the monogram "JR8" and Jacobite national anthem with concluding "Amen," NMS, H.MEN 3; one inscribed "the Memory of Mr David Drummond, 1743," NMS, H.MEN 93.



Figure 3: Two "Amen" glasses flanking a glass with an enameled image of Prince Charles Edward Stuart. The "Amen" glasses carry a crown surmounting the cypher "JR," and two verses of the Jacobite anthem. (L) is also engraved "To the Prosperity of the Family of Lochiell," mid-eighteenth century, 165 (height) mm, NMS, A.1952.71; (R) associated with the Murray Threipland of Fingask family, mid-eighteenth century, 190 (height) x 83 (base). NMS, H.MEN 92 © National Museums Scotland.

Some memorabilia items were more representational of the princes they commemorated, such as the Jacobite glasses carrying an enameled image of Charles Edward, modelled on portraits of him in highland dress from c. 1740–1750. An example of this type of design is found in a set of six wine glasses commissioned around 1775 by Thomas Erskine, later ninth Earl of Kellie, who was one of the aristocratic Jacobites who continued to celebrate Charles Edward's birthday.²⁸ Such visual representations were part of a long-standing commemorative tradition of miniature portraits of the Stuart prince depicted on diverse ceramics, glass, and jewellery. These figurative reminders of the individualised person commemorated made such objects more explicitly evocative than a simple expression of loyalty to a political cause. The object's power played on the affective affordances of the image in stimulating an emotional, possibly empathetic, response from the viewer or owner, and establishing a sense of connection to that particular Stuart prince. This emotion was heightened where the object was created in memory of those Stuarts who suffered misfortune and/or exile. They were as Turkle has coined, things that were "good-to-think-with."²⁹ Probably the earliest such Stuart memorabilia to survive are the locket and rings containing miniature paintings, or carved cameos of the unfortunate

²⁸ For example, see figure 3, glass in centre, c. 1775, NMS, H.MEN 94.

²⁹ Turkle, "Introduction: The Things that Matter," 4.

Mary, Queen of Scots.³⁰ Another wave of commemorative images came after the execution of Charles I in 1649, in a proliferation of printed engravings and jewellery.



Figure 4: Miniature of Charles I in a pendant locket, c. 1650, gold, enamel, glass, 17 x 10 mm. NMS, H.NK 83 © National Museums Scotland.

These are intentionally evocative objects using the image of the “martyred” king to stimulate or express emotion. For example, one tiny gold pendant locket containing a miniature portrait of Charles wearing the blue Garter ribbon, depicts him with exaggeratedly large mournful eyes, intentionally styled to engender sympathy (see fig. 4). This is a simply framed portrait; other lockets were more ornately decorated and convey a greater sense through their materiality of the kingly or elite qualities of the person they commemorate. One such is a finely worked gold heart-shaped locket, dripping with pearls, framing a miniature Charles-with-big-eyes-portrait, surmounted by a crown, with the *in memoriam* skull and crossbones below. The virtuosity of its making and its precious components suggest, materialise, embody, the fine qualities of the man depicted (see fig. 5). This beautiful commemorative locket is a particularly elaborate declaration of loyalty to Charles I, dangerous to own during Oliver Cromwell’s Protectorate in the 1650s, and again after James VII and II’s deposition when it will have suggested loyalty to the Stuart dynasty more generally. However, unlike the simpler locket (fig. 4) above, its elaborate working suggests something that would have been worn to be seen (albeit in safe surroundings). We can perhaps imagine its owner wearing it against their skin, touching its image in a physical expression of personal connection to the dead king. Its appearance is also more reverential in its use of royal iconography, the crown supported by two angels, and precious stones and metals. This is fittingly suggestive since the locket contains what

³⁰ For instance, the enamel, pearl and gold pendant locket framing a miniature of Mary, and her son James VI, in the Penicuik Jewels. NMS, H.NA 422. See Anna Groundwater, “Materialising Mary in a museum.”

are allegedly a woven piece of Charles's hair and a fragment of the blood-stained linen shirt worn at his execution. It is thus a reliquary, reputedly containing the secondary remnants or relics of the dead king; a reliquary with almost sacral properties in the combination of the portrayal of Charles's martyrdom, and the supposedly divinely ordained power of the king, reiterated through the presence of the angels on the locket.³¹ That this locket has survived in such good condition almost certainly attests to the belief in the association of the hair and textile with Charles, and, as a result, the reverence with which it has been preserved.



