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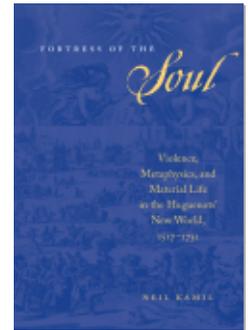
Fortress of the Soul

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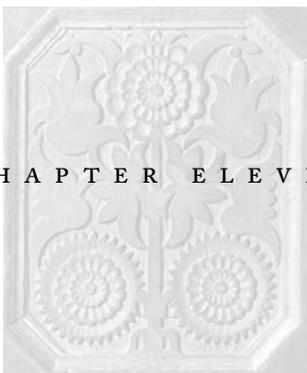


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The Geography of “Your Native Country”

Relocation of Spatial Identity
to the New World, 1628–1787

❧ Flowering Plasters ❧

The fall of La Rochelle reformed perceptions of human geography. Change paralleled the unprecedented diffusion of natural-philosophical books throughout a rapidly expanding Atlantic world. Following the events of 1628, the extent to which Winthrop adopted the rustic persona as part of his New World Paracelsian project may be measured by books he owned and used as laboratory and clinical texts. Paracelsus’s most influential books on alchemic medicine and natural philosophy have survived from Winthrop’s library: *Archidoxorum* (Basel, 1582); *Baderbuchlin* (Mulhouse, 1562); *Das Buch meteorum* (Cologne, 1566); *De secretis creationis* (Strasbourg, 1575); *Philosophiae magnae* (Basel, 1569); and *Volumen medicinae paramirum* (Strasbourg, 1575).¹ These volumes not only formed the core of Winthrop’s alchemical library; some of them were inscribed copies, which carried enormous talismanic significance.

In 1640, Winthrop acquired at least two of the Paracelsus titles from the library of John Dee (1527–1608), the pioneering author of the famous *Monas hieroglyphica* (Antwerp, 1564). Dee, an alchemist and mathematician, explored the mystical relation between geometry and Nature, and was the most revered first-generation English Paracelsian. Dee’s fame spread quickly throughout the learned culture of the Atlantic world, and after the master himself, he became the most celebrated hermetic figure of

the sixteenth century. These volumes of Paracelsus, along with seven other alchemical books and assorted manuscripts originally owned by John Dee, may have been given as presentation copies to Winthrop by Dee's alchemist son Arthur, as was Arthur's own *Fasciculus chemicus* (Paris, 1629). Such gifts were indicative of the exalted status Winthrop eventually attained among European colleagues as a New World natural philosopher and patron.

Winthrop's copies of the *Baderbuchlin* and *Das Buch meteorum* are each heavily annotated with drawings of laboratory apparatus and alchemical notes in John Dee's delicate hand, as Winthrop himself noted with unprecedented pride on the flyleaf of both volumes:

[*Baderbuchlin*]

This above written and the name on the top of the frontispice of tis booke & yt writing in the middle of the frotispice and the severall notes in the margent through the whole booke, was written by that famous philosopher and Chimist John Dee. wth his owne hand. this J: Dee was he yt wrote the philophicall treatise called Monas Hieroglyphica. also Propaidenmata Aphoristica also the learned preface before Euclides elements in English in folio. he was warden of Manchester. I have divers bookes yt were his wherein he hath written his name and many notes &c: for wch they are worthyly the more esteemed. John Winthrop. [Jr.] Jul: 25. 1640.

[*Das Buch meteorum*]

The writing on ye next leafe & ye next leafe & ye name on the top of the ffrontispice & ye marginall notes in ye booke were written by that famous and learned philosopher John Dee, warden of Manchester, wth his owne hand writing, this booke was his while he lived I have divers other bookes both printed & some manuscript yt came out of his study, in them he hath likewise written both his name & notes: for wch they are farre the more precious . . . Jul: 25: 1640.²

The mystical Dee was to become so important to Winthrop's identity as a Paracelsian and book collector that he transcribed the hermetic "monas" (see fig. 11.3) signifying philosophical mercury from the frontispiece of his copy of Dee's *Monas hieroglyphica* as his *ex libris*. When Howes sent Winthrop an important shipment of alchemical books, including Robert Fludd's *Opera* (Frankfurt, 1619–1629), in 1632, he marked the outside of the box with the monas symbol.³

Winthrop collected mystical books by Oswald Croll, Peter Severinus (Peder Sørensen), and Michael Sendivogius (Michał Sedziwój) to complement those of Paracelsus, which (especially if annotated by Dee "wth his owne hand writing") were the talismanic core of his alchemical library, around which other texts rotated like planets around the sun. These followers clarified Paracelsus's theoretical language and thera-

peutic recipes for both practical and political purposes. Winthrop's editions of Croll's *Basilica chymica* (Frankfurt, 1609); Severinus's *Idea medicinae philosophicae* (Basel, 1571); three volumes of Sendivogius, who thought deeply about the relationship between manual experience and the philosopher's stone, including *A New Light of Alchymie* (London, 1650), an important new English translation by John French of *Novum lumen chymicum* (the 1628 Geneva Latin edition of which Winthrop already had); and, finally, *Von dem Rechten wahren Philosophischen Steine* (Strasbourg, 1613) meant that his library contained the four basic primers on seventeenth-century Paracelsian medicine.⁴

The didactic and lexicological nature of these primers and the publishers' intention to respond to a demand in the early-to-mid-seventeenth-century book market for readable introductions to Paracelsus is made absolutely clear on the title page of French's London translation of Sendivogius:

A New Light of Alchymie: Taken out of the fountaine of Nature, and Manuall Experience. To which is added a Treatise of Sulphur . . . Also Nine Books Of the Nature of Things, Written by Paracelsus, viz. Of the Generations Growthes Conservations Life: Death Renewing Transmutation Separation Signatures of Naturall things. Also a Chymicall Dictionary explaining hard places and words met withall in the writings of Paracelsus, and other obscure Authors.⁵

These primers elucidated Paracelsus's perception that matter was interconnected by the same spirit that animated man. "Man could not separate himself in time and space from natural events," Owen Hannaway explains. "Nature was within him as well as without him, and all was encompassed within God. As such, man was inextricably caught up in the pulse of cosmic events stretching from the Divinity to the lowest of the elements." Thus, Hannaway concludes, "such knowledge was a unique gift of God granted to each individual according to his own lights." Croll's *Basilica chymica*, his only published book, argued for new standards of evidence for chemical and mineral therapy, so, "in this study, no man is further to be believed, than as everyone findeth by his own proper experience."⁶ Paracelsians believed that physicians could learn more from humble artisans, chirurgeons, midwives, and others taught by direct experience of natural materials than from the theories of schoolmen who trivialized manual labor as merely instrumental.

An exemplary instance of such a Paracelsian appropriation of folkloric cures occurs in an exchange of letters between April 11 and 18, 1628, in which John Winthrop Sr. and his physician son discuss alternative therapies for an illness afflicting the father. This exchange took place six months after John Winthrop Jr. had returned from the Île de Ré. The last letter was delivered to London just days before the younger Winthrop embarked on the Mediterranean journey that preceded his final decision to join his father in the colonies. Paracelsus used systemic constitutional and chemical thera-

pies, but he was not averse to topical treatment. In this instance, the experience of a skillful woman synthesized the Galenic approach and iatrochemistry. When Winthrop counseled his father to let the medicine “grow well,” he alerted him to follow the Paracelsian practice of “flowering”—which *In patientia suavitas* shows in a political and historical context—where pathology and therapy interacted sympathetically to achieve a cure.

The elder Winthrop was in residence as lord of Groton Manor in Suffolk, when he experienced a debilitating affliction of his right hand. Fearing gangrene, a local physician counseled surgery for the removal of “mortified fleshe.” This was a painful and risky alternative in the seventeenth century; the surgeon’s knife killed with greater efficiency than most diseases. When this treatment was proposed to the younger Winthrop in London, he became alarmed and wrote his father to recommend the use of a poultice instead of surgery. He called these applications “plaisters,” a noninvasive therapy learned during a recent visit to a “scilfull” woman living in London’s artisans’ quarter:

I am very sorry to heare that your hand continueth so ill, but I hope, by godes providence, you shall finde helpe by those thinges I have sent you, which I receyved from a woman that is very scilfull, and much sought unto for these thinges, she is sister to Mr. Waterhouse the linnen draper in Cheape side, by whose meanes, I was brought to her, she told me if you were at London she made noe doubt but to cure it quickly, but because you cannot come up she therefore gave me these plaisters to send to you, and said that if it were not Gangreend she would warrant them by godes helpe to do you present good, the use of them is as followeth Take the Yellow plaister, as much as will cover your sore finger all over to the next Joynt below the sore, and on the rest of your finger whereon this plaister does not ly, lay as much of the blake plaister as will cover it all over, this must be done twice a day in the morning, and evening till it beginneth to grow well, and then once a day. The other blacke plaister you must lay all over your hand, and that you must shift once in 2 or 3 dayes. You must not wash it nor lay any other thing to it. this will draw out the thorne if any be in and heale it both. she will take nothing for it, and therefore I doe the rather credit hir, for she doth it only for freindes etc. I pray therefore use it, *and leave of any other course of surgery*. I wish you were here at london where she might dresse it her selfe.⁷

Unfortunately, the hand had already “gangreend,” and by the time the younger Winthrop’s letter arrived in Groton with the package of “plaisters,” the surgeon had done his work. Winthrop’s father was forced to use his left hand to write his son four days later with news of the apparently successful operation, but he still labored to note tactfully that he applied the “scilfull” woman’s therapy as well:

My Good Sonne, As I have allwayes observed your lovinge and dutyfull respectes towards me, so must I needes also now, in that sence which you have of my affliction,

and that care and paynes you have taken to procure my ease; . . . I prayse God, my finger is well amended, my Surgeon did his parte well, and stayyde the gangreene and tooke out the mortified fleshe, but because your love and paines should not be loste, I have betaken my selfe wholly to your plaister, which the Surgeon likes well enough of . . . My yellow plaister wilbe spent this week, but of the blacke I have more than I shall use. My naile is almost shotte of, I feare. The short bone under my nayle is putrified, but my finger will not be the shorter for the losse of that bone.⁸

The elder Winthrop, like his son, was utterly dependent on his writing “hand” to extend an epistolary reach from the country into the “outside world” of London, through the careful maintenance of family, mercantile, religious, and courtly patronage networks. That is why he added a postscript to explain that he would soon visit London personally, because “this trouble of my hand hath so hindered me in the disposinge of my affaires as I must be forced to come downe.”⁹ The younger Winthrop was pleased at the news of improvement and the impending visit, but he replied warily, cautioning his father to take his advice seriously by using the “plaisters” exclusively without recourse to further surgery:

I receyved your letters, my self and all our freindes heere much rejoycing to heare from you so good newes of your hand, whereof your former letters put us in noe small feare. I have sent you some more plaisters. I told the Gentlewoman of the bone which you feared was putrified, she saith that her plaister will draw it out, if it be, and heale it both without any other thing. I hope you wilbe at London before you shall need any more.¹⁰

❧ A Frontier Library ❧

We hear of the importance that colonial observers attached to John Winthrop Jr.’s alchemical library on December 15, 1640, when he was just thirty-four years of age and already a magistrate of his father’s Massachusetts Bay Colony. The library was then in its formative stages—Winthrop had only just acquired Dee’s volumes of Paracelsus—but given the context, such an enormous assemblage of books was perceived as a sort of spectacle by colonial observers. According to a journal entry recorded on that date by Winthrop’s father (always fearful that his son’s scholarship might lead to apostasy), he “[had] many books in a chamber . . . there were above a thousand.” As historians of science have long noted, Winthrop’s library was already “the most significant and extensive . . . in colonial America.”¹¹ Winthrop’s was also among the most complete natural-philosophical libraries in private hands anywhere in the seventeenth-century Atlantic world.¹² When, in 1648, the Bermudan George Starkey—who would eventually forge a controversial career in both Boston and London as a self-proclaimed “Philosopher made by the fire, and a professor of that Medicine which is real and not

Histrionical”—needed to consult “chemical bookes” in one of Winthrop’s frequent absences, he wrote: “If your W[orshi]p would be pleased to remember the keyes of the cabinets wherein your bookes are, I should count it an extreame facility once to have the view of the chemical bookes wch I have not read a long time.”¹³ Ten years later, two “chemical bookes” written by Starkey himself—*Natures Explication and Helmont’s Vindication* (London, 1657); and *Pyrotechny Asserted and Illustrated* (London, 1658)—found a place in Winthrop’s cabinets.¹⁴

Winthrop also lent chemical books and gave advice and instruction to Jonathan Brewster, a trader in New England’s backcountry and the son of Plymouth Colony’s William Brewster Sr. Winthrop’s clear intention was to patronize the peripatetic Brewster’s research, while making him a sort of advance scout for potentially productive mineral sites in uncharted territories. Jonathan Brewster’s correspondence is important because it shows that his interest in backcountry commerce was intertwined with a career as an enthusiastic alchemist in fierce pursuit of the philosopher’s stone (“the red Elixer”) on the Connecticut frontier. Brewster’s deferential letters were appropriate to his status as a governor’s protégé. But Brewster was also writing to an acknowledged adept who held keys to a great scientific library that was indispensable to his work. Books from Winthrop’s library helped Brewster to achieve a sophistication in alchemical knowledge and laboratory practice that would have been judged competent even by London standards. The fictitious Nicolas Flamel’s *Hieroglyphical Figures* (London, 1624)—the first English translation of a French treatise published in Paris in 1612 by a native of Poitou named Arnaud de la Chevalerie (who borrowed the pseudonym “Flamel” from a fourteenth-century bookseller)—was particularly helpful.¹⁵ In returning Winthrop’s book, Brewster tells us much about the significance of reading words simultaneously with allegorical images in seventeenth-century colonial material life. Brewster reported that his interpretation of Flamel’s first hieroglyphical figure provided the key to understanding the “first ingredience.” He meant the *prima materia*, basic to the discovery of the philosopher’s stone. “I have sent your worshipp, by John Elderkin [the chair maker], the booke you sent,” Brewster wrote in 1656. Laboring to decode the hieroglyph, he continued, “I will write as clear as a light, as farr as I dare to, in fyding the first ingredience . . . the first figure in Fflamonell doth plainly resemble the first ingredience: what it is, & from whence it comes, & how gotten.”¹⁶ Surely, Elderkin, to whom figures 6.2 and 6.3 are attributed, was similarly influenced by the alchemical imagery in his master’s books.

Meanwhile, there is no mistaking the violent, “wilderness” context of Brewster’s enterprise. Indeed, his preoccupation with death in the midst of his experiments and the foundation of pure white materials in the process is remarkably similar to Palissy’s. In another letter to Winthrop in 1656, he wrote that the “red elixir” would achieve per-

fection only after the "white." Yet time—essential to the formula—was not on his side. Would he have the time to be patient?

it is 5 yeares, wanting two monthes, befor the red Elixer be perfected, and 4 years before the white, soe that my worke will be yet till December next, befor the coullers bee, & 5 monthes after before the white appeare; and after the white stands a working till perfected by the hott fyerey imbibitiones, one whole year after till September. I ffear I shall not live to see it finished, in regard partly of the Indianes, who I ffear will raise warres; as also I have a conceit that God sees me as not worthy of such a blessing, by reason of my manifold miscariadges.¹⁷

Fear of violent death or "miscariadge" before "the work" could "grow" and achieve "perfection" was as fundamental to the existential reality of New World alchemists practicing on the frontier as it was central to the narrative structure of transatlantic alchemic texts such as Palissy's. By 1658, Winthrop had resigned himself to the possibility of such a truncated outcome in his lifetime. After the failure of his experiments with Dr. Robert Child to produce viable amounts of "black lead" (or graphite) in the "Tantiusque" hills, sixty miles west of Boston—one of a series of commercial disappointments—Winthrop intimated to colleagues that he might not live to see the fruits of his labor. "It may be," he wrote with stoical resignation, that "God reserves such of his bounties to future generations."¹⁸

Early modern European alchemists often worried that processes that had not yet been written down might be forgotten and "the work" lost. Aside from the dangers of disease, such as the Great Plague in London in 1665, which killed George Starkey and 70,000 other citizens, many scientists experienced wars of religion so violent, enduring, and widespread as to make the bloody Indian wars of seventeenth-century America seem almost trivial by comparison. It is thus perhaps not surprising that in their sagas of heroic suffering, endurance, or even death in pursuit of the philosopher's stone, in addition to evidence of Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, we encounter Stoic ideas suggestive of Seneca, Plutarch, and Tacitus, who were read closely, sometimes in English translation, by Calvinists in the seventeenth century.

The Catholic world shared these interests. In 1555, André Thevet, a Franciscan friar who eventually served both Catherine de Médicis as chaplain and Charles IX as royal cosmographer, traveled to the new French colony in Brazil, where he stayed nearly three months. Thevet left shortly before the arrival of the famous Huguenot historian and natural philosopher Jean de Léry, whom he blamed (along with Léry's co-religionists), for the colony's religious schism and ultimate failure. Shortly after his return to France in 1556, Thevet published *Les Singularitez de la France antarctique, autrement nommée Amerique* (Paris, 1558), an ethnography of Brazilian Indians that

made his reputation as a world traveler in the epic tradition—a sort of French Ulysses come home to tell the tale. A year after Charles IX died, Thevet produced an influential *Cosmographie universelle* (Paris, 1575), which celebrated the metamorphoses and transformative powers of a panoply of heroic figures, many of whom were doubtless later adapted to the dramatic logic of alchemic narratives.¹⁹

It would in any case be a mistake to regard Brewster's alchemical experimentation on the dangerous colonial frontier as the work of an eccentric loner "in hot and sanguine pursuit of the grand elixer in his cabin on the Connecticut frontier with the Indians howling at his kitchen door."²⁰ Far from being rare, such rustic natural-philosophical activities may have been "nearly routine for early [colonizing] ventures."²¹

An intact locally fired ceramic "alembick" found buried near several well-preserved pieces of late medieval English armor—including a close helmet and visor—in a refuse pit on the Carter's Grove tract at Martin's Hundred, Virginia (fig. 11.1) suggests that Brewster's frontier experience was far from unique to the borderlands of New England. A seventeenth-century fortified "bawn" called Wolstenholme Towne once stood on this exposed site overlooking the James River. This tiny edifice was little more than a flimsy English toehold in the Chesapeake. It was cobbled together within a generation of the defeat of the Armada. The settlers used log and posthole construction, which, until as late as 1740, was ubiquitous in the region's domestic and military architecture.²² Ironically, given Wolstenholme Towne's fate at the hands of indigenous people, its cannon were trained toward the sea and potential Spanish adversaries. Yet the town's history was so short that the Spaniards had insufficient time even to notice its existence.

One of an alembic's functions was to serve as a condensation funnel or "head" of a tripartite alchemical still. The still and furnace were perhaps the most basic apparatus found in seventeenth-century laboratories.²³ It may be that Tidewater versions of Brewster's "red elixer" and medicinal substances such as "potable gold" were condensed in this artifact at Martin's Hundred in addition to alcohol. After all, were it not for the rare survival of his letters to Winthrop, Brewster would have labored in complete obscurity and we would know nothing of his experiments. Given what we have learned about the vast intellectual and commercial importance assigned to natural philosophy in virtually every early modern European imperial court that had interests in the Americas, future research may reveal that colonial expeditions to frontier outposts commonly included individuals like Brewster. Aided by an alchemical still and available Paracelsian books, they performed the dual functions of physician and alchemist.²⁴ Winthrop's natural-philosophical interests are well documented, as are those of, among many others, the Quaker diarist James Logan—who purchased a pewter "Limbeck" from the London-trained Philadelphia pewterer, brazier, and merchant Simon Edgell



FIGURE 11.1. Lead-glazed ceramic alembic, Martin's Hundred, Virginia, ca. 1620. H: 13 $\frac{1}{8}$ ", spout bore: $\frac{5}{16}$ ". Courtesy Colonial Williamsburg Foundation. The rim is turned up inside the alembic, forming a channel to carry the distilled liquid down to the narrow spout, now broken, whence it finally dripped out into the alchemist's distilling flask, or cucurbit. Archaeological excavation of the ca. 1607 site at Jamestown has unearthed just such a cucurbit, made of unglazed earthenware, imported from London. Illustrated in Beverly Straube, "European Ceramics in the New World: The Jamestown Example," in *Ceramics in America*, 2001, ed. Robert Hunter (Hanover, N.H.: University Press of New England, 2001), 49, fig. 4.

(1677–1742) in 1724—and the Pennsylvania German pietists Johannes Kelpius, who led a spiritual brotherhood called The Woman in the Wilderness, and Johann Conrad Beissel, who founded the Ephrata Cloister. These individuals, unlike Brewster, set up alchemical laboratories in the relative security of established settlements founded during the late seventeenth or early eighteenth centuries.²⁵ Though unclear to what ex-

tent, this archaeological evidence links the Saybrook and Martin's Hundred settlements.

Moreover, Sir John Wolstenholme (d. 1639), principal financial backer of Martin's Hundred, was also a backer of earlier voyages by Henry Hudson (1610) and William Baffin (1615), both of whom sailed to the New World in search of the Northwest Passage. This was an enterprise laden with alchemical associations from the start of Atlantic exploration, drawing Winthrop to the fortieth parallel and New Netherlands. Like Brewster, other, as yet unknown first-generation American alchemists must have felt threatened with violent death and feared the destruction (or appropriation) of their alchemical enterprises at the hands of Spanish or French competitors, or local Amerindians.

The date assigned the archaeological strata in which it was found suggests that the user of the Martin's Hundred alembic must have experienced the attack by Indians from the Powhatan Confederacy in March 1622 that destroyed Wolstenholme Towne except for two houses and "a peece of a church." He may have lost his life along with seventy-seven other colonists, or he may have been among the sixty-two survivors who retreated to the fort built at Jamestown in 1607. By 1622, James Fort had barely survived its own calamitous beginnings, and the refugees were lucky anyone at Jamestown was alive to receive them. After years of searching, archaeologists have discovered post-holes and decomposed traces of rough hewn logs that are the remnants of James Fort's original palisades and bastions. Further clues to the alchemical context of the Martin's Hundred alembic, a fragment of one of colonial America's earliest laboratories, may yet be unearthed there.²⁶

From the correspondence of Brewster and other rustic colonial natural philosophers, we can understand something of how Winthrop's vast network of scientific patronage influenced the circulation of books into and out of his library. Title-page dedications were an important aspect of this practice. The circulation of books to facilitate patronage was a strategy Winthrop shared with many seventeenth-century European collectors. These included Winthrop's Catholic correspondent Sir Kenelm Digby (1602–65), his would-be patron during the 1650s, whose famous libraries in London and Paris functioned as design studios and staging areas for gifts. The use of books in this fashion was therefore entwined with portability; books were among the most "mobile," widely diffused artifacts of the early modern era. It was Winthrop's habit as New England's most influential and "princely" natural philosopher to lend or make presents of alchemical books that were considered indispensable to the replication of certain seventeenth-century laboratory practices, thus extending his network to the periphery of New England and solidifying his connections with alchemical clients exploring the frontier. The borderlands of southern New England drew his attention after 1635, when the Saybrook project with its laboratory and manufacturing complex

got under way. Simultaneously, European clients and patrons in the metropole, including Howes and Digby, attempted to do the same with Winthrop. In the process, Winthrop played the role of "adept," extending his identity through Dee's "monas" bookmark, to distant places—backcountry laboratories he would never have found time to visit (or perhaps have dared risk going to) in person. When books were returned with appropriate letters of gratitude after the completion of experiments in which they were used, he might also expect—as in Brewster's case—a report on a promising client's progress. Patronage provides a functional explanation for such an ambitious alchemical library in colonial America, yet this tells only part of the story. Above all, Winthrop used his library personally in his extensive laboratory experiments and astronomical observations and in preparing medicinal therapies.

Winthrop's informed reading in natural philosophy may be found everywhere in the letters, but particularly in the constant stream of correspondence with Howes—his primary supplier of books before 1650—about the relative merits of new titles currently available in London or at the Frankfurt book market. If friends, agents, or clients passed by way of Frankfurt, they offered to courier books for their esteemed patron. In 1629, for example, while Winthrop was visiting Venice during his lengthy tour of the Mediterranean, he received a letter from Judah Throckmorton informing him that "the stay wee have at Franckfourt (be it more, or lesse) I will employ to finde your booke."²⁷ The value of a book's contents—and hence its suitability for accession to the library—was hotly (and jealously) contested. In 1650, Dr. Child wrote Winthrop to dismiss as a mere gloss a book by the influential Belgian medical writer J. B. van Helmont. Writing that "though they conteyne many good things, yet they fall very short of the expectation which the world had of him, and truly he hath extracted most out of Paracelsus He bein[g] as easy to be understood as this man," Child assumed a familiarity with the complete works of Paracelsus and debates in London about plainness. His poor assessment of van Helmont's *Obscura medica* (Cologne, 1644) failed to dissuade Winthrop from adding this important seventeenth-century defense of Paracelsus to his library, however.²⁸

❧ "Gov. Winthrops Ring" ❧

Winthrop's role as patron, librarian, and intermediary for seventeenth-century colonial alchemists and natural philosophers in his network of correspondence was also operative for adepts of "future generations." Above all the Reverend Dr. Ezra Stiles, who showed that he too "hath extracted most out of Paracelsus." During his thirty-year tenure as Yale's president and primary professor of American ecclesiastical history, Dr. Stiles (1727–95) also taught courses in a variety of related subjects, ranging from the practice of medicine and natural philosophy to law. It was in his double role

as ecclesiastical historian and natural philosopher that Stiles recorded his scientific encounter with minerals extracted from the legendary “Gov. Winthrop’s Ring.” In his *Literary Diary*, buried inside a routine inventory of pedagogy and laboratory experiment for May 31, 1787, Stiles recalled:

I gave my Lect[ure] on Ecc[lesiastical] Hist[or]y, viz. [the] beginning [of] the American Churches . . . & also Mr. Erkelens . . . shewed me the Process for reducing Cobalt to Smalt, so that one Ton of Cobalt, with pulverized Flints & Potash will produce Eighteen Tons of Smalt, worth 2/ ster[ling] p[er] pound. The Mountain, called Gov. Winthrop’s Ring, abounds with it, & Mr. Erkelens owns it, about 1800 acres. He is going to carry Twenty Tons [of smalt] to China . . . with w[hich] is made the beautiful Blue on china Ware.²⁹

Since first mined for ore in the seventeenth century, “Gov. Winthrop’s Ring,” in East Haddam, Connecticut, had been associated with folk legends of the younger Winthrop’s mystical practices. In the summer of 1787, Stiles invited Erkelens, a merchant, mariner, and “projector,” to his laboratory in New Haven. Erkelens’s visit prompted reflection in Stiles’s diary entry the next day on the seventeenth-century derivation of the place-name “Gov. Winthrop’s Ring.”³⁰ The cobalt experiments at Yale triggered Stiles’s memory of a conversation with Governor Jonathan Trumbull, his fellow local historian of colonial Connecticut, in which oral and written history merged with hermetic legend, local folklore, and mythology. Thus, an otherwise unremembered “Mountain in the N.W. corner of East Haddam,” on the Connecticut River just north of Long Island Sound, was associated with Winthrop, whom Stiles called “an Adept.” Stiles understood adepts to be a worthy seekers selected by God to possess the alchemical philosopher’s stone for the transmutation of metals. The Yale cobalt experiments allowed Stiles to harness himself to Winthrop’s rustic natural philosophy, and hence to an elite international community of alchemists, with whom the former colonial governor remained “intimately” connected over the course of his lifetime.³¹

Gov. Trumbull has often told me that this was the place to which Gov. Winthrop of N[ew] Lond[on] used to resort with his servant; and after spend[ing] three Weeks in the Woods of this Mountain in roast[ing] Ores & assaying Metals & casting gold Rings, he used to return home to N[ew] Lond[on] with plenty of Gold. Hence this is called the Gov. Winthrop’s Ring to this day. Gov. Winthrop was an Adept, in intimate Correspond[ence] with Sir Knelm Digby and [the] first chemical & philosophical Characters of the last Century.³²

As late as 1787, it was thus common knowledge that Winthrop had by the time of his death achieved the lofty status of adept and possessor of the stone. This status was famously poeticized in an elegy by the Harvard-educated schoolmaster, physician, and

alchemist Benjamin Tompson entitled: "A FUNERAL TRIBUTE To the Honourable Dust of that most Charitable Christian, Unbiased politician and Unimitable Pyrotechnist John Winthrope, ESQ: A Member of the Royal Society, & Governor of Conecticut Colony in New England Who expired in his Countreys Service, April 6th, 1676."³³ Tompson's elegy read, in part:

/ . . . Great Winthrope Name Shall never be forgotten / . . . Projections various by fire he made / Where Nature had her common Treasure laid. / Some thought the tincture Philosophick lay / Hatcht by the Mineral Sun in Winthrope way, / And clear it shines to me he had a Stone / Grav'd with his Name which he could read alone / . . . His common Acts with brightest lustre shown, / . . . But in Apollo's Art he was alone. / . . . Sometimes his wary steps, but wandering too, / Would carry him the Chrystal Mountains to, / Where Nature locks her Gems, each costly spark / Mocking the Stars, spher'd in their Cloisters dark.

