

Chapter 7

Francis Bacon, King James and the Private Revision of Public Negotiations

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Francis Bacon's early political career was anything but meteoric in its trajectory. Born into an influential family, an accident of timing left him simultaneously fatherless and landless, necessitating his entry into Gray's Inn as training for a profession Bacon noted as one of 'Burden', rather than as a gentleman's finishing school, a function it served for John Donne, amongst others.¹ Add to this his unfortunate crossing of Elizabeth in Parliament over the small matter of a triple subsidy, his equally unfortunate choice of the Earl of Essex as patron, and the unwillingness of his powerful relations to help him gain the positions his talent and breeding demanded, and it's no wonder that in 1592 he wrote to his uncle, Lord Burleigh, effectively giving up on politics, suggesting that he would rather concentrate on his passion, philosophy:

And if your Lordship will not carry me on, I will not do as Anaxagoras did, who reduced himself with contemplation to voluntary poverty: but this I will do; I will sell the inheritance that I have, and purchase some lease of quick revenue, or some office of gain that shall be executed by deputy, and so give over all care of service, and become some sorry book-maker, or a true pioner in that mine of truth which (he said) lay deep.²

No matter how much he protested otherwise, however, Bacon continued to try to climb the 'winding staire' to 'great place', and the accession of James I in 1603 presented him with new opportunities. A self-proclaimed intellectual, James was the perfect recipient of Bacon's first work of philosophy, the *Advancement of Learning*. Bacon's subsequent advancement, however, predicated as it was on

¹ *The Oxford Francis Bacon*, Graham Rees and Lisa Jardine (gen. eds), 15 vols (Clarendon Press: Oxford, 1996–), IV, p. 175 (hereafter *OFB*).

² *The Letters and Life of Francis Bacon, Baron of Verulam, Viscount St. Alban and Lord Chancellor of England*, James Spedding, Robert Leslie Ellis, and Douglas Denon Heath (eds), 7 vols (London: Longmans, 1861–74), I, pp. 109, 107 (hereafter *LL*). For biographical details, see Lisa Jardine and Alan Stewart, *Hostage to Fortune: the Troubled Life of Sir Francis Bacon, 1561–1626* (London: Victor Gollancz, 1998), pp. 67–73, 140–45, 18–80, 220–32.

his talents as a lawyer, left rather less time for his philosophy than he might have hoped. Between 1605 and 1620, Bacon wrote several incomplete rehearsals of what he termed the instauration, the restoration of the sciences, but published only one new work, the *De sapientia veterum* (1609).

By 1618, however, Bacon was Baron Verulam and Lord Chancellor: no longer a client seeking preferment as in 1592, but one of most powerful men in the land. Bacon used this power to publish his magnum opus, the *Instauratio magna* of 1620, through the prestigious and authoritative King's Printers, his work taking its place amongst the other heavyweight intellectual tomes produced to fix the intellectual credentials of James's reign.³

There was one more step to climb, however, as the epistolary gossip and newshound John Chamberlain noted in 1621:

On Saturday the .L. Chauncellor was created Viscount St. Albanes with all the ceremonies of robes and coronet, whereas the rest were only don by Patent, and yet for all these speciall favors the king cannot forbear some times in reading his last booke to say that yt is like the peace of God, that passeth all understanding.⁴

Chamberlain's comments regarding the *Instauratio magna* may be mischievous, but the flamboyance he notes is instructive: by March of the same year Bacon stood accused of taking bribes, and by April he was impeached for corruption.⁵

The final five years of Bacon's life were years of political exile and philosophical productivity, and he not only produced the bulk of his writings, but also endeavoured to have his existing works translated into Latin 'for the good of other nations'.⁶ Considering Latin the 'universal language' that would outlive modern tongues, Bacon also desired a wider audience, writing to James of the *De augmentis scientiarum*, the translation of the *Advancement*, that 'my end of putting it into Latin was to have it read everywhere'.⁷

According to William Rawley, his secretary, amanuensis, editor and posthumous champion, Bacon accounted the *Instauratio magna* 'the chiefest, of his works', noting that he had seen 'at the least, Twelve Coppies, of the Instauration; Revised, year by year, one after the another; and every year altered, and amended, in the

³ See Maria Wakely and Graham Rees, 'Folios fit for a King: James I, John Bill, and the King's Printers, 1616–1620', *Huntington Library Quarterly*, 68 (2005): 467–95.

