

A KEY FOR THE GATE: ROGER WILLIAMS, PARLIAMENT, & PROVIDENCE

I: INTRODUCTION

Among the first generation of English settlers in New England, Roger Williams is one of the most appealing figures for present-day readers. In contrast to contemporaries whose names are bywords for intolerance, Williams is hailed as a prophet of tolerance; in contrast to neighbors who could imagine relations with Indians only in terms of killing them or converting them, Williams is celebrated for his efforts to understand the natives of America. Thus, a 1991 biography of Williams asserts that while he “had no hand in writing the First Amendment, [he] “would have taken great pleasure in its guarantees.”¹ In the context of Euro-Indian relations, the ethno-historian James Axtell contends that Williams knew the Indians “better than anyone else,” and that he was among the first to suggest that “English had no monopoly on virtue” and even that Indians were “more Christian than Christians.”²

These views of Williams as an advocate for native Americans and for religious liberty are supported by his two best-known works, A Key into the Language of America, an account of the New England Indians, and The Bloody Tenent, a defense of religious freedom. However, scholars tend to interpret the achievements of A Key into the Language of America in a different vein from the achievements of The Bloody Tenent and Williams’s other polemical works. Thus, there are two separate ways in which scholars celebrate Williams: for his racial understanding and for his religious toleration.

¹ Edwin Gaustad, Liberty of Conscience: Roger Williams in America (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 1991), p. xi.

² James Axtell, The European and the Indian (New York: Oxford University Press, 1981), pp. 135, 203.

Yet simply identifying Williams as the herald of these qualities for later generations can blind us to the nature of Williams's achievement in his own time. Williams's contribution was not simply that he espoused or embodied the acceptance of religious or cultural difference, but that he created a space where these principles of tolerance could be put into action. Without an instrument of civil government for Providence Plantations, Williams's admirable opinions would have found no means of expression. In this light, I argue that the most important achievement in Williams's career is not the Bloudy Tenent or the Key, but the charter he secured from Parliament for Providence Plantations in 1644.

This paper traces the importance of Williams's London publications to this effort. The grant of this instrument of government from Parliament was the product of Williams's sustained campaign in revolutionary London, a mission framed by the publication of the Key in September 1643, shortly after his arrival, and the Bloudy Tenent in the summer of 1644, at the time of his departure. The Providence charter not only preserved the territory of Providence Plantations from a rival claim made by Thomas Weld and Hugh Peter on behalf of Massachusetts, but it also permitted the religious liberty and cultural toleration for which Williams is celebrated. In an historical context, examining Williams's mission to England and his suit for the charter reveals the discursive construction of Providence Plantations through books and pamphlets as it prevails over the more traditionally based claims of the Massachusetts Bay Colony.

Without this warrant for a piece of American soil, Roger Williams might well have been either another pamphleteer in England or another frustrated dissident in New England, both crowded fields in the 1640s. However, instead of returning to England,

like Thomas Morton and William Pyncheon, or abandoning the cause of dissent, like the Antinomians who stayed in Boston, Williams intervened not only in New English, but also English affairs. Through the texts he published during his 1643-44 stay in London, Williams forged connections between his troubles in New England and England's civil turmoil. Cultivating this trans-Atlantic authorial identity, Williams was able to marshal A Key into The Language of America, the texts of his debates with John Cotton, and two other pamphlets in the successful defense of his tiny settlement on the shores of Narragansett Bay. More specifically, Roger Williams was able to satisfy his millennial idealism by engaging with the intellectual trends that were then circulating in London among the overseers and underwriters of American colonies; within the pansophic philosophy promulgated by Jan Amos Comenius and popular among Parliamentary leaders, Williams found a literary form he could use to revise English conceptions of Native Americans.

Re-reading Williams's early writings as part of an integrated political campaign to preserve Providence Plantations from the Bay Colony's territorial ambitions does more than simply clarify his efforts on behalf of his colony— it must change the way we read collateral documents from neighboring colonies, especially from Massachusetts. It is true enough that the good citizens of Boston, in Perry Miller's words, "failed to rivet the eyes of the world upon their city on a hill," but Williams's triumph over Weld and Peter reminds us that John Winthrop and his crew were not "left alone with America," but rather faced constant challenges to the polity, ecclesiology, and survival of their colony.³

³ Perry Miller, "Errand into the Wilderness," in Errand into the Wilderness (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1956), p. 15.

Moreover, the success of Williams's suit to Parliament demonstrates the heterogeneous and polemical evolution of the English colonies and points out the limitations of any view of Puritan New England as a hegemonic entity able to fortify itself by feasting on dissent, as Philip Gura and Stephen Foster suggest.⁴ As Roger Williams's errand to London indicates, by 1644, a range of heterogeneous views of New England were competing for metropolitan attention and credit.

In his analysis of the trans-Atlantic forces that shaped Puritanism, Foster identifies the creation of an "imaginative context" as one of the fundamental accomplishments of Puritanism.⁵ Taking a broader perspective, however, the success of Williams and other dissidents in maintaining the colonial autonomy of Rhode Island and Providence Plantations speaks to the ability of these writers to create an alternate imaginative context for English activities in the New World, one that challenged the painstakingly wrought narrative of mainline American Puritanism and, at times, overshadowed it.

The millennial politics of Roger Williams inaugurated a genre of colonial dissent that powerfully shaped life in New England for generations. From a historiographic perspective, Williams's accomplishment also extends Sharon Achinstein's concept of the "revolutionary reader" to embrace a colonial framework.⁶ At the same time, Williams's accomplishment also suggests an American prelude to the Habermasian models of discursive action in eighteenth-century America that Michael Warner outlines in Letters

⁴ See Philip Gura, A Glimpse of Sion's Glory: Puritan Radicalism in New England 1620-1660 (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 1984), p. 303; Stephen Foster, The Long Argument: English Puritanism and the Shaping of New England Culture (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press for the Institute of Early American History and Culture, 1991), p. 189.

⁵ Foster, p. 322.

⁶ See Sharon Achinstein, Milton and the Revolutionary Reader (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994).

of the Republic.⁷

That this discursive sphere spans the Atlantic Ocean makes it harder to recognize, but no less important. The Atlantic has emerged as a popular rubric for scholars in recent years, and this heuristic concept has offered important insights into the history and culture of populations on both sides of the ocean. While the Atlantic linked the disparate communities on its shores, the physical and temporal barrier this body of water posed shaped the discourse that circulated among far-flung members of the Atlantic world. Williams's success in London demonstrates the peculiar importance of the physical presence of the Atlantic Ocean in the middle of the Atlantic world. Writing from America for London presses and readers presents both challenges and opportunities for New England colonists. In Williams's case, a presence in person on one side of the Atlantic, and a presence in print on the other, was essential to his effort to serve both his colony and his conscience. At the same time, a crucial feature of his participation in London's print culture is his exploitation of the ability that a text has to be present when its author is absent.

II: THE REMOVES OF ROGER WILLIAMS

Roger Williams's experience of the west shore of the Atlantic was a turbulent one. He arrived with his wife in Boston on 9 February 1630/1, part of the first wave of Puritan migration to New England.⁸ After a brief sojourn there, he moved to Salem. Despite a distinguished intellectual reputation, he began to make enemies among the

⁷ Michael Warner, Letters of The Republic: : Publication and The Public Sphere in Eighteenth-Century America. (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1990).

Boston ministers and magistrates and moved to Plymouth, but he returned to Salem in the fall of 1633. A variety of controversies with the Bay Colony authorities filled his time there, most notably one concerning a manuscript Williams wrote on Anglo-Indian relations that attacked the very premise of the English colonial project. The manuscript does not survive, but Massachusetts Bay Company Governor Winthrop's reaction to it indicates that Williams took issue with the prevalent English conviction that, as the American continent lay beyond the pale of Christendom, it was the prerogative of an English sovereign to grant swaths of it to his subjects with a stroke of the pen.⁹

The controversy between Williams and the Bay Colony soon made coexistence untenable for both parties. Unmoved by Thomas Hooker's admonitions to recant, Williams was banished from the Bay Colony by the General Court on 9 October 1635. Williams, who had taken ill before his trial, and whose wife had just delivered their second child, was granted a six-week stay of sentence, under the condition that he cease disseminating his blasphemous opinions. Evidently, Williams continued his objectionable activities anyway, and in January 1635/6, the Bay Colony ordered his immediate arrest and transportation to England, sending a representative to Salem to execute the sentence. Warned of his impending arrest by John Winthrop, among others, Williams fled Salem, one step ahead of his would-be captors.

⁸ For specific dates in this section, I am indebted to Glenn LaFantasie's "Roger Williams Chronology" in Glenn LaFantasie, ed., The Correspondence of Roger Williams (Hanover, NH and London: Brown University Press/University Press of New England, 1988), I: xcii.

⁹ See, for example, the charter of the Massachusetts Bay Company. Nathaniel B. Shurtleff, ed., The Records of the Governor and Company of the Massachusetts Bay (Boston: 1853), I: 3. Here, as in other cases, Williams's unconventional position on Indian affairs was dictated more by the mandates of his faith than by a sense of fair play for the Indians. Williams objected to this grant not simply because it denigrated the humanity and sovereignty of Indians, but because it depended on the notion of "Christendom," and for Williams, "the terms Christian and Christendom could not properly be applied to a *nation*, since only the *church* actually consisted of God's chosen people." W. Clark Gilpin, The Millenarian Piety of Roger Williams (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1979), p. 41.

After some intermediate stops, on 24 March 1637/8, Williams secured a deed for Providence from the Narragansett sachems, Miantonomo and Canonicus, stating that they had conveyed to him “the lands and meadowes, upon the two fresh rivers called Mooshawsuck and Wanassquatucket, doe now by these presents, establish and confirm the bounds of those lands, from the river and lands at Pautuckqut, the great hill of Notquonckanet, on the northwest, and the town of Maushapogue on the west.”¹⁰ On 27 July 1640, having previously apportioned the land he purchased among those who joined him on the shore of Narragansett Bay, Williams joined with his fellow settlers in drawing up a civil compact.¹¹ However, both Plymouth and Massachusetts coveted the settlement and its port; some of Williams’s neighbors wanted to compound with one of these more established governments sanctioned by England. In the face of mounting pressures on his settlement, both from within and without, Williams sailed for London in the early summer of 1643, in an effort to secure a warrant for his settlement from England’s government. The port of Boston was closed to him, of course, and because Providence was then a port of little account, Williams was forced to journey overland to New Amsterdam to get passage.

He arrived in June 1643 to a London that was preoccupied with civil war and the Solemn League and Covenant, which was approved by Parliament on 25 September of that year. Williams published A Key into The Language of America on 7 September 1643. His Mister Cotton’s Letter Examined appeared on 5 February 1643/4, after the publication of a letter of Cotton’s in late 1643. Immediately turning to British affairs,

¹⁰ John Russell Bartlett, ed., Records of the Colony of Rhode Island and Providence Plantations (Providence: NP, 1856), I: 18. Hereafter cited as RCRI.

¹¹ RCRI, I: 27-31.

Williams published Queries of Highest Consideration on 9 February 1643/4. Slightly more than a month later, Williams received a patent for Providence Plantations, on 14 March 1643/4. The Bloody Tenent of Persecution appeared on 15 July 1644, not long before Williams must have left London, which was as just as well for him, as it was ordered burned by the public hangman on 9 August 1644. Christenings Make not Christians, the final product of this trip, appeared early in 1645. By the time this work appeared to the London public, Williams had been back in America for several months. Winthrop notes in his journal that on 17 September 1644, Williams returned to America, able to land at Boston because of a letter of protection signed by several members of Parliament, including his old patron William Masham, as well as Cornelius Holland and Miles Corbet.¹²

There are several curious features of the sequence, timing, and nature of Williams's activities in London that scholars have not adequately considered. He published the most sustained articulation of his beliefs, The Bloody Tenent, on the eve of his departure, and arranged to have the most controversial of his publications, Christenings Make Not Christians, appear once he was far from London. The publishing choices he made while in London are also curious. He revived two separate and long-forgotten disputes with John Cotton to retail to a London with plenty of current controversies clamoring for its attention. Queries, his most overtly political effort, could

¹² Howard M. Chapin, A Documentary History of Rhode Island (Providence: Preston and Rounds, 1916), I: 217; John Winthrop, The Journal of John Winthrop, 1630-1649, ed. Richard S. Dunn, James Savage, and Laetitia Yandle (Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1996), pp. 540-1. The date of Williams's date of departure is necessarily an approximation, as the vagaries of weather and shipping could cause the time a passage took to vary widely. Cressy suggests "eight to twelve weeks or more"; at that rate, even with a very speedy passage, Williams could not have hung around London for long after the appearance of the Bloody Tenent, and he may well have been gone before it appeared. David Cressy, Coming Over: Migration and Communication between England and New England in the Seventeenth Century (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), p. 151.

not have been constructed to antagonize more readers if he had been trying to do so: it questioned not only the actions of the Westminster Assembly, but the very validity of its existence, asking “What warrant from the Lord Jesus for the Assembly of Divines?”¹³

Most curious, though, are the timing, form, and content of A Key into the Language of America. Williams came to England on an urgent political mission, and he also had an intense personal stake in the momentous issues of church and state that were being debated when he arrived. The rest of Williams’s publications during this visit had an immediate and apparent bearing on current political and religious affairs in England, with attendant ramifications for New England. However, before he published any of these documents, Williams produced a guide to the language of the Indians of New England, which one would imagine to be the work of a man of an inquisitive spirit, eager to produce a curiosity for what William Wood called the “mind travelling reader,” but one possessed of considerably more leisure than Williams himself enjoyed.¹⁴

Reconstructing Williams’s activities and the motivations for them during his trip to London is critical to understanding how he was able to secure the charter for Providence Plantations. Unfortunately, all of Williams’s correspondence is missing from 8 March 1640/1 to 25 June 1645, covering the entire trip to London and more than a year before and after.¹⁵ To understand how Williams secured the charter, we must consider the relation between his surviving published work, and the ideas and interests of the intended audiences for his various publications.

¹³ Roger Williams, Queries of Highest Consideration, In Publications of the Narragansett Club (Providence: NP, 1866), II: 256. The Narragansett Club published an edition of Williams’s major works; subsequent references to this edition will be abbreviated as “PNC,” followed by the relevant volume and page.

¹⁴ William Wood, New Englands Prospect (London: 1634), t.p.

¹⁵ Glenn LaFantasie, “Lost Correspondence and Incomplete Records.” Editorial note in The Correspondence of Roger Williams, I: 216.

The Key is the most puzzling production of Williams's trip to England. Leaving aside questions of timing and content for the moment, the best explanation for the form of the Key lies outside the parameters of the literature of American contact and exploration; as commentators have observed, it is unique in its form and concerns among the many accounts of North America that issued forth from London presses in the first half of the seventeenth century. Williams was one of many colonists to supply English readers with Indian words, but he does not produce a dictionary or word list. As Laura Murray points out, Indian vocabularies were a common feature of early colonial texts, functioning as "authenticating and decorative devices"; she cites John Smith, William Strachey, and William Wood as examples.¹⁶ Williams, however, offers not a list of words, but a carefully structured series of dialogues between English and Indians. As anomalous as the Key may appear in the context of colonial discourse, in another contemporary context it fits quite comfortably, for in its dialogic structure and linguistic focus, the Key is a close relative of the linguistic manuals that were a hallmark of the pansophist movement in the 1630s and 40s. This movement, with Francis Bacon as its intellectual progenitor, and the Czech philosopher Jan Amos Comenius as its standard-bearer, saw utopian promise in the possibility of universal knowledge and linguistic competence.

As the dearth of recent scholarship in English suggests, Comenius is not prominent in the minds of most intellectual historians of Revolutionary England. However, this Czech philosopher and educator enjoyed a good deal of esteem among many of the prominent members of the Parliamentary side, and his works circulated

¹⁶ Laura J. Murray, "Vocabularies of Native American Languages: A Literary and Historical Approach to an Elusive Genre," American Quarterly, Vol. 53, No. 4 (December, 2001), pp. 594-5; see also Stephen A. Guice, "Early New England Missionary Linguistics," in Papers in the History of Linguistics: Proceedings

widely among English-speaking readers as well as in Europe. Comenius's Janua Trilinguarum Reserata (the gate of three languages opened) appeared in 1631 at Leszno, and in the same year, John Anchoran produced an English version; Adrian Johns numbers fifteen separate editions by various combinations of translators and printers appearing in England between 1630 and when Williams made his visit.¹⁷ This Janua was inspired in its form by the 1615 Janua Linguarum of William Bathe, a Jesuit priest who intended his book as an aid to Jesuit missionaries in the Americas.¹⁸ As Johns notes, one reason for the proliferation of editions of Comenius's book lay in the very form of the work, which was parallel translations of sentences in three or more languages; it was natural for enterprising translators to extend this project to embrace new languages. Comenius himself observed in retrospect: "It happened, as I could not have imagined possible, that that puerile little work was received with a sort of universal applause by the learned world." Comenius uses "puerile" in the sense of "juvenile," for he saw the Janua as an early stage of a larger educational project, which extended the structure of the Janua to encompass things as well as words. Barbara Lewalski, describing the Comenian scheme promoted in England by Samuel Hartlib and John Drury, explains: "In the Noble Schools boys from ages eight to thirteen would study the subjects of the common school, as well as *Januas* for Latin, Greek and Hebrew."¹⁹ Despite the disappointment of his grander ambitions for his English visit of 1641-2, Comenius does comment that the popularity of

of the Third International Conference on the History of the Language Sciences... 1984 (Amsterdam, Philadelphia: John Benjamins, 1987).

¹⁷ Adrian Johns, The Nature of the Book: Print and Knowledge in the Making (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998), pp. 224-5.

¹⁸ Robert Fitzgibbon Young, Comenius in England (London: Oxford University Press/Harvey Milford, 1932), pp. 27, 61.

¹⁹ Barbara K. Lewalski, "Milton and the Hartlib Circle: Educational Projects and Epic Paideia," in Literary Milton: Text, Pretext, Context, ed. Diana Treviño Benet and Michael Leib (Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 1994), p. 206-7.

this book “was testified... by translations into the various popular tongues... all the European tongues, [and] such Asiatic tongues as the Arabic, the Turkish, the Persian, and even the Mongolian.”²⁰

Both the form of the work and the philosophy of its adherents suggested the reiteration of this form to embrace other tongues. Looking back, in his Linguarum Methodus Novissima (1649), Comenius hoped that his Janua would surpass Bathe’s in its ability to help travelers to America learn native languages and teach the natives English or Latin.²¹ Given Williams’s interest in appealing to the same parliamentary leaders who had invited Comenius to England little more than a year before Williams arrived, it is no accident that the title of Williams’s work evokes the language of doors opening. At least one critic has previously noted the similarities between the Key and these popular linguistic materials, pointing out that “Williams’s pedagogical thinking... suggests acquaintance with the most progressive contemporary thinking about the teaching of foreign languages, such as that promoted by Jan Comenius in his Janua Linguarum.”²² Anne Myles observes that Williams and Comenius share an approach of teaching language through “text that discourses in simple terms on the names of things,” but she notes this affinity between the Janua and the Key as an indication of Williams’s intellectual sophistication. The Key does indicate Williams’s awareness of current

²⁰ As quoted in David Masson, The Life of John Milton, Narrated in Connexion with the Political, Ecclesiastical, and Literary History of his Time (London: MacMillan & Co., 1873), III: 200; for an exposition of the larger Comenian educational project, see Charles Webster, The Great Instauration: Science, Medicine, and Reform, 1626-1600 (New York: Holmes and Meier, 1975), pp. 100-129.

²¹ Young, p. 61. That a form developed by a Jesuit missionary to teach Indians Latin could be deployed by Protestants for vulgar tongues suggests the dangerous versatility of this genre.

²² Anne G. Myles, “Dissent and the Frontier of Translation: Roger Williams’s A Key into the Language of America,” in Possible Pasts: Becoming Colonial in Early America, ed. Robert Blair St. George (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2000), p. 96.

intellectual trends, but this awareness has political dimensions that are critical for Williams's errand to London.