Tompson thus provided an early textual source for the legend of "Gov. Winthrope's Ring," but why does the famous Catholic Kenelm Digby warrant favorable mention by the faithful "old Puritan" Dr. Stiles? To elucidate the transatlantic political, cultural, and scientific context that inspired "intimate correspondence" between Digby and Winthrop, one must revisit Stiles's intense reenactment of the seventeenth-century governor's alchemical experience at "Gov. Winthrope's Ring." How can Stiles's retrospective absorption into a moment of personal experience of seventeenth-century metallurgical experimentation—indeed his identification with this rustic moment and its "wandering" protagonist—be better understood in the context of his gloss on colonial America's place in the Atlantic world and his own late-eighteenth-century natural-philosophical pilgrimage?

Consider that for Stiles, the significance of the experimental cobalt lay not merely in the specific natural phenomena manifested by the thing itself but its shared material history with the adept. During the 1640s, Winthrop experimented with cobalt extracted from his property in East Haddam to exploit its potential as a mineral dye to compete with indigo, just as Erkelens and Stiles would do 150 years later. To reveal again in Stiles's laboratory the hidden potential of this "lowly element," unearthed from inside Winthrop's hermetic "mountain," which "abounds with it," was also to stand with a heroic ancestor among sacred stones in the philosophical "ring." It was no coincidence that Stiles's interest in Winthrop grew after 1758. In a philosophical quarrel reminiscent of the great English debates of the 1640s and 1650s, Stiles rejected his early association with the "enlightenment" principles of deism, mechanistic thought, and "rational" religion and reached back beyond the revivalism of New England's Great Awakening to embrace the seventeenth-century millennial cosmology of the "old" English Calvinists.³⁴ "I am in principle," he wrote in 1770, "with the good old Puri-

tans.” The totality of Stiles’s intellectual reversal and embrace of filial pietism caused him to identify so closely with seventeenth-century predecessors that by the late 1760s, he had virtually reinvented himself as an “old Puritan.”³⁵

Stiles felt he transcended the early eighteenth-century New Light revivalism of Jonathan Edwards (though Edwards’s natural philosophy was not far removed from his own) and the later New Divinity of Samuel Hopkins and stood behind “those evangelical Doctrines for which their learned and pious Ancestors were eminent.” Those ancestors included Edwards’s grandfather Solomon Stoddard, Thomas Hooker, and such “old” English Puritans as William Perkins, the Elizabethan minister and Cambridge University theologian who mentored many of New England’s first-generation divines.³⁶ In 1775, Stiles wrote Edward Wigglesworth, Harvard’s professor of divinity, that modern evangelical models were insufficient to retrieve seventeenth-century doctrines of grace, which had been corrupted by Arminianism:

I fear also a loss of the Evangelical Doctrines and the Doctrines of Grace as held by the good Old Puritans and by our Ancestors. They have evanished from the Church of England since Archbishop Laud, they are evanishing apace from the churches of Scotland and even Holland, and from the Dissenters in England . . . be instrumental, in your Day, of making such a Sett of Ministers as those made by the Tuition of that eminent Man of God Mr. Perkins of Cambridge.³⁷

“The Writings of that excellent Divine are worthy [of] the Attention of every Student in Divinity, not for any Systematic order in them,” Stiles argued, “but for the Perspicuity and Justness of his theological Principles.”³⁸ Stiles also knew that Perkins “theological principles” elucidated doctrines of grace and justification that extended well beyond the pulpit into “physick” and the scientific study of the natural world and material life of “our ancestors.” It was in the natural world that the key would be found to unlocking the secrets of a lost past. The writings of Perkins, along with those of a few other early seventeenth-century English Calvinists, such as John Preston and William Ames, played a crucial role in the mediation of abstract theological theory and Protestant scientific practice in everyday life on both sides of the Atlantic.³⁹ David D. Hall has demonstrated how deeply Perkins’s “Old Puritan” views on divine will, providential experience, and the free working of the Holy Spirit influenced popular cultural practice in New England during the 1640s. This was especially true of theological debates on the reform of almanacs. Perkins wished to expunge representations of agency at the expense of spirituality and rituals asserting ways of dying deemed inappropriate for the godly. It is not until the late 1670s, or the second generation of settlement, that Hall sees signs of Perkins’s influence on the wane.⁴⁰ Stiles thus yoked his program to Perkins when he inveighed against the Arminianism that had infected

the Church of England "since Archbishop Laud." Human reason could never achieve philosophical unity; "God's works or his word . . . must be poured down upon the human intellect, as an emanation into the soul directly from God himself."⁴¹

Long before the Yale cobalt experiments, Stiles already provided an alternative for alienated colleagues who "lamented" the degree to which his scholarship embraced the religious enthusiasm "of our ancestors," at the expense of modern reason. When his mystical *Discourse on Saving Knowledge* was published in 1770, Stiles acknowledged in print that man was utterly helpless to understand "God's works" in the natural world without divine agency in the process. God alone could "raise divine Illuminations, and spiritual influences, to a degree of irresistibility" in human experience. Stiles's enthusiasm followed closely in the footsteps of Ficino, Paracelsus, Palissy, Croll, and especially van Helmont.⁴²

Among the most influential "Helmontians" was George Starkey, Winthrop's close friend and colleague in both Europe and America. William N. Newman has proven that Starkey secretly constructed an elaborate fictional narrative and false identity around his "close friend," alter ego, and pseudonym, the charismatic, world-renowned adept and *philosophus Americanus* ("American philosopher"), "Eirenaeus Philalethes" ("Peaceful Lover of Truth").⁴³ Winthrop's reputation as an adept, his friendship with Starkey, and his location in New England caused many to identify Winthrop himself as Philalethes. This was a logical hypothesis in the 1650s. There can be no doubt from surviving correspondence that Winthrop and Starkey influenced each other directly, perhaps to the point where their laboratory practices in pursuit of the philosopher's stone ran in parallel courses. But, as Newman has also shown, it was Starkey in particular—often writing in the fictional guise of Philalethes—who profoundly affected the curriculum in chemistry at Harvard in the seventeenth century. And it was Starkey who, in the 1650s, translated van Helmont in ways that resonate powerfully with the spiritualist epistemology of Stiles's discourse from 1770:

But I beleeve that the Almighty alone, is the only way, truth, life, & light, both of things living and al things else, not Reason. And therefore it behoves our mind to be intellectual, not rational, if it hold forth the immediate Image of God. This Paradox wil be very necessary to be unfolded, before wee enter upon the search of al things knowable, *but most Especially of such things which are Adepta.*⁴⁴

In this sense, Stiles reasserts that worship was the primary function of old Christian adepts such as Winthrop. "The study of nature led to God," Hillel Schwartz writes; "by means of curiosity, diligence, logic and faith, the fortunate virtuoso ascended the spheres of religious illumination."⁴⁵ Stiles's soulish reading of the seventeenth-century past in terms of the Paracelsian light of Nature supports revisionist scholarship on

pietism in early New England. Despite the dramatic stance against religious enthusiasm taken by its Calvinist leadership, many orthodoxies contested for spiritual space in seventeenth-century Massachusetts.⁴⁶

For revisionists, New England—especially in places distant from Boston, on the Massachusetts “near frontier”—experienced diverse patterns of religiosity similar to parts of England and most of the post-Reformation Atlantic world. Thus it would tend, in places, to look like the middle colonies.⁴⁷ The cultivation of a fluid, nonspecific experimental cultural setting was as crucial to Winthrop’s personal experience as settling on the coast of Long Island Sound and the fortieth parallel was to his natural-philosophical and economic agenda.⁴⁸ Stiles’s preoccupation with local history in and around New Haven suggests that he knew that his personal embrace of “seventeenth-century” religious enthusiasm at Yale in the 1760s was a necessary precondition to forging links between his natural philosophy and the beginnings of the Paracelsian tradition in the southern New England borderlands.

But Stiles’s archaeological interest in Winthrop had already extended beyond the heady experience of mystical communion with the first American adept through reenactments of legendary seventeenth-century experiments. Stiles wanted the words of his ancestor heard at the same time that he touched, handled, and founded ores that had been disinterred from Winthrop’s ring and “roasted and assayed” in Winthrop’s laboratory. Like a sixteenth-century humanist questing for power from knowledge recovered in ancient texts, Stiles sought to recover and transcribe vast sections of early Winthrop papers and manuscripts. These primordial texts from New England’s “ancients” began with a cache of “old” English documents from the year 1498. Mainly, however, they contained seventeenth-century archives that had passed through the hands of Adam Winthrop (1548–1623) of Groton, England, his son, John Winthrop of Groton and Boston, and his grandson, John Winthrop Jr. The Winthrop archives remained mostly intact and were passed down through the family until 1767, when Stiles borrowed the volumes directly from John Still Winthrop, Winthrop the Younger’s great grandson. After they had been in his possession for four years, Stiles began his laborious transcription of the archives in January 1771. Stiles’s will indicates that when this task was completed, he had filled one manuscript volume in quarto with “Extracts fr[om] Mss of Gov. Winthrop and others” and a second quarto volume bound with “Extracts from John Winthrop’s MS History of New England.”⁴⁹ When Stiles finally returned the borrowed documents to John Still Winthrop, they were lent to Governor Jonathan Trumbull. Often the *Literary Diary* notes that Trumbull shared Stiles’s fascination with the younger Winthrop, the predecessor Trumbull revered most as the first governor of the newly chartered Connecticut Colony.⁵⁰

The alchemical foundation of Stiles’s medical practice was inspired by passionate spiritual engagement with the natural philosophy of his ancestors. Thus, Stiles’s copi-

ous extracts from the Winthrop archives were also an archaeology of what for him represented "prelapsarian" sacred texts. For Stiles, the Winthrop archives documented Puritan seventeenth-century hermetic experience with "original" New World materials in their purest form, free from subsequent historical corruption. The same conceptual framework must also have been operative when Stiles undertook to master Hebrew, which Winthrop also mastered. Such linguistic skills had been common among seventeenth-century ancestors, who had read the Old Testament in Hebrew, and they were needed to facilitate an intensive analysis of the "antient . . . pure Knowledge" of the Kabbala in what was perceived to be its original language.

Among alchemists, the Kabbala was the traditional first step in decoding mystical and prophetic meanings in the Old and New Testaments, and through inspired biblical exegesis that transcended the corruption of time, in nature as well. By the mid seventeenth century, "the Kabbala . . . had burrowed deep into English religious thought."⁵¹ In Stiles's day, thanks to the Kabbalistic inquiries of numerous transatlantic millennial sects including the French Prophets, Philadelphians, and Behmenists (followers of Jakob Böhme), the book of Revelation was perceived as a vast Kabbalistic code. It was thought that Jewish mystical code "ran through the entire New Testament," and French *millenarians* living in eighteenth-century London contended that over "1500 passages [were] incapable of being understood without knowledge of the Kabbala."⁵² In a letter of 1773 to a Jewish talmudic and Old Testament scholar from Rhode Island who assisted with his Hebraic studies, Stiles claimed in "obscure" metaphorical prose to have distilled mystical knowledge from this ur-hermetic text. Several standard alchemic tropes were used to connote purification as a process of separation from historical dross:

Much of this antient Knowledge is gone to ruin, being swallowed up and polluted in other streams that have issued forth from corrupt fountains. But as Gold mixt with reprobate Silver, or the Iron in the Image of Nebuchadnezzar which mixeth indeed but will not unite and cleave to the Clay; so a great deal of this pure Knowledge may be preserved among the Traditions and in the Caballa of the Nations.⁵³

Mystical readings of the Old and New Testaments—and, as we have seen, the story of Nebuchadnezzar's Dream (Dan. 4:4–27) in particular—were fundamental to the artisanal Paracelsian material-holiness synthesis as it was put into practice by Palissy, Winthrop, and others. The importance to Huguenot artisans of the narrative of Nebuchadnezzar's Dream is clear from the ways in which Bernard Palissy interpreted this story, using both written texts and material artifacts, to elucidate the material history of an aging earth. It is noteworthy that Stiles, in the role of Neoplatonic alchemist, reactivated this story in a Kabbalistic context. Together with such "antient" hermetic texts, Winthrop's seventeenth-century laboratory notes and alchemical archives were

transcribed by Stiles as unimpeachable ancestral authorities. By harnessing his experience to the replication of these aspects of Winthrop's laboratory practice taken from oral history or archives in the adept's own hand—and by working to complete certain unfinished Winthrop projects—Stiles thought himself able to cobble together an “antient,” or uncorrupted, natural-philosophical identity. Then he would attract “emanation[s] into the soul directly from God himself;” which, in hermeneutic fashion, would have circled back to authenticate his personal exegesis of Winthrop's writings.

Stiles's concern with America's ancient texts and minerals was a conduit to a deep well of universal soulish experience, capable of putting him in mystical contact with Winthrop himself. In so doing, we return to his “intimate” interest in Sir Kenelm Digby's natural-philosophical relationship with the old Connecticut adept during the seventeenth century.

Stiles's mystical thought experiments at Yale were the most idiosyncratic of his many personal initiatives in cosmology. Stiles amplified the occult astronomy of John Dee and Robert Fludd, because this was key to Winthrop's identity as a physician-chemist and bibliophile. Fludd diagrammed elegant proportional relationships between microcosm and macrocosm, a well-known project in Neoplatonic cosmology, in which he developed the harmonic theory of the heavens in aesthetic as well as mathematical directions.⁵⁴ But following Dee, Stiles calculated the rate at which the universe expanded, something he understood to occur each time a new soul was created. Stiles's astronomical thesis was a proportionally elegant synthesis of animate materialism. Stiles perceived the perpetually expanding material boundaries of the universe as symbiotic in the spiritual sense, and so cosmological expansion was paralleled in precise order by a proportionally exact soulish expansion. Reading Paracelsian Neoplatonism, combined with the “face-to-face” archaeology of his Winthrop archival research, fieldwork, and laboratory practice, Stiles theorized that even as souls never die, they retain their names and historical identities. Familiar souls are eternally knowable in the Platonic consciousness of the dead, and also by living adepts with access to what Digby called the “Universal Spirit.” “When we have left these Regions of incarnate spirits,” Stiles claimed with anticipation, “and [have] entered into the intellectual World or Abodes of unbodied Minds—not only [will we] renew our Acquaintance with departed Friends, but personally converse with Moses, Isaiah, Paul, Plato, Cicero, Newton, Locke, and . . . with exalted Minds assembled from all parts of the moral Dominions of Jehovah.”⁵⁵

Nowhere is this fusion of unbodied minds in the Neoplatonic universal spirit better represented than in the portrait of Ezra Stiles painted in 1771 by Samuel King (1749–1818) (fig. 11.2).⁵⁶ Stiles is portrayed in clerical garb, as both a scholar of ecclesiastical history and Paracelsian physician-chemist—in his own words, an “Effig[y] in a Green Elbow Chair.” Behind him, on the shelves of his library, volumes from diverse



