The Imperial Laboratory: Discovering Forms in "The New Atlantis"
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Source: *ELH*, Vol. 70, No. 4 (Winter, 2003), pp. 1021-1042
Published by: The Johns Hopkins University Press
Stable URL: http://www.jstor.org/stable/30029911
Accessed: 13/05/2013 13:05

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THE IMPERIAL LABORATORY: DISCOVERING FORMS IN *THE NEW ATLANTIS*

BY CHRISTOPHER KENDRICK

Francis Bacon's obsession was to refashion intellectual production, and no one doubts that *The New Atlantis* (1626) came into existence as propaganda for the refashioning. In its relative narrowness it contrasts with Tommaso Campanella's *City of the Sun* (circa 1602) and Johann Andrea's *Christianopolis* (1619), the contemporary utopias, similarly protoscientific and imperial in design, with which it is often compared, as well as with *Utopia* (1516) itself.[1] In Thomas More's work, King Utopus gives his name to the whole island that he has refashioned from the ground up. Solamona, the equivalent figure in the *New Atlantis*, bequeaths his name to a single corporation, a research institute called Salomon's House in the utopian country of Bensalem.[2] Insofar as *The New Atlantis* thus attempts to separate out as exclusively utopian a particular problem (what Bacon called natural philosophy, or, in other words, a system for the production and use of knowledge about nature), it resembles a single issue utopia of the sort exemplified in More's book 1 by the Polylerite enslavement of felons.[3] Accordingly, its basic generic composition is mixed, in a way not uncommon for Renaissance and projectors' utopias. In many respects it wants to be what critical tradition knows as the ideal (or the perfect moral) commonwealth, a more or less philosophical, representationally innocent, kind of writing whose effective aim is to offer the ruling classes an improved image of themselves, and which would be used as a model. Yet in strict formal terms, as in final ideological scope, it presents itself as a true utopia, whose slippery understood difference and aim hinge on the skewing of the social image or model offered to socially cognitive ends.[4] I want to argue here that Bacon's practice of the utopian genre results in an unwonted thickening of his propagandistic message (all the motifs of which are familiar from his other works), and that it thus winds up interrogating the social significance of his scientific obsession. I will begin with the last section of this unfinished work, the nonnarrative utopian core in which the scientific institution is described at some

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length, and then move to the semi-utopian periphery of the work, the narrative frame and preliminary episodes that serve as situating utopian pretext.

I. THE LABORATORY AS CRITIQUE OF METHOD

On reflection, it is striking that the leading member who describes Salomon's House to the narrator has little to say about Bacon's theory of knowledge production, that is intellectual method itself. This wisdom remains a secret, arguably the greatest of many secrets in Bensalem.[5] Divulged instead are its appurtenances, the conditions of the method: laboratory and labor force. Two imbalances stand out. In the first place, there is so much lab and so little labor—and then, in addition to the lab's sheer copia, miraculous results (exotic new plants and animals, elixirs of life, tremendously powerful cannon) keep intruding into the description of what was to be "preparations and instruments." In the second place, within the summary description of the labor force, there seem a disproportionate number of collectors and relatively few producers of experiments.[6]

The critical tendency has been to read these imbalances as the natural symptoms of protoscientific daydreaming, and the expansive lab, in particular, as a curiosity cabinet to beat all curiosity cabinets. No doubt Bacon does daydream. But the apparent laxity may be justified by reference to salient features of his inductive method. The magic cabinet aspect answers to Bacon's notion that, with the institution of science as a collective project, the pace at which new discoveries and inventions are accidentally made will increase—and he of course stresses often in his natural philosophical writing that the great inventions of the past have been by happenstance.[7] Perhaps the miracles peppering the lab of Salomon's House are not really understood by the men of the house (we of course don't know whether they have made it to the true, the final method yet or are still in the hunt for it) but are the sort of thing to be expected with socially concerted effort.

On the other hand, the expansiveness of the lab/house is to be explained by the centrifugality of Bacon's method. Since none of the rudimentary forms, the invisible pieces of matter-cum-motion that constitute nature's alphabet for Bacon, have been properly defined yet, and since the assumption is that their discovery will be differential and totalizing, Baconian induction needs much stuff to work on, and much room.[8] It takes a continent to discover a form, and the

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seeming indulgence of Bacon's Salomonic father is rigorously symptomatic of this.

To show that the peculiarities of the estate of Salomon's House are organic to Bacon's inductive method is not to reduce but to depersonalize its wishful dimension, hence to lend it a more probing, critical character than it might seem to have at first. Of what is it critical? In the first place, of the unspoken method itself: the description puts in the form of an enigmatic picture a problem basic to Bacon's notion of experiment. Is it more a matter of occult wisdom or of transparent comprehension? Or, in other words, does it involve a series of intuitive forays into nature's unknown, wagers as to nature's nature, or is it conceived as systematic elimination, a tedious but progressive and inevitable closing down on the alphabet of forms?[9]

But this is utopia, so questions of experiment and method are, or ought to be, posed as social questions. The desire for a lab appears as a design upon social space—as a rather more comprehensive and problematic design, I would argue, than Bacon probably intended. To put it in Marxist terms, Bacon's attempt to figure transformed forces of production (for that is what he is doing, figuring more than describing, in Salomon's House as well as in the preliminary episodes) cannot keep from betraying an allegory of new social relations of production.

Let us begin the demonstration by acknowledging a sensible objection to this sort of reading—namely, that Bacon himself clearly resists it. One could certainly argue that, in spite of formal appearances, *The New Atlantis* is more an ideal commonwealth than a utopia. *The New Atlantis* offers a sketch of the "good place," stripped of the original *Utopia*'s bold irony as well as of its militant communism: Bacon labors earnestly to assure his audience that the verities of religion and patriarchal hierarchy continue to pertain.[10] Early in the narrative, for example, before the ambassador can throw up his hands and swoon with happiness and gratitude that the wayward travellers are Christians (249), differences in the islanders' deportment and dress have established that distinction reigns among them (248). A basic message of the work is that, by changing or adding only one institution, much benefit will redound to all; almost everything else in the social structure may be left much the same as it was.

Yet the strategy surely goes somewhat awry in *The New Atlantis*. A key generic criterion has to do with the situation of the otherworldly work in the religious field and above all with its operative attitude towards original sin, which served traditionally as a bedrock justifica-

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tion for a political class, for class domination.[11] Ideal commonwealths typically believe in sin, utopias don't. Religion will be an especially charged issue in a scientific utopia in the early modern period, of course, and Bacon's officious conservatism is insistent throughout *The New Atlantis*—to what are, however, tellingly ambiguous ends. A good example of insistence and ambiguity is to be found in the attitude of the father of the house, who tells the narrator its secrets: he bears "an aspect as if he pitied men" (478).[12] I gather we are to understand this as a classic ruling-class stance, that of the good Christian *pater*, whose sorrow for the sins of others eminently qualifies him to rule; in this case, additionally, the appreciation of Original Sin reassuringly motivates the House's lust for knowledge. But this message, though apparent, does not really come across. Its oddity strikes at once. In what country does this Father think he is living? Salomon's House has liberated Bensalemites from sin's effects into health, strength, and peace. Why pity them? So sin is neutralized in context; that is, it must mean something else here, such as the mere error, the distance from the real, imposed on humanity by the crudity of its sense organs. Or again, as will become clear in a moment, the father's pitying demeanour might be taken as the attitude of nature itself, at work in the House. That one searches for such a meaning testifies to the utopian consistency of the work as a whole.

Such consistency is not necessarily scintillating in itself. It is there, for example, to come back to the description of the House, in the verbs the Father uses to describe the corporation's relation to its lab. These tend to be of two sorts. One sort is verbs of possession, "have" above all. The other sort is verbs of fabrication, among which "imitate" comes to stand out. As the description moves indoors, from the estate to shops, verbs of fabrication tend to come to the fore. And, in context, the latter verbs tend to rewrite the former, so that having, corporate possession, comes to mean *imitating*. Consider the description of the heat shop:

> We have also furnaces of great diversities, and that keep great diversity of heats; fierce and quick; strong and constant. . . . But above all, we have heats *in imitation of the sun's and heavenly bodies' heats*, that pass divers inequalities and (as it were) orbs, regresses, and returns, whereby we produce admirable effects. Besides, we have heats of dungs, and of bellies and maws of living creatures, and of their bloods and bodies; and of hays and herbs laid up moist, of lime unquenched, and such like. (484, my emphasis)

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Reading the sentence about the heats of dungs, one at first thinks that the House actually has a collection of dungs, maws of creatures, and so on, before realizing that, no, what it has is varieties of heat, in substrates unknown or neutral. Just as the House possesses "heats *in imitation* of the sun's and heavenly bodies' heats," so it has managed to separate dungs' heats from their ordinary source or locus: it has them "in imitation," too. And one realizes, under the pressure of "imitation" verbs, that the creatures previously described are to be understood in some properly unimaginable way as imitations of animals and plants, the components of the lab itself as their own replicas. Insofar as the Fellows knowingly deploy them, insofar as they are possessed, the things of the House are imitated things—true apparitions of themselves.

How to account for the curious ontological status of the House? It stems from his subscription to the "maker's knowledge" tradition—that is, to the old idea that to be able to craft a thing is to know that thing. As Antonio Perez-Ramos has shown, Bacon held that forms could be defined in two ways: either substantively or operatively, as a set of positive qualities or as the actions that must be undertaken to yield them. The approach to forms will involve continuous translation from one "language" into another; nonetheless, operative definitions are surest and most determinant.[13] The imitative status of Salomon's House transcribes the peculiar spatial effects of this emphasis: the sense of nature retracting beneath its forms, insofar as these can only be known artificially, by means of human craft; but then an echoing sense of Nature itself as authoring construct, as the original source of imitation, a fertile storehouse of recipes in motion.

But if it can be accounted for ideologically, the imitation theme through these latter effects asks for and indicates a broader, social explanation. It is to be remembered that the House's imitation, unlike, say, literary imitation, is indelibly corporate, presupposing as it does a dislodging and active resituation of the subject within nature, conceivable only as the result of large group organization.[14] No great leap then is taken if one says that the House's "possessive corporatism" betokens a desire for a new class, a new sort of class being. To put it in a way that makes the generic slippage clear: the theme of imitation decisively overdetermines the theme of secrecy, transforming it from a late absolutist motif into a protocapitalist one.[15] The secrecy of Bensalemite society is part of the strategy by which Bacon means to convince his audience of the social neutrality of his scientific project, its nonthreatening character. But with the

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emergence of imitation, secrecy comes to characterize the workings of Nature itself in this society, to seem ingredient in what is a radically new social dynamic.

But look at the description of the human material of the House: thirty-six people all told, plus novices and apprentices, and servants. How can that be a social class? So a sensible objection would go, and I readily allow that in the letter it is indeed a tiny class. Its smallness is, of course, part of the propagandistic point: it's a court really, rather than a class. Only the barest state is needed for the great instauration. But consider the letter further. Are the thirty-six organized like a court or council? They represent a much more streamlined and efficient outfit than these, on the one hand, and a more agglomerate one, on the other. Above all, the names given by the corporation to its various areas of induction are telling.

> We have three that collect the experiments which are in all books. These we call Depredators.
>
> We have three that collect the experiments of all mechanical arts, and also of liberal sciences; and also of practices which are not brought into arts. These we call Mystery-men.
>
> We have three that try new experiments, such as themselves think good. These we call Pioners or Miners. (486)

Just as London has its guilds or chartered companies in spheres of handicraft—drapers, fullers, dyers, clothworkers, say—Bensalem has its companies in the sphere of induction, which seem every bit as natural to the Father as London's trades to the reader. That the Father's sobriquet-sentences are illuminating for the reader is a sign of Europe's underdevelopment in this whole line of trade. The guild analogy implies a key Baconian theme, namely the (need for the) replacement of a contemplative, conversational notion of knowledge with an active, interventional one, and the correlative elevation of the mechanical arts themselves as so many modes of experimental knowledge. It also indicates, I would suggest, that the mechanical arts served as conditioning images for Bacon's instauration in its inner form.