⁴ J.C. to D.C. London, February 03 1621, PRO SP14.119.64.

⁵ Jardine and Stewart, pp. 451–69.

⁶ *The Works of Francis Bacon, Baron of Verulam, Viscount St. Alban and Lord Chancellor of England*, James Spedding, Robert Leslie Ellis, and Douglas Denon Heath (eds), 7 vols (London: Longmans, 1857–64), I, pp. 9–10 (hereafter *SEH*).

⁷ See *SEH*, VII, pp. 13–14. *LL*, VII, p. 436.

frame thereof; Till, at last, it came to that Modell, in which it was committed to the Presse'.⁸

More than a mere book of philosophy, the *Instauratio magna* was a statement and plan of how Bacon intended to instigate the overhaul of philosophy he had first announced in his 1592 letter to Burleigh:

I have as vast contemplative ends, as I have moderate civil ends: for I have taken all knowledge to be my province; and if I could purge it of two sorts of rovers, whereof the one with frivolous disputations, confutations, and verbosities, the other with blind experiments and auricular traditions and impostures, hath committed so many spoils, I hope I should bring in industrious observations, grounded conclusions, and profitable inventions and discoveries; the best state of that province.⁹

Thirteen years after this letter, Bacon set down, in the *Advancement of Learning*, the knowledge he felt was 'not occupate, or not well conuerted by the labour of man', but the *Instauratio magna* was a very different work.¹⁰ Both the culmination and the inception of Bacon's ambitions, it was the opening salvo of a publishing event, and the programme he elucidates over the first thirty or so pages – generally considered the preliminaries to *Novum organum*, Bacon's startlingly original contribution to the knowledge economy – are perhaps the most important part. These preliminaries explained how the instauration of the sciences was not just a divinely appointed age and the restitution of man to his proper sovereignty over nature, but was an intellectual event which took the form of a six-part plan, with each part being accompanied by one or more books.¹¹

Of part three, the natural history, which consisted of the collection of the masses of raw and processed data which could then be put through the interpretive mill of Baconian induction, Bacon wrote that 'my *Organum*, even if it were finished, would not carry forward the Instauration of the Sciences much without Natural History, whereas Natural History without the *Organum* would advance it not a little'.¹² Bacon understood, however, that the natural history was simply too vast an undertaking for an individual man or age, being 'plainly a work for a King or Pope, or some college or order'.¹³ Typically, he tried to start the ball rolling

⁸ *Resuscitatio*, William Rawley (ed.) (London: Sarah Griffin for William Lee, 1657), c1^{r-v}. *SEH*, I, p. 11

⁹ *LL*, I, pp. 109, 107.

¹⁰ *OFB*, IV, p. 192.

¹¹ For a fuller explanation of the plan of the *Instauratio magna*, see *OFB*, XI, pp. xix–xxi.

¹² *OFB*, XII, p. 13.

¹³ *LL*, VII, p. 533.

himself, promising to produce one single-subject natural history every month from 1622, but faltering after just three.¹⁴

While Bacon's Latin translations can be read as evidence that he was despairing of ever gaining the royal support his project needed, the *Instauratio magna* stands as his last great effort to persuade James just how important such funding could be. Bacon accordingly crafted the preliminary material, effectively a white paper on the future of scientific endeavour in Britain, into a complex appeal for James's patronage, not of Bacon himself, but of his project.

From his very first philosophical writings, Bacon had sought to correct man's over-reliance on nominal authority, an issue he conflated with his need for patronage in typically lithe fashion by asking the *Advancement of Learning's* most important reader, James I, the following question: 'why should a few received Authors stand vp like *Hercules Columnes*, beyond which, there should be no sayling, or discovering, since wee haue so bright and benigne a starre, as your Ma: to conduct and prosper vs?'¹⁵ The tensