Old Atlantis, *New Atlantis*, and the Vicissitudes of Things

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Of the many who have been inspired to seek out the lost city of Atlantis, there is at least one whose expedition aimed at something more than the discovery of forgotten or unknown lands, who aimed to recover and renew the project represented by old Atlantis, to succeed where the old Atlantis had failed, to conquer the world. Francis Bacon's *New Atlantis* (1627) which tells the tale of the European discovery of the heretofore unknown but happy island nation of Bensalem, home to an institutionalized, cooperative, cumulative and technologically-oriented science of nature for nearly two millennia, was among the most important influences on the founders of the Royal Society, and so on the early history of modern science.[1] Indeed, it may not be an exaggeration to say that this little posthumous work, originally appended to the forbidding *Sylva Sylvarum*, was Bacon's most influential advertisement for the grand project he dubbed *Magna Instauratio*. For only in *New Atlantis* are we afforded a vision of the reconciliation of political stability, law abidingness, Christian piety, and ongoing scientific and technological innovation, doubt of which possibility was the most important obstacle to working on behalf of the institutionalization of the new science at the time of its invention.

[1] The volume including *Sylva Sylvarum* and *New Atlantis* was reprinted more often in the seventeenth century than any other of Bacon's works. B. Price, 'Introduction' to *Francis Bacon's 'New Atlantis': New Interdisciplinary Essays* (Manchester 2002), see especially pages: 14-19. B. Vickers includes a succinct statement on the influence of *New Atlantis* in his collection of Bacon's writings, *Francis Bacon: A Critical Edition of the Major Works* (Oxford 1996) 788-89. R.-M. Sargent concludes her essay 'Bacon as an Advocate for Cooperative Scientific Research', in: M. Peltonen ed., *The Cambridge Companion to Bacon* (Cambridge 1996) 146-171, with some remarks on the legacy of Salomon's House. The introduction to W. Lynch, *Solomon's Child: Method in the Early Royal Society of London* (Stanford, CA 2001) is helpful not only for its remarkable collection of secondary material but also on the general question of Bacon's influence. Also worth noting are M. Hunter's observations about R. Boyle's interest in and variations on ideas from *New Atlantis* in *Boyle Studies: Aspects in the Life and Thought of Robert Boyle (1627-91)* (New York, NY 2016).

But however important it is to begin by recognizing the work's manifestly propagandistic intention, I want to suggest that this apparently fragmentary posthumous work is ultimately something more than a mere advertisement on behalf of Baconian science, and that the key to discerning this lies in taking its title seriously, and thus thinking through its relationship to the Platonic story of Atlantis.

By way of making an entry into the work, and into the puzzle of the work's title, it is helpful to consider Bacon's not infrequent references to the Atlantis tale in others of his writings. For unlike many 'Renaissance readers' of Plato's *Timaeus* and *Critias*, Bacon seems much more interested in the framing story of Atlantis than in the strange but beautiful cosmology outlined by Timaeus. It is perhaps unsurprising that Christian Europe should have found Timaeus' story of the creation of the whole by a benevolent demiurge a crucial point of contact with the classical tradition, and thus a bridge between Athens and Jerusalem, if not an answer to the pious question 'What has Athens to do with Jerusalem?'[2] Bacon, however, was apparently much more impressed by the suggestion in the story of wisdom deeper than and prior to Greek wisdom. It is from the *Timaeus* that Bacon takes what is perhaps his favorite quip about Greek philosophy: 'Vos graeci semper pueri' (You Greeks are always children).[3] Now this comment, which comes from the Egyptian priest Solon encounters in Egypt according to Critias' story in the *Timaeus*, becomes in Bacon's hands a key admission of the parochiality and historical ignorance of the ancients, and as such, grounds for liberating ourselves from thralldom to the authority of the ancients. While he never points out that this comment itself occurs within Plato's own writings, and so can't really tell against the authority of the ancients without at the same time trading on it, his interpretations of the comment highlight certain of the crucial defects of ancient thought Bacon believed were genuinely telling. Thus in *Novum Organum* I. lxxi,:

[2] J. Pelikan, *What Has Athens to Do with Jerusalem?* Timaeus *and* Genesis *in Counterpoint* (Ann Arbor, MI 1997).

[3] *Redargutio Philosophiarum*, in *The Works of Francis Bacon*, J. Spedding, R.L. Ellis, and D. D. Heath ed., *Oxford Francis Bacon* (hereafter OFB) 15 vols. (London 1857-74) III, 563. A.M. Hartmann includes a list of references to versions of this remark throughout Bacon's works in her essay, 'The Strange Antiquity of Francis Bacon's *New Atlantis', Renaissance Studies* 29 (2014) 375-393: 376 n.5.

> It also seems that we should not leave out the Egyptian priest's verdict on, or rather prophesy concerning the Greeks, namely *that they were forever children, lacking both knowledge of antiquity and antiquity of knowledge.* And they have indeed one attribute of children, i.e. they are ready to prattle but cannot procreate. For their wisdom seems to be full of words but barren of works.[4]

The Greeks weren't merely ignorant of much (of the history of the world), but they were only talkers, and their thought fruitless. I will have more to say about the encounter between Solon and the Egyptian priest below, but it is perhaps worth noting here that, as so often is the case with the Lord Chancellor's quotations, the context of the remark speaks against his interpretation of it, for it is the wise statesman-legislator Solon who, in voyaging to Egypt, learns what the Greeks have forgotten, and so, we are invited to suppose, is prepared to return to legislate for the new Athens. Properly approached, ancient wisdom need not be sterile chatter.

A second locus of references to the Atlantis story in Bacon's corpus surrounds the discovery of the Americas. For as almost any post-Columbus reader of the Atlantean dialogues must be moved to wonder, did the ancients perhaps know of the Americas? Thus, in his *The historie of the raigne of King Henry the seventh*, we encounter this somewhat surprising digression on the voyages of Columbus and the two Cabots:

> Somewhat before this time also, there fell out a memorable accident. There was one Sebastian Gabato, a Venetian, dwelling in Bristow, a man seen and expert in cosmography and navigation. This man seeing the success and emulating perhaps the enterprise of Christopherus Columbus in that fortunate discovery towards the south-west, which had been by him made some six years before, conceited with himself that lands might likewise be discovered towards the north west. And surely it may be he had more firm and pregnant conjectures of it than Columbus had of his at the first. For the two great islands of the old and new world, being in the shape and making of them broad towards the north and pointed towards the south, it is likely that the discovery first began where the lands did nearest meet. And there had been before that time a discovery of some lands which they took to be islands and were indeed the continent of America, towards the north-west. And it may be, that some relation of this nature coming afterwards to the knowledge of

[4] G. Rees ed., *The Oxford Francis Bacon XI* (Oxford 2004) 115.

> Columbus, and by him suppressed (desirous rather to make his enterprise the child of his science and fortune than the follower of a former discovery) did give him better assurance that all was not sea from the west of Europe and Africke unto Asia, than either Seneca's prophecy, or Plato's antiquities, or the nature of the tides and land winds and the like, which were the conjectures that were given out whereupon he should have relied.[5]

Similarly, in the essay 'Of Prophesies', Bacon goes out of his way to explain away or undermine the importance of Seneca's apparent prophesy of the discovery of America (*Medea*, lines 375-9), by suggesting that 'the tradition in Plato's Timaeus and Atlanticus [Critias]' together with awareness of the size of the Earth, emboldened Seneca to make a prediction of new lands discovered in a future age, 'when the ocean looses the chains on things'.[6]

As these passages make clear, for Bacon the important question is not whether the ancients knew of the New World, but rather how the Atlantis story (or other ancient texts and traditions) can be invoked so as to legitimate what would otherwise come to sight as a dangerous, even foolhardy undertaking. As a thinker proposing his own great but essentially unprecedented project, one that presupposed the existence of what it set out to discover, Bacon was understandably interested in the example of the great voyages of discovery of the 15th century. Nor was this a merely ornamental parallelism. Following the lead and the example of Machiavelli,[7] Bacon repeatedly likens his great project or work to the Columbian discovery of the Americas. The famous frontispiece to the *Magna Instauratio* portrays ships coming and going from between the pillars of Hercules, with a quotation from the Book of Daniel – 'Multi pertransibunt & augebitur Scientia' - which Bacon retranslates later in *Novum Organum* I. xciii, where he tells us that the verse, 'manifestly hints and signifies that it was fated (that is, Providence so arranged it), that thorough exploration of the world (which so many long voyages have apparently achieved or are presently achieving) and the growth of the sciences would meet in the same age."[8] In the preface to the *Magna Instauratio* Bacon observes:

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[5] OFB VI, 196-7.

[6] Francis Bacon, *The Essayes or Counsels, Civill and Morall,* M. Kiernan ed. (Oxford 1985) 112-114.

[7] Consider the Preface to *Discourses on the First Ten Books of Titus Livy*.

[8] OFB XI, 150-1. Compare the frontispiece to the *Sylva Sylvarum* and *New Atlantis*, which features the columns framing a globe traced by a map of the Atlantic Ocean

> But as in earlier times when men only had the stars to sail by, they could indeed coast along the shores of the Old World or cross lesser and mediterranean seas; but before they could cross the oceans and discover the regions of the New World, the use of the mariner's compass, as a more trustworthy and certain guide, had first to be found out… [So] before we can get at the more distant and hidden aspects of nature, we are necessarily obliged to bring in means of bettering and perfecting the exercise and practice of the human mind and intellect.[9]

In the *Novum Organum*, published along with the *Magna Instauratio*, Bacon remarks in I. xcii:

> Accordingly, I must open and lay out my conjectures which make hope in this business probable, just as Columbus did before his epic voyage across the Atlantic, when he gave reasons why he believed he could discover new lands and continents beyond those known then, reasons which, though rejected at first, were afterwards vindicated by his experiment, and were the origin and cause of events of vast consequence.[10]

Further on, in aphorism I. cxiv, he remarks, 'Even if the breath of hope blowing from that new continent were much weaker and less perceptible… I have decided we must make the attempt.'[11]

So, while Bacon repeatedly goes out of his way to mention Plato's Atlantis story as offering inspiration and legitimation for those who undertook to venture forth beyond the pillars of Hercules, and he likens his own undertaking to these great voyages of discovery, he downplays the value of these ancient 'prophesies', encouraging in his readers a proud sense of independence from and superiority to the ancients. But why then reference the ancient texts and authors at all? Why a 'New *Atlantis*', or a 'Novum *Organum*'?

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upon which is written *Mundus Intellectualis*, while the sun and two cherubs look down from on high.

[9] OFB XI, 19-21.

[10] Ibidem, 150-1.

[11] Ibidem, 172-3.

One part of an answer is surely captured in Bacon's oft repeated observation that 'Things new in themselves will be comprehended in terms of things ancient (or old).'[12] Thus the one who would bring the new, has no choice but to borrow and invoke familiar terms, if ultimately filling them with new content. As Bacon well knew, one need not credit the ancient words to borrow from their authority for the sake of legitimating and winning support for one's own work. Thus, as he coyly quips:

> Now I know that if I had wanted to behave less candidly, it would not have been difficult for me to attribute what I have to say either to those ancient times before the Greeks… or also (up to a point) to some of the Greeks themselves – thence to get testimonials and prestige in the way that new men do when, with convenient genealogies, they construct and cobble up a noble ancestry for themselves by forging links with some ancient pedigree. But I, trusting to the evidence of things, repudiate all taint of fiction and imposture, and think that it matters no more to the present business whether what shall now be discovered was once known to the ancients and has come and gone with the passage of time and the vicissitudes of things, than it ought to worry people whether the New World was the island of Atlantis known to the Old, or whether it was discovered for the first time now.[13]

Bacon thus has it both ways – pointing out to his reader that he could have borrowed legitimacy from the ancients, while loudly disdaining any need to do so. He thus leaves open the possibility that his own project is not unprecedented, but indeed, rooted in deepest antiquity, without committing himself to the authority of the past. In so doing he both emboldens his readers to follow his lead while encouraging in them an indifference toward the question of what the ancients would have thought of his project. But we ought to think twice about this last clever quip, for does Bacon not here invite his reader to consider the relationship between his project and ancient thought on the analogy of the relationship between the story of Atlantis and the discovery of the new world? Perhaps now we are prepared to turn to the 'work unfinished' he titled *New Atlantis*.

But just prior to doing so, let me point out one more characteristically Baconian reflection that is clearly inspired by Plato's

[12] See for instance: OFB XI, 76-77.
[13] Ibidem, 122.

Atlantan dialogues. For if Bacon could be said to draw comfort and even inspiration from the *Timaeus-Critias* and the tale of Atlantis in his effort to break with classical thought and advance his far-reaching, future-oriented project, he seems also to have been moved by and taken seriously the Platonic teaching, prominent in these dialogues, of the cyclical character of 'history'. Thus in the crucial final essay 'Of Vicissitude of Things', as well as in the fable 'Nemesis' from *De Sapientia Veterum*, we hear Bacon apparently endorse the classical teaching on periodic cataclysms which reduce all human projects to naught, putting an end to whatever cumulative development in the arts and letters, and return man to a primitive state. Now as should be plain, such a teaching rests uncomfortably with Bacon's grand project, indeed any grand project. For if, as Bacon suggests in these texts, nothing human is permanent, that change is ultimate and oblivion the fate of all human undertakings, then is not the effort to conquer nature folly? Or does Bacon in fact believe that he has found the means to triumph over the vicissitudes of things? But if so, what explains his apparent endorsement of the ancient teaching on periodic cataclysms?

Now, as an outstanding recent analysis of *New Atlantis* points out, an apparent solution to this puzzle is suggested in the essay 'Of Innovations', which, like 'Of Vicissitude of Things', appears for the first time in the 1625 edition of *the Essays*, and was likely crafted while Bacon was working on *New Atlantis*.[14] There, Bacon suggests that deliberate innovation to remedy or correct against defects that arise in time could intervene in and interrupt the tendency of all things to decay.

Might a closed and self-sufficient political community built upon and around an institution dedicated to the 'knowledge of causes and secret motions of things; and the enlarging of the bounds of Human Empire to the effecting of all things possible' be able to triumph over the vicissitudes of things?

Let us turn now to the *New Atlantis*. While it has been occasionally noted that *New Atlantis* shares certain similarities with Plato's Atlantan dialogues – it has been suggested that the work is formally unfinished in imitation of the *Critias*, which breaks off midsentence – the deeper narrative parallels between *New Atlantis* and Plato's *Timaeus-Critias* have seldom been

[14] A.M. Hartmann, 'The Strange Antiquity', 391.

recognized, and yet, as I hope to show, these are crucial to an interpretation of the work.[15]

But we must begin by reminding ourselves of the place of the Atlantis myth within Plato's oeuvre, for it is only in that light that we can make sense of Bacon's title. Now as any reader of Plato's Atlantan dialogues will recall, Atlantis is introduced in response to Socrates' expressed desire to have depicted to him a city that in several key respects seems akin to that described in the *Republic*. The *Timaeus* all but begins with Socrates recalling a conversation the day before, involving himself and four interlocutors, three of whom have returned 'today'. Socrates wishes to see the city he outlined to his interlocutors the day before 'in action' which comes to mean at war and contending with other cities.[16] In response to this request, a certain Critias[17] offers to recount a story that he heard from his grandfather, who in turn heard from his father, who heard from Solon himself, who heard from certain Egyptian priests, who keep records of all significant events in their archives stretching back more than 9,000 years. The story is about the austere and virtuous old city of Athens, long since destroyed and refounded, but which is said to have borne a certain resemblance to the city Socrates described in speech the day before. And the greatest of the deeds of this old Athens was the defeat of the mighty imperial power 'Atlantis'.