They would have done so, largely by virtue of the instability and dynamism of their polities. *The New Atlantis* was published in George Unwin's moment of the patent or artificial monopoly: this was marked, on the one hand, by the small masters' desire to free themselves from an increasingly alienated and oppressive commercial class, and, on the other, by the mercantilist desire to coordinate

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an entire trade in the interests of state and nation.[16] Arguing for the exploratory character of this moment organizationally, F. J. Fisher noted that Bacon himself played a significant role in setting up one of the more interesting monopolistic failures: a kind of state joint-stock guild, centered in the Midlands, whose aim was to regulate the production and trade, domestic and foreign, of all English cloth.[17]

The staff of Salomon's House, in the agglomerate uncertainty of its organization, registers and responds to this crisis of trade organization. On the one hand, literally and, as it were, from the outside, it simply is or presents itself as something like a state joint-stock gild. Remember that scientific knowledge for Bacon differs from craft mysteries only in its improving and synthetic orientation. This difference, one sees in *The New Atlantis*, will become less salient as natural philosophy comes into its own, takes on a controlling character, imparts its ethos and aims to the arts. Its putative rightful status as a second-level craft, as the mystery of mysteries, would have made it for Bacon a breakthrough art, privileged by virtue of its superior autonomy and reflexivity. As the guild to make more such guilds possible, Bacon's House represents a symbolic resolution of the problems affecting industrial companies in the present.

But no natural philosophical company existed, of course, and Bacon is using a guild structure analogy to figure his method. In this respect, the analogy is as important for the questions it raises (for example, questions of division size and of relations among divisions) as for any clear image it provides, and one speculates that it happens this way because of the mobile, stressed state of the companies in actuality.[18] Bacon was not simply extrapolating from alterations in the mechanical arts—from some dramatic increase, say, in the tempo of technological change. Rather, the really moving changes at the level of production would seem to have concerned sheer scale and the associated separation (given the existing social conditions) of production and distribution. These made for the tensions and fluctuations in company structure. And this political crisis, in turn, I'd infer, had the effect of estranging the labor process from itself, revealing it as raw material to be worked on, of making it seem, as if by contagion, similarly arbitrary and changeable; or to put this another way, it created a situation in which the political forms themselves could figure forth unknown changes in the mysteries, the perdurable techniques and practices they were meant to represent and organize.[19]

The guild analogy indicates the source of the House's questionable positivity, then, as well as its apparent diffuseness, its seeming to

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stand for a function bigger than itself. But if Bacon's ideal institution swells into a utopian society as the effect of minor political struggles around, or reacting back upon, labor processes, then that helps to explain why the Father's gospel conveys, along with a sense of nature as multifarious and dynamic potential, a sense of nature as an obstacle come up against, of definitive impasse. The wonders mentioned, if exciting, contribute more to this latter sense of imitation, for they do not indicate specific vectors of change. But most telling is the falling away of literary form in this section, and the badness of the literary elements that persist in the description. The Father's pomp and solemnity, and the continuation of the theme of the secret (now in a fair way to being without superficial motivation, since the pretext of the episode is that the time has come for the House to spill the beans about itself), tend toward parody. They slide, that is, from being signs of the House's sacred gravity and superior productivity to being the obvious covers, the giveaways, for the fact that there is nothing there, or only the familiar facts, beneath nature's appearances. One might consider this opening of a subdued carnivalesque dimension the revenge of form upon content for being used badly. It is paradoxically not an un-utopian effect, reminding one as it does of an etymological meaning of "utopia" ("no-place").

II. THE IMPERIAL GAMBIT

Let us turn finally to the story leading up to Salomon's House. I want to show how the geopolitics of the imaginary travel narrative participates in the thematics of the House episode, and I will do this by showing how the opposition between narrative figures of foray/wager, and of network or systematic enclosure, informs the whole work. A word is perhaps appropriate here as to the relative determinacy of imperial and domestic-economic problems. It might appear, since geopolitical antinomies come second in my order of presentation, that the assumption is they do in reality too. I confess that, in spite of William Harvey's *bon mot* about Bacon writing science like a Lord Chancellor, I find it hard to think of him as a statesman first, before he would be a scientist. But it certainly need not be seen that way; and the argument of this section is that Bacon's utopian narrative renders geopolitical antinomies as integrally involved in domestic-economic ones, hence suggesting that they condition and model the freeing of the labor process, the distance between gild polity and economy, just rehearsed.[20]

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Bacon's plan was evidently to stick to a travel narrative format through the body of the work. Timothy Reiss has rightly stressed that its episodic structure reflects Bacon's epistemology. Bensalem is to be sketched in a series of soundings or inductive forays. In place of the sociological categorization of More's *Utopia*, with its pretense of comprehensiveness and finitude, Bacon provides a contingent series of episodes in which parts of Bensalemite society are severally encountered and relayed, often from perspectives marked as singular.[21]

Still, as anyone who has spent time reading in Richard Hakluyt and Samuel Purchas knows, even real travel voyages from the period tend to be romance, to offer themselves as blessed or cursed or both. Bacon's story does not entail so much contingency as Reiss implies. By the time the text breaks off, narrative expectations have been set in place that cast doubt on whether what at first looked like accident was really so. The story in question involves a gambit on Bensalem's part, and, on the narrator's, a complex betrayal of his people.

The possibility that the travellers will effectively betray their nation by willingly leaving it is indirectly broached when the Governor of the Stranger's House explains how the wise Solamona, when laying down the laws that isolated Bensalem from the known world, had provided for the occasional accidental visits from foreigners that the country must expect to suffer:

> That king also, still desiring to join humanity and policy together . . . did ordain that of the strangers that should be permitted to land, as many (at all times) might depart as would; but as many as would stay should have very good conditions and means to live from the state. (470)

So, of course, only a very few European visitors have gone back home, and their news must have been dismissed as raving. The possibility of betrayal is explicitly established a little further on, and as a temptation not just for the plebeian element in the crew but for the narrator and the ruling element as well.[22]

> But when it came once amongst our people that the state used to offer conditions to strangers that would stay, we had work enough to get any of our men to look to our ship, and to keep them from going presently to the governor to crave conditions. But with much ado we refrained them, till we might agree what course to take. . . . We took ourselves now for free men . . . and obtain[ed] acquaintance with many of the city, not of the meanest quality; at whose hands we found such humanity, and such a freedom and desire to take

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> strangers as it were into their bosom, as was enough to make us forget all that was dear to us in our own countries. (472)

The expectation created here is of course not that in the text's closing pages we will find we have been reading a screed entrusted to a bottle, but rather that the traveller will prove able to resist the siren comforts of enlightenment for the higher pleasure of spreading the good news of them.

This plot thickens when it transpires that Salomon's House has been waiting for our particular traveller to divulge some part of its mystery to him. The text does not state the House's reason for talking. But evidently it is part of a deep plan, for which times are ripe: our narrator will be encouraged not to betray his country but rather to take what he has heard back.

What can one conjecture about the House's motives? We are not meant to doubt, of course, its benevolence. Just as it has decided to communicate those patents to Bensalem society that have made life there more commodious, so it has decided to go public to the known world with its most important patent—its own idea—for the world's good. But the question is, What makes it prudent to publish its idea abroad now? And the expected answer must evidently have to do with the relative readiness of both societies.[23]

Expectation is that the readiness of Bensalem will have to do with strength of two sorts. On the one hand, one imagines that the House's generosity comes from confidence in the idea of the organized natural-philosophical institution itself. The Governor of the Stranger's House relates that the House originated as the positive part of a two-fold strategy to settle Bensalem in peace and stability after a period of dangerous conflict. The negative part of this strategy was to sunder it from known and New Worlds. The experiment has proven so successful that the House now deems it prudent to suspend the negative part of the strategy in order to try its idea abroad. There is no more need for isolation.

On the other hand, the House's epochal decision can be understood as somewhat murky advertisement for another sort of success. The House must feel it has little to fear from the known world, even if, say, its idea should fall into the wrong hands. While the Father mentions in passing that great leaps have been taken in ballistics, no hints are dropped of special military preparations. What is made clear, though, is that Bensalem is a much more populous society than anything the narrator knows. This is implied by the description of the

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Feast of the Family (473–75), a kind of rationalized fertility ritual staged to honor lucky fathers, upon the occasion of their having thirty blood descendents capable of responsible civic participation. The state pays for these rites, considering itself the fathers' debtor from then on; and it is not uncommon for men to dis-enfeoff themselves in this way. The populousness of a state was still a key military criterion, so the Feast of the Family suggests a military reason for why the House feels able to use the narrator as a messenger. Yet, past a certain density, population could be reckoned a problem; so that, given the extreme stress on Bensalem's fecundity over more than two millennia, Francois Rabelais's joke in the first chapter of *Tiers Livre* about Utopians as ideal colonizing material perhaps knows a pertinence here as well.[24] The text encourages one to wonder, that is, whether the House's benevolent decision might be backed not only by strength but by demographic pressure. And, at this point, the choice projected before for the narrator, between betraying his country and bringing good news back to it, starts to break down. For if the House's decision to publish its idea is to be read as a geopolitical gambit, then the narrator's prophecy will involve a complex form of betrayal.

We might call this horizon of narrative expectation the epochal romance—though I'd note that choosing *epochal* instead of *imperial* romance is to favor the story's symptomatic, exploratory aspect over its propagandistic. Bacon's decision to make his travellers Spanish especially works to highlight the narrative's epochality and to deepen the theme of fortune, but it also renders the propaganda more exquisite. Its immediate motives are equally to do with considerations of plausibility and symbolism. An expedition to the Far East was statistically more likely to be Spanish than English. But the travellers are Spanish also, and not Dutch for example, because Spain was the great European power, and an opposition is thus set up between utopian and Spanish empires. Now for readers of the English "translation"—since, whatever one's politics, Spain is still the great rival in 1625, the most dangerous nation—this creates a peculiarly uncanny effect: the New Atlantis is situated as the other of the Other, and so distanced and magnified at once.[25] Clearly this makes the threat it constitutes greater, not least because as the great rival nation of Spain, Bensalem's offer of knowledge-power is extended first to Spain.

But note the complication attaching to Bensalem's isolation, its odd existence as island continent. This tends to shortcircuit Spanish

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mediation, to situate Bensalem as England's direct other. So: perhaps the new thing that the New Atlantis speaks of and is turning itself into—this isolate "empire for increase," in James Harrington's later phrase, this great spaceless country of the knowledge guild—need not be thought of as tendentially Spanish. Perhaps our narrator—whose actual nationality the reader of the English translation tends to forget—is being asked to betray his literal to his *de facto* country.[26] The possibility and hope are there that England, as a prosperous, populous country without an army, depending on the navy and trading companies for protection and increase, is in a better position than Spain to become the New Atlantis, a successful universal empire.

This sliding triangle of opposition, established by the epochal romance "frame," knows its less slippery analogy in the body of the narrative in the rewriting of the Atlantis legend. It will be recalled that Bacon specifies Plato's myth as referring to a remote past ("about three thousand years ago, or somewhat more" [467]) characterized by cosmopolitan prosperity, in which trade and emigration were vigorously conducted across oceans. He casts what is now the New World as (the Old) Atlantis, while splitting it in two into the countries of Coya (or what is now Peru) and Tyrambel (Mexico). These states, not only highly developed but evidently predatory, mounted expeditions of conquest against Bensalem and the Mediterranean region respectively, and shortly after being rebuffed, suffered catastrophe in the form of a flood that reduced their populations to mountain remnants and devastated their civilizations.

Now, on one hand, this story ranges Eurasia and Bensalem alongside one another against the Old Atlantis, as nonaggressive and fortunate regions who have not suffered a devastating cultural break. On the other hand, as a founding story its very purpose is to distinguish Bensalem from Eurasia. Bensalem's decision to isolate itself—to practice its own internal trade with its hinterlands and cultivate its natural philosophy—casts it against Eurasia as well as Atlantis, themselves now opposed as places of commerce and empire respectively.

