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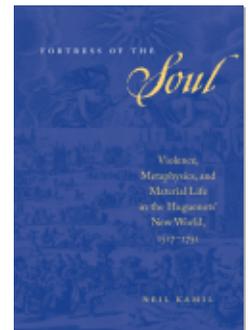
Fortress of the Soul

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Reflections on a Three-Legged Chair

Sundials, “Family Pieces,” and Political Culture in Pre-Revolutionary New York

In 1736, William Hogarth explored shadows cast by the gnomon of a metaphorical sundial over the hidden world of his Huguenot neighbors in London. In 1751, a copper sundial (figs. 17.1, 17.1a, 17.1b), was engraved in New York by Joseph Leddell Sr. (also Leddell) that turned the tables on Hogarth by reflecting light on the sun’s government of the fortieth parallel. A Huguenot engraver and pewterer with powerful anti-Catholic and anti-Jacobite political convictions, Leddell had connections to a French Calvinist artisanal network that may have originated in Saint-Malo. Leddell (1690?–1754) was actually born in England, to refugee parents in Hampshire, but he eventually resettled in New York, where he became a member of the city’s French Church.¹ The philosophical maxim used by Leddell to title his sundial, “Emblematical Figures Better Conceiv’d Than Express’d,” is particularly well suited to Huguenot themes. New York City’s coat of arms locates the New World’s future in the unity of its polyglot crucible, where scriptural text, transatlantic history, and prophecy are combined by alchemic processes. Like Vulcan at his forge, the emblem of the alchemic crucible transmutes artifacts of war into articles of mercantile commerce, not plowshares fit for the countryside.

References to war served multiple purposes. Above all, they were a gloss on the brutal experience of New Yorkers on the frontier with New France, where fighting had been going on since the seventeenth century. Such figures also attempted to distance the city’s Huguenots from local fears of conspiracy on the part of their French Catho-

lic counterparts by calling attention to the long history of their own sanctification by violence beginning with the civil wars of religion and ending with the final separation of the diaspora from absolutist France in 1685.

To reiterate millennial themes of unity amid the potential for conflict inherent in middle colonial heterodoxy and pluralism, the dial face is engraved in English, while the gnomon, which casts the shadow, has additional maxims about passing time in several languages on both sides. These are written in classical Latin and Greek as well as the city's three commonly used languages: Dutch, French, and English. Plays on social unity connect the gnomon's linguistic messages, which make sense if read together as couplets. Leddell's choice for his French maxim is joined—as were most Huguenot New Yorkers—to an English one above it. The English and French lines form a couplet on the gnomon's east side referring to the metaphysics of security, that most venerable of Huguenot artisanal themes: “Mans life is nought without divine protection / Si nous y faisons une serieuse reflection [*sic*] [If we give it serious reflection].” There can be little doubt that Leddell used “we” to associate his work with New York's Huguenots. All the more reason for “serious reflection” to have a double meaning in French (as in English); the phrase puns on contemplation and reflection (or perhaps being and appearance). When new, this copper gnomon was as highly polished as gold, casting shadows in sunlight at the same time as the maxims reflected off the luminous dial. Like *Noon*, “Emblematical Figures” on the Leddell dial also exist in a looking-glass world of shadow and reflection.

Sundials reminded readers in implicit and explicit ways that the earth merely reflects (and is animated by) the sun's light. At the same time, however, earthly creatures can only be seen fully in the daylight. It is for this reason, of course, that sundial chapter rings count the hours of daylight only from five in the morning until seven in the evening. Mechanical clocks like the one on Hogarth's church tower were necessary for telling time at night. This liability was the common subject of jokes and humorous reproaches engraved on the dials themselves. Didactic aphorisms were a form of serious play: reminders that habits of industry, politeness, and internal self-mastery, on display during the day, should remain constant, or else the baneful effects of an unexamined or unrestrained life—impoliteness, conspiracy, chaos, and corruption—can reassert control at night or remain hidden in shadow during the day. Imperceptible behavior thus operates secretly outside the sun's (or the state's) “regulative power.”

Supported on columns of Justice and Virtue, the two stanzas of verse engraved on Leddell's dial invoke a range of pieties that underscore social harmony and its connection with the daily rising of the sun. With the sunrise, mankind's industriousness can be timed to coincide exactly with the calm dispassion of a mechanistic cosmos. But the sundial cannot possibly reflect what transpires on earth between seven o'clock at night and five in the morning. In the absence of light, “this machine” loses both the