Presented with a work entitled 'New Atlantis', a reader of Plato's dialogues expects to encounter a renovation of the defeated and destroyed western empire, located beyond the pillars of Heracles, which nearly conquered the whole of Europe, and was turned back only by old Athens, that city that of all historical cities, most closely resembles Socrates' city in speech. Within the Platonic corpus, 'Atlantis' thus names the anti-utopia, the arch-enemy of the city in logos, or at least is closest actualization, and

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[15] Critias as unfinished: H.B. White, *Peace Among the Willows* (The Hague 1968) 116; J. Weinberger, *New Atlantis and The Great Instauration* (Wheeling, IL 1989) xiv; D. Clay and A. Purvis, *Four Island Utopias* (Newburyport, MA 1999) 119; L. Lampert, *Nietzsche and Modern Times* (New Haven, CT 1993) 28, 46; M. Yaffe, *Shylock and the Jewish Question* (Baltimore, MD 1999) 99; R. Faulkner, *Francis Bacon and the Project of Progress* (Lanham, MD 1993) 234; parallels not recognized: Cf. Hartmann, 'The Strange Antiquity', and T. Van Malssen, *The Political Philosophy of Francis Bacon* (Albany, NY 2015).

[16] *Timaeus,* 19b-20c.

[17] On the question of which Critias this is, see L. Lampert and C. Planeaux, 'Who's Who in Plato's Timaeus-Critias and Why?', *Review of Metaphysics* 52 (1998) 87-125.

portends a new war against the virtuous city, perhaps even a new (and presumably more successful) bid at global conquest. That virtually none of the recent readers of the work remark upon the intimations of this title indicates a profound forgetfulness or misunderstanding of the Platonic original.[18]

But no sooner do we establish the provocative and anti-utopian intimations of the title, than we are struck by the decidedly un-Atlantan character of the island nation of Bensalem described in *New Atlantis*. Moreover, the two words of the title never appear together in the text, let alone as identifying Bensalem. Indeed, Bacon seems to have gone out of his way to contrast Bensalem with Plato's Atlantis. Whereas Atlantis is depicted as spectacularly opulent and of great elevation,[19] Bensalem is described as 'flat to our sight', and the buildings, 'not great indeed, but well built.'[20] There is no hint in Bensalem of the comprehensive geo-physical engineering and city planning of Plato's Atlantis. Moreover, while Atlantis is depicted as aggressive and grasping, Bensalem keeps to itself, and apparently defends itself without shedding any blood.[21] Atlantis, situated in the Atlantic Ocean, borrows its name from its first king, Neptune's son Atlas. Bensalem, literally 'offspring of peace', is located in the Pacific. Why then has Bacon entitled the work *New Atlantis*? Or, how is the travel story telling of the European discovery of the island nation of Bensalem properly entitled *New Atlantis*?

As I have argued at greater length elsewhere,[22] Bensalem is not the 'New Atlantis' of the title. In the course of the European sailors' time in Bensalem, they learn that Bensalem is *not* Atlantis, that Atlantis was a once flourishing neighbor of Bensalem; that, as Critias reports in the *Timaeus*, Atlantis was destroyed by a great cataclysm after having been involved in a failed bid at global conquest. Within *New Atlantis*, Atlantis is equated with America (specifically North America). According to the 'faithful registers of those times' in possession of the Bensalemites, three thousand years before the European sailors arrived in Bensalem, Atlantis was a 'mighty and proud

[18] Yaffe notes that the title points towards a bid at global conquest, *Shylock*, 109.
[19] *Critias*, 118a.
[20] OFB III, 130.
[21] Ibidem, 142.
[22] Craig, 'On the Significance of the Literary Character of Bacon's New Atlantis to an Understanding of His Political Thought', *Review of Politics* 72 (2010) 213-39. The account that follows draws from that earlier article.

kingdom in arms shipping and riches and it launched an attack on Europe from which no one returns.

> Divine revenge overtook not long after those proud enterprises. For within less than the space of one hundred years, the great Atlantis was utterly lost and destroyed; not by a great earthquake, as your man saith, (for that whole tract is little subject to earthquakes), but by a particular deluge or inundation.[23]

At the time of the story, the European sailors are told, Atlantis is a sparsely populated continent, inhabited by a rude, ignorant, mountain people who remember nothing of the past greatness of Atlantis. During the flood, all the achievements of Atlantean civilization are lost, and so trade (though clearly not all contact) between Bensalem and Atlantis effectively ceases.[24]

This apparently gratuitous digression on the past greatness and current state of Atlantis within an account ostensibly given of Bensalem's surprising knowledge of the rest of the world (who know nothing of Bensalem) invites us to return to the Platonic account. Following this suggestion unlocks the mystery of Bacon's title. For upon returning to the *Timaeus*, we notice that both accounts of Atlantis are given by priests who have in their possession 'faithful registers' or records of past events of which their interlocutors know nothing. In both cases, this privileged position is explained in terms of the periodic cataclysms which destroy all other nations, rendering them young again. In both stories, the visitor is mocked for having only 'poetical and fabulous' accounts, or *mythoi* about the ancient things, and in particular, for remembering only one flood. Taking a step further back, we notice that both priests are surprisingly open to naturalistic explanation for the cataclysmic events they describe. Science and religion are thoroughly intermingled in both Bensalem and Egypt. In Bensalem, the scientists dress and comport themselves like priests, while the priests defer to scientists in the judging of miracles. In Egypt the priests vacillate between crediting their unique felicity to piety and to geography, and boast of advanced medicine, and a careful study of the cosmos. From others of Bacon's writings, we are reminded that Egypt, like Bensalem,

[23] OFB III, 141-3.
[24] Ibidem.

accords honors to its inventors.[25] So far from being the 'New Atlantis' of the title, Bacon's Bensalem is the stand-in for Plato's Egypt.

Once this narrative parallelism is noted, we can begin to see our way to a resolution of the riddle of Bacon's title. Bacon's title 'New Atlantis', thus announces a project consequent to the discovery of Bensalem. Somehow, we are led to conclude, what the European sailors learn in Bensalem opens the way to the re-founding of Atlantis. The most obvious element of this teaching is Salomon's House, the state-funded scientific and technological research institute that is the showpiece of the work. At the conclusion of the tale, the Europeans sailors are sent back to Europe and the narrator is asked to 'publish [the account of Salomon's House] for the good of other nations.'[26] But the narrator has chosen to provide us with much more than he was asked to. He tells of the life-saving discovery of the island, the efficient and hospitable tending of the sick Europeans, the complete 'conversion' of the European crew to Bensalem, 'at whose hands we found such humanity, and such a freedom and desire to take strangers as it were into their bosom, as was enough to make us forget all that was dear to us in our own countries.'[27] He includes the history of Bensalem, the account of its miraculous conversion to Christianity, the conversations with the Jewish merchant Joabin about the familial and sexual *nomoi* of the Bensalemites. Indeed, most of what we know of the "eutopian" island of Bensalem, and all of what we hear of Atlantis, is the result of the narrator's decision. The narrator, we note, who on the analogy to Plato's Atlantan dialogues, occupies the position of Solon, the great re-founder of Athens.

Left at this, we are inclined to see the work as an advertisement, not just for Salomon's House, or the institutionalization of Baconian science, but rather for the more complete 'Bensalemization' of Europe. But how then is this a 'New Atlantis', a new technologically empowered super-empire?