This latter opposition, between commerce and empire, projected in the moment of New Atlantis's emergence, I take to be seminal.[27] It marks the contradiction, the macropolitical problem to which the project of seclusion/cultivation responds, that which it aims to overcome. How to conceive an empire that is not defined—driven and riven—by war or commerce and their attendant dangers? The institutionalization of true learning is clearly a large part of the answer to this question, though the epochal romance frame that

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makes it discernible as a response also makes it clear that it is not everything.

In what remains, I want to propose two things. First, that the travel narrative's romance encasement reads isolation as cultural regression, in the sense of a regression both to and in culture, and makes Salomon's House itself legible as part of this regression. And second, that the generic feature of the utopian break, the rupture necessary to make the alternate society thinkable, which in Bacon's work takes the relatively plausible form of seclusion and cultivation, is figured into the very being of the learning community, characterizing their mode of activity on and in relation to Nature.

We can begin to see how Salomon's House is part of a larger cultural regression if we notice that Bensalem's more programmatic and active isolation of itself, relative to Europe's passive or merely fatal isolation, rewrites a crucial turn in the mythic history of science that Bacon forwarded in various ways in several works. According to this, the new method is a rediscovery; it or something like it had been known by ancient wisdom up through the pre-Socratics, after which Plato and especially Aristotle replaced its active, instrumentalist model of knowledge with a magisterial, conversational one.[28] The epochal romance, in this regard, is about a contest: a contest between a society that never suffered Aristotle and that militantly kept the ancient wisdom alive, and ourselves, hapless victims of a talkative, merely rhetorical model of knowledge. In the story of Bensalem's wager, of the narrator's betrayal, the consequences of the West's fatal decision are coming home to roost, with obvious propagandistic connotations.

But again, the consequences do not stop at propaganda. This becomes clear if we consider that the decision to isolate and cultivate knowledge is defined, first of all, against commerce, and in its willfulness is like, or aligns itself with, war. Socratic learning, correlatively, insofar as it favors the hierarchies and regularities that be, is aligned with commerce. A logic is set in play, that is to say, whose purpose is not to show the superiority of pre-Socratic to Socratic learning, but rather to realign the two learnings so as to show the way beyond the macropolitical antinomy between imperial war and commerce, to use them to figure a postimperial society. A reminder is in order here as to a qualifying theme repeatedly sounded in Bacon's proselytizing works. He is not against Aristotelian formalism *per se* and its aim of producing masters who speak and defend the old verities ably; rather, there is a place for such conservative learning

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when it is a matter of propagating the social order, and what Bacon is against is the misapplication of the Aristotelian method.[29]

But how does Aristotelian learning figure in Bensalem, or does it? Salomon's House embodies the old (pre-Socratic) new learning. But what takes the place of the conservative, magisterial-rhetorical wisdom of Aristotle? If Bacon had gone on to write the Laws of his utopia, we might not have to content ourselves with attending to the logic of the narrative soundings. But as things stand, everything points to the Feast of the Family as the institution that tells us most about how Aristotelian wisdom ought to be embodied.

This is the moment to note the narrative significance of an episode that is accorded, in terms of plot, an undue amount of space. I refer to the description of the American people after the flood: the descendents of a backwards woods culture who are said not to have had the time to evolve a complex state and society, but who are cast all the same as types of mere survival, the "poor remnant of human seed" (468), stagnant stirps of Nature. Bacon exaggerates Acosta's negative portrait here, though surely he would have been able to perceive it as Spanish and Jesuit propaganda.[30] Partly he does so for a plot reason, as we have already seen: the destruction and deterioration of the American states is what makes Bensalem's foreign policy of isolationist experiment-gathering possible. But the lingering on the image of decayed remnants suggests symbolic motives.

There are two connections, which taken together help to make the Feast legible as an example of "rhetorical learning well applied." First, the Americans as a merely surviving remnant unable to recreate itself contrast both with Salomon's House as advanced tribe homing in on Nature's first principles, and with the productive families, the families seemingly on their way to turning clans, adumbrated by the description of the Feast. More than this, the remnant motif tends to make both House and family clans understandable as "withdrawals from the state," or as aspects of a willful retreat to culture that opposes itself to the Americans' pathetic retreat. Second, largely through the seme of decay, the Americans are linked with Europe and its comparative stagnation, and, more particularly, with a specific subcause of that stagnation, the Aristotelian monopoly of the universities, with their customary contentions and passions, as arbitrary and frivolous as the Americans' caparisons of birdfeathers. It is particularly this relationship of double opposition, the symbolic role of the American survival as a mediating degree zero of culture, that brings the idea of Aristotelian conservative

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wisdom into the *New Atlantis*, attributing to the narrative soundings a redistributing function and rendering Aristotle's message as that of a general return to paternalism evident, especially, in the Feast of the Family.

The Feast of the Family is usually read simply as smacking of early modern patriarchalism or, a little differently, as involving the imagination of a society in which patriarchy is accentuated. But Bacon's text enacts a revision of patriarchy as it was known, or a return rather to an aboriginal form, what for lack of a better word I would call paternalism, which involves a remaking of sexuality and sexual desire itself so that it works with approximately the same certainty as the syllogism. When the Feast of the Family is read together with Joabin's description of Bensalem's remarkable chastity, one begins to gather that the misuse of Aristotelian pedagogy correlates to certain other historical deformations. These, Joabin's speech indirectly suggests, are to be located in whatever has caused chastity to be coded as feminine, to be understood as a female virtue first and foremost. "It"—and not "she"—is the "virgin of the world" (476), he says, and goes on to portray the European system of sex-love as a huge waste of reproductive energy.[31] Chastity is not overtly gendered in the passage; or better, it is understood to be male insofar as it involves sexual energy.

This, it is worth pausing to observe, is the main sense of the positioning of the wife in the Feast of the Family:

> The Tirsan cometh forth with all his generation or lineage, the males before him, and the females following him; and if there be a mother from whose body the whole lineage is descended, there is a traverse placed in a loft above on the right hand of the chair, with a privy door, and a carved window of glass, leaded with gold and blue; where she sitteth, but is not seen. (473)

It is not that she has to be hidden so as to cover up the old truth, as venerably troublesome to patriarchs as it is pleasant to feminists of all waves, that paternity is always in doubt. Except for the rare miracle, paternity is never in doubt, after all, but only the identity of the specific father; and Joabin's celebration is of a social-sexual system which removes this latter doubt by sacralizing paternity as a general function. So the mother is plainly hidden, is staged as an absent witness, to testify to paternity's not being in question, to its being the only reproductive force.