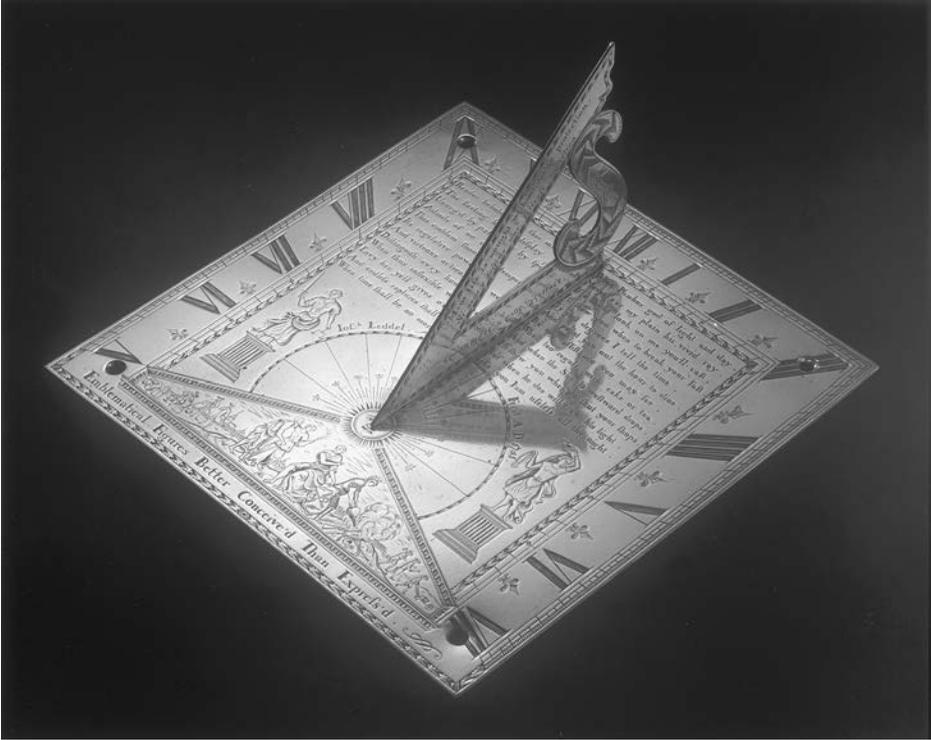


FIGURE 17.1. Joseph Leddell Sr. (1690?–1754), copper sundial, New York City, 1751. H: $4\frac{5}{8}$ " , W: $9\frac{1}{4}$ ". Courtesy Henry Francis du Pont Winterthur Museum, Winterthur, Delaware. Visual and textual messages are engraved over the surface of the dial and its gnomon to promote political, temporal, linguistic, and religious pacifism in pluralistic New York City during an age of imperial warfare and factional competition. The main frieze depicts interaction and friendly commerce through trade and Roman soldiers turning swords into plowshares in the republican period. Leddell, a Huguenot refugee, engraved multiple texts about time, industry, and God's protection in a confluence of Latin, Dutch, Greek, French, and English to reflect his context but also to refute accusations by critics of its many non-English ethnicities that New York City was a modern Babel. (a) and (b): A dog chases a rabbit up and down the gnomon's serpentine bracket; a playful comment in the age of Hogarth on the perpetual interaction of time with the macrocosm and microcosm.

source of its power and its audience. "Like" the spectator, it is resigned to a "useless" half-life that invites disorder, lassitude, and (ribald) dysfunction:

Reader behold how this machine,
The fleeting hours display.
Unurg'd by passion, or by spleen,
Admits of no delay.
This emblem should our tempers give

When Phaebus god of Light and day,
Moves o'er my plain his vivid ray.
If a slight look on me you'll cast.
I'll shew you when to break your fast
By just degrees I tell the time.



(a)



(b)

Its regulative power.	And point you out the hour to dine.
And virtuous action while we live	By my assistance you may see,
Distinguish ev'ry hour.	When too regale with cake or tea.
When thus inflexible we'r found,	And when the Sun to westward drops.
Envy her yell gives o'er,	I'll shew you when to shut your shops.
And endles raptures shall us	But when he dos withdraw his crown, light,
When time shall be no more.	Like you I am useless all the night.

Leddell's production of instruments of natural philosophy was not unique in the city. Another eighteenth-century New York dial maker who was conspicuous for having the widest range of technical and scientific skills (in addition to engraving) was an Irish manual philosopher named Christopher Colles (1739–1816). Colles settled in Manhattan in 1774, after three relatively anonymous years in Philadelphia. What little we know of Colles's sojourn in Philadelphia dates from August 26, 1771, when the newly arrived immigrant from Ireland advertised his intention in the *Pennsylvania Chronicle* to “instruct young Gentlemen . . . in the different Branches of . . . Mathematics and Natural Philosophy.” There was much competition in Philadelphia among a well-established group of talented scientists and instrument makers—including Franklin and Benjamin Rittenhouse—so New York must have offered more plausible opportunities.