This question points us first to the limits to any effort to Bensalemize Europe. For Bacon has worked into his depiction of this happy place a number of key elements which are simply unreproducible, let alone in then contemporary Europe. For starters, Bensalem's happiness is importantly the by-product of its peculiar geographical situation. Hidden amidst the

[25] *Novum Organum* I, 73; OFB III, 165-6.
[26] OFB III, 166.
[27] Faulkner, *Project of Progress*, 238; OFB III, 147.

'greatest wilderness of waters in the world', Bensalem is unknown, and so virtually immune from all influence and pressure to adapt to the practices of potential rivals.[28] Secondly, there is Bensalem's peculiar history. Bensalem knew 'Baconian science' before it knew of Christianity, and indeed, the new religion is introduced by and so on the terms of the scientists and the state.[29] Related to this, in Bensalem the new science never confronted an existing tradition of learning that it had to replace or reconcile with. Thus a reader inspired by the example of Bensalem will in fact be working towards the realization of something else. That Bacon clearly crafted the work to encourage a hope he quietly shows to be misplaced indicates he has counted on this.

And for those who notice what Bacon is doing with Bensalem, a darker suggestion awaits. In the course of the narration of Bensalem's history, we are introduced to Bensalem's great founder or rather re-founder, King Solamona, 'whose memory of all others we most adore.' Solamona, we are told, found the people of Bensalem happy and flourishing, and set himself the task '(as far as human foresight might reach) to give perpetuity to that which was in his time so happily established.' And so he founds Salomon's House, and closes Bensalem off to the outside world, giving them their careful laws governing the admission of strangers, and legislating that only members of Salomon's House were permitted to venture abroad on special missions every twelve years.[30] The decision taken at the end of *New Atlantis*, to disclose Bensalem to the outside world is thus an epochal moment in the history of Bensalem. For this decision amounts to the repealing of one of the crucial preconditions for Bensalem's 'happy and flourishing estate.' The action of *New Atlantis* is thus the end of Bensalem, and with it, Bacon seems to be arguing, the whole classical tradition of *eutopia*. The closed, self-sufficient political community, concerned primarily with domestic political health and the happiness of its citizenry, is shown to be no longer viable. By undertaking his own effort at crafting a eutopia, thinking through the limits of what is politically possible, Bacon arrives at Bensalem, a happy political community whose happiness is dependent on being unknown. In then thinking through the position of such a community in the world of global navigation, Christian evangelism, and imperial competition between great powers, he shows that community unable to

[28] OFB III, 129.
[29] OFB III, 136-139.
[30] Ibidem, 144-7.

maintain its insularity. Bensalem, which comes to sight and attracts our admiration for its ability to persist and triumph over the vicissitudes of things, is shown succumbing to them.[31]

In *New Atlantis*, then, we see Bacon appropriate the inspiring and motivating power of 'eutopia' in the service of his own anti-utopian project. It is perhaps not incidental that after Bacon 'utopia' comes to name, more often than not, a *future* possibility, a model to be realized, rather than a contemporary discovery of the timeless limits to politics as in the classical tradition through More's *Utopia*. As such, it becomes an instrument of political change rather than a teacher of moderation. But in contrast to the modern utopia-crafters who come after him, the reader who has followed Bacon this far has been led to a recognition of the ultimate limits to human action, and so has been led to wonder whether knowledge of those limits, 'the very contemplation of things as they are without superstition or imposture, error or confusion', might not be worth more than any fruits.[32]

[31] It could be replied that because the Father of Salomon's House authorizes the announcement of the existence of Salomon's House and therefore Bensalem to the world, Bensalem doesn't 'succumb,' but rather decides to reveal itself. But this simply raises the question of why now, which, it seems to me, can only be answered in terms of some change in Bensalem's geo-political situation.

[32] OFB XI, 196-7.