What Bacon is implicitly attacking in these episodes, then, is whatever it is in Europe that has made for the loss of reproductive

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energy, whatever institutions and conventions are mainly responsible for the gendered symbolics of desire and an understanding of sexuality as incorrigibly deviant. This means, most proximately, courtly love in all of its ambit; and here one thinks of the extremely antiromantic profile discernible in some of Bacon's *Essays*: "as if man," he writes in "Of Love," "made for the contemplation of heaven and all noble objects, should do nothing but kneel before a little idol [the adored woman], and make himself a subject, though not of the mouth (as beasts are), yet of the eye."[32] But beyond this, it aims at a dominant Christian acceptation of sexuality as an inherently martyring dimension of subjectivity, what is generally understood to have been crystallized by Augustine and to have been incorporated more securely into Christian cultures generally than into other theological innovations.[33] Here I think of the peculiarly distant Erastianism of Bacon's religious interventions, as if he were the ideal person to manage a settlement on account of his religious unmusicality.[34]

My main point here is that in the epochal romance, the Feast of the Family is cast as part of the same isolationist, reductive movement that sundered the continent from the globe and separated out an institution of natural philosophy. Put another way, the House of Salomon becomes legible as part of a larger strategy which involves "returning" to local institutions, autonomizing them to a degree in relation to the state. This general or thematic connection between the House and the Feast raises some questions about their specific relationship. Part of this, the propagandistic part, is relatively clear: the House makes the Feast a routine affair by increasing longevity and reducing the incidence of mortal disease. These improvements, and the thirty-person family itself, are conceived in good part as the effect of a superior husbanding of paternal seed. Is the House then itself responsible for the new attitude toward sexuality, the resituation of Aristotle so as to make him, in the first place, a paternalist? Indeed, has the House been responsible for not just the resituation but the recharging of the paternal function? The very independence of the Feast suggests not—suggests indeed that the scientific project may profit from an environment in which local forms have been, and are being, sprung free from a territorialization by the state.

At this point, one gathers then that the opposition between Aristotelian and natural philosophical learning is predicated on a deeper affinity; that the autonomization of the family goes along with, is part of the same regressing, resituating movement as is involved in the formation of Salomon's House, now read as the isolation/autonomization

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of the guild form; and that this localizing movement constitutes an imperial, geopolitical strategy. And it is worth pausing to remark here that it is in respect of what is given to be shown by the epochal romance that Bacon's utopia reveals its greatest affinity with that other major literary utopia of the moment, much more marked by identification with More's text even if composed in another country and on behalf of another empire, Campanella's *City of the Sun*.[35] The inductive principles of Baconian natural philosophy do not lend themselves to the overwhelming, positive consistency provided by Campanella's prophetic astrology, so much on display in the concentric shape of his fortress city. But the *New Atlantis* testifies to Baconian science's being as integrally, if less immediately, linked to the thought of empire, indeed to an imperial strategy. And if Bacon's normative utopian subjects are comparatively uninvolved in the knowledge revolution that makes the new society possible—if they do not live in the midst of its imagery and come to internalize it in the way one internalizes the buildings that one lives in, as Campanella's subjects do—still, they participate with their bodies in the inductive movement of knowledge production: the isolation of, the homing in on, natural forms. There is an equivalent notion of a determinant radiation of knowledge through the body politic.

Equivalent—but of course with nothing of Campanella's terrifying coherence. Bacon's imperial strategy operates by way of the freeing of local institutions, the uneven development of traditional cultural forms into dominant, political-social ones; it implies the idea of a state that becomes empire by receding, by allotting traditional institutions space to discover themselves. And paradoxically, it is when the strategy is seen as such, as a whole—that is, it is when the movement of induction is grasped as part of, as entailing, a broader movement, when induction becomes social, then—that a basic question is raised about it, that it begins to suffer an identity crisis. For the imitative recomposition practiced by the House is thus linked to, is joined up with, a gesture on the part of the whole body politic. This gesture is constitutively ambiguous: it is evidently to be grasped as a general isolation and return to Form(s); but it must be felt also as a more or less calculated wager—as a kind of emulative activity, in other words, whose purpose is not in fact to imitate the nature out or in there in its true rudiments, but rather to conjure nature forth, to bring nature into being by winning an emulative response.

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NOTES

[1] See Frank E. Manuel and Fritzie P. Manuel, *Utopian Thought in the Western World* (Cambridge: Harvard Univ. Press, 1979), who refer to the utopia of Bacon's period as the cosmopolitical utopia.

[2] The Governor of the Stranger's House, the hospital in which Bacon's travellers are offered lodging for six weeks after happening onto the island of Bensalem, conjectures to the travellers that the house must be named after the Salomon of the Old Testament, rather than, as others have thought, after Solamona himself: "Some think it beareth the founder's name a little corrupted, as if it should be Solamona's House. But the records write it as it is spoken. So as I take it to be denominate of the King of the Hebrews, who is famous with you, and no stranger to us." Part of Bacon's point here must be to stress Bensalem's common ancient heritage with Europe; Solamona is Bensalem's Solomon especially by virtue of recognizing the importance of the Old Testament Solomon. See Francis Bacon's *New Atlantis*, in *Francis Bacon: A Critical Edition of the Major Works*, ed. Brian Vickers (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 1996), 471. This edition is the best annotated, as well as the most conveniently available now. Hereafter cited parenthetically by page number.

[3] See Louis Marin's suggestive analysis of the Polylerite episode as a sort of halfway house to utopia, revealing utopian thought in its unfolding, in *Utopics: Spatial Play* (1973), trans. Robert A. Vollrath (Atlantic Highlands, NJ: Humanities Press, 1984).