In The Intellectual Origins of the English Revolution Revisited, Christopher Hill lists the supporters of Comenius and his work in the 1630s and 1640s, observing, "It is very nearly a list of members of the Providence Island Company. It is a list of the leaders of the opposition in the Long Parliament."²³ Of more immediate concern to Williams is that the Committee for Foreign Plantations, the body charged by Parliament to regulate colonial affairs, mirrors the composition of the Comenians and the Providence Island Company. In essence, the members of Parliament charged with weighing Williams's suit were the same members who brought Comenius to England in 1641-2. As R.F. Young explains in his account of Comenius' visit to England in 1641-2, "Comenius genuinely believed that he had been invited by Parliament, but the available evidence suggests that Samuel Hartlib had summoned him on behalf of... Lord Mandeville, Pym, Lord Brooke and others." These men were all members of the Committee for Foreign Plantations, which would review Williams's suit in 1644; the summons Comenius thought was an official invitation was in fact part of a sermon preached to Parliament on 29 November 1640 by John Gauden, entitled The Love of Truth and Peace (printed by order of Parliament in early 1641) to entreat Comenius. Gauden was later the Bishop of Exeter and of Worcester, but at this time, he was vicar of Chippenham and chaplain to Robert Rich, Earl of Warwick, who three years hence would become the head of the Committee

²³ Christopher Hill, The Intellectual Origins of the English Revolution Revisited (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997), p. 90. Hill writes: "When in the sixteen-thirties Hartlib, Drury and Comenius tried to give effect to Bacon's plans, their most enthusiastic supporter was John Pym; backed by the Earls of Bedford, Essex, Leicester, Pembroke, Salisbury and Warwick, by Lord Brooke, Lord Mandeville, Lord Wharton, Sir Thomas Roe, Sir Benjamin Rudyerd, Sir Thomas Barrington, Sir Nathaniel Rich, Sir William Waller, Sir Arthur Annesley, Sir John Clotworthy, John Selden, Oliver St. John." For the membership of the

for Foreign Plantations.²⁴ In the charter they bestowed on Williams, the Committee for Foreign Plantations was explicit in its praise for Williams’s “printed Indian labours,” leaving no doubt that they were a receptive audience for the Key. The knowledge we have of the colonial political interests and pansophic intellectual pursuits of this body allow us to situate Williams’s text as that of a colonist writing to metropolitan authorities mediating between the pragmatic and ideological concerns of his mission, even as he shapes his text to appeal to his powerful audience.

When the ideas of Comenius have been associated with New England, it has generally been in one of two misleading ways. In “Comenius and the Indians of New England,” Robert Young suggests that Comenius supporters in Parliament thought “Comenius’s scheme... might in some way be associated with the missionary and educational work among the natives in New England.”²⁵ In later years, once Puritan missionary to the Indians John Eliot and his associates were active, this connection makes sense, and the name of a Native American student is inscribed in a copy of the Janua in 1665. This book, a copy of Anchoran’s pirated translation (1631), was among the volumes John Harvard willed to Harvard College in 1638.²⁶ However, at the time of Comenius’ visit in 1641-2 and still at the time of William’s trip to England in 1643-44, there was little missionary activity to celebrate. In essence, New England’s First Fruits

Providence Island Company, see Karen Ordahl Kupperman, Providence Island, 1630-1641: The Other Puritan Colony (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993).

²⁴Young, pp. 39, 52. At the end of this decade, Gauden’s career took another turn: he appears to have aided in the composition of Charles I’s Eikon Basilike. See Francis Falconer Madan, New Bibliography of the Eikon Basilike (London: B. Quaritch, 1950).

²⁵ Robert Fitzgibbon Young, “Comenius and the Indians of New England” (London: King’s College, 1929), p. 9. In Comenius in England, Young explains, “The implicit association of the plan for a college for scientific research with a general reform of schools and with the educational work that was being carried on among the colonists and the Indians in New England and Virginia is particularly significant, and is peculiar to Comenius and his follower, G.W. Leibniz. It must be remembered that one of the principal functions of

(1643) is essentially an apology for the slow progress of the Bay Colony on this front in light of Williams's progress demonstrated in the Key: "wonder not that wee mention no more instances at present: but consider, first, their infinite distance from Christianity...."²⁷ Whatever the actual degree of interest Comenius took in the souls of Native Americans, his supporters would be hard pressed to congratulate the orthodox New England colonies for their work in that area up to 1643, when Williams was seeking protection from these same colonies.

The other common association between Comenius and New England is a tradition that he was offered the presidency of Harvard College in the 1640s, but declined, going to Stockholm instead.²⁸ Will Monroe demonstrates several reasons why this story is improbable, but the tradition has persisted despite the evidence against it.²⁹ These associations, despite their traditional rather than factual basis, have the tendency to orient any interest in the American context of Comenius to orthodox institutions and people, and away from a less orthodox adaptation of his work, such as A Key into the Language of America. However, the model of the Janua is essential to Williams's appeal to Parliamentary leaders.

scientific societies at this period was to digest and explain the vast body of fresh data on various bodies of knowledge which had been obtained from the Americas." (p. 7).

²⁶Young, Comenius in England, p. 61.

²⁷New Englands First Fruits (London: 1643), p. A2.

²⁸ See Cotton Mather, Magnalia Christi Americana (Hartford: Silas Andrus, 1853), II: 14.

²⁹ Will S. Monroe, Comenius and the Beginnings of Educational Reform (New York: 1900), pp. 78-81; for the persistence of this story, see especially J.B. Conant, "Comenius and Harvard," in The Teacher of Nations (Cambridge: The University Press, 1942), p. 40.

Jan Amos Comenius, *The Gate of Tongues vnlocked and opened....* Tr. John Anchoran. (London :1633):

PORTA LINGVARVM TRILINGVIS			RESEMATA ET APERTA		
XI. De Herbis.	XI. Of Herbs.	XI. Des Herbes.			
119 H erba cauli (vel scapo) tinnitur.	119 A ß Heards ienneth or flayeth upon a Gaile.	119 L' Herbe se tieur desus le tige.	120 Cicere, Ervo, Vicia, Lente, videre est.	120 Q uoniam, no may be seme in a Beane, a Grosse, a small Pulse, an Oare, a French lentils.	120 Comme on peut voir en la Fève, au Pois, de Erv, de Vesve, & les Lentilles.
120 Ex his rapum, Napus, Carota, Scir, Raphanus minor, Pastinaca, Brassica, Crambe, Lactuca, Scolymus, Apium (petroselinum) Nasturcium, Oxalis, Olera vocantur.	120 O f them a Rape, a Carrot, a Turnep, a Cabbage, Colewort, a Lettice, an Artychoke, Parsly, Watercresse, Sorrell, are called pot-herbs.	120 D' icelles, la Rave, le Navet, la Carote, le chery, le Raves, la Peste-nade, les Choux Cabus, les Choux verds, la Laitue, le Persil, le Cresson, l'Artichoux, la Savelle, le Cresson d'ap-pellent herbes potageres.	121 Sed qui fit satricium in sigilnem. (fecale) imò in Zizania & Lobum? Hordeum in Agyllo-pens? Avena in avenam suam degenere?	121 B ut how com it to passe that Wheate both degenerate into Rye, or into Barley and Cockle, Barley into wild Oates Oates into pour Oates?	121 M ais d'où vient que le Bled degenere en Seigle, voire en Yvoire, l'Orge en Avoine, la brave Avoine en Avoine corrompue?
121 Fruges sunt quæ in culum sursum, & spicas (sive aristas sive mucicas) ferunt, glumis autem granum sistent, ut Oriz, Ziza, Ador, Milium, Panicum.	121 F ruits are they which grow in stalkes and produce ears of Coyme, (he they bearded or without beard) but with huskes they hope warme the graine, as Rice, Spelt, pure wheate, Millet, Penniche.	121 I ls n'ont des fruits qui croissent en tige, & qui portent des espices, (soit barbes, soit sans barbe) & qui contiennent le grain, dont de petites pailles, comme le Ris, l'Espautre, le Froment, le Millet, le Penis.	122 Farrago pectoris causa feritur.	122 F orage is sowne to Castell.	122 L e Fourrage & disage se sement pour les bestes.
122 Legumina verò siliquis & valvulis, ut in Faba, Pl.	122 W h the Legumes with huskes or pods, such as Pease	122 E t les Legumens avec petites peaux (ou gouffes)	123 Papaver capitarum soporandi vim habet.	123 T he Poppy has both an head both force and vertue to bring sleepe.	123 L es herbes seules, font l'Asie, l'Oignon, le Perreau.
			124 Balbosa sunt, Allium, Cepsa, Pteris.	124 B albsa are onions, Leeks, are clobed.	124 L es herbes seules, font l'Asie, l'Oignon, le Perreau.
			125 Aromata sunt Piper, Zingiber, Cardamom, Cinamomum, Nux Myristica, Macer, Caryophylla, Anisum, Anethum, Cuminum, Sinapi.	125 A romata are Pepper, Ginger, Cinamom, Nutmeg, Clove, the Sweet Cane, or great Galligate, Costambr, Anise, Cumine, Mustard.	125 L es herbes seules, font le Poivre, le Gingembre, Cardamom, la Canelle, la Noix Muscade, le Macis, (ou fleur de Girofle), l'Acate, le Carumbr, l'Anis, l'Aneth, le Cumine, ou Coroin, le Mustarde.
			126 Odonifera & Coronariae sunt, Amaranus, Amaran	126 O donifera, and to make Galantus, Wildbell, are	126 L es Odonifera, & dont on fait des Bouquets, font la

Roger Williams, *A Key Into the Language of America* (London, 1643):

98 <i>Of the Earth and Fruits thereof.</i>	<i>Of the Earth and Fruits thereof.</i>	99
Oyle good for many uses, but especially for their annoynting of their heads. And of the chips of the Walnut-Tree (the barked taken off) some English in the Countrey make excellent Beere both for Taste, strength, colour, and in offensive opening operation:	Wuchipoquame-neash.	A kind of sharp Fruit like a Barbary in taste.
Sasaunckapamuck.	The Sassafrasee Tree.	Saiteameash another sharp cooling Fruit growing in fresh Waters all the Winter, Excellent in conserve against Feavers.
Mishquawtuck.	The Cedar tree.	Wenomenash.
Cowaw-efuck.	Pine-young Pine.	Wuttahimnasippagua.
Wenomesippagua.	The Vine-Tree.	Peshauiwash.
Micuckaskecte.	A Meadow.	Nummouwinneem.
Tataggoskiwash.	A fresh Meadow.	Mowinne-aiog.
Maskitwash.	Grasse or Hay.	Atauntowash.
Wkinash-quash.	Reed, Reeder.	Ntauntawem.
Manisiminin.	Trent or moss.	Punnouwash.
Quiluckomincanug.	The Cherry Tree.	Npunnowaumen.
Wuttahimneash.	Strawberries.	Attitaash.
<i>Obs.</i> This Berry is the wonder of all the Fruits growing naturally in those parts: It is of it selfe Excellent: so that one of the chiefest Doctors of England was wont to say, that God could have made, but God never did make a better Berry: In some parts where the Natives have planted, I have many times seen as many as would fill a good ship within few miles compass: the Indians bruise them in a Morter, and mixe them with meal: and make Strawberry bread.	Of which there are divers sorts sweeter like Currants, some opening, some of a biting nature. Saiteash are these Currants dried by the Natives, and to preserved all the yeare, which they beat to powder, and mingle it with their parcht meale, and make a delicate dish which they call Saiteashig: which is as sweet to them as plum or spice cake to the English.	They also make great use of their Strawberry berries having such abundance of them, making Strawberry bread, and having no other
Wuchipoquame-	H	Food

III: “PRINTED INDIAN LABOURS”: THE WORK OF THE *KEY*

The *Key* worked to construct Williams’s version of America in the minds of his English readers, displacing a more traditional conquest ideology. For Williams’s claim to the Narragansett region by virtue of Indian purchase to have any validity, his radical notion that Native Americans could and did possess land would have to find currency in the minds of Englishmen.³⁰ Despite its didactic structure, the goal of the *Key* was not so much to teach Londoners how to speak to Americans, but rather to teach them how to think about America.

Despite taking the unassuming form of a linguistic and anthropological work, the *Key* is a tremendously subversive document. The most radical aspect of Williams’s Indian lexicon is its title: “A Key Into the Language of America: or an help to the language of the Natives in that part of America, called New-England.” Specifically, the title asserts that the “Language of America” is the language of its natives, rather than any of the languages of European conquerors; Myra Jehlen observes “its anomaly lies in the implication that Indians are human beings with whom it is important to speak.”³¹ Williams’s equation naturally underscores the connection between the continent and its original inhabitants and asserts the unconventional notion that the Narragansett and their neighbors were autonomous peoples, like the English, Dutch, or Swedes, who were able to make and assert land claims. Indeed, the rhetorical construction of a civil American

³⁰ One of the premises underlying the English appropriation of American lands was a notion that Native Americans could hold no title to land because they did not settle and inhabit it in ways that were recognizable to English observers. See William Cronon, *Changes in the Land: Indians, Colonists, and the Ecology of New England* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1983), chapters 2-3.

³¹ Myra Jehlen, “Three Writers of Early America,” in *The Cambridge History of American Literature*, ed. Sacvan Bercovitch (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), p. 77.

Indian society is one of the central goals of the Key. In asserting a right to the lands of Providence Plantations based on a sale by an Indian deed, rather than by royal fiat, Williams inverts the traditional process of colonial settlement. Thus, Williams must present the Narragansett as competent to convey and alienate land if his claim to the Narragansett Bay is to have any merit. For Williams, his pragmatic concerns resonate with his religious convictions: because his millennial beliefs lead him to denounce the idea of “Christendom,” the civility of his Native American neighbors is not contingent on their Christianity.

The form of this text is well suited to this task. Each chapter of the Key is broken up into vocabulary, social and cultural observations, and a poem, almost always with a didactic religious theme. Through the vocabulary, the prose observations, and the religious verse, Williams offers his London readers a pervasive sense of the humanity of the Narragansett Indians. Each section affords Williams a different kind of rhetorical opportunity.

For many scholars, especially those of a literary orientation, the principal interest of the Key lies in the poetic sections. Ivy Schweitzer, for example, devotes a chapter to the Key in her study of the “Lyric Poetry of Colonial New England.”³² This focus on Williams as a poet may be motivated in part by the paucity of verse productions among the sermons and tracts of seventeenth-century New England; however, Williams did not return to this form, and on the strength of the poetic section of the Key, it is hard for even the most charitable reader to regard him as a rival of Anne Bradstreet or Edward Taylor. In their critical edition of the Key, Teunessen and Hinz stress the importance of an

³² Ivy Schweitzer, The Work of Self-Representation: Lyric Poetry in Colonial New England (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1991), pp. 181-228.

integrated reading of each chapter, in order to recover the work's similarity to emblem books. Williams scholars owe a debt to Teunessen and Hinz for their editorial work, but their claim of the affinity of this text with medieval emblem books is not entirely persuasive, resting as it does on an assertion that Williams's dialogues replace the pictures (emblems) that are the central feature of emblem books. Instead, I wish to stress that the different genres contained within the Key each work on the imagination of the reader in a distinct manner.³³

If Williams's poetry has attracted the most scholarly attention, by the same token it is the dialogues that appear to be the most inert and normative aspect of this text; however, these "implicite dialogues" are central to the end Williams intended for his little book. In the account of the form he chooses for teaching the language in his "Directions for the use of the Language," Williams allows "A dictionary or Grammer Way I had consideration of, but purposely avoided, as not so accommodate to the Benefit of all, as I hope this Forme is." Williams continues, explaining that "A Dialogue also I had thoughts of but avoided for brevities sake, and yet (with no small paines) I have so framed every Chapter of it, as I may call it an Implicite Dialogue."³⁴ If anything, the layout seems to privilege Narragansett, by having the flow be from Narragansett into English, in contrast to John Eliot's translation of the Bible from English into Algonkian. However, the salient feature of this lexicon is its bilateral quality. "Translate" etymologically means "to carry across." Eliot's translation, for instance, carries the Gospel across to the Indians, but finds

³³ See Roger Williams, A Key into the Language of America, edited with a critical introduction, notes, and commentary by John J. Teunessen and Evelyn J. Hinz (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1973), pp. 14-23. For a survey of the structure and function of emblem books in this era, see Peter M. Daly, Literature in Light of the Emblem: Structural Parallels Between the Emblem and Literature in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries, 2nd ed., (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1998).

³⁴ Roger Williams, A Key into the Language of America... (London: Gregory Dexter, 1643, rpt. 1997), preface. Hereafter abbreviated "Key."

nothing in their language worth carrying back. Jehlen comments that Eliot's works are "true to the purpose of the catechism, which is to repeat verbatim what one has been taught."³⁵ The Key, by comparison, can be used to open the door from either side. In this context, the Key reads like a document that is an artifact of a transcultural "contact zone," while Eliot's Bible is an instrument deployed by Massachusetts to Christianize and thus regulate the Indian frontier.³⁶

This idea of an implicit dialogue works two ways and helps us reconstruct how this text appeared to its English readers: if they read across in one direction or the other, readers can translate the language of England into the language of America or vice versa. The nature of text, however, implies another dialogue as well, one that runs down each column of the linguistic sections of the Key. Then or now, it would require an extraordinarily patient reader to sound out each Indian phrase before translating it. Thus, the tendency for readers in London would be to let their eyes run down the column in their native tongue. It is no accident, in this context, that these phrases are commonly arranged in what reads like a dialogue. The reader, reading to himself or herself, imagines a dialogue between Indians and English, with the two speaking on equal terms. This effect is enhanced by the reader's awareness that a parallel conversation is happening in the other language in the adjacent column. The following short excerpt from the first chapter, "Of Salutation," indicates the effect that recurs throughout the text:

Askutaaquompsin?		How do you?
Asnpaumpmauntam		I am very well.
Taubot paumpmauntaman		I am glad you are well.
Cowacunkamish		My service to you. ³⁷

³⁵ Jehlen, p. 79.

³⁶ Mary Louise Pratt, Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation (London: Routledge, 1992), p. 6.

³⁷ Key, p. 2.

Literally as well as figuratively, the Londoner and the Narragansett are on the same page, just as the Moravian, Roman, and Turk can share the pages of the same Janua.

Beyond these implicit dialogues, the didactic options rejected by Williams also help clarify the political work of the text. Williams allows that he had considered presenting this material in “a dictionary or grammer way,” but rejected that option in favor of this dialogue-driven model. As a result, if one were to imagine this text in terms of contemporary approaches to language teaching, the Key is more like a phrase-book for tourists than a comprehensive textbook that provides a grammar and vocabulary as building blocks that allow the student to communicate in a given language. The chapters of the Key correspond to given situations, edify the reader concerning Indian culture, and provide appropriate phrases for “Salutation... Travell... Sports and Gaming,” and so on. However, constructing phrases for situations not in the book from what Williams provides the reader would be tedious and haphazard, if not impossible. Williams rejects a “dictionary or grammer way” as “not so accommodate for the benefit of all,” but in fact it is his own purposes that would not be suited by a lexicon or grammar of this Indian language. As anyone who has attempted to communicate in a foreign language with only a tourist phrasebook can attest, the phrases one would like to have are rarely present in the phrasebook, so the traveler is forced into the role of a reluctant actor in a series of scripts prepared by the author of the phrasebook. By providing prescribed phrases for prescribed situations, Williams deliberately shapes the character of the discourse that can occur with the Indians in New England, or about them in England; the phrases Williams provides are for the traveler or trader, not for the soldier or evangelist. Substituting conversation for catechism, Williams regulates the application of English language to

foreign subjects by teaching English subjects a foreign language.

The dialogues allow English readers to imagine a conversation with these far-off, fascinating people, while Williams's proto-anthropological observations give them an image of their interlocutors as members of a civil, humane, and well-regulated society. Later in the first chapter on salutation, Williams directs the reader: "From these courteous Salutations Observe in generall: There is a savour of civility and courtesie even amongst these wild Americans both amongst themselves and towards strangers."³⁸

This representation of the civil Indian is at odds with the prevailing impressions furnished from New England, the most contemporary being New Englands First Fruits, which was published in early 1643. Describing the task of converting the Indians, the main obstacle is "their infinite distance from Christianity," the reason for which is their "never having never been prepared there unto by any civility at all."³⁹ In a colonial context, one dramatic consequence of Williams's faith is the divorce of Christianity and civility: if Christianity and civility are not coextensive, it is possible to be civil without being Christian.