Figure 5: Heart-shaped pendant, containing a miniature of Charles I, and allegedly a lock of hair and a fragment of the blood-stained linen shirt worn at his execution, c. 1650, glass, pearl, enamel, porcelain, linen, hair, 84 x 38 x 30 mm. NMS, H.NF 20 © National Museums Scotland.

Neither James VII and II, his son James VIII and III, nor his grandson, Charles Edward were martyred, all dying of natural causes in varying degrees of piety. Therefore, there are no blood-stained textiles with which to commemorate them. There are, however, many objects that purport to contain secondary relics of them in the form of hair, including one, a pointed oval-shaped finger ring containing not only Charles Edward's hair but also tiny pierced seed pearls, which apparently once formed the initials CR.³² Another such is a gold ring containing, reputedly, a snippet of James VII's tightly woven hair, given by him to his supporter Sir Peter Halkett as he fled London in 1688, and inscribed with this memory. On the front, twisted gold filigree initials "JR" and an enamelled gold crown overlay the hair,

³¹ Martin, "Infinite Bodies," 173-4, 176, 178-9.

³² Gold finger ring containing a lock of Prince Charles Edward Stuart's hair given by him to Alexander Stuart of Invernayle, with seed pearls forming the initials "C.R.". NMS, H.NJ 84.

set under glass (fig. 6).³³ Such commemorative jewellery became more widely ubiquitous in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries; for Marcia Pointon, the practice of incorporating hair into rings like these amounted to "some manner of fetish."³⁴ They were intimate, personal, personified objects, both in terms of their human contents, and in the manner of wearing, on the finger, or hung discreetly under clothing.



Figure 6: Finger ring inset with monogram "JR" and crown, given by James VII and II to Sir Peter Halkett the night he fled from London in 1688, gold, crystal, enamel, hair, 20 mm. NMS, H.NJ 100 © National Museums Scotland.

Such objects' power lay in their evocation of the knowledge or memory of the person literally embodied within them. More powerful still were their haptic and sensory affordances in enabling the owner to touch them, or at least the vessel containing them. Objects, as Stephanie Downes has written, "become mediators in emotional transactions between humans." Through objects, she goes on to argue, "feelings are embodied, experienced physically" and, in doing so, these "[t]hings may change or alter affective states."³⁵ Of sacred reliquaries, Lisa Beaven suggests how the "emotions and sensations operate together at the site of the body, and between the body and object of prayer" so that "objects become saturate with 'affect.'"³⁶ For Marcia Pointon, the hair-filled mourning jewellery, "the valued relic," nestled between the mother's breasts, "is the embodiment of

³³ Gold and enamel finger ring inset with monogram "JR" and crown, NMS, H.NJ 100.

³⁴ Pointon, *Brilliant Effects: A Cultural History of Gem Stones and Jewellery*, 204–9, quotation at p. 208.

³⁵ Haptics and the emotional affordances of objects through touch are a burgeoning field of study: see for instance, Downes, "A Feeling for Things, Past and Present," quotations at 9, 10, 11, see also 17–20; Randles, "Signs of Emotion," 50, 51, 56–7; Robinson, "Touching the Void: Affective History and the Impossible," 503–20; Hamling, "Reconciling Image and Object in Religious Imagery in Protestant Interior Decoration," 322, 333–34; de Witte, "Touch," 148–155.

³⁶ Lisa Beaven describes the function of sacred relics "via the senses" as "portals for the individual's private relationship with the divine." Beaven, "Faith and Fetish," 235, 236.

the man [which] provides the physical contact (kissed a thousand times) between herself and her deceased son." As significantly, "[t]hese artefacts are not abstract but tangible and were understood to bring into tactile proximity the loved one."³⁷ For these historians, their conclusion is that objects are not passive and inanimate but could bring people closer to those who were not present in meaningful and tangible ways. Here it is suggested of objects associated with the Stuarts, that the act of touching linked the owner physically and emotionally through the metallic or glass surface to the absent prince.

They may have been dead or overseas, but through such objects the Stuarts were still physically present in the lives, homes and social networks of those that owned such relics. As Pointon goes on to observe, the "body-part or material fragment stands as surrogate for a presence that is at once mystical and phenomenological."³⁸ Objects that they had touched, or were bodily part of, were in constant contact with their supporters' bodies, lying against their skin, and in rings twisted on fingers. Their containers were also eminently portable, finger rings and lockets strung from the neck or pinned to clothing. They were, we might say, "relics-to-go," carrying the personal memories of and loyalties to the Stuart dynasty. In comparison to the examples of the personal or familial mementoes in the existing haptics literature, however, what is remarkable about the Jacobite relics was that their haptic affordance was to be deployed at an unprecedented scale over geographical space and time to promote the cause of the exiled Stuarts.

Touching the royal Stuarts

If this scale of impact was true of jewellery holding hair or blood, it was even more so of objects touched by the Stuarts, which carried similar haptic affordances. Amongst such objects are the thousands of touchpieces dispensed to their adherents following an audience with the Stuarts in France or Rome. Their prevalence in the National Collection attests to this dynasty's prolific use of such objects to cement loyalties and perpetuate memory. They were part of a "new cultural economy" (that also included commemorative medals) developing from the mid seventeenth century.³⁹ These gifts were not one-directional, the exchange reflecting a mutually constitutive relationship on which either could call for support; through this both Stuart prince and follower constructed a sense of

³⁷ Pointon, *Brilliant Effects*, quotations at 294, 298; on the significance of touch, see also 315, 317, 321, 326, 341, 349.

³⁸ Pointon, *Brilliant Effects*, 296.

³⁹ Pittock, *Material Culture and Sedition*, 130-1, quoting Richard Kroll at 125; Guthrie, *The Material Culture of the Jacobites*, 207, n. 17.

themselves, gracious monarch, privileged adherent. On touchpieces, the Stuarts surrounded themselves with laurel leaves, accompanied by ships or saints, drawing on the personal attributes of classical Roman, religious, and national iconography. In a James VIII touchpiece from 1708 (fig. 7), St Michael slays the dragon in the fight against evil, the touchpiece correlating the saint's actions with those of the Catholic James, leading the fight of the just against the Protestant usurpers. Although the motto reads *Gloria Soli Deo* (Glory to God alone), it implicitly suggests the sanctity of James's cause, and rights of restoration to his divinely ordained throne.



Figure 7: Touchpiece, James VIII and III, 1708, gold, 20 mm. NMS, H.1958.2051 © National Museums Scotland.

Carrying such a piece was not just an expression of political loyalty. The object-type's origins were in the coins given by kings on Maundy Thursday, accompanied by the washing of the supplicant's feet. The humility of the act recalled Christ's own washing of his disciples' feet, drawing a parallel that signalled the monarch's virtue in doing so. The Maundy coin was an enduring reminder of that ephemeral act, even when the ceremony had reduced from such physical cleansing to 'mere' touching. Further, in retaining the memory of the action of cleansing or touching, the coins came to embody that performance, their meaning derived from that invested in them by their givers and recipients. In the fleeting touch of royal hands, the coin was now impregnated with the royal presence; it held "touch-to-go," or to takeaway.⁴⁰ In religious contexts, for Emile Durkheim, the spread of belief occurred through a process of contagion, the

⁴⁰ For instance, James VII and II set of Maundy coins, from 1 to 4 penny denominations, 1687, X.2023.140. Beavan, "Faith and Fetish," 245.

"contagiousness of sacredness" (*la contagiosité du sacré*), manifested in and through ritual occasions.⁴¹ We can (and Matthew Martin does through his "principle of contagion") characterise the imbuing of meaning in the donated object not only through the shared belief in the performance of touching, but transmitted tangibly through the medium of the Maundy coin, or alternatively the touchpiece. This touchpiece could thus be categorised as a contact relic.⁴²

The physical contact manifested through a touchpiece was particularly significant given a history of belief in the divinely therapeutic powers of the "king's touch" associated with curing scrofula.⁴³ From Edward the Confessor onwards, medieval kings had touched to heal, a practice resurrected by Charles II. James VII and II was notably prolific in this, reputedly performing as many as 14,000 instances in one year of his brief reign in England.⁴⁴ His son and grandsons (both Charles Edward and Henry Benedict) continued the tradition in Rome. This was not specifically a Catholic practice given that the Protestant Queen Anne and the notionally Protestant Charles II both did this.⁴⁵ So, for some, the divinely empowered monarch's touch could heal. Since the monarch touched the person during the ritual, and then the coin that commemorated it, this royal therapeutic power could be, as Matthew Martin describes it, "transmitted to objects through contact with the royal person" so that Maundy coins took on, for many, a talismanic, healing aura."⁴⁶ Similarly, the touchpieces given by Stuart princes potentially transmitted royal protection from life's misfortunes.