[4] For a useful discussion of the difference between the utopia and the perfect moral commonwealth, as he calls it, see the first chapter of J. C. Davis, *Utopia and the Ideal Society: A Study of English Utopian Writing, 1516–1700* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1981), though it does not hit the essential point: for which, see Marin; Fredric Jameson, "Of Islands and Trenches: Neutralization and the Production of Utopian Discourse," in *Ideologies of Theory: Essays, 1971–1986*, 2 vols. (Minneapolis: Univ. of Minnesota Press, 1988), 2:75–101; and Darko Suvin, *Metamorphoses of Science Fiction* (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1979).

[5] See, for discussion of secrecy in *The New Atlantis*, Rose-mary Sargent, "Bacon as An Advocate for Cooperative Scientific Research," in *The Cambridge Companion to Bacon*, ed. Markku Peltonen (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1996), 163, and the several references there cited. Sargent holds that secrecy is an objective problem in Bacon's scientific project. And on this, see in the same volume, John Channing Briggs, "Bacon's Science and Religion," on the centrality of what he calls the "principle of encryption" (185) in Bacon's scientific and social thought. See also William Eamon, *Science and the Secrets of Nature* (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1994), who presents the secretiveness of Salomon's House as residual, while stressing the important role that Bacon played overall in the move from a scientific culture of "secrets" to one of "public knowledge" (323).

[6] Sargent nicely stresses both these features in her commentary on Salomon's House. I would note that whereas Sargent speaks of Bacon describing a division of labor in the preparations section, the most that can be said is that he describes general aspects of what Karl Marx called the technical division of labor (as opposed to the social division). One learns little about how the lab is actually put to work or practiced. Are there botanists, animal husbands, specialist technicians of sound, or specialist technicians of sight? One cannot tell from the description of occupations.

[7] See, for example, Bacon's Aphorisms, in book 1 of *The New Organon*, ed. Lisa Jardine and Michael Silverthorne (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 2000), 23;

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and Bacon's description of the fifth part of the great instauration in "The Plan of the Work," in *The New Organon*, 25–35.

[8] For an authoritative discussion of Baconian form, see Antonio Perez-Ramos, *Francis Bacon's Idea of Science and the Maker's Knowledge Tradition* (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 1988), 67–80 and following, who describes it as "a notion transitional between the 'substantial forms' of late Scholasticism and the 'internal structures' and 'real essences' of the Corpuscularians" (67).

[9] See Jardine, "*Experientia Literata* or *Novum Organum*? The Dilemma of Bacon's Scientific Method," in *Francis Bacon's Legacy of Texts*, ed. William A. Sessions (New York: AMS Press, 1990), 47–68.

[10] The generic ambiguity of *The New Atlantis* is marked by a surprisingly direct and self-conscious relationship to Thomas More on Bacon's part. For Bacon is not unaware of his work's paradoxical relationship to *Utopia*, and indeed wants to encourage its consideration, turn the inevitability of the comparison to use. His one explicit reference to More's work—a virtually tongue-in-cheek revision of Utopian "courtship"—provides the clearest evidence for this. Whereas each Utopian is to see her prospective partner naked, and approve, before the marriage is settled, Bensalemite custom delegates the task of viewing to family friends of the same sex.

> I have read in a book of one of your men, of a Feigned Commonwealth, where the married couple are permitted, before they contract, to see one another naked. This they dislike, for they think it a scorn to give refusal after so familiar knowledge. But because of many hidden defects in men and women's bodies, they have a more civil way; for they have near every town a couple of pools, (which they call "Adam and Eve's pools"), where it is permitted to one of the friends of the man, and another of the friends of the woman, to see them severally bathe naked. (478)

This is a pragmatic and face-saving revision of Utopian custom in the interest of modesty, on the one hand, but surely also an allegory of the mediation of utopian desire, of a holding at bay of the utopian object itself, marked as overseen by the decorous predilection of the author. I should allow that the last sentence of the above quotation is ambiguous, and that I conjecture from context that the bridegroom's friend is female, and the bride's male; I also think it unlikely that the friends are to do the viewing together, though the formulation allows the possibility. Why Adam and Eve's pools? To mark this as a stage in the remaking of the primal marriage, of course, and then to stress the innocence of the viewing, but also to underscore the practice's role in keeping the race populous and pure (since those of defective shape will not pass muster for marriage).

[11] See chap. 8 of Christopher Hill's *The World Turned Upside Down: Radical Ideas during the English Revolution* (1972) (London: Penguin Books, 1991).

[12] See Vickers' note on this phrase. Paolo Rossi, quoting from Bacon's *Redargutio Philosophiarum* (but probably with Bacon's sketch of the Fellow in mind too), observes that "a chaste patience, a natural modesty, grave and composed manners, a smiling pity are the characteristics of the man of science in Bacon's portrait of him," stressing that this portrait is directed against the Faustian stereotype of the occult philosopher as restless and overweening ("Bacon's Idea of Science," in *Cambridge Companion*, 33). One suspects that Bacon did not feel that a change in social context would change the meaning of the scientific demeanor.

[13] See, especially for this, the early aphorisms of book 2 of the *Novum Organon*.

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[14] Surely few humanists had so keen an appreciation as Bacon of what was, after all, a period axiom, that human practices and identities are collective achievements. "Certainly," Bacon concludes in the essay "Of Custom and Education," "the great multiplication of virtues upon human nature resteth upon societies well ordained and disciplined. For commonwealths and good governments do nourish virtue grown, but do not much mend the seeds." *Francis Bacon*, 419–20. Note that the opposition is between governments, conceived as merely regulatory or encouraging, and *social groups* themselves, conceived as creative or constituting.

[15] For secrecy as an absolutist theme in *The New Atlantis*, see John Michael Archer, *Sovereignty and Intelligence: Spying and Court Culture in the English Renaissance* (Stanford: Stanford Univ. Press, 1993), esp. 140–50.