Because Colles's natural-philosophical interests focused primarily on experiments in hydraulic engineering, he sought patronage in New York for ambitious waterworks projects, while laboring to establish a day-to-day market for engraving and domestic scientific instruments made in direct competition with English imports. It is possible that the two enterprises were connected, since Colles may have produced sundials as gifts—to solicit subscriptions or other forms of patronage for his waterworks projects—as well as for sale. Nevertheless, only four Colles sundials are known to survive, in part because the vast majority of sundials used in early America were imported from England, and they were, in any event, simply discarded as out of fashion by the early nineteenth century. Mostly, however, the survival rate is low because Colles made his dials from the cheapest base metal available in the colony, locally mined paper-thin copper, with a wrought-iron gnomon loosely attached with a rivet at either end. When placed outside in the elements, the copper and iron tended to corrode, come apart, break free of rusted iron attachments to the dial post, and eventually disappear altogether into the refuse pit. While it is impossible to extrapolate Colles's output over the course of a forty-two-year-long career, the mere fact that four of these flimsy devices survived at all suggests that it was substantial. Moreover, he clearly had expectations of success, since the dials were engraved for reference of future patrons, as “fecit” (made by him), at “No 42 Pearl Str[eet] New York.”²²



FIGURE 17.2. Christopher Colles (Ireland, 1739–New York, 1816), copper and iron sundial, New York City, 1774–1816. Private collection. Photo, Christopher Zaleski. H: $5\frac{1}{4}$ ", W: $8\frac{3}{4}$ ", D: $8\frac{3}{4}$ ". The dial is signed "Chris Colles fecit No 42 Pearl St. New York." Colles arrived in New York City from Philadelphia in 1774 and promoted himself as a hydraulic engineer, mathematician, and natural philosopher. He may have made sundials as gifts to promote patronage for his many waterworks projects, including a network of pipelines underneath the city's streets. This project showed promise but ended with the British occupation of New York during the Revolution. Whereas the poem on the front of Leddell's dial (fig. 17.1) ends with the line, "Like you I am useless all the night," engraved on the back of Colles's dial is the phrase "I fly while you sleep." Both sentiments were playful reminders that time's secret life goes on in the shadows.

When Colles took up Leddell's humorous lament about the perceptual limitations of sundials, he did so far more succinctly than his Huguenot counterpart. Atop the most complete surviving dial (fig. 17.2), Colles engraved daytime's motto in Latin, "Dum spectas fugio" ("Watch [me] fly while you can"). This suggested that a playful dialogue was under way with the unseen portion of the back of the dial. There he engraved nighttime's arch response in English, "I fly while you sleep."³

“A slight look . . . cast” at Leddell’s sundial, perhaps situated on a dial post in the herb and medicinal garden just outside the door, must have had the daily effect of a subliminal précis of Benjamin Franklin’s *Poor Richard Improved* (Philadelphia, 1763), or even his *Autobiography*. Both were elite texts adopting quotidian (often artisanal) poses. All attempted to lock in emblemata that “governed” social and astronomical harmony between microcosm and macrocosm, embodied by the relentless timing of industrious labor in support of the prevailing natural and ideological order.⁴ The sundial displayed patrons’ Enlightenment ideology conjoining time and natural law, but Leddell’s personal and religious history was far too byzantine, and his pluralistic “readers” in New York City (as the sundial itself reminds us) were too much a part of a complex social milieu, for Leddell to be reduced to a mere cipher for the dominant order.

The best evidence that Leddell’s work defined hierarchies of loyalty is drawn from an extraordinary group of his engravings on silver, which show that the mental world of a Huguenot living in mid eighteenth-century New York was still intensely historical and deeply rooted in seminal Reformation events of seventeenth-century Europe. Leddell’s artifacts display fear of the continuing threat to overthrow the Protestant Hanoverian dynasty in England with, in effect, the reversal of the Glorious Revolution of 1688, plotted by Catholic supporters of Charles Stuart, the grandson of the deposed James II. With the obvious exception of books, overtly polemical artifacts that are known to have been made and used (here remade and reused) domestically, or even in ritual settings, by the same Huguenot artisan and his family rarely survive.

❧ A Language of Remembering ❧

However, a silver beaker with anti-Jacobite iconography (figs. 17.3a, b, and c) made about the same time as his sundial is one such artifact. Its provenance indicates Leddell had a deeply personal stake in its idiosyncratic design and manufacture as a relic of the Huguenot historical past, a guide to the present, and a prophesy of a bleak future that might cause a return to the dangers of the past once again. By the 1750s, Huguenot artisans such as Leddell felt less threatened by the inscription of an overt iconographic narrative on diasporic artifacts that were previously left silent, “plain,” or natural.” Earlier artisans who suffered a great deal in their refugee experience, such as Palissy, were constrained by sophisticated Nicodemite strategies that emerged out of fear of violent reprisal. Shunning openness, these artisans sought to communicate indirectly, through hidden artisanal languages they understood to be available in certain natural materials.

It is therefore a remarkable homage to changing contexts that the beaker has out-sized images of the devil, the pope, and the pretender (Charles Stuart) engraved all around, rendered in the anachronistic caricatured style of the Germanic Reformation’s mannerist woodcut. These woodcuts were cheap, widely diffused instruments of popu-

lar anti-papal propaganda, perhaps the most instantly recognizable prints in the history of early modern Europe. The beaker itself was neither of American manufacture nor engraved when first made. Rather, it was made “plain,” in 1707 in Saint-Malo, France, by a provincial Huguenot silversmith named Huges Loissieux. Leddell inherited it from his parents—who, unlike him, had been persecuted in France—and carried it with him as a sacred family heirloom from the Old World to New York, where he himself added the engraving in 1750. Because the beaker remained in the possession of the Leddells in an unbroken line of descent to modern times, it served the personal use of the maker and his descendants, possibly for private communion at home, with family members and friends. Leddell attested in French to his work as “sculp”[ter] (“carver”), along with his name and the date, all of which are engraved on its bottom, next to the original Loissieux shop mark.

Perhaps Leddell left the French maker’s mark behind as a vague reminder that its former history in France and England paralleled his own family’s history and travels, showing also that his additions were not without foundation, but built on top of the sanctified experience of the beaker’s original maker.⁵ His mark superimposed on that of his predecessor, therefore, functioned as a palimpsest of refugee life. Hence, a formerly silent old cup from Saint-Malo was refashioned by a Huguenot artisan in mid eighteenth-century New York, where it now retold an old Reformation story in a languages that were universally recognizable, albeit on a private artifact of Huguenot family memory. Here, the devil drags a chain attached to the pope’s nose, first through a doorway marked “Death,” signified by the “Raw-Head and Bloody-Bones,” and then down into the flaming mouth of hell. There, the Stuart pretender (in a Scottish tartan) follows prayerfully behind the pope Anti-Christ, with their necks yoked together in a noose drawn through a gibbet marked: “Danger.” This evil procession allowed for space behind the pretender. Thus, if England and America were harnessed by the neck to Charles Stuart as their monarch, it would be the equivalent of marching in lockstep behind the damned into hell. Like most sixteenth-century Reformation prints, the beaker’s engraved images from 1750 mingle easily with written text. Unlike prototypes published during the wars of religion, Leddell admonished friends and family—perhaps at the moment of the Lord’s Supper—to “Remember” when they handled the relic. His engravings were living updates, not “dead-letter” anachronisms:

Three mortal enemies *Remember*
The Devil Pope and the Pretender
Most wicked damnable and evil
The Pope Pretender and the Devil
I wish they were all hang’d in a rope
The Pretender Devil and the Pope

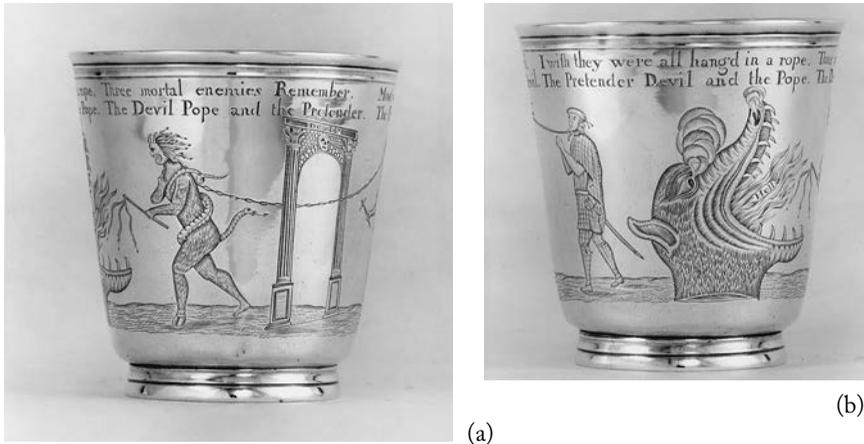


FIGURE 17.3. (a) (b) (c) French Huguenot silver beaker depicting the devil leading the pope and the pretender into the mouth of hell, made in blank form by Hugues Lossieux, in Saint-Malo, France, around the time of the Revocation of the Edict of Nantes, and subsequently engraved by Joseph Leddell Sr. in New York City in 1750. Courtesy Museum of the City of New York. H: $3\frac{1}{16}$ ". Leddell reanimated this old family relic from the period of the *désert* by engraving it in the style of seventeenth-century Reformation propaganda to depict his perception of a continuous personal threat to religious and political liberty, from the Old World to the New.

French Calvinists had complex relationships with their kings, and Huguenot discourse on monarchy could vary greatly from moment to moment and by region in the transatlantic world. It ranged from a minority of so-called radical “monarchomachs” (or king-killers) on one end of the spectrum to unapologetic royalists on the other. Moderates, or “politiques,” occupied shifting ground in the middle. Loyalties to monarchs divided families. After the Revocation, many Huguenots still attached strong emotional attachments and political hopes to the mystical body of their king, though the individual who inhabited his secular body may have been despised.