In the ensuing chapters of the Key, Williams extends this notion by constructing a view of a civil Indian society, with the requisite appurtenances of any such society. Williams labors to construct an image of Narragansett society that is in many respects

³⁸ Key, p. 9-10.

³⁹ New Englands First Fruits (London: R.O. & G[regory] D[exter] for Henry Overton, 1643, p. A2. Reprinted in Samuel Eliot Morrison, The Founding of Harvard College (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1995), pp. 420-447. This comment is one of many examples that one might furnish of the automatic, near unconscious equation of Christianity and civilization. This same equation that the Bay Colony's boosters make in the 1640s, generations of historians continued to make: Young comments of the Comenians that "...one of the functions of the great scientific society would be to promote the extension of the Christian civilization of western Europe among the Indians of North America and the Moslems of the Near East." More recently, Alden Vaughn describes early missionary efforts thusly: "James, sagamore of the Lynn and Marblehead region, appeared willing to be civilized and converted." New England Frontier 3rd ed., (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1995), p. 241. Today, one imagines, most scholars of

like London: “They are of two sorts, (as the English are) rude and clownish... or sober and grave.” This universalizing impulse permeates the text: “their Desire of, and delight in newes, is great, as the Athenians, and all men.”⁴⁰ With his language, Williams seeks to narrow the difference between the English and the Narragansetts, observing “Nature knowes no difference between Europe and Americans in blood, birth, bodies... God having of one blood made all mankind, Acts 17, and all by nature being children of wrath, Ephes 2.”⁴¹

There are few moments in this text when Williams does not avail himself of the chance to offer evidence of the probity, civility, and general uprightness of his Narragansett neighbors. Describing Indian timekeeping, Williams comments, “They are punctuall in their promises of keeping time, and sometimes have charged mee with a lye for not punctually keeping time, though hindred.”⁴² On larger moral issues, in place of Thomas Morton’s salty images of “lasses in beaver coats,” Williams observes, “Their Virgins are distinguished by a bashfull falling downe of haire over their eyes.”⁴³ Ultimately, the sense of their rectitude that Williams conveys integrates them into the reader’s imagination as civil beings, not savage creatures. In Williams’s account of their “coyne” not only does Williams use an English word for money to describe it, rather than peage, or wampum, but his translations also serve to establish a rate of exchange back and forth between Indian shell-money and English pence and shillings.

Having rhetorically clothed these Indians with the civil virtues of punctuality,

Native Americans would not make this kind of mistake, but the persistent conflation of Christianity and civilization in the historiography can obscure the possibility of their separation.

⁴⁰ Key, p. 54.

⁴¹ Key, p. 53.

⁴² Key, p. 64.

⁴³ Thomas Morton, New English Canaan (London: 1631), p. 135; Key, p. 29.

modesty, and economy, along with many other virtues, Williams can more easily assert what is for him perhaps the most important aspect of the Key. In “Of the Earth and the fruits thereof,” Williams’s first observation is that “The Natives are very exact and punctuall, in the bounds of their Lands, belonging to this or that Prince or People.... And I have knowne them to make bargaine and sale amongst themselves for a small piece, or quantity of ground.” Maintaining his scientific distance, Williams does not refer here to his own purchase, but explicitly challenges the familiar notion of *vacuum domicilium* articulated by Winthrop from the deck of the *Arabella*, and defended by Cotton: “notwithstanding a sinfull opinion amongst many that Christians have right to Heathens lands: but of the delusion of that I have spoke in a discourse concerning the Indians conversion.”⁴⁴ This pamphlet, Christenings Make not Christians, did not in fact appear until 1645, after Williams was back in Providence; at this stage, what is most notable about this gesture is that Williams deliberately suppresses his views on evangelizing Indians while he presses his suit to Parliament.

Considering his pessimism on the subject, it is no wonder that Williams prevented his views on the likelihood of converting the Indians from reaching London readers until he was back home with his charter. Indeed, Christenings make not Christians offers an expansion of the millennial concerns that become increasingly prevalent in the concluding poems of each chapter of the Key. Initially, these poems work to humanize the Indians by portraying the inhumanity of their Puritan neighbors:

If natures sons both wild and tame,
Humane and Courteous be:
How ill becomes the Sonnes of God

⁴⁴ Key, p. 95.

To want Humanity?⁴⁵

However, as the Key progresses, this moral calculus gives way to a sense of the equal wretchedness of Indian and Englishman before the coming Judgment:

How many millions now alive,
 Within few yeeres shall rot?
 O Blest that soule whose portion is,
 That Rock that changeth not.⁴⁶

This millennial rhetoric becomes increasingly strident in the poetry toward the end of the Key. The final two stanzas explicate the nature of the coming Judgment:

Two Worlds of men shall rise and stand
 ‘Fore Christs most dreadfull barre;
 Indians, and English naked too
 That now most gallant are

True Christ most glorious then shall make
 New Earth and Heavens New
 False Christs, false Christians then shall quake,
 O blessed then the True.⁴⁷

More than manners, customs, or civility, the coming wrath of God renders distinctions between English subject and savage Indian insignificant.

In presenting this work to the readers who would decide the fate of his colony, Williams legitimates himself as the proprietor of a plantation he has acquired through a civil transaction with a civil people. By inscribing the Narragansett Indians within a Comenian linguistic framework, Williams creates an American extension of the European Janua. Through this gate, Williams finds a route to connect his political aims with the intellectual interests of the Parliamentary overseers of colonization. His “printed

⁴⁵ Key, p. 10.

⁴⁶ Key, p. 85.

⁴⁷ Key, p. 204.

Indian Labours,” as the Committee for Foreign Plantations called them, secured the political autonomy of Providence.

Appendix I:

