

The Feast of the Family and the fragmentary aspect of the representation of sociopolitical structures in Bacon's *New Atlantis*

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Abstract

This study aims at analyzing the relation between the fragmentary aspect of Bacon's *New Atlantis* and the representation of the sociopolitical structures of his utopian island by the reading of the narrator's report of the Feast of the Family, a ceremony granted by the State to the man who is able to father thirty children or more. Firstly, I discuss the fragmentary - or deliberately inconclusive - nature of the work, pointing to some divergences among Baconian scholars who have discussed the problem, and arguing that, beyond the author's apparent conservative attitude towards patriarchal rule, his silence is, at the same time, an evidence of (a) his awareness that a social and political transformation is unavoidable after the establishment of his program of scientific reform, as well as (b) his awareness of being incapable, given the historical circumstances he lived in, to provide a complete description of the world under the rule of a scientific enterprise. Thus, the second part of the article is the reading of the ceremony of the Feast of the Family, not as an idealized description of Bensalemite society, but also as a satiric representation of English political and social institutions in the author's time.

Keywords: English utopia; Francis Bacon; sociopolitical representation