To return to the James VIII touchpiece from 1708, described above, this metallic object was imbued with the touch of the king, and if the belief was such, could transmit his therapeutic powers through contact with it. It is a contact relic. Notably, it, like many others, has a piercing through which it could be suspended and worn next to the skin. From the skin of the royal Stuart that touched it, to contact with the skin of its recipient, the attributes and memories of its royal origins transmitted directly through the touchpiece to the person wearing it. Given its wearability and portability, its "touch-to-go"

⁴¹ Durkheim, *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life*; Paul-François Tremlett, "Energy and contagion in Durkheim's *The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life*," *Oxford University Press blog*, October 2017, <https://blog.oup.com/2017/10/energy-contagion-emile-durkheim/>.

⁴² Martin, "Infinite Bodies," 177–8, quotation at 178. Randles, "Signs of Emotion," 46, 50–1.

⁴³ Woolf, *The Sovereign remedy: Touchpieces and the King's Evil*; Bloch, *The Royal Touch*.

⁴⁴ Martin, "Infinite Bodies," 177–8; Pittock, *Material Culture and Sedition*, 130.

⁴⁵ Matthew Martin cites a report of healing in Rome by James III and VIII in *A Letter from A Gentleman at Rome to His Friend in London* (London: A. Moore, 1721), Martin, "Infinite Bodies," 173–4, 177–8.

⁴⁶ Martin, "Infinite Bodies," 178.

materiality, this contact relic was not only for one-off ritual performance, but potentially something worn and performed daily. As such, it was an everyday physical reminder of the individual Stuart that touched it. It continued to embody and transmit the presence of that prince, no matter whether he was alive or dead. Hundreds of these pieces were in circulation, carrying that royal contact in much-extended social spaces and geographical areas than the king's presence in one physical location or place (as opposed to space) could ever have achieved.⁴⁷ Touchpieces embodied the king's presence in the wider networks and socio-political spaces of Jacobite loyalists. However, their fullest significance lay not simply in their therapeutic properties; touchpieces acted too as an expression of the divinely willed nature of James' monarchical power. They were the tangible activators and constant reminders of the God-given powers of the Stuart princes and, as such, as justifiers of the legitimacy of the Stuart claim to the British throne.

Touching James VII and II

James VII and II was not insensitive to the haptic and miraculous power of such relics. In 1687, the tomb of St Edward the Confessor was opened at Westminster Abbey, and an official there withdrew a crucifix and gold chain from it and presented them to James. Several records of this event were published in 1688, one of which drew an association between James and his saintly forebear, Edward's virtues "Reviv'd in the Sacred Majesty" of James. The latter noted that the "Sacred Relique," the crucifix, was "since worn sometimes by his present Majesty."⁴⁸ In wearing it, James appears to have appreciated the physical connection that the crucifix gave him to the highly revered, saintly, and long dead king, whilst it also advantageously signalled his own ancient English royal lineage through his ancestral links to the crucifix's owner.

If the miraculously therapeutic power of kings could be transmitted through contact relics, something they had merely touched, a bodily remnant of them might have been felt to be even more potent. As considered above, secondary relics composed of allegedly royal hair abounded. But hair was something you could lose without danger to life, an extension not an integral part of the living body. Blood too did not necessarily denote death; it was a leakage from the body, and not necessarily fatal. That said, in the case of Charles I, it was collected through the tangible aftermath of his execution, and as

⁴⁷ Martin, "Infinite Bodies," 179.