In New York City in the 1750s, Leddell harnessed his family’s loyalty to the Hanoverian kings. He saw the return of a Catholic pretender to the throne as the greatest threat to British-American Huguenots, and the guarantee against this happening was a strong monarchy.⁶ By extension, Leddell joined the royal governor’s colonial clientage network. Huguenot artisans learned much from personal experience and family history in the dangerous internecine political battles of sixteenth-century France. They learned how loyalty to patrons tied to the established order of the moment could sometimes be seen as resistance, and loyalties to patrons were similarly flexible in mid eighteenth-century New York. That is why it is difficult to consider Leddell’s loyalty to the Georgian kings separately from the specifics of his artisanal admonition: “remember” the past. As Leddell’s near contemporary Paul Rapin de Thoyras demonstrated in his *History of England*, Huguenots throughout the Atlantic



(c)

world attached enormous providential significance to the Glorious Revolution. Rapin's *History* equates the momentous landing and subsequent installment of William and Mary on the throne with Julius Caesar's landing in ancient Britain. The year 1688 was thus Year One of a prophetic narrative that began with Louis XIV's impending defeat by William, followed by the reversal of the Revocation of the Edict of Nantes, and ending with the exiles' victorious return to France. When these events did not transpire as predicted, Rapin abandoned England for the Hague, and finally Wesel, where he subsisted on a pension from William III until his death in 1725. Despite their disappointment that the ultimate promise of the Glorious Revolution was not fulfilled by William of Orange, diasporic Huguenots of Leddell's generation remembered the significance of 1688 and nurtured millennial hopes of an eventual return to France behind a combined Anglo-French army led by a new English Calvinist warrior-king.

But any analysis of Leddell's worldview must also take into account his elevated status as an artisan who supplied the luxury trades, if only because he had access to coin and other forms of precious metal. Like most successful New York silversmiths, he was obliged by his business to maintain strong commercial and political ties with the city's English elites, while at the same time absorbing styles and fashions from the metropolis into his decorative vocabulary. Taken together, Leddell's motivations for crafting goods that idealized the submission of New York's factional groups to the natural order and "regulative power" of the cosmos are too complex to categorize neatly. That Calvinists were motivated by the sublimation of "passion . . . spleen . . . [and] tempers" (these are Leddell's words) into work must also find its proper place here. The negative experience of violent passions was recorded for posterity as a fundamental trope of Huguenot historiography, which was itself simultaneously a martyrology of victims. Huguenot historiography was a narrative of the baneful effects of centuries of "spleen [and] tempers"—Palissy's disordered "esmotions." Huguenots had learned to construct stories about tragic consequences that resulted from emotional

disharmony, and to extend narratives of “memories” of victimization—so central to Huguenot identity as a diasporic culture—into Leddell’s time.

Memory narratives of the dispersion were written in Europe and the Americas until well into the nineteenth century and provided the textual basis for founding Huguenot societies throughout the world.⁷ Still, it seems problematic that “Emblematical Figures Better Conceive’d Than Express’d” was Leddell’s axiom for manual philosophy in New York, if for no other reason than that its logic about the limited expression of metaphor underscored the limitations of the sundial’s message in social practice. While Leddell’s rhetoric traces the naturalness and hence the universality of “regulative power” as it flowed from God to God’s allegorical figures—the sun and the king—the logic of his axiom automatically acknowledges its limitations.

As Leddell admits—and Hogarth demonstrates—the dial’s “governing” paradigm for the regulation of time is complicated by the rules of practice, where everything is negotiable. Just as the normative rules “expressed” by sundials disappear during the night, so too metaphorical philosophies espoused by “this machine” can be as elusive in light of day as the shadows on Hog Lane. Indeed, one reason Leddell claimed a specific definition of this axiom was his realization that in practice the range of possible meanings ascribed to emblematic figures of the natural world were as multiple and fluid as they were tacit. All were “conceive’d” on the basis of invisible personal, cultural, and historical memories. Leddell also announces a strategy that social convergence around a natural-philosophical master narrative was accommodated under certain conditions in New York, but only if tacit agreement existed on a metaphorical level beyond language (and hence beyond debate).

❖ Natural Light and Imperial Politics ❖

However, reading the sundial’s axiom as part of a larger discursive context, its maker and patron could not have been complacent about the universal acceptance of mechanistic natural philosophy and its political ramifications in New York City. The dial’s mechanistic discourse blends seamlessly with language used by members of a mid eighteenth-century political faction that believed in the naturalness of royal prerogative in the colonial context. This faction was conscious of the problematic nature of achieving this worldview in practice, fearing disorder caused by rejection of the prerogative in New York. Leddell’s engravings can thus be linked to a program to neutralize assembly power and domesticate monarchical notions of order and security by inserting Whitehall’s ideas about the nature of prerogative, mediated by “Master” artisans but unsullied by the assembly, directly into the homes and private spaces of New Yorkers.

The metaphorical language of “emblematic figures” originated with Renaissance humanism and had important seventeenth-century antecedents in colonial New En-

gland. This language was firmly reactivated in New York politics during the early 1750s—just when the sundial was made—and written into polemical tracts that supported the immutability of royal prerogative (and the power of royal governors) in order to resist steady encroachment on it by the lower houses of colonial legislatures.⁸

With the British imperial administrator and mercantilist Archibald Kennedy's "From an Assembly We Have Everything to Fear" in his *Essay on the Government of the Colonies* (New York, 1752), a monarchist jeremiad was launched by this city customs collector of over twenty years' standing against privileges taken by the powerful and obstreperous New York assembly. "The design of the Settlement was the Extension of Commerce," Kennedy insisted, to clarify the assembly's willful misreading of its proper place in New York Colony's institutional history, "not the Foundation of a City, or a new Empire." Kennedy's criticism of the New York assembly's imperial ambitions in competition with the crown resonates with the growth of local artisanal production. Yet Leddell and other successful New York tradesmen also knew that Kennedy was sometimes an ally who had defended to his superiors in England the right of New York's artisans to expand their manufactures in the face of growing imperial policies demanding cutbacks or interdiction. This may have been cause for political alliances.⁹ Still, at around the same time as his tract was published, or perhaps a decade or so earlier, an anonymous New York painter completed a rustic image of Romulus and Remus (fig. 17.4). Given the context of Kennedy's complaint, it is not far-fetched to suggest that the painting depicts precisely the sort of conception of the founding of an empire in New York that Kennedy warned against. In addition, the painter seems to use the Roman foundational myth as a call for political and cultural inclusiveness as the basis for empire building in the city. Here the orphan Romulus is received into the "open household" of the shepherd Faustulus, who presents him to his wife, Acca Larentia, gesturing an exorbitant welcome.

It follows, then, that what Kennedy called the "Fundamental Law" of colonies was meant to supersede indigenous authority and so was properly called the "Law of Europe."¹⁰ For Kennedy, this meant law devolved directly from the monarch to colonial British America and that the multilayered imperial system was an instrument of royal prerogative. The king's laws were a benevolence extended as a gift to his English subjects in New York and were exercised directly through the offices of the royal governor—the king's chosen surrogate—and not the assembly, which diffused the purity of the original intention through pluralism and private interest. Unruly individuals wishing to advance personal agendas in pursuit of social and economic liberty did so at the expense of the whole, which, for Kennedy, stood to benefit most from the monarch's natural sense of order.

Liberties thus subverted the royal prerogative, accumulated unnaturally over time, and were finally institutionalized as inviolable assembly privileges. The exercise of royal



FIGURE 17.4. Unknown artist in the circle of Gerardus Duyckinck I (1695–1746), *Romulus and Remus Received into the Household of the Shepherd Faustulus and His Wife Acca Larentia*. H: 12" × W: 18". Oil on canvas with original stretcher of American white pine. Probably New York City, ca. 1700–30. Private collection. Photo, Christopher Zaleski. Another scene from early Roman history to which a New York artist drew parallels. Here the rustic theme infers that adopting refugees will, in time, make New York City a new Rome.

prerogative, which Kennedy thought natural, was perceived as negotiable by his political opponents. The constant state of hurly-burly that characterized negotiation over political power in New York was the cause of Kennedy's despair. Because disorder was, for Kennedy, an unnatural state, his rhetoric uses a variant of the microcosm/macrocosm analogy to satisfy his desperate desire to restrain social chaos and fluidity through a fictional consensus based on metaphors of "natural Prerogative":

The Commission and Instructions directed to his Excellency the Governor, but intended for the Good of the Whole; which, by the Bye, I cannot help thinking, that if they were in every Body's Hands, as a Family-Piece or House Bible, and not scooped up like the *Sibylline Oracles*, to which Recourse was only had upon extraordinary Emergency, it might be of mighty Use; the People would become acquainted and in Love with their Constitution! they would there see through the Whole, the benevolent Intentions of our most gracious Sovereign the King, and our Mother-Country: Whereas, at present, they are

represented, by some of our Dealers in Politicks, as big with that Monster, *Prerogative*, a Thing which some of our weak Members are taught to dread as much as ever Children were that of *Raw-Head and Bloody-Bones*. Thus by wicked Instruments, for wicked Purposes, are weak Minds imposed upon; for whose Sake I shall endeavor to explain the Word, which, I doubt, is but ill understood.¹¹

Using antiquarian strategies developed to argue opposing positions by the great seventeenth-century English parliamentarian and legal historian Sir Edward Coke (“The Oracle of Law,” as he was called by New York’s eighteenth-century historian and legal scholar William Smith),¹² Kennedy found ample historical precedent for royal prerogative in the Americas. He “explain[ed] the Word” philologically by tracing its origins beyond the earliest colonial governments chartered under Elizabeth, back through Henry VII and Sebastian Cabot, to speculation on Carthaginian sources. Predictably, after citing papers written in the powerfully symbolic year of 1664 by the famously autocratic Governor John Endicott (1588–1665) of Massachusetts Bay Colony, Kennedy settled on an authoritarian and paternalistic reading of Calvinist prerogative in relatively homogeneous seventeenth-century New England, while asserting the unifying value of a similar definition for pluralistic New York Colony. From this definition, he extrapolated the historical existence of a tacit colonial consensus—the unwritten foundation of an American ancient constitution—that confirmed tacit and customary rules of obedience to the king. This was “expressed” “emblematically” by the most basic Calvinist symbol for patriarchal authority available, the father’s preeminent place as ruler in his household or shop. These tacit rules remained unfixed because their variety was as mysterious and infinite as there were numbers of households or shops, even as the contexts in which they usually applied were face-to-face and informal.