[16] George Unwin, *Industrial Organization in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries* (1904) (London: Frank Cass, 1972), 68 and following. Note that the apparent harmony of the House's series suggests a contrast with the volatility of the companies, many of which were in danger of coming apart during the phase of patent monopoly; yet I suspect that the echo of Genesis's fiats in the Father's dubbings ("Let there be Depredators. Let there be Dowry-men") would have called up the creation of new patents, which were sometimes a result of invention wholecloth, but more often the result of struggles within companies (as in the cases of the feltmakers and pinmakers, which established themselves in 1611 and 1614, respectively [Unwin, 159, 166]). Perhaps I should note here the existence of newer scholarship on the guilds, which claims to have superseded Unwin's work by showing that the guilds were great sources of social stability (see Ian W. Archer, *The Pursuit of Stability: Social Relations in Elizabethan London* [Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1991]; Joseph P. Ward, *Metropolitan Communities: Trade Guilds, Identity, and Change in Early Modern London* [Stanford: Stanford Univ. Press, 1997]; and especially Steve Rappaport, *Worlds within Worlds: Structures of Life in Sixteenth-Century London* [Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1989]). In my view, the supersession consists in a sleight on the word "stability": Unwin tried to explain how and why guild organization was undergoing stress and change, and would not have thought this would be taken to mean that individual companies did not perform useful, cohesive functions.

[17] F. J. Fisher, "Some Experiments in Company Organisation in the Early Seventeenth Century," in *London and the English Economy* (London: Hambledon Press, 1990), 43–60, esp. 57–59. Bacon served as warden for the company. Though letters are extant (printed in vol. 12 of *The Works of Francis Bacon*, ed. James Spedding, Robert Leslie Ellis, and Douglas Denon Heath [London: Longmans, Green, Reader, and Dyer, 1869], chaps. 5 and 7), recording Bacon's nearly contemporary, and mostly monitory, participation in the so-called Cockayne project, I find no extant references by him to this venture.

[18] Three key questions should probably at least be noted. The first concerns the strongly marked distinction between collectors of experiments and those who think upon them, and the considered faith in collection *per se* this implies. This problem is clearly a properly intellectual one, and is not to be explained by reference to the uneven development of industrial organization in Bacon's moment. Still, an analogy is there in the text: the division between collectors and redeployers of data calls up the unstably fixed division between craftsmen and merchants in the livery company. This correlation works both to expose the intellectual problem and to justify it by making it seem a form precedented in the deep order of things. Second, the

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proliferation of offices calls up the splitting of companies and creation of new patents, yet produces uncertainty as to whether the proper analogy is to a single company or the fairly nominal but famous confederation of the twelve livery companies of London. Third, this last correlation encourages one to wonder whether the number of novices, apprentices, and servants is not much greater than at first appears—whether the various offices are not, in fact, what we would call departments. The staff, in its explicit and understood division of labor, tends to become a figure for a whole mode of production within the mode of production: for a social function and quantity indefinitely bigger, we can only say, than it appears.

[19] For a contrasting but related use of *The New Atlantis* to locate a model for Bacon's notion of natural-philosophical work and discovery, see Michele Ledoeuff, "Man and Nature in the Gardens of Science," in *Legacy*, 119–38. The case is for gardening (and especially the practice of grafting), involving as it does an experimental modeling from without of processes whose inner workings remain unknown, and she quotes from the manorial part of the description of the House to make it. Bacon was evidently avid about gardening, and it probably did inform his way of thinking about the arts in general. My reading of the House episode suggests, though, that the split between forces and relations of handicraft production was probably more determinative in his coming to the bileveled maker's knowledge notion of intellectual production.

[20] For a stimulating argument that it is misguided to search for an underlying unity between Bacon's roles and recommendations as scientist and politician, see Peltonen, "Politics and Science: Francis Bacon and the True Greatness of States," *The Historical Journal* 35 (1992): 279–305.

[21] Timothy J. Reiss, "Structure and Mind in Two Seventeenth-Century Utopias: Campanella and Bacon," *Yale French Studies* 49 (1973): 82–95, esp. 92.

[22] Despite Vickers's comment in *Francis Bacon* (see his note to the phrase "foremost man" [790n]) that Bacon's narrator is the head of the crew, we know only that he is a leading member, and his incidental commentary works to bring out his identification with the few, the ruling class of the ship, as against the many.

[23] It is worth noting that Europe's readiness might very well be on account of Bacon's publishing the Instauration. For an informed and interesting reading of Bensalem's role with respect to Europe in terms of an absolutist thematics of intelligence, see J. M. Archer, 140–50. For interesting comments on the House's intentional obscurity, see John Channing Briggs, *Francis Bacon and the Rhetoric of Nature* (Cambridge: Harvard Univ. Press, 1989), 172–74.

[24] They are ideal because they reproduce so rapidly and are such loyal subjects. See Francois Rabelais, *Oeuvres Completes*, ed. Guy Demerson (Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1973), 261–62.

[25] With respect to the term "translation," my point is that, though *The New Atlantis* was only later translated into Latin, its first version, according to the fiction, should be in Spanish or Latin; hence, the reader feels that he ought to be reading a translation.

[26] See James Harrington, *The Commonwealth of Oceana and A System of Politics*, ed. J. G. A. Pocock (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1992), 32–33.

[27] Note that this is to suggest, against Peltonen's position that Bacon felt no need to align his natural-philosophical and imperial doxa, that his utopia at some level undertakes their reconciliation.

[28] See, for example, for the prerhetorical ancient learning, Aphorism 71 of *The New Organon*, and the preface to Bacon's *The Wisdom of the Ancients*, in vol. 6 of *Works*, 695–99.

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[29] See, for example, the closing paragraphs of the preface to *The New Organon*.
[30] In fact, in spite of Vickers's assured comment that Bacon relies on the work, it is not clear to me that he takes anything from Acosta's natural history of the Indians, which has them victimized by manifold species of idolatry at the devil's instigation. He of course need not have found the idea of cultural decay here.
[31] Prostitution, late marriage, and the disregard for issue attendant upon bargain marriages come in for special fire.
[32] Bacon, "Of Love," in *Francis Bacon*.
[33] See Peter Brown, *The Body and Society: Men, Women, and Sexual Renunciation in Early Christianity* (New York: Columbia Univ. Press, 1988), esp. part 3.
[34] See, for example, Bacon's "An Advertisement Touching the Controversies of the Church of England," in *Francis Bacon*, 1–19.
[35] For Tommaso Campanella's imperialism and the crucial role of his utopia therein, see Anthony Pagden's chapter, "Tommaso Campanella and the Univeral Monarchy of Spain," in *Spanish Imperialism and the Political Imagination* (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1990), 37–64.

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