FIGURE 11.2. Samuel King (1749–1819), *Portrait of Ezra Stiles*, Newport, Rhode Island, 1771. H: 34", W: 28". Oil on canvas. Courtesy Yale University Art Gallery, bequest of Dr. Charles Jenkins Foote, B.A. 1883, M.D. 1890. This portrait was painted while Stiles was minister of the Second Congregational Church in Newport, Rhode Island, where he remained until joining Yale in 1778. Books visible on the top shelf of Stiles's library include Newton's *Principia* next to Plato, the Cambridge Platonist Ralph Cudworth's *Intellectual System*, and works by the "old" Puritan divines Isaac Watts and Cotton Mather. Aristotle is conspicuous by his absence. The second shelf groups together the Roman historian Livy (presumably his *Historia romanae*) and the *Historia ecclesiae* of Eusebius of Caesarea. Jean-Baptiste du Halde's *History of China* confirms Stiles's recent interest

in the material science of such China trade commodities as cobalt blue on Chinese export porcelain, as well as the older quest for a Northwest Passage, while the Hebrew text from the Talmud—with the names of the early Jewish philosophers Abraham ibn Ezra, Solomon ben Isaac, and Maimonides inscribed on its spine in Hebrew and Aramaic—illustrated commitment to the languages of the Old Testament. The second shelf shows that the old Jewish, pagan, Christian, and Asian authors were now “Happy in God,” commingling in a universal soul—and in the Neoplatonic Stiles's mind—despite their differences, as represented by the orb of light with *Yahweh* written in Hebrew at center, for Stiles, an “Emblem of the Universe or intellectual world” (David L. Barquist, *Myer Myers: Jewish Silversmith in Colonial New York* [New Haven: Yale University Press, 2001], 232–33). The diagram on the column shows the elliptical course of a comet intersecting with earth's orbit, a reminder—like Plato's pride of place next to Newton—that God's intervention in human affairs belies vulgar misunderstandings of mechanistic philosophy.

minds, religions, and disciplines converge. Newton's *Principia* and Plato's *Works* sit together on the top shelf, at the upper left, conjoining the revealed and the hidden in Nature. Also pictured are the works of Livy, the *Ecclesiastical History* of Eusebius of Caesarea, books by Cotton Mather and Isaac Watts, and the Jesuit J.-B. du Halde's *History of China*. Volumes in Hebrew (including “one inscribed Talmud B., Aben Ezra, Rabbi Selomoh Jarchi in Hebrew letters, and a little below R. Moses Ben Maimon Moreh Nevochem”) and Arabic, as well as great histories of East and West, are shelved together. “By these I denote my Taste for History,” Stiles wrote in his diary entry for August 1, 1771. “Especially of the Roman Empire, & of the Ch[urc]h in the 3 first Cen-

turies & at the Reformation—the State of China as contain[ing] a systematical View of an antient p[eo]ple for 4000 years, being one Third or more of the human Race.” He combined natural philosophy and primitive theology “on the other shelf [in] Newton’s principia, Plato, Watts, Doddridge, [and] Cudworth’s Intellectual System; & also the New Engl[an]d primæval Divines Hooker, Chauncy, Mather, Cotton.”⁵⁷

Stiles’s mastery of mystical powers—represented by the orb of atomized light particles that floats above his head to the right, and the linked circles on the column that diagram the conjunction of macrocosm and microcosm—show that death was not necessary to unite Stiles with the authors in his library. With one hand over his heart (where the sacred mysteries are hidden in the conduit of the soul), “in a Teaching Attitude,” and the other “holding a preaching Bible” (from which he wishes to decode a hidden unity of knowledge), Stiles communes with his authors and his students through the transit of astral energy in the form of atoms that descend and then reascend from the orb of the universal spirit, as instructed in the Fludd cosmologies. The orb of light reveals the name “Yahwah” in large Hebrew text at the center; and barely visible in English is the unifying phrase, “all Happy in God,” emanating out with the astral light of the soul toward the circle’s periphery, called down into Stiles’s heart from the macrocosm into the microcosm. Did Stiles or King intend that every atom of light emanating from God embody one of the “departed friends” or “exalted minds”? “At my Right hand stands a Pillar,” Stiles wrote, in an extensive elucidation of “these Emblems” painted by King to his specifications, as they “are more descriptive of my Mind, than the Effigies of my Face”:

On the Shaft is one Circle and one Trajectory around a solar point, as an emblem of the Newtonian or Pythagorean System of the Sun & Planets & Comets. It is pythag, so far as respects the Sun & revolvs Planets: it is newtonian so far as it respects the Comets moving in parabolic Trajectories, or long Ellipses whose Vertexes are nigh a parab. Curve. At the Top of the visible part of the Pillar & on the side of the Wall, is an Emblem of the Universe or intellectual World. It is as it were one sheet of Omniscience. In a central Glory is the name [Jehovah] surrounded with white Spots on a Field of azure, from each Spot ascend three hair Lines denoting the Tendencies of Minds to Diety & Communion with the Trinity in the divine Light: these Spots denote [*Innocency*,] a Spirit, a World, Clusters or Systems of Worlds, & their Tendencies to the eternal central yet universal omnipresent Light. This world is represented by a Cluster of Minds whose central Tendencies are turned off from Gd to Earth, self & created good—and also in a state of Redemption. Intervening is the Crucifixion of Christ between two Thieves—both Tendencies going off, but one turned back to the Light. Denotes also a converted & an unconverted Man. . . .

. . . At a little Distance on the Left hand is a black Spot—the Receptacle of fallen An-

gels & the finally wicked. And as we know only of two Worlds (out of infinite Myriads) that have revolted; so this is big eno' to contain all these if none were saved. And the collection of moral Evil & Misery, in comparison with the moral Perfection & Happiness of the immense Universe, is but a small Spot & as nothing in proportion to the [whole]. So that under this small minutesimal Exception of the Misery of all the fallen Angels & even most of the Posterity of Adam, when we consider what is held forth in the Description of Coloss, i. 16. of Principalities, Dominions &c innumerable grand assemblages of Intelligences, we may say ALL HAPPY IN GOD.⁵⁸

As Edward Howes wrote Winthrop after consulting with a "misticall" doctor in London, the unification of human knowledge would "come with such a light, that it will make a harmonie among all your authors, causing them sweetly to agree, and put you forever out of doubt and question."⁵⁹ Like Connecticut's original adept, Stiles practiced rustic philosophy in an invisible college thousands of miles from the center of science at the Royal Society in London, in the presence of Winthrop's words and things and the other exalted minds in his library.

❧ A New Model Catholic and the Prodigal's Return to La Rochelle ❧

Thus, it was partly because he associated himself with Kenelm Digby's well-known belief in the ability of the "Universal Spirit" to reconcile differences and obliterate the natural boundaries of time and space that Ezra Stiles privileged the Catholic Digby's "intimate correspondence" with Winthrop above other "friends" and placed him among the "first chemical & philosophical Characters of the last Century." The other impetus was Stiles's knowledge of a pivotal letter from Digby to Winthrop, written in 1655.

Winthrop's transatlantic community of "friends" was dominated by Protestants—albeit many were independents and sectarians—and most were Reform-minded scientists whose libraries and laboratory methods were similar to his own. Most followed Francis Bacon's interpretation of Paracelsus, which found voice in Bacon's skepticism and his firm belief in the primacy of evidence obtained by experiment alone. Webster argued that Bacon's experimentalist ideology was a natural outgrowth of the uncertainty of Calvinist predestinate theology and science, which appropriated Paracelsian thought in an effort to overturn the scholastic canon in natural philosophy during the Civil War and the interregnum. While Webster is revised to broaden his analysis beyond "Puritan" science to include all early modern Protestant natural philosophy, Stiles's anointment of Sir Kenelm Digby as one of seventeenth-century Europe's "first chemical & philosophical Characters" begs for further inquiry.

Stiles, a Calvinist minister with strong psychological and cultural ties to the Re-

formation, declared openly that Rome's intellectual and religious legacy was corrupt. However, it is possible to argue, with Webster, that Digby's status should be raised from "proselytizing Catholic" to "rehabilitated Catholic." The very ambiguity of Stiles's assertion of Digby's role as "intimate correspondent" suggests an entry into Winthrop's conception of his own religious and scientific identity. This opening arranges itself in the few traces that remain of Winthrop's complex transatlantic relationship with Digby and the risky context within which Sir Kenelm was forced to operate during the 1650s.⁶⁰

Despite Stiles's enthusiasm about Digby's "chemical & philosophical" career, it would be a gross exaggeration to claim that the latter made significant contributions to seventeenth-century science. It *is* fair to say, however, that Digby was a successful courtier under the early Stuarts and the Protectorate, and that at least some of his success may be attributed to his transatlantic connections and the practice of natural philosophy. Sir Kenelm attended Charles I as "gentleman of the bedchamber" and was a member of the king's council. Like his father, James I, and indeed most seventeenth-century European monarchs, Charles demonstrated a passionate interest in alchemy. According to the diarist John Evelyn, natural philosophy helped Digby gain credibility and status at court, especially after "he had fixed [mercury]" for the young king.⁶¹ And, unlikely as it may seem, Sir Kenelm also advanced for a time under Oliver Cromwell (when he was known as the Lord Protector's "Catholic favorite"). In seventeenth-century England, it would appear that noble bloodlines, court politics, and favorable patronage could forge a notable figure in transatlantic natural-philosophical circles even out of a relatively minor, though famously theatrical, Catholic philosopher.

Digby is known to specialists in seventeenth-century English literature as Ben Jonson's literary executor and the author of commentaries on Sir Thomas Browne's *Religio Medici* (1642) and Spenser's *The Faerie Queene* (1609), and much can be learned about the trajectory of his courtly career from his two greatest personal triumphs. Both were brief, dramatic, and early.⁶² First, Sir Kenelm wooed the famously beautiful Venetia Stanley from a very public array of aristocratic suitors. In 1625, the two were married; and in 1628, Digby led a bloody but politically adept and, to be sure, highly profitable privateering mission to the Venetian-held port of Scandaroon (Iskenderun, formerly Alexandretta, in southern Turkey). Whatever else might be said about this mostly derivative natural-philosophical writer, Digby's maritime diary is among the most keenly observed reports on British privateering in the Mediterranean written in the seventeenth century.

Indeed, following the humiliating rout of the British navy under Buckingham at the Île de Ré in 1627, it is notable that the first appearance of Digby's "relation" of his "brave and resolute sea fight . . . (on the Bay of Scanderone)" was published together with the earliest English translation of the punitive articles of capitulation dictated by

Louis XIII in 1628. To borrow a set of adjectives from a contemporary polemical pamphlet titled *An Unhappy View of the Whole Behavior of my Lord Duke of Buckingham, at the French Island, called Isle of RHEE. Discovered by . . . an unfortunate commander in that untoward service* (1648), Sir Kenelm's was an example of "an undaunted heart" in the "true" English aristocratic tradition of courage and steadfastness in the face of an ancient enemy.⁶³ The ideological purpose of Digby's story of a knight's faithful service to king and nation with his sword was made clear by juxtaposition with the most palpable reminder yet published of England's dishonoring by the despised Lord Admiral Buckingham and his purportedly "effeminate," "desperate," and "perfidious" comportment on the field of battle just the year before.⁶⁴

In 1629, in recognition of the didactic and political force of this juxtaposition, Digby was named naval commissioner. In 1630, doubtless for the sake of a rising career at court, Sir Kenelm converted and joined the Church of England. Anti-Calvinist Arminianism was in the ascendancy at court, and William Laud, who acted as Digby's patron while gaining the confidence of Charles I, was to become archbishop of Canterbury just three years later. Since the assassination of Buckingham in the aftermath of the Île de Ré, Charles had not selected a new favorite. Partially to fill the vacuum, Laud gained greater access to the king's inner circle of advisors. This, of course, was a well-known contributing factor in the great Calvinist migration to New England during the 1630s. What better time for an aristocratic Catholic to convert to this new and, from the Calvinist perspective, "papist" version of the Church of England?

Unfortunately, Digby's once promising career at court was interrupted on May 1, 1633, when Venetia succumbed to an untimely death. By all accounts, Sir Kenelm was devastated emotionally by his personal tragedy. He retreated into monkish seclusion in the alchemical laboratories at Gresham College and devoted himself to the study of natural philosophy, at first with particular emphasis on psychological and spiritual healing by analogy with material processes of death and rebirth. When Digby finally emerged from Gresham in 1635, the situation at court had changed sufficiently that he chose to abandon London for Catholic Paris. Before doing so, he prudently abjured the Church of England and reconverted to his natal faith.⁶⁵

Sir Kenelm spent the next six years pursuing scientific interests in France and Holland while crisscrossing the Channel to appeal to English Catholics for funds on Charles's behalf.⁶⁶ One might presume a reversal of Digby's career at court during the Puritan Revolution and interregnum. However, despite close associations with Archbishop Laud and Charles I, and even despite his recent reconversion, this royalist chameleon made the best of the fall of his Stuart masters. Sir Kenelm continued his natural-philosophical research while casting about for new patrons to serve. The Long Parliament finally removed him from Charles's Council in March 1641, and while Charles I was on the run in November 1642, Parliament confined Digby under house

arrest at Winchester House, a former episcopal palace in London. Far from languishing in his elegant prison, Digby revisited a Paracelsian project that was probably initiated when he attended Gresham College from 1633 to 1635. Because aristocratic prisoners were given extraordinary privileges, Sir Kenelm managed to hire a glassmaker named John Colnett, and with this local artisan as his skilled operator, he established a laboratory to experiment with the production of glassware for domestic and scientific use. By 1662, Digby was successful enough in this to apply surreptitiously for a patent, in Colnett's name, for a new process to manufacture glass bottles.⁶⁷

After Digby petitioned for release, Parliament exiled him to France. There he joined forces with Henrietta Maria's expatriate court at the Louvre as chancellor to the Vatican. Charles I's French queen—who secretly practiced Roman Catholicism throughout her marriage and for Puritans remained the papist sister of Louis XIII—was sent across the Channel in 1642 by her husband, then a fugitive. Charles returned Henrietta Maria to her homeland to secure her safety. But she was also asked to locate royalist allies on the Continent and acquire munitions to mount a defense of the Stuart monarchy. Chancellor Digby was thus in attendance at the Vatican from May 1645 until January 1648 to negotiate in Henrietta Maria's name for 500,000 scudi in financial support. This was for arms to support Charles I in the Civil War, but also to bribe Calvinist members of Parliament to inspire conformity to the Arminian Church of England.