But if codification was “impossible,” it was also unnecessary. The symbolic language of natural prerogative had stood the test of time. It had shown itself to be all-encompassing, flexible enough to accommodate the infinite variety of everyday life. It was, to gloss Leddell, as unnatural as delaying time to negotiate “The Father[‘s] or Master[‘s]” authority in the household; just as “His Majesty, as he is our political Father, his political Prerogative, from the like Circumstances and Reasons, is equally necessary.” By both natural law and custom, this universal symbol of convergence was “perfectly understood” by every family. “And this political Authority has been allowed the supreme Director, in all States, in all Ages, and in all Places.” Thus, Kennedy continued, “if I may be allowed to compare small Things with great,”¹³ the natural prerogative to rule both “little” and “larger” governments was intertwined, because in either world, only one individual could effectively bestow justice on the plurality:

There is, in every Family, a Sort of Government without any fixed Rules; and indeed it is impossible, even in a little Family, to form Rules for every Circumstance; *and therefore it*

is better conceived than expressed [emphasis added]; but perfectly understood by every Individual belonging to the Family. The Study of the Father or Master, is for the Good of the Whole; all Appeals are to him; he has a Power, from the Reason and Nature of Things, to check the Insolent, or Indolent, and to encourage the Industrious: In short, the whole affairs of the Family are immediately under the Care or Direction of the Father or Master; and this is a natural Prerogative, known and acknowledged by every Man living, who has ever had a Family, in all Ages and in all Places. His Majesty, as he is our political Father, his political Prerogative, from the like Circumstances and Reasons, is equally necessary. And this political Authority has been allowed the supreme Director, in all States, in all Ages, and in all Places; and without it, there would be a Failure of Justice.¹⁴

When Kennedy added a third layer to form a tripartite analogy of king with father *and* master, he cleverly extended the conceptual framework of “We Have Everything to Fear.” Now he included Leddell and diverse other New York master artisans—whose craft and economic interests he supported in England—on yet another level of ideology and patronage. Kennedy saw the economic and cultural common ground between elite patrons and the city’s unusually heterogeneous group of masters as a useful bridge linking royal prerogative with the lower orders of urban artisanal labor. This included journeymen, indentured servants, apprentices, and, after the slave rebellion of 1741, New York’s large, mobile, and threatening society of slave artisans as well.

Less conventionally “political,” but more provocative from the viewpoint of both the early modern transatlantic history of New York’s refugee artisans and their artifactual record, on the one hand, and the synthesis of synchronic (universal) and diachronic (local) time contained in Leddell’s sundial, on the other, is Kennedy’s deceptively quotidian wish: “by the Bye, I cannot help thinking, that if [the governor’s instructions from Whitehall] were in every Body’s Hands, as a Family-Piece or House Bible, and not . . . only had upon extraordinary Emergency, it might be of mighty Use; the People would become acquainted and in Love with their Constitution! *they would there see through the Whole*” (emphasis added). Kennedy proposed the domestication of contentious political discourse in the form of benign everyday artifacts, so common as to appear almost invisible. Quietly discursive things would extend cosmological ideas from the central authority into colonial households in ways that would invite casual acquiescence by circumventing standard forms of political resistance. One wonders how much Kennedy’s published wish reflected processes that were already under way in New York’s material culture, or whether he intended a new challenge to the city’s artisans on the lookout for powerful patronage.

To be sure, the parallels between Kennedy’s language of the benign transparency of paternalistic intentions and the reflective and instrumental function claimed by Leddell’s quotidian artifact, which merely synchronized the mechanical nature of man, are

striking in both chronology and rhetoric. Consider the functional precision with which man matched universal messages directed from “this machine” of God’s macrocosm (the sun’s rays) to every locality in the dial’s adjustable microcosmic context. To decode the mystery of cosmic convergence, it was a simple matter to adjust the angle of the gnomon to the latitude of its geographical setting (as in Leddell’s and Colles’s gnomons, which are set permanently to Winthrop’s mystical latitude of 40°, which bisects New York City). Consider, as well, that Leddell’s playful pun on the French phrase *serieuse reflection*, may have been associated with the following passages from Kennedy: “If any impartial Thinker, or indeed that can think at all, would give himself the Trouble *seriously to reflect*, and *compare our present Situation and Constitution, with any other upon the Face of the Earth* [emphasis added], I am confident he would determine in our Favour.”¹⁵ Leddell crafted just such a situational instrument, to provide a context in which to consider and reflect upon these comparisons minute by minute.