⁴⁸ Taylour, *A True and Perfect Narrative of the Strange and Unexpected Finding the Crucifix & Gold-Chain of That Pious Prince*.

such a powerful, physical reminder of the pain inflicted on him, and for his supporters, his martyrdom. Testament to the royal blood's potency in martyr-making were the efforts of Elizabeth I's officials in immediately burning any remnant of Mary, Queen of Scots' clothing after her execution. Given such contemporary perception of the blood's attributes, a body-part would presumably have been considered even more efficacious in translating the presence and powers of that monarch.⁴⁹

With these things in mind, this is where we return to the preservation, attributes, and potency of James VII and II's bodily remains. Their distribution was recorded by a priest of the Benedictine Monastery of St Edmund's in Paris at the time, Dom Benett Waldon OSB.⁵⁰ Some of James' viscera, that is intestines, were buried in the parish church of St Germain-en-Laye, close to where he had spent his exile. Other viscera were donated to the Jesuit College at Saint-Omer. A piece of flesh from his right arm was sent to the English Austin Nuns of the Rue St Jacques in Paris, close to where his body lay in St Edmunds Chapel, his heart to the Visitandine Convent at Chaillot, and his brain to the Scots College in Paris. The latter was the only part that James himself had willed, the evisceration and distribution of his other body parts apparently contravening his wishes. In 1703, a monument bearing James's encased brain was built by James Drummond, first duke of Perth, the base of which still exists *in situ* in the Institut Catholique de Paris.⁵¹

Much of James's remains, and the body itself, were lost during the political conflict of eighteenth-century France. Those buried at St Germain was rediscovered and reburied in 1824, and subsequently Queen Victoria paid for a memorial stone there. A brain was found by workmen in a lead case in floor of the Scots College in 1883, but is presumed lost in a disappearing trail since then.⁵² Other parts of the viscera that had gone to Saint-Omer, which according to Jan Graffius included the *praecordia* (the upper abdomen close to the heart) were moved to Bruges in 1762, and ended up in 1794 at Stonyhurst.⁵³ Since then, other parts said to be from James have appeared, including allegedly from his heart, encased in a bulbous silver heart shaped locket now at Chiddingstone Castle in Kent (along with a circular horn box reliquary containing reputed blood, hair and snippet of garter ribbon), that appears to have been bought by the collector Denys Eyre Bower for

⁴⁹ Bertelli, *The King's Body*.

⁵⁰ Weldon, *Chronological Notes*, 244-7.

⁵¹ Graffius, "Stuart Relics in the Stonyhurst Collections," 160-1; Martin, "Infinite Bodies," 170-3; Longueville Jones, "Sepulchral Inscriptions at the Scotch College, Paris," 35.

⁵² Corp, "The Last Years of James II, 1690-1701," 25.

⁵³ Graffius, "Stuart Relics," 147-8, 160.

Chiddingstone at auction or from a dealer.⁵⁴ There is also arm flesh at Ushaw College near Durham, and fragments of blood stained textiles at Ushaw, Downside Abbey in Somerset, and Sizergh Castle in Cumbria.⁵⁵ According to Neil Guthrie, other human remains, of which an association was claimed with James VII and II, surfaced on eBay in 2005, subsequently withdrawn since in contravention of that site's ethical policy; these were from a dealer asserting their provenance in the family of George, Baron Jeffreys of Wem (1648-89), of Bloody Assizes fame.⁵⁶ That such objects, making associative claims, are still in circulation, suggests the continuing potency or significance of their bodily connections.

This then is the historical context to the object with which this article began: a silver heart shaped reliquary locket, much simpler in design than that at Chiddingstone, and said to contain the *pericardium* of James's heart. The style of the locket is consistent with the late-seventeenth century, or early-eighteenth century, although it could have been made earlier. This engraving is also consistent with the period, so it is possible to suggest that it was made around the time that James VII and II died in 1701. That dating, along with the initials J.R. suggest that it was made for James and not his son Prince James Francis Edward. It is currently on display in the *Monarchy and Power* gallery, within the main *Kingdom of the Scots* galleries in NMS, alongside other such mementoes for Charles I and Charles II. A couple of these can be classed as reliquaries because they contain what is purportedly Charles I's hair or blood, but none of them are claimed to carry part of a human body, as James VII and II's heart-shaped locket was said to do.

Recent scientific research does in fact suggest that its contents are human and male. Following ethical guidelines for human remains research, a tiny, less than a millimetre, sample of the friable, desiccated material within the locket, was sent for historical DNA testing to Dr Thomas Booth and his colleagues in the Skoglund Ancient Genomics Laboratory. Despite the difficulties of extracting DNA from tissue as opposed to bone, some preliminary unofficial findings have been advanced. However, while this process can suggest similarities with known examples of DNA, whether it is human, and whether male or female, it cannot prove that it is from a specific person (although genealogical research might narrow the field). Historical DNA complicates this process further. Taking these caveats into account, the scanning so far tentatively suggests that the contents of the

⁵⁴ Private correspondence with the current curator at Chiddingstone. See the horn box on Walpole Antiques website, <https://www.walpoleantiques.co.uk/relic-king-james-ii>.

⁵⁵ Martin, "Infinite Bodies," 173, 175.

⁵⁶ Guthrie, *Material Culture of the Jacobites*, 208-9, n. 28, and private correspondence. My thanks to Dr Guthrie for his clarification of this.

locket are human, male, and consistent with north European heritage.⁵⁷ It therefore seems reasonable to suggest that it is possible for the remains to be related to James VII and II, in that they are probably human and male, and not from an animal. Further, given their preservation in a locket inscribed with his initials, it is perhaps unlikely that another person's remains would have been so carefully treated.

It is a locket that has clearly been highly treasured. The naively drawn heart, possibly added later, expresses the affection of the owner to the *James Rex* of the inscription. The heart shape of the locket itself is similarly evocative: not only does it explicitly declare affection, its shape and inscription invoke emotion, and provide a medium through which that affection can be expressed, both in private, or in sympathetic company. There are precedents for small silver lockets of heart-shape in the commemoration of Mary, Queen of Scots and other royal Stuarts, which are held in, for instance, the Scottish Catholic Heritage Collections Trust and NMS collections. In this case however, the heart-shape design and inscription might also indicate the nature of its contents. However, unlike that at Chiddingstone, the simplicity of NMS's locket's design, does not appear to have been made with display in mind. It feels a deeply intimate object, made to be worn perhaps in secret, or at least under clothing. Further, it bears the evidence of sustained human contact in its erosions and in the inexpert soldering to rectify what had been lost. This is an object that has been repeatedly touched, held, and caressed, with the body oils gradually eroding the metallic surface so much that multiple repairs were necessary (fig. 8).



Figures 8a, 8b: Microscope images of eroded surfaces of the James VII and II locket, early eighteenth century, 30 x 33 mm. NMS, X.2019.365 © National Museums Scotland.

⁵⁷ Skoglund lab: Ancient Genomics Laboratory at The Francis Crick Institute: <https://www.crick.ac.uk/research/labs/pontus-skoglund>. The team are conducting further tests to ensure the human DNA they have retrieved is genuinely ancient and not contamination from a more modern source. Booth et al., "Ethics of DNA research on human remains."

It is these signs of the human hands that have so frequently touched it, that give this reliquary locket its interpretative significance. This is an object whose owners have apparently thought important to touch. In doing so, they reiterated their loyalty and affection to the Stuart monarch, and in the performance of rubbing it (or merely the feeling of the locket lying secreted against their skin), recalled his memory. More than this, they were physically in proximity to him in the remains lying within.⁵⁸ The king was bodily present if departed from life. Even more compelling is the religious significance of haptic contact, contagiously translated through the locket's surface, with a physical remnant of a divinely ordained king. Given the belief in the therapeutic attributes of the royal touch, this locket held talismanic attributes. In touching the reliquary, the locket's owners were performing the belief they had in the relic's special powers.⁵⁹ These were reiterated through the religious iconography of the I.H.S and the arrows on the reverse recalling Christ's crucifixion. These symbols of martyrdom signalled James's own sacrifice of his earthly powers in upholding his Catholicism, and his notable piety in later life. This locket, redolent with pious symbolism, had a quasi-sacral status, drawing for efficacy on belief in the royal touch. Further, in the eyes and hands of the believer, that sacral status had been elevated when rumours circulated, soon after his death, about the miraculous powers of his body lying in St Edmunds.⁶⁰ Investigations were made in Paris for potential canonisation but never realised. Despite this, for those that believed, James's body was that of a saint. Holding a reliquary that contained a piece of him, put that person in touch with that saint, and their miraculous powers.

Simultaneously, in its combination of monarchical and religious iconography, and the semi-sacral nature of its contents, this locket communicated, manifested, and embodied the divinely willed nature of James's monarchical powers more generally. Through its symbolisms, it reiterated the Godly source of his kingship. Thus, every time its surface was rubbed or touched, the action symbolised and materialised a performance of allegiance to the absent king, and an affirmation of the legitimacy of the Stuart claims to the British throne. In doing so within the broader contexts and interactions of Jacobite associational and material culture, the locket also facilitated resistance amongst a wider group of people to Hanoverian rule.

⁵⁸ Pointon, *Brilliant Effects*, 294, 296, 298.

⁵⁹ Hooper, "A cross-cultural theory of relics," 190.

⁶⁰ Matthew Martin certainly thinks so of the sacral status of the other James II relics he covers. Martin, "Infinite Bodies," 173; Hooper, "A cross-cultural theory of relics," 175-6, 189, 191.

Conclusion

Over the years, pilgrims snipped away the black velvet surrounding James's coffin in the chapel of St Edmund's in Paris. The divine power that James had possessed as a living king, which had given his royal touch its therapeutic efficacy, lived on through his remains and the contact of anything in proximity to them. That principle of contagion holds then for the reliquary, the relic's container, and by extension, any substance in contact with that too. For those that touched the reliquary, or held a snippet of the funerary velvet, they were connecting to those miraculous sacral powers. Simultaneously, these relics facilitated affective connections to the person commemorated, their design and associations evoking and invoking that person's memory. Further, it was the very tangibility of the relic or reliquary that facilitated a sense of physical connection to a dead king. In the contact between the James VII and II locket and its wearers' skin, an ongoing connection was activated to the king, unleashing its political, religious and miraculously therapeutic attributes. Through its slowly-eroding case, the locket transmitted the continuing potency of an anointed king.

A reliquary containing a piece of the revered one might be thought surely to rank the highest in terms of efficacy. However, in the haptic transmission of miraculous powers, the locket's usage is not perhaps as potent as another example of a contact relic by Matthew Martin: a James VII and II Maundy coin from 1687 embedded in a later wine glass.⁶¹ Probably created to express loyalty to the Stuart cause, in incorporating this coin, the glass subsumed within its body the touch of the late king. If we carry the principle of contagion to its fullest extent, in this receptacle's mediation of James VII and II's presence through anything touching the glass, any liquid within became imbued with the royal touch. So, in a process resembling the transubstantiation of eucharist wine into the blood of Christ, those sipping the glass's contents were consuming the essence of the dead king, they were literally imbibing him. The sacramental connotations of drinking from this glass were intensified by the Maundy ceremony at which the coin was given, and Christ's suffering on the day that followed. Thus the preservation of the coin also promotes the "martyr-like" qualities of the man that gifted it, and reinforces the sacral qualities claimed of his remains, whether physical or transmitted through touch.

⁶¹ Martin, "Infinite Bodies," 176–7, 178, 179 (fig. 8.5); Goblet, English, glass & silver, c.1725, James VII & II Maundy threepence, 1687, NGV 1004-D4 © National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne.

So any ritual of toasting the king over the water with this glass was not simply a toast to the absent Stuart. In the haptic transmission of the royal presence through the embedded Maundy coin, the drinker was not only demonstrating loyalty to the Stuarts but incorporating James VII within their own body. A result, although it may not contain any physical remains, a contact relic like this Maundy coin offered the means for the corporeal consumption of the potency of the king's touch, of the king himself. That said, the glass was for ceremonial ritual, and not for everyday use.

In contrast, the possessor of the eminently portable reliquary locket was viscerally in daily contact with the dead king. Its usage says much about the continuing power of those objects to sustain affectionate and loyal memories to the Stuart princes when they were physically or mortally absent. However, what this article has shown further is the affective and haptic processes by which such objects triggered and sustained such allegiance, beyond their purely commemorative function. They stimulated emotion and memory certainly, but more than this, in their touchability they facilitated a tangible connection between the holder, the absent king, and ultimately the divine. Objects like these, carrying either the remains or touch of a king, signalled as they manifested the divine nature of his kingship and that of his Stuart successors. In doing so, they helped to perpetuate, as much as embody, the continuing Jacobite challenge to Hanoverian rule. The sheer performative viscosity of these objects and the miraculous powers they could activate would be something that the King Georges were unable ever to emulate or control.

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