In return, Pope Innocent X negotiated to dismantle the Reformation in England. He demanded toleration for English Catholics under Rome's stewardship and stipulated that should the royalists triumph, he expected that the conversion of Charles I would follow shortly thereafter. Both of these demands were of course impracticable, and, in the end, moot. On June 24, 1646, after a series of defeats during the "first" Civil War that led to the capitulation of the royalist capital at Oxford to revolutionary troops, Charles chose to surrender himself to Scottish forces at Newark, where he was promptly ransomed to the Long Parliament for £400,000. Charles escaped captivity in November 1647, an often-told story that needs no particular development here. This event initiated a second round of warfare and decided the king's fate. Cromwell moved quickly to ensure that Charles's freedom was temporary. After a decisive battle in the north of England, the king was recaptured, and his trial and beheading outside Whitehall Banqueting Hall on January 30, 1649, followed.⁶⁸

As late as 1647, Henrietta Maria hoped that Digby would be able to gain papal support for Charles's dwindling forces in the field. However, the military situation exacerbated a growing polarization between the principals, who had learned to loathe one another. The negotiations ended disastrously in July 1647, after another frustrating papal audience. In November of that year, Digby wrote a bitter statement of grievances to the pope. Innocent responded through the Venetian ambassador that Sir Kenelm was "full of crazy whims and phantasms." Digby's rhetoric, in turn, sounded more like

that of a Puritan M.P. than a staunch defender of the Roman faith. He wrote Henrietta Maria at the Louvre to complain that "this prodigal Pope," had reduced their Church to a "sordid and impious" court.

Despite this exchange and Innocent's subsequent alienation, there was still support for Sir Kenelm and the royalist cause in the Congregation of Cardinals. At the last minute, the cardinals voted in favor of supplying the English royalists with financial support. No one in Rome except perhaps Sir Kenelm was surprised when Innocent intervened to overturn the cardinals' vote. The volatile Digby finally lost his temper and berated the pope in public, before leaving Rome in January 1648 for an extended tour of the Mediterranean, as if to obscure this failure by reminding observers of past triumphs for king and country. His heated speech amounted to political suicide for Digby and the royalist cause in the Vatican. But for Protestants at home, Sir Kenelm's behavior in the face of papal authority was surprisingly heroic, even if both his cause and religion were suspect. To dejected royalists who felt they had lost their main chance, however, the seventeenth-century antiquary John Aubrey's summary of Digby's catastrophic Roman sojourn seems particularly apposite. Sir Kenelm "grew high, and Hec-tored with His Holinesse, and gave him the Lye," Aubrey wrote. "The Pope said he was mad."⁶⁹

The failure to form an alliance with Rome transformed Digby into a bitter anti-papist. Sir Kenelm now pinned his hopes on a risky plan to construct an anglocentric hybrid out of the fragments of the Roman Church that remained after the English Revolution; in effect, Digby posited a "new model" English Catholicism. After returning to join Henrietta Maria in Paris in February 1648—where the Gallican movement pursued similar goals for an independent French Church—Digby conspired with other Catholic nationalists to form a secularized English Catholic episcopate with stronger ties to the English state than to Rome. This conspiracy became known as Blacklo's Cabal. Blacklo was the pseudonym used by Digby's friend and co-religionist Thomas White, the leader of the ultra-secret cabal. White was an ordained priest, president of the English College of Lisbon, and a respected philosopher. He was also accused of heresy by Rome for publishing a series of attacks on the doctrine of the infallibility of the Church, which earned him a place on the Vatican's Index.⁷⁰

When exiled in Paris in 1652, Digby published his *Discourse, Concerning Infallibility in Religion* in English, for an audience across the Channel, which he hoped would include all Christians.⁷¹ Digby's religious, political, and natural-philosophical career was thus tied to a quest to unify Christianity and negate confessional difference. This was arguably a goal he shared with the silent Neoplatonist and latitudinarian Winthrop.

Once the initial impetus for the Digby-Winthrop relationship is understood, it is understandable that Blacklo's shrewd reformist program voiced concerns about tramontane institutional corruption that seemed to parallel aspects of the elder John

Winthrop's anti-Arminian experiment in New England and Parliament's revolt against Archbishop Laud in London. Since Rome had fallen into a state of intractable decadence, the task would fall to White *qua* Blacklo and his "Blackloist" co-conspirators—including Digby, John Belson, Hugh Cressy, Peter Fitton, Mark Harrington, Henry Holden, John Sergeant, Dr. George Leyburn, Abbot Walter Montagu, Dr. Humphrey Waring, and Bishop Richard Russell—to reconstruct Catholicism on English soil with "Papists of the new Modell." Although the conspirators were drawn initially from the royalist ranks, Blacklo's cabal accommodated the new power structures of the interregnum at the expense of both the Stuarts and orthodox English Roman Catholicism. Denying the Roman Church's infallibility was the theological and political basis of the Blackloists' goal of achieving toleration for Catholic worship in England. The Blackloist program also questioned the existence of purgatory, which obviated the vexing question of indulgences. Above all, it advocated transfer of power of appointment of English Catholic bishops from Rome to Westminster. Once a bishop and canonical chapter had been established in England, the plan called for a French prelate to consecrate the new English bishop. The bishop would then take an oath that circumvented the pope, whose commands were meaningless anyway without Parliament's approval.⁷²

The plot began to unravel as early as 1650. Animosity toward the program of religious and political accommodation increased from both orthodox Catholics and deposed royalists. The Blackloists were prepared to trade theology for pragmatism, but their English co-religionists, in particular the Jesuits, were firmly opposed to "the most formidable faction, which has ever yet endangered our small national church."⁷³ In 1655, despite professions of loyalty to the deposed Stuart monarchy, White urged English Catholics to accommodate the Lord Protector's new religious and political order. In this White was clearly counting on Cromwell's growing sense of moderation and the assertion of his belief in "liberty of conscience." Such latitudinarianism coming from the mouth of the Atlantic world's most notorious Calvinist predestinarian caused astonishment and tortured soul-searching among Puritans in both old and New England. And indeed, Cromwell's tendency to recognize the practical benefits of international Protestantism and sectarian inclusivity in both foreign and domestic affairs did provide an opening for the enemies of those whom he derisively called "the preaching people."⁷⁴ Since the Blackloists openly disavowed the pope, White and his followers espoused a new model English Catholicism that would follow the letter of the Protectorate's written constitution of 1654, which guaranteed liberty of Christian worship, "provided that this liberty be not extended to Popery and Prelacy."

This was precisely the strategy Digby pursued aggressively on his own account, and he reminded English Protestants of his legendary denunciation of Innocent X. Working to ingratiate himself at Cromwell's "court," Digby also traded on his potential to

the Lord Protector as a diplomatic intermediary between the revolutionary government and expatriate Stuart royalists and their new royal masters dispersed throughout the European monarchies. Above all, Cromwell was interested in Digby's strong French connections. The Lord Protector made clear his intention to rally international Protestantism behind England in support of the revivification of La Rochelle and the greater Huguenot cause. Cromwell asserted, as had the Parliamentarians before him, that the cause of the Reformation in France had been lost by Buckingham and the Stuarts in 1628.⁷⁵ Cromwell's interest in La Rochelle and the memory in England of the younger Winthrop's role as scientist and observer for his father's Puritan faction in 1627 thus piqued Digby's interest in Winthrop's return.

In 1660, Blacklo's risky enterprise was finally undone by the Restoration of the Stuart monarchy. The cabal's association with the Long Parliament and ultimately with Cromwell's Protectorate itself branded the group as Catholic anti-royalists. Ideologically, the Blackloists were neither anti-Stuart—as Digby's association with Henrietta Maria attested—nor, to be sure, were they anti-royalist. Rather, the Blacklo conspirators were ambitious opportunists who chose to support the establishment of an illegitimate monarch, who had effectively disinherited the Stuart dynasty, in order to lead elite Catholics such as Sir Kenelm away from the margins and toward the center of power in English civic life.

Meanwhile, the vast majority of the Blackloists' Catholic co-religionists continued to repudiate the cabal's political and theological unorthodoxy as self-destructive heresy. Digby was deeply wounded by this outcome, though not yet finished politically. This was in large part because Thomas White became the universal scapegoat for the conspiracy and for the fears it engendered among various constituencies of England's established political and religious orders. White was forced to flee for his life to the Netherlands. With the exile of Blacklo, the cabal disintegrated in a flood of recriminations. Its vindictive members attacked one another over perceived lapses in security, which were ultimately blamed for the plot's failure. Digby's indiscretions were denounced by his co-conspirator Henry Holden: "You may do well not to open your mouth . . . (for your freedom of speech ruins all your affairs)."⁷⁶ But Digby's political and religious interest in the reconciliation of opposites—England's old Church with the new—was also seen in alchemical terms as part of a project to unify fragmented geographies, politics, and confessions by transmuting all things to one substance.

❧ The Universal Courtier ❧

Although Holden advised Digby "not to open your mouth," evidence abounds that the latter's linguistic virtuosity was legendary under both the Stuarts and the Protectorate. Indeed, Digby's ability to survive during the interregnum owed much to the dramatic

practice of courtly natural philosophy. Digby's verbal performance at court balanced the dual handicap of religion and a derivative intellect. Sir Kenelm's theatricality was motivated by the courtier's traditional desire to please the powerful and accumulate prestige through service, which was later amplified under Cromwell by adding the fluid eclecticism of Blackloism. Thus, beginning with the accession of Charles I, Digby worked to overcome marginalization by developing a framework within which to domesticate Paracelsus and hold the middle ground at court. This stance allowed him to pursue novelty with the enthusiasm of a gentlemanly virtuoso—as he did when he demonstrated for Charles I the use of a new powder with which to fix mercury—while never appearing openly to embrace either occult obscurantism or sectarian Calvinist millennialism. To recontextualize language from Hillel Schwartz's brilliant study of Huguenot millenarian scientists and prophets who sought refuge in London during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, Digby's "theatrical ambivalence" allowed him to play both sides of the street, depending on his audience.⁷⁷ His mutability would prove especially useful given Cromwell's close association with the Cambridge Neoplatonists in the 1650s, during which time he openly distanced himself from orthodoxy, supporting something approaching freedom of conscience and Protestant universalism.⁷⁸

Digby moved boldly to trade on the courtly and economic value of a variety of Paracelsian scientific initiatives pioneered by others. His aristocratic pedigree and the verbal facility of his storytelling at court (in which he played the metamorphic role of Ovidian hero) enabled him constantly to reinvent himself as a courtier, while directing and starring in a personal theater of scientific innovation, burnishing his reputation as a natural philosopher. An intriguing if suitably ambiguous body of research and writing resulted. This oeuvre might be interpreted to reflect Digby's lukewarm adaptation of traditional Aristotelian theory to the "new" philosophies. While this position is not indefensible—Digby often invoked Aristotle to frame arguments—it has the potential to overstate the "rear-guard" significance of Sir Kenelm's "Catholic" Aristotelianism.

An argument can be made that even Digby's public discourses intended for courtly and scholastic consumption (where he tended to cite Aristotle most often) were distanced from "purely" Aristotelian natural philosophy. Sir Kenelm grappled bravely with the pivotal relation between Paracelsus's emphasis on experience and Bacon's expansion of this philosophical attitude into skepticism, which Bacon refracted through the lens of the Reformation into the principal of uncertainty of outcome inherent in experimentalism.⁷⁹ This was a period when innovation in natural philosophy remained under the powerfully anti-Aristotelian Neoplatonic influence of Paracelsus, with his fundamental emphasis on hidden interior experience, ineffable occultism, and the monistic unity of animate spirit and matter. However, Digby also came into contact

with Descartes. But if Digby felt it politically prudent to assert public explications of the natural world based on appearances and traditional scholastic systems, he was also too well aware of Paracelsus's axioms about contingency and the centrality of personal experience to accept the formal, binary logic of a Descartes. "Digby cannot properly be called a Baconian in method at all, even though he was devoted to experience, and, or, experiment," the historian of science Betty Jo Dobbs observes.

[H]e did not, like Bacon, want to discard all systems completely and begin anew in a systematic way to build from experience. Digby preferred to use experience to modify Aristotle. . . . Nor can Digby be called a Cartesian in any real sense, though he knew Descartes from 1640 and admired him greatly. Digby was only too conscious of the complex actuality of the world to allow him to follow Descartes all the way . . . Digby's criticism . . . was essentially that Descartes . . . did not accord with experience.⁸⁰

If Digby attacked the obscurantism of Paracelsus rhetorically while publicly he adopted only parts of Bacon's experimentalism, then it is still fair to say that his critique of Descartes on the basis of experience was fundamentally a Paracelsian critique. This would tend to support Webster's interpretation:

It is possible to argue at one extreme that the English Catholics (e.g. . . . Sir Kenelm Digby), or at the other, that religious radicals . . . were [both] highly receptive to the new philosophy or experimental science . . . the entire Puritan movement was conspicuous in its cultivation of the sciences . . . developing a scientific outlook consistent with its doctrinal position . . . [this outlook] was so productive that the influence of their work and outlook extended to many figures (e.g. Evelyn, Cowley, Digby, Aubrey) with whom they had otherwise little in common.⁸¹

It may be much too strong to position Digby in dialectical opposition to the "religious radicals," or indeed to *anyone* with power in mid-seventeenth-century England. It was his business to find things in common with those in a position to provide patronage and to accommodate his philosophical discourse to religious and political change. In this sense, he shares the younger Winthrop's courtier's reputation for "indecisiveness." While some historians may find it tempting to view Digby as a "transitional figure" who occupied a position between two oppositional poles represented by Aristotle on the one hand and Webster's "modern" reformers—including Paracelsus, Galileo, Bacon, Newton, and, by extension, Winthrop—on the other, it is probably more accurate (if also less elegant) to conceptualize his work initially in its specific courtly context and then as part of an eclectic, inclusive, multifaceted synthesis of traditions that had been active in Europe since the late Middle Ages. Digby's status as a philosophical hybridizer working to expand the scientific margins of an oppressed religious subculture would seem to fit the notion that such ill-defined categories as "an-

cient” and “modern” were conflated in the actual practice of seventeenth-century natural philosophy.⁸² Digby’s interest in inclusiveness was also fundamental to the Neoplatonic search for unity and order in all things. While Webster credits the “productive” nature of the new philosophy with having brought alienated and marginalized Catholic scientists into the same fold with Calvinists, it should not be forgotten that scholarly elites from both camps shared enduring institutional and political structures outside the laboratory: these would include the court, the religious wars, and the shifting quest for power. The historian of philosophy Beverley G. Southgate has pursued the argument that even after 1660, Digby’s philosophical program was intertwined with the changing religious and social context that produced Blackloism. For Southgate, Sir Kenelm’s science sought, in part, to counteract the skeptical effects of Calvinist predestinarianism:

despite the demise of any practical political aspirations, the philosophical and theological positions associated with Blackloism long persisted. Expounded by White and Digby in the 1640s and ‘50s, these were essentially concerned with countering the challenge of [extreme] scepticism. In face of what seemed a growing threat to the possibility of any certain knowledge, the Blackloists sought to present a coherent intellectual package which would guarantee that certainty on which they believed human salvation ultimately depended. So they formulated a remarkable intellectual synthesis, combining elements of new thought with old, and . . . of science with religion.⁸³

If, like Howes, Winthrop and Stiles, Digby wished to be “put forever out of doubt and question,” his revolt against skepticism can also be overdrawn, in part because his “courtly” philosophy during the interregnum—like so much of the Blackloists “secret” discourse against Roman infallibility—was constructed for public consumption. Synthesis of science and religion during the seventeenth century was, first and foremost, a quintessentially Paracelsian project. However, while Paracelsus was perceived by critics to have willfully couched his synthesis in the occult, White and Digby extended their public discourse of the symbiosis of comprehensible phenomena and “new model” Catholicism to natural philosophy. In this way, the Blackloist compromise paralleled a shift in seventeenth-century science toward appropriation of the occult to clarify the inexplicable through experiment. Thus, elements of “mechanical” philosophy began to absorb the occult as its proper subject because scientists such as Boyle and Descartes perceived the unknown to be only temporarily unintelligible.⁸⁴ This aspect of the Blackloist program—to make sense of the inexplicable—sent Sir Kenelm on a Christian humanist’s quest for both old and new texts in natural philosophy to provide occult observations of natural phenomena suitable for reinterpretation. The new books were primarily alchemical texts, again making the Paracelsians the core of Digby’s library and his main frame of reference.