In the end, however, Kennedy’s rhetorical “confidence” in the transparent purity of the theory of royal prerogative was shaken by the instability of liberty in practice. “Family-Pieces” made by Leddell and his co-religionists were potentially useful political instruments, but Kennedy knew that without complicitous readers, artifacts were in themselves unpersuasive. Private messages could not be controlled. Objects were insufficient to fill “thoughtless, unwary Country-men” with knowledge of the tacit natural relationships revealed in the “whole” of “Emblematic Figures Better Conceiv’d Than Express’d.” Metaphorical relationships could not be contained whole within one confined symbolic system. Instruments reflecting the polish of royal prerogative in autonomous domestic settings had crude but successful competition in the assembly among “Perverters of it.” While New York’s heads of households might acquiesce to Kennedy’s analogy of kingship to patriarchy, there was no guarantee that such a heterogeneous group would rule like Hanoverian monarchs, or even like one another. That is why the author’s contempt for his colony’s consumers “of our Dealers in Politics . . . [those] wicked Instruments, for wicked Purposes,” was unvarnished. New Yorkers who perceived virtue in muddled and subversive assembly rhetoric and a multiplicity of laws and interests, rather than clarity in royal prerogative, were “weak Minds imposed upon.” The cause of this weakness was “our Liberty . . . it must infallibly indanger our Constitution.”¹⁶ Thus “We Have Everything to Fear” from the loss of reciprocity and balance in the cosmological machine caused by contention and disorder. Instability in the microcosm threatened retribution from the king or an angry God, for Kennedy, the primary agents of government regulation between the two worlds. Kennedy reasoned that the danger to New York lay in its ever-present work-in-progress state of fluidity and becoming. Moreover, he represented the threat in a stunning paraphrase from Jeremiah, of the famous analogy God draws between himself and a potter at his wheel in the process of making and remaking a clay vessel: “We

are but yet, as it were, in the Hands of the Potter; in a probationary State of Good-Behavior; if we totter upon three Legs, he can add or diminish, or turn us off in whatever Shape he pleases; and who dare say, *What doest thou?*¹⁷

Did Kennedy perhaps borrow this asymmetrical image from Jonathan Swift, whose “A Beautiful Young Nymph Going to Bed (Written for the Honour of the Fair Sex, in 1731)” explores the disjunction between appearance and reality: “Corinna, pride of Drury Lane, / For whom no shepherd sighs in vain . . . seated on a three-legg’d Chair / Takes off her artificial Hair . . . / Untwists a Wire; and from her Gums / A Set of Teeth completely comes”?

Huguenot artisans and exegetics of the *désert* experience from Palissy to Leddell would recognize the source of Kennedy’s analogy in the prophetic narrative of God’s assessment of the punishments and possibilities for redemption awaiting unfaithful Israelites in Jeremiah:

For in the day that I brought them out of the land of Egypt, I did not speak to your fathers. . . . But this command I gave them, Obey my voice, I will be your God, and you shall be my people; and walk in all the ways that I command you, that it may be well with you. But they did not obey or incline their ear, but walked in their own counsels and the stubbornness of their evil hearts, and went backward and not forward. (Jer. 7:22–24)

[Then] word . . . came to Jeremiah from the Lord: Arise and go down to the potter’s house, and there I will let you hear my words. So I went down to the potter’s house, and there he was working at his wheel. And the vessel he was making of clay was spoiled in the potter’s hand, and he reworked it into another vessel, as it seemed good to the potter to do so. The word of the Lord came to me: O house of Israel, can I not do with you as this potter has done? says the Lord. Behold, like the clay in the potter’s hand, so are you in my hand, O house of Israel. If at any time I declare concerning a nation or a kingdom, that I will pluck up and break down and destroy it, and if that nation, concerning which I have spoken, turns from its evil, I will repent of the evil I intended to do it. (Jer. 18:1–8)

While Kennedy dared not ask God the potter, *What doest thou?* to stabilize the fearful three-legged disequilibrium of “an over Ballance of Power,” Palissy, the philosophical potter, actively reconstructed the materials of divine knowledge in a quotidian, artisanal synthesis of macrocosm and microcosm. Combining words and things to document his self-conscious heroism in rebuilding the metaphysical monism by hand, something that seemed impossible after the Fall separated the cosmos, Palissy’s artisanal history of Saintonge was also written from the perspective of the postlapsarian potter in Jeremiah. His too was a history of the dispersion of God’s chosen people. Palissy labored to “pluck up and break down and destroy” his shape-shifting vessels in the furnace. Innovation had required these forms to be “spoiled . . . [and] reworked

. . . into another vessel,” momentarily disappearing into tiny, overlooked fragments, but like the chosen people of the book, never allowed to vanish altogether. Still, if Kennedy’s jeremiad inveighed against the vessel of New York City as an imperfect work in progress, he remained hopeful that if not destroyed prematurely by the chaos of everyday life, it might be perfected in time.

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