#	Original CFP Members:	PIC - Major members 1630s: (Kupperman)	Comenians, 1630s: (Hill)	Providence Patent, 1644: (Bartlett)	RW Passport 1644 Sep (Winthrop)	Weld-Peter Charter: (Stearns)
1)	Warwick, Earl	Warwick	Warwick	Warwick		Warwick
2)	Pembroke, Earl		Pembroke, Earl	Pembroke		Pembroke
3)	Manchester, Earl	Manchester	Manchester	Manchester?		Manchester
4)	Saye & Sele, Lord	Saye & Sele		Saye and Sele		
5)	Wharton, Lord		Wharton	Wharton	Wharton	
6)	Roberts, John Ld*	Roberts		Roberts		Roberts?
7)	Gerard, Gil, BRT	Gerard				
8)	Hasselrige, Art Sir			Hasselrige		Hasselrige
9)	Vane, Henry, Sir			Vane		
10)	Rudyer(d), Ben, Sir	Rudyer	Rudyer			
11)	Pym, John	Pym	Pym			
12)	Cromwell, Oliver					
13)	Bond, Dennis					Bond
14)	Corbett, Miles			Corbett	Corbett	Corbett
15)	Holland, Cornelius			Holland	Holland	
16)	Vassal, Samuel			Vassal		Vassal
17)	John Rolle					
18)	Spurstow, William			Spurstow		Spurstow
19)		Brooke, Lord	Brooke, Lord			
20)			Essex, Earl			
21)			Leicester, Earl			
22)			Salisbury, Earl			
23)			Bedford, Earl			
24)		Holland, Earl				
25)		Moundeford, Ed, Sir				
26)		Rich, Nat, Sir	Rich, Nat. Sir			
27)			Clotworthy, Jno, Sir			
28)			Annesley, Art.			
29)			Roe, Thos, Sir			
30)		Barrington, Ths, Sir	Barrington, Ths, Sir		Barrington	
31)		Waller, William	Waller, William			
32)		St. John, Oliver	St. John, Oliver.		St. John	
33)		Knightley, Richard				
34)		Darley, Henry				
35)		Gurdon, John			Gurdon	
36)		Sherland, Chris				
37)		Jessop, Wm.				
38)		Harwood, Ed.				
39)					Nrthumberld	
40)					Rob Harley	
41)					Wm Masham	
42)					I. Penington	
43)					G. Pickering	
44)					J. Blackiston	

Appendix II:

Patent for Providence Plantations - March 14, 1643 [\(1\)](#)⁴⁸

WHEREAS by an Ordinance of the Lords and Commons, now assembled in Parliament, bearing Date the Second Day of November, Anno Domini 1643, Robert Earl of Warwick, is constituted, and ordained Governor in Chief, and Lord High Admiral of all those Islands and other Plantations inhabited or planted by, or belonging to any His Majesty the King of England's subjects, (or which hereafter may be inhabited and planted by, or belonging to them,) within the Bounds, and upon the Coasts of America. And whereas the said Lords have thought fit, and thereby ordained, that Philip Earl of Pembroke, Edward Earl of Manchester, William Viscount Say and Seal, Philip Lord Wharton, John Lord Rolle, Members of the House of Peers. Sir Gilbert Gerrard, Baronet, Sir Arthur Haslerig, Baronet, Sir Henry Vane, jun. Knight, Sir Benjamin Rudyard, Knight, John Pim, Oliver Cromwell, Dennis Bond, Miles Corbet, Cornelius Holland, Samuel Vassal, John Rolle, and William Spurstow, Esqrs, Members of the House of Commons, should be Commissioners, to join in Aid and Assistance with the said Earl. And whereas for the better Government and Defence, it is thereby ordained, that the aforesaid Governor and Commissioners, or the greater Number of them, shall have Power and Authority from Time to Time to nominate, appoint, and constitute all such subordinate Governors, Counsellors, Commanders, Officers, and Agents, as they shall judge to be best affected, and most fit and serviceable for the said Islands and Plantations; and to provide for, order and dispose all Things, which they shall, from Time to Time, find most advantageous for the said Plantations; and for the better Security of the Owners and Inhabitants thereof, to assign, ratify, and confirm, so much of their afore-mentioned Authority and Power, and in such Manner, and to such Persons as they shall judge to be fit for the better governing and preserving of the said Plantations and Islands, from open Violences and Private Disturbances and Distractions. And whereas there is a Tract of Land in the Continent of America aforesaid, called by the Name of the Narraganset-Bay; bordering Northward and Northeast on the Patent of the Massachusetts, East and Southeast on Plymouth Patent, South on the Ocean, and on the West and Northwest by the Indians called Nahigganneucks, alias Narragansets; the whole Tract extending about Twenty-five English Miles unto the Pequot River and Country.

And whereas divers well affected and industrious English Inhabitants, of the Towns of Providence, Portsmouth, and Newport in the tract aforesaid, have adventured to make a nearer neighborhood and Society with the great Body of the Narragansets, which may in time by the blessing of God upon their Endeavours, lay a sure foundation of Happiness to all America. And have also purchased, and are purchasing of and amongst the said Natives, some other Places, which may be convenient both for Plantations, and also for building of Ships Supply of Pipe Staves and other Merchandize. And whereas the said English, have represented their Desire to the said Earl, and Commissioners, to have their hopeful beginnings approved and confirmed, by granting unto them a free Charter of Civil Incorporation and Government; that they may order and govern their Plantation in such a Manner as to maintain Justice and peace, both among themselves, and towards all

⁴⁸ <http://www.yale.edu/lawweb/avalon/states/ri03.htm> Accessed 23 October 2004.

Men with whom they shall have to do. In due Consideration of the said Premises, the said Robert Earl of Warwick, Governor in Chief, and Lord High Admiral of the said Plantations, and the greater Number of the said Commissioners, whose Names and Seals are here under-written and subjoined, out of a Desire to encourage the good Beginnings of the said Planters, Do, by the Authority of the aforesaid Ordinance of the Lords and Commons, give, grant' and confirm, to the aforesaid Inhabitants of the Towns of Providence, Portsmouth, and Newport, a free and absolute Charter of Incorporation, to be known by the Name of the Incorporation of Providence Plantations, in the Narraganset-Bay, in New-England.-Together with full Power and Authority to rule themselves, and such others as shall hereafter inhabit within any Part of the said Tract of land, by such a Form of Civil Government, as by voluntary consent of all, or the greater Part of them, they shall find most suitable to their Estate and Condition; and, for that End, to make and ordain such Civil Laws and Constitutions, and to inflict such punishments upon Transgressors, and for Execution thereof, so to place, and displace Officers of Justice, as they, or the greater Part of them, shall by free Consent agree unto. Provided nevertheless, that the said Laws, Constitutions, and Punishments, for the Civil Government of the said Plantations, be conformable to the Laws of England, so far as the Nature and Constitution of the place will admit. And always reserving to the said Earl, and Commissioners, and their successors, Power and Authority for to dispose the general Government of that, as it stands in Relation to the rest of the Plantations in America as they shall conceive from Time to Time, in most conducing to the general Good of the said Plantations, the Honour of his Majesty, and the Service of the State. And the said Earl and Commissioners, do further authorize, that the aforesaid Inhabitants, for the better transacting of their public Affairs to make and use a public Seal as the known Seal of Providence-Plantations, in the Narraganset-Bay, in New-England. In Testimony whereof, the said Robert Earl of Warwick, and Commissioners, have hereunto set their Hands and Seals, the Fourteenth Day of March, in the Nineteenth Year of the Reign of our Sovereign-Lord King Charles, and in the Year of our Lord God, 1643.

ROBERT WARWICK,
 PHILIP PEMBROKE,
 SAY and SEAL,
 P. WHARTON,
 ARTHUR HASELERIG,
 COR. HOLLAND,
 H. VANE,
 SAM VASSAL,
 JOHN ROME,
 MILES CORBET
 W. SPURSTOW.

(1) Bartlett's Records of the Colony of Rhode Island and Providence Plantations. I.143-146. [Back](#)