❧ Digby's Library ❧

Sir Kenelm's resources and courtly ambitions—and the enormous prestige that his important alchemical library conveyed through the gift, loan, or dedication of books—makes it understandable that he spent a large percentage of his income on his library.⁸⁵ Digby's first library was among the most celebrated collections of books and manuscripts in England. With the exception of gifted books that survive today in public collections, most of Digby's English library was either confiscated or burned during the Civil War or, after the Blacklo debacle, the Restoration. Sir Kenelm also built a second important library of more than 3,500 volumes during his exile in France. This was not an outstanding library in quantitative terms, especially by the high standards of the French court (Mazarin's contained 40,000 volumes); but it was famous for the quality, expense, and style of its dazzling, full red morocco bindings. The most theatrically self-referential example of Digby's devotion of capital to the embellishment of the finest bindings occurred in 1634, when he spent over £1,000 on the production of just one volume: an imposing Digby family history that is now lost. Almost 600 vellum pages long, Sir Kenelm's homage to his family name was enormous not only in length but also in sheer physical scale. Digby designed the book himself to function as a bibliopegistic spectacle—a sort of memory theater of filial pietism—which encompassed in microcosm his family's outsized history for visitors to the library. Observers marveled that the appearance of the Digby genealogy's intricate medieval calligraphy and painting, mounted with the finest enamelwork in the "antique" Byzantine style, exceeded that of any Bible in England.

Sir Kenelm's lavish expenditure on the binding of books in his collection accentuated their status as luxury objects, in part because of their frequent use as gifts. The style of his morocco bindings was so well known among seventeenth-century English bibliophiles that most could probably identify Digby's gifts of patronage at a glance, long before taking a book down off the shelf to read the inscription or find the *ex libris*. Some sense of the protean Sir Kenelm's strategy as a courtly book collector can be gleaned from the legendary quality of his gift in 1634 to Oxford's Bodleian Library—England's first noteworthy "public" library—where 238 manuscripts in medieval literature and sixteenth- and seventeenth-century natural philosophy marked "Digby MSS" remain deposited. Perhaps most significant was the enormous personal honor, prestige, and capital at court Digby must have expected to accumulate as a result of the Bodleian gift.

The gift was sponsored at Oxford by Archbishop Laud, a fellow bibliophile whom Digby was anxious to serve. A new west wing was constructed at the Bodleian to house the Digby gift, and the ceremony of acceptance performed by Laud and the heads,

proctors, and other principals of Oxford was said to be “similar to that made for foreign rulers or dignitaries of the Church.” Laud also solicited Digby to join him in a combined gift of Arabic, Hebrew, and Asian manuscripts to St. John’s College, Oxford, at the start of the Civil War.⁸⁶ Dobbs summarizes Digby’s life as that of “a private gentleman, sometimes *virtuoso*, sometimes servant of the crown,” by concluding that Sir Kenelm “fits the ideal of the post-Elizabethan period very well; he held a book in one hand and a sword in the other . . . he was *persona grata* at courts and watering places, in salons and laboratories and the meetings of learned societies on both sides of the Channel . . . he was the man who knew everyone and took an interest in every advance.”⁸⁷ It was in his role as opportunistic courtier that Digby would take “an interest” in John Winthrop the Younger and enter Stiles’s field of vision.⁸⁸

❖ The Weapon Salve: Artifactual Memory in the Powder of Sympathy ❖

Winthrop associated the name of Sir Kenelm Digby with the famous weapon salve long before the two natural philosophers first corresponded. Winthrop maintained an interest in this mystical therapy since the early 1630s, when Howes reminded him that Fludd had first come to his attention with a book about the weapon salve.⁸⁹ Digby published two widely read discourses in natural philosophy that appeared almost simultaneously in France and England: *Two Treatises. In the one of which, the nature of bodies; in the other, the Nature of mans soule; is looked into: in way of the discovery, of the immortality of reasonable soules* (Paris, 1644); and *Discours fait en une celebre assemblée, par le Chevalier Digby, Chancelier de la Reine de la Grande Bretagne &c. touchant la guérison des playes par la poudre de sympathie* (Paris, 1657). Whether Winthrop possessed these volumes is unclear; neither survives with the small remnant of his alchemical library. The discourse on the “poudre de sympathie” appeared in its first English translation, as *A Late Discourse Made in a Solemne Assembly of Nobles and Learned Men at Montpellier in France . . . Touching the Cure of Wounds by the Powder of Sympathy* (London, 1658). Both texts were ultimately published together in an omnibus English edition of Digby’s essays under the title *Of Bodies, and of Mans Soul. To Discover the Immortality of Reasonable Souls. With two Discourses: Of the Powder of Sympathy, and of the Vegetation of Plants* (London, 1669).⁹⁰ *Two Treatises* ran through an impressive eight editions by the eighteenth century. Despite the success of *Two Treatises*, Digby made his name outside court and academic circles with *Of the Powder of Sympathy*, a brief, wildly popular essay derived from Paracelsian occult medicine, which was to remain in print continually until 1704, when the last of an astonishing forty different editions appeared.⁹¹ Thus, Digby’s essay on the sympathetic powder, otherwise known as the weapon salve, was reprinted for a new audience of readers about once a year on average for nearly a half century.

Though he denied it publicly, Digby's idea for the sympathetic powder clearly originated with Paracelsus. First appearing in the 1582 edition of *Archidoxorum* as the "weapon-salve," Paracelsus's original recipe called for a gelatinous mixture of human skull-moss, mummy, human fat, human blood, linseed oil, oil of roses, and a claylike substance known as "Bole Armoniack."⁹² Digby sanitized Paracelsus's macabre recipe for polite consumers by reducing its grisly ingredients to a pure white anhydrous powder. The sympathetic powder did possess a mild styptic property, but in the end Digby's version of the famous mixture was derived from nothing more corporeal than common green crystals of English vitriol baked white in the sun. Although he mixed different ingredients in the master's pharmacopoeia, it would appear that Digby's source for the powder was again Paracelsus, who used vitriol as a homeopathic mineral therapy for patients "when you see Erysipelas," an ulcerous inflammation of the skin.⁹³

Erysipelas bacillus commonly presents symptoms of ulcerous lesions on the hand, resembling the malady that caused the elder Winthrop to write for medical advice in 1628. The skillful woman in that case prescribed black and yellow "plaisters" (green and white were usual in vitriol compounds), but it is not inconceivable that her remedy was derived from similar minerals to those used by Paracelsus in his well-known homeopathic therapy for skin diseases.⁹⁴ As early as 1617, the English Paracelsian physician John Woodall wrote in *The surgions Mate*, a treatise for "the benefit of young Sea-Surgions, imployed in the East-India Companies," that common vitriol, or a mixture of vitriol and alum both "burn'd" [black?] and used as a precipitate, "keepeth the flesh moyst and from putritude, consumeth, contracteth and purgeth ulcers," when applied for "outward ordinary uses." Woodall openly credited Paracelsus for prescribing vitriol in the recipe.⁹⁵ Winthrop's skillful woman would have known the value of vitriol and alum from common usage, while Digby, the well-read mariner, learned about earlier versions of his sympathetic powder from Woodall's ubiquitous "Sea-Surgions" manual, if he had not already acquired it from other texts.

Clearly, Digby's sympathetic powder was far from unique in the seventeenth century, which occasioned a virtual growth industry in weapon salves. Demand was great in the wake of continual religious warfare experienced everywhere. And dangerous occupations such as seamanship in the service of conquest and colonization, as well as the growth of oceangoing commerce to Asia, Africa, and the Americas, placed a premium on topical cures.

What *is* surprising is that Digby's remedy should have cornered the extensive market in the literature of weapon salves and that his name was linked in perpetuity with the sympathetic powder. The source of Digby's personal association with the sympathetic powder and his ability to market the therapy as unique, despite fierce competition from numerous similar therapies, was a function of blatant dissimulation, self-promotion, and the dramatic persona of a seasoned courtier. Digby understood from

watching the success of such royal favorites as the duke of Buckingham that the true origin and content of a Stuart courtier's message was negotiable if hidden artfully under the subterfuge of physical beauty and represented with the appropriate rhetorical conventions.⁹⁶

The handsome and charismatic Digby—acclaimed by noble audiences as a brilliant storyteller at court—inserted himself personally into a seductive alchemical legend he fabricated about the origin of the sympathetic powder. This was not the first time Sir Kenelm had made himself the heroic protagonist of legend; in fact, Digby's "autobiographical" *Private Memoirs*, which was purported to recount the events of his life until his return from the Mediterranean in 1628, was written very much in this style.⁹⁷ Sir Kenelm related the story of the sympathetic powder in the form of an early modern romance. The first audience was apparently the "Assembly of Nobles and Learned Men at [the medical college at] Montpellier," and thereupon, in 1657 and 1658, it was promptly published in both French and English. As the story goes, Digby did a great favor for a Carmelite monk who had returned to the West after having traveled widely in India, Persia, and China. In his debt for the favor, the monk, though reluctant to part with his secret, relinquished the recipe for the sympathetic powder. But Digby's romance takes on truly heroic proportions at the court of James I, when he used the sympathetic powder with astonishing success to cure the injured hand of a fellow courtier, James Howell. This feat was accomplished in the presence of the king, the royal physician, Theodore de Mayerne, and Lord Chancellor Francis Bacon. Digby then gave the well-known secret "freely" as a gift to James I, from whom the royal physician and Bacon obtained it, after which the episode was common knowledge among physicians. Though the now royally verified narrative legitimized Digby's story, Bacon certainly knew that the origin of the therapy was Paracelsus, not the wandering Carmelite monk.⁹⁸ Focusing on aristocratic political exploitation of the rhetorical conventions of fictional romance during the Restoration, the literary scholar Elizabeth Hedrick has explored Digby's use of the sympathetic powder to advance his ambitions at court during the late 1650s:

Not only did his story purify the weapon-salve of its nefarious Paracelsian origins . . . Digby's dating of his story about Howell and the Carmelite monk to the early 1620s served the specific purpose of allowing him to include James I in his account, and to portray himself to Charles II—after his attempts to establish an English Catholic church and to curry favor with Cromwell had helped factionalize the royalists—as a personal favorite of Charles II's grandfather. Indeed, Digby's tale of sharing the secret of the powder with King James is . . . clearly calculated to show, without Digby saying so, that he and the Stuarts had always shared a mutual regard . . . in sniffing the political wind of the late 1650s, Digby detected an opportunity to recuperate his political fortunes and his natural philo-

sophical reputation in one stroke by writing his account of the sympathetic powder . . . a story like the one Digby uses to obscure his reliance on Paracelsus . . . was at once more noticeable and more fully necessary to producing natural philosophical innovation than it would be now; and it exists at the extreme end of a hermeneutic continuum in which the mere act of glossing a text can constitute an alteration of it—for all the interpreter's claims to pious originality.⁹⁹

If Digby used the tale of the Carmelite monk to distance himself from Paracelsus at both Montpellier and the court of Charles II, it nevertheless remained hard to explain how the weapon salve worked. For, as Paracelsus had prescribed in the original weapon-salve therapy of 1582, to heal James Howell's injured hand, Digby applied the sympathetic powder, not directly onto the wound, but indirectly, to an old bandage in which Howell's bloody hand had been wrapped. Paracelsian weapon-salves were believed to heal through the air, even at a great distance, by activating the "material memory" of things that had come into contact with the wound during or just after the injury: the bandage was one of two appropriate place to apply the powder; the other, better one was the weapon that had actually caused the injury. As for the wound itself, the therapy basically ignored it, or prescribed simply that it be washed thoroughly and kept clean, or covered with a bandage soaked in the patient's urine, a natural disinfectant.

This in fact explains the relative effectiveness (and popularity) of the weapon salve compared to other early modern therapies. Unlike most treatments, weapon-salve therapy saved patients from contact with overzealous but incompetent physicians and, more important, prescribed sanitary treatment of the wound.¹⁰⁰

Paracelsus and his followers attributed the success of the weapon salve to divine intervention. For Paracelsus, the healing virtues of the weapon salve traveled on an astral bridge from microcosm to macrocosm and back again. A soulish sympathy existed between the blood left on the weapon (or the old bandage) and the blood still inside the wounded patient's body. Indeed, there was an irresistible cosmological attraction between them. Distance was completely irrelevant to the operation of the salve, since for adepts the microcosm and macrocosm always existed in perfect proportion and mathematical symmetry to each other. Thus, the sympathetic agent in the patient's blood remaining on the weapon was activated by astral influences, which carried the salve's healing virtues with them through the air, where they were made more potent by further spiritual purification, after which the cure finally returned to the wound.¹⁰¹

In the *Late Discourse*, Digby explained sympathetic powder in an elaborate "Geometrical Demonstration," that reconfigured the occult motions of the Paracelsian weapon salve into an eclectic mix of corpuscularianism and mechanistic philosophy. Here, the inner workings of occult natural philosophy were purportedly laid bare. "The

Air is full throughout of small Bodies or Atomes,” wrote Digby. “When fire or some hot body attracts the Air and that which is within the Air. . . . The source of those spirits or little bodies, which attract them to it self, draws likewise after them that which accompanies, and whatever sticks, and is united to them.” Within this conceptual framework, where “spirits” were “divisible” “little Bodies,” it would follow logically that under certain conditions such spirits could be perceived to move with almost mechanistic predictability:

[T]he Sun and Light will attract, a great extent and distance off, the spirits of the blood. . . . [T]he Spirit of Vitriol, being incorporated with the blood cannot choose but make the same voyage together with the atoms of blood. [The wound] expires and exhales, in the meantime, [an] abundance of hot fiery Spirits, which stream as a river out of the inflamed hurt: nor can this be, but the wound must, consequently, draw to it the air which is next [to] it . . . so there will be a kind of current of air drawn round about the wound [which] will come to incorporate at last the atoms and Spirits of the Blood and the Vitriol. . . . [T]he atoms of the blood, finding the proper source and original root whence they issued will stay there, re-entering into their natural beds and primitive receptacles . . . [T]he Spirits of the Vitriol [being inseparable from the blood], both the one and the other will joyntly be imbibed together within all the corners, fibres, and orifices of the Veins which lye open about the wound; whence of necessity be refresht, and in fine imperceptibly cured.¹⁰²

As a Catholic survivor stigmatized in the England’s Protestant courts and laboratories, Digby was, like Palissy, a masterful manipulator of the ambiguity of perception for career advancement and personal security. Digby’s clear intention was to make a name for himself by providing an explanation for why the weapon salve worked in the first place. While this explanation gestured boldly in print toward Paracelsus’s competitors, the powder remains “sympathetic,” and if Digby’s “little bodies” are no longer overtly astral, they are still implicitly so. Like Stiles’s disembodied minds pictured in King’s portrait (fig. 11.2), they remain moveable “spirits” directed by an ineffable God. Digby never considered placing his version of Paracelsus’s salve directly on the wounded patient. Not only was this mundane procedure less theatrical, but it was common knowledge that such cures must travel through the air bonded to spirits. Digby understood that “imperceptible” spirits, though material, transcended barriers of distance and difference of confession, because “little bodies” were part of a unified whole he knew as the “Universal Spirit.”

The Neoplatonic source for Digby’s conception of cosmological unity was neither Aristotle nor Descartes but again the theoretical convergence of Marsilio Ficino and Paracelsus. These authors were deeply influential in forging the synthesis of metaphysical and epistemological questions that concerned Benjamin Whichcote, Ralph

Cudworth, John Worthington, John Smith, and Henry More, the most important of the English Platonists centered at Emmanuel College, Cambridge, Forth Winthrop's beloved school.¹⁰³ Perhaps Forth's letter to his brother John on the eve of the latter's Mediterranean voyage may also be read as a Neoplatonic allegory on an advancing illness, necessitating scholarly travel via the universal spirit among the books at Emmanuel, rather than following John's "fortunate foot" of experience?

Digby knew Cromwell had taken strong personal interest in the latitudinarianism of the Cambridge group. Most were Calvinists who shared his belief in "liberty of conscience" and the doctrine of "liberty in non-essentials." The Lord Protector consulted Cudworth on policy and made Worthington vice-chancellor of Cambridge. In 1656, Cromwell's sister Robina married John Wilkins, a member of the group.¹⁰⁴ Given the political necessity for Digby's frequent sojourns across the channel however, and the congruence of Huguenot alchemy in Catholic France to his own situation in England, French alchemic Neoplatonism became more specific to Sir Kenelm's personal history and laboratory practice than did the Cambridge school.

❧ Digby's Book of Secrets ❧

Unlike the books he published during his lifetime, Digby's book of *Rare Chymical Secrets and Experiments in Philosophy*—compiled in the crucial 1650s and 1660s and published posthumously by his friend and laboratory operator George Hartman in 1682—is unambiguous on mystical and occult influences. *Secrets* shows that while he described the hybrid sympathetic powder in Aristotelian or mechanical language for courtly display or polite viewing, bound in morocco, for visitors to his library, Digby's secret laboratory journals contained voluminous evidence of Sir Kenelm's private passion for the experiments of Paracelsus, Croll, and Bacon. The work of Aristotle is insignificant in *Secrets*. Scholasticism is supplanted by private experimental discourse; Digby credits seven occult writers with influencing his work. "Crollius" is included as the master who best "teacheth the preparation and use of Chimike medicines." But Digby reserved the highest praise for Paracelsus himself, whose universal approach "aymes at all learning." Sir Kenelm admitted that Paracelsus's prose might have been "writt . . . when he was drunk; yet," he refused to quibble, "his workes generally a[re] worthy ones."¹⁰⁵

During his exile in France, Digby demonstrated his complete understanding of why Paracelsus "ayme[d] at all learning." He did so by further exploring the implications in Nature presented by the profound linkages that Paracelsus perceived between the material practice of alchemy and the universal souliness that connected all things at the level of "simplicity," as elucidated by the Neoplatonism of Ficino and Plotinus.¹⁰⁶ By the time Digby returned to England in 1654, he had harnessed his secret alchemical experiments to closely related French Neoplatonic theories of the "Universal

Spirit,” as elucidated by the seventeenth-century natural philosophers Nicasius le Febure (Nicolas Le Fèvre [1615–69]) and especially Jean d’Espagnet (1564–1637).¹⁰⁷

Like Winthrop and the generation of British-American natural philosophers that came of age after the fall of La Rochelle and matured during the Protectorate, when he returned to England, Digby assimilated the influence of the pansophic social reformers of the Hartlib circle. Samuel Hartlib’s political principles and his attention to nuances of patronage and parliamentary support were especially attractive to Digby. They reflected his courtly experience and resonated with the Blackloist program of nationalistic inclusion across confessions. Theoretically, Hartlib’s utopian universalism had the radical potential to absorb stigmatized religious minorities into civic culture, including English Catholic adepts. Religious inclusion was the primary goal of Hartlib’s Scottish associate John Dury, an ecumenical Presbyterian, whose program called for reunion of the British Church. Cromwell encouraged alchemical Neoplatonism, the Blackloist philosophy of pragmatic accommodation, and Hartlib’s pansophic ideas about the communitarian role of adepts in civic institutions that functioned openly for the public good. Sir Kenelm focused what remained of his personal wealth, and his hope for the convergence of the “Universal Spirit,” on the philosophical language, theoretical premises, and material armature of “a general chemical council” whose goal was to erect a “Universal Laboratory” in London.¹⁰⁸

This was an enterprise of such enormous ambition and scope—of such utopian potential for making transatlantic common cause through a general material-holiness synthesis of the metropolitan center with its colonial peripheries—that Digby thought the laboratory would enable him to seduce John Winthrop Jr. away from the New World and back to “your native country” in 1655. Though the inclusive ideology of its principal planners was pluralistic in nature, in different hands, the universal laboratory might have become a state-sponsored enterprise, adumbrating the aggressively imperialistic cultural stance that England took toward the colonies after the Restoration, when Whitehall attempted to bridge the growing social, cultural, and economic gap between America and the mother country by flooding the colonies with British functionaries and consumer goods.

But his courtier’s history suggests that Sir Kenelm did not look deeply into the future. He had more immediate problems. Whatever else might become of Digby’s elaborate stratagems of 1654–55, his most pressing ambition was to survive and avoid another exile. To accomplish this goal, he planned to return John Winthrop Jr. to Cromwell as a gift to help validate the Puritan Protectorate. Unlike the contents of the Bodleian gift, the learned expatriate from New England’s founding family was to be presented at the Protector’s newly established “court” as a sort of speaking text, the prodigal returned. Winthrop’s return would serve as a conduit of pansophism, solidify shaky linkages between Old and New World Reform movements, and facilitate

transatlantic commerce and industry. Finally, a new expedition to reverse the catastrophe of 1628 and liberate La Rochelle was in the offing, this time under the more inclusive flag of international Protestantism. Winthrop himself was to lead its alchemists and pyrotechnicians. Sir Kenelm Digby thus gambled that he could persuade Winthrop to join his Universal Laboratory and lead the expedition back to La Rochelle; in return, the grateful Lord Protector would solidify his tenuous toehold as "Catholic favorite" at court, and religious tolerance would return to England.

❧ Your Native Country: 1628 and 1655 ❧

In 1655, two exchanges took place between John Winthrop Jr. and Digby. Prompted by Winthrop, Sir Kenelm sent a handsome gift of some 40 natural-philosophical and theological books to Harvard College to help build a library begun in 1638, which stood at a meager 350 volumes in 1655. Given Digby's practice of using gifts of books for political purposes—and Winthrop's habit of accepting (and lending) scientific books to expand his patronage network—this gift commanded reciprocity.¹⁰⁹ The impulse behind the gift became clear in a remarkable letter from Digby to Winthrop written on January 31 the same year:

I hope it will not be long before this Iland, yr native country, do enjoy yr much desired presence. I pray for it hartily, and I am confident that yr great judgemt, and noble desire of doing the most good to mankinde that you may, will prompt you to make as much hast hither as you can. Where you are, is too scanty a stage for you to remaine too long upon. It was a well chosen one when there were inconveniences for yr fixing upon this. But now that all is here as you could wish, all that do know you do expect of you that you should exercise your vertues where they may be of most advantage to the world, and where you may do most good to most men.¹¹⁰

Digby's letter is a source for Stiles's representation of the Catholic courtier as an "intimate Correspond[ent]" of Winthrop's, and one of the "first Chemical & philosophical Characters of the last Century." It is unclear whether Stiles was interested in Digby's career before finding the letter, or if its discovery prompted him to do further research. Knowing his compulsively "inclusive" nature and understanding the occult and universalist directions his work took in the 1750s, it is probable that Stiles read everything Digby wrote. As a physician, Stiles might reasonably have learned about Digby and the weapon salve in the natural course of his medical training with vitriol compounds. Indeed, when combined with the mystical universal spirit of Digby's *Secrets* and the younger Winthrop's alchemical archives, the occult theory of the Paracelsian weapon salve was very close to Stiles's own emerging Neoplatonic program. After the letter revealed Digby's personal association with Winthrop and his admiration for

the adept, the decision to absorb Digby's "new model" Catholicism into one or another of these larger categories would not have been difficult.

Cited by Winthrop biographers as evidence of his growing international reputation, which was not enticing enough to tempt him from moral and familial responsibilities in colonial America, Digby's letter deserves closer scrutiny from the transatlantic perspective. It contained an artful combination of historical references to New England's eschatological "errand" and courtly puffery. This potent mix of seduction and status anxiety was calculated by Digby to make Winthrop's head spin.

In "John Winthrop, Jr., Industrial Pioneer," written in 1930 for *Builders of the Bay Colony*, Samuel Eliot Morison presented the canonical analysis of this pivotal quotation from Digby's letter. Morison rightly situated Digby's "warm invitation to London" in the context of fierce local and international competition for the relocation of Winthrop's skills as an "industrial" projector.

After the death of his father in 1649, it was now possible for Winthrop to remove himself completely from Boston's authoritarian sphere of influence, something he had done in fits and starts in the past. So during the 1650s, with a permanent move in the offing, Morison observes, "everyone wanted the younger Winthrop . . . he was the most sought-after person in New England."¹¹¹ Official invitations ensued from settlements with attractive inducements of land. He could reside south of Boston, including Connecticut Colony (where he was already a magistrate and assured of the governorship); New Haven Colony (where he was offered a plantation house complete with maidservant in exchange for the development of a local ironworks); Providence Plantation (Roger Williams suggested this was a logical spiritual home for Winthrop, as "You have been noted for tendernes toward mens soules, especially for conscience sake to God"); and most intriguing, New Netherlands (where Peter Stuyvesant sought to co-opt his cosmopolitan, land-hungry correspondent of many years by offering "accommodation" in land and slave-rich Brooklyn, "soe large and ample as hee hath power to give").¹¹² Stuyvesant's offer was the most complex, and Winthrop had long planned to appropriate the director-general's chair for himself.

Without mention of the fortieth parallel, the American Mediterranean, or its proximity to the Saybrook project, Morison concludes that Winthrop ultimately chose New London—on Long Island Sound, adjacent to Fishers Island at the mouth of the Sound, where Winthrop raised livestock—because the Pequot territory of southern Connecticut offered the richest mining and metallurgical prospects. These inducements were very real, but probably less significant to the younger Winthrop than the territory he hoped would become available south and west of the Sound. Once he became governor of Connecticut, Winthrop worked ceaselessly toward the ultimate goal of absorbing New Netherlands. As a final inducement to settle there, in May 1651, the general assembly of Connecticut Colony granted Winthrop a monopoly in perpetu-

ity over any rocks and minerals he discovered and improved to form the "staple commodity" that, as the architect of the Massachusetts General Assembly's Edict of 1646, which encouraged the development of local trade and manufacturing in the *absence* of a staple, Winthrop had failed to find in the Massachusetts Bay Colony:

Whereas in this rocky country, among the mountains and rocky hills, there are probabilities of mines and metals, the discovery of which may be of great advantage to the country in raising a staple commodity; and whereas John Winthrop . . . doth intend to be at charges and adventure for the search and discovery of such mines and minerals:—for the encouragement thereof, and of any that shall adventure with the said John Winthrop . . . in the said business, it is therefore ordered by the Court that if the said John Winthrop . . . shall discover, set upon and maintain such mines of lead, copper or tin, or any minerals, as antimony, vitriol, black lead, allum, stone salt, salt springs, or any other the like, within this jurisdiction, and shall set up any work for the digging, washing and melting, or any other operation about the said mines and minerals, as the nature thereof requieth—that then the said John Winthrop . . . his heirs, associates, partners or assigns, shall enjoy forever said mines, with the lands, wood, timber and water within two or three miles of said mines, for the necessary carrying on of the works and maintaining of the workmen.¹¹³

Like Palissy, Winthrop had directed his gaze downward, looking for a synthesis of salvation, security, and profit in the "bowels of the Earth." Stiles's understanding of the folkloric connotations of "Gov. Winthrops Ring," had historical origins in a competitive land grant. By law and custom, Winthrop's name was associated with ore excavated from his East Haddam "mountain," including Erkelen's cobalt. As for Digby's invitation, Morison argues that a triumphant return to continue his laboratory research among peers in London would have proven "irresistible" had it been not for Winthrop's hopes that this promising new situation in Connecticut would allow him "to retrieve the family fortunes, sadly wasted by the old Governor's lavish hospitality and too great devotion to the public weal."¹¹⁴

Although he does not cite it fully, Morison refers to a letter Digby sent Winthrop from Paris, on January 26, 1656, after Winthrop refused his invitation in a letter sent four months earlier:

Yr most welcome letter . . . was sent me . . . the same day I went out of London to come to this towne: wch made me lament the lesse the necessity of those affaires that call me hither for a little while; since I learne by it that you are not as yet minded to make our country happy wth yr presence. I pray God you may so alter yr resolutions that by the return of the shippes I may meete you att London. For I can not subscribe to your reasons—the maine of wch is, *res augusta domi* to a numerous family. For wheresoever you are, I am sure you can not want.¹¹⁵

Digby usually made for France when the political situation in England was dangerous. All the more reason to use Winthrop as leverage to improve his unstable place at Cromwell's court.

Digby was quite right in implying that Winthrop was being disingenuous in using family problems as an excuse. Winthrop's extensive correspondence with Dr. Samuel Hartlib, whom he called "the great intelligence of Europe," about books, medical practice and above all the competitive, worldwide quest for the philosopher's stone, contain many reports concerning Sir Kenelm (whom they called "the Knight"). These indicate that Digby knew Winthrop well enough to understand when he was obfuscating. Winthrop himself had certainly continued to keep a jealous eye on Digby's travels, political intrigues and quest for the stone, long after their exchange of letters in 1655. In a letter from London dated March 16, 1660, for example, in response to Winthrop's query regarding Digby's whereabouts, Hartlib writes:

Sir Kenelme Digby hath been up and down in Germany for the liquor Alkahest the great elixer. He hath now returned to Paris where he is for the present. My correspondent from Paris writtes unto me as followeth; we were with the generous knight (meaning Sir Kenel. D. but found him just stepping in his coach for to visit a person of quality . . .) . . . so I can give you no account at all of his voyage into Germany and the experience he hath had of that countrey onely I heare . . . that there is an Italian gentleman . . . at Strasburg necessitated to retire thither from Rome for having spoken too freely of the Popes aequality with other bishops; which person the Knight extolleth highly for his profound knowledge in Chymestry, and rare happiness in curing all manner of desperat diseases; About which I intend God willing to learn Sir K. D. [s] own relation at our first meeting.

Digby was arguably just as familiar with his American correspondent and competitor's personal history; at least enough to know that in the past, Winthrop had not hesitated to sacrifice family for the sake of ambition or travel. It would be a simple matter to paint a picture of cruel indifference to the basic emotional and material needs of both his wives and his children. Winthrop's first wife, Martha, died unlamented in childbirth in 1634; Elizabeth, his second wife, spent much of her married life alone; she was left behind while her husband traveled and "prayed often and tearfully for his return."¹¹⁶ Like those of Bernard Palissy, Jakob Böhme, and virtually all of the intensely self-contained, sexually sublimated Paracelsian natural philosophers in this story, Winthrop's emotional relationships with the women and children in his life were cold, physically ambivalent, or absent.

Let us suggest other, more probable and complex reasons for Winthrop's rejection of Digby's proposal that he take his rightful place among adepts of the universal laboratory in his native country. In 1655, Winthrop continued to believe that the greater potential universal showcase for his skills as the New World's one authentic natural-

philosophical prince would be located at the fortieth parallel, where the Northwest Passage bisected Manhattan Island and where the philosopher's stone would unite east and west, macrocosm and microcosm. Evidence of a grand obsession with the conquest of New Netherlands is abundant in the plan he formulated to absorb the Dutch West India Company's colony into Connecticut. Winthrop was already deeply involved in a well-documented plot to extend his domain to Long Island, Manhattan, and the Hudson Valley, where he planned to use the region's abundant resources to maximize the manufacturing, mining, and alchemical projects started in Ipswich, Saybrook, and New London. When he received Digby's invitation, he had already made bold moves to grab land in the lower Hudson Valley and on Long Island from Stuyvesant. This was preliminary to his actions of 1664, when Winthrop was on the verge of the "peaceful" conquest of New Amsterdam just as the duke of York's fleet arrived to stake the latter's prior claim.

Winthrop knew Digby's ulterior motives regarding Cromwell's plans to return to La Rochelle with the legendary New World Puritan adept accompanying him, this time to play a leading and successful role in retrieving the fortress. If the Lord Protector, an accomplished general, with Winthrop at his side, could reverse the apocalyptic defeat of Buckingham and Charles I in 1627–28, he would gain a foothold against absolutism, trump the Stuarts again, and provide an elegant sense of closure. After all, the elder Winthrop had cited the fall of La Rochelle as a portent of final things that had sealed the fate of the Reformation in Europe and sent the New England Company into hiding across the Atlantic. After his father's death and the recovery of international Protestantism's great lost fortress, the younger Winthrop could lead the American exiles back to the mother country to rejuvenate English Protestantism through moderation and internationalist belief in the universal spirit. This was also the Cromwellian subtext in Digby's claim that a rustic New World refuge "was a well chosen one when there were inconveniences for your fixing upon this."

Cromwell's and Digby's interest in Winthrop's return for a second La Rochelle expedition was not limited to its symbolic value. Winthrop knew the territory well, having spent five months on the scene. His expertise in pyrotechnics and fortress design would also prove valuable to his friends, the Küffelers, in redeploying their torpedo and a new generation of underwater "engines." By the mid 1650s, Cromwell had become the torpedo's main patron in Europe, with an eye toward its use in a second siege of La Rochelle. "Dr. [Johann Sibert] Kuffler . . . presents his service to you," Hartlib wrote Winthrop on March 16, 1660, "hearing that you had written to me, by the letter here inclosed":

He hath many excellent and usefull inventions which I cannot yett obtain that the publick should take notice of them. Only I sped in one towards the late Lord Pro[tecto]r

[Oliver Cromwell] which was to destroy ships in a moment which the Dr. made good near Deptford, to the great astonishment of all beholders; His highness was wonderfully affected with it, and would have done some great matters for him, but he soon died after. I shall send you God permitting the propositions and uses of all his undertakings by the next occasion.¹¹⁷

After the Lord Protector's death in 1658, however, first Richard Cromwell and then Charles II cut the Küffelers off. Not coincidentally, all talk of a return to La Rochelle was ended by Charles II, who had become the younger Winthrop's new and valued royal patron for the Connecticut Charter, which granted him New Netherland. Stuart interest in the New World was on the rise. Above all else, however, much had changed in Winthrop's approach to security since 1627. By 1655, his conceptions of international security and the declining value of fortresses conformed more closely to Palissy's than ever before. In a letter dated August 25, 1660, in response to Hartlib's offer of more details on J. S. Küffeler's latest experiments, Winthrop revealed just how far he had come: "I wish you could prevaile with Dr. Keffler to bury that fireworke (which you mention he would have made knowne) in oblivion and not by any meanes divulge it. There are means ynough already knowne to the world of ruin and destruction to mankind by sea and land."¹¹⁸ Having "bin at the Ile of Rue," Winthrop did not wish to return.

What, finally, did Winthrop make of Digby's double-edged play on his colonial status anxiety—both flattering and condescending—that asked for a return to "your native country," because "where you are, is too scanty a stage for you to remaine too long upon"? One might begin, with Forth Winthrop, by inquiring whether John Winthrop Jr. had ever really had a "native country." In his famous letter to his father of 1629, Winthrop wrote that every place seemed the same to him now, and that he would call home that place where he could be near his "dearest friends."

But even that seemingly innocuous phrase is problematic when wielded by a master dissimulator. For who *were* Winthrop's dearest friends: his family, the other "Puritans" from Suffolk in the New England Company, his transatlantic network of scientific correspondents spread all over the world, his laboratory apparatus, or perhaps, even most likely, his library of natural-philosophical books, which traveled with him wherever he went? This latter group of friends had no geographical limits, no "native land." As Forth was the first to recognize in his brother, Winthrop's "native land" was an interior, rustic, and natural place; that is, anywhere capable of camouflage, where his portable skills and experience could be carried in head, hand, and heart.

His rustic stage on the pluralistic borderlands of Long Island Sound, with access to abundant land, natural resources, and perhaps the Northwest Passage was simultaneously unified with the universal spirit, circulating everywhere in the Atlantic world

at once, just as it did in Stiles's portrait. From the perspective of colonial America, Digby's personal belief in a universal spirit that allowed the efficacy of the weapon salve—a belief that Winthrop, Howes, and Stiles shared—belied the need for a universal natural laboratory located specifically in London. The soulish energy that supported any universal project was available everywhere, it need only be channeled to the fortieth parallel to find "Christ and the Stone" and (in the words of the rustic potter) "multiply your treasures." At that latitude, Winthrop's heart was centered like Fludd's cosmological figure at the center of the microcosm, encompassing the universe within his reach. Just as Saintongeais Huguenots developed the skills to survive the apocalyptic loss of the regional fortress in 1628 and their subsequent dispersion into the Atlantic world, so too Winthrop's rustic New World periphery negated the primacy of "this Iland[']s" metropolitan core.

One of Sir Kenelm Digby's philosophical heroes, the French magistrate and Neoplatonist Jean d'Espagnet, elucidated the hermetic relationship of the universal spirit to the secret of the philosopher's stone in his book *Enchiridion physicae restitutae* (Paris, 1642). "Before the creation of the Universe [God] was a book rowld up in himself giving light onely to himself;" d'Espagnet explained:

but, as it were, travailing with the birth of the world, he unfolded himself, and that work which lay hid in the womb of his own mind, was manifested by extending it to view, and so brought forth the Ideal-world, as it were in the transcript of that divine Original, into an actual and material world . . . so that the extreames of the whole worke [are connected] by a secret bond [and] have a fast coherence between themselves through insensible mediums, and all Things do freely combine in obedience to their Supream Ruler.

Winthrop the Younger possessed a copy of d'Espagnet's book in his alchemical library.¹¹⁹ Written on the inside cover of Winthrop's tiny volume is an unusual spelling of his name "Johanes Winthrop" in what may be his own hand (or perhaps that of the friend who gave him the book as a gift), with John Dee's monas sign placed above it, bracketing the "th"—and hence joining the "east" and "west"—of "Win-th-rop," making Winthrop emblematic of a passage of unity (that is, the Northwest Passage) bisecting the center of his own name (fig. 11.3). Below "Johanes Winthrop," formed like a Latin declension, is a phrase identified as an "Anagr[am]," which reads: "I Hope Wins a Throne." Because an anagram is defined as a transposition of the letters of a word or name, whereby a new word, name, or phrase is formed, this breaking of the code was above all a performance of linguistic alchemy. The hidden truth had been distilled out from behind the dissimulation that overlaid the façade of "John Winthrop." Names were significant when transmuted into anagrams by alchemists, as they were thought to possess enormous prophetic power associated with the discovery of the philosopher's stone and the "naming" of an adept. Anagrams were thus frequently

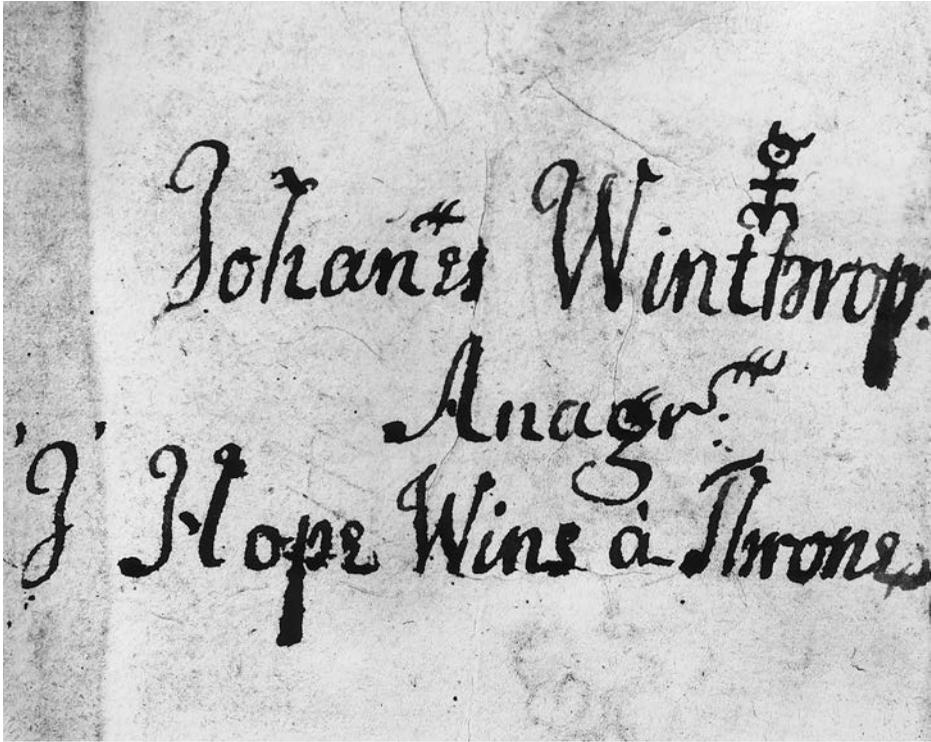


FIGURE 11.3. Anagram of “Johanes Winthrop” with the “th” surmounted by Dee’s monas sign, possibly by John Winthrop Jr., from his copy of *Enchiridion physicae restitutae* (Paris, 1642), a pivotal French Neoplatonic text on the mystical relationship between natural philosophy and hermeticism. Courtesy New York Academy of Medicine Library. Fludd interpreted the four unified elements of the sign to mean, bottom to top: *ignis* (fire); *elementa* (the elements); *sol* (the sun); and *luna* (the moon).

associated with geological excavation, and in the seventeenth century, they were often harnessed to Palissian figures of subterranean, prelapsarian life emerging from underneath the ruins of history. “Heaven descends into the Bowels of the Earth,” one commentator claimed in 1677, “and, to make up the Anagramm, the Graves open and the Dust ariseth.” “His body,” another wrote the next year, was like Fludd’s gargantuan microcosm, “that stupendous frame, Of all the world the anagram.”¹²⁰

The Johanas Winthrop anagram and our knowledge of its decoder’s ambitions suggest that the “throne” Winthrop hoped for was an adept’s, whose status as secret royalty among virtuosi would be acknowledged with the discovery of the Northwest Passage on the fortieth parallel. At the same time, he knew, the philosopher’s stone would be his and the gnostic circle squared in perpetuity. Thus, let us return for a final look at Winthrop’s physician’s chair, made in the Long Island Sound region shortly before Winthrop was elected the first colonial American member of the Royal Society (1661).

We do not know at what date Winthrop's copy of *Enchiridion* entered his library. It was published in 1642, so if he acquired the book within a few years of its publication, then he had already spent a decade on or about the fortieth parallel. That would suggest his hopes of finding the Northwest Passage were undiminished, and that he felt close to his goal. Certainly, it is also possible that he entered the anagram in *Enchiridion* much later, on the eve of becoming a member of the Royal Society.

Is it unreasonable to speculate that Winthrop chose precisely this volume in which to reveal himself because Jean d'Espagnet's (and by extension Kenelm Digby's) understanding of the universal spirit was analogous to that which Winthrop himself desired be made material in his "physician's chair?" Did not Stiles have representations of the motion of the universal spirit in mind when he sat for his portrait by King in 1771, hand over heart? Surely he knew where to aim his heart when he sat in Winthrop's chair, as he must have done at some point in his life, as an ultimate act of communion with the disembodied spirit of the dead alchemist.

Having begun with the "invisible" Edward Howes's memories of Winthrop "at the Île of Rue, and at Rochell," scattered among "the dust" of its dead, conjured across the Atlantic, it seems fitting for Howes to have the final word on the geography of the universal spirit:

But to our sympathetical business whereby we communicate our minds to one another though the diameter of the earth interpose . . . I would have you so good a geometrician as to know your own centre. Did you ever yet measure your everlasting self, the length of your life, the breadth of your love, the depth of your wisdom & the height of your light? Let Truth be your centre & you may do it, otherwise not. I could wish you could now begin to leave off being altogether an outward man . . . the Ruler can draw you straight lines from your centre to the confines of an infinite circumference, by which you may pass from any part of the circumference to another without obstacle of earth or section of lines, if you observe & keep but one & the true & only centre, to pass by it, from it, & to it.¹²¹

Winthrop's chair now stands empty in its museum, extending its original function to the present. When the American adept took his seat, he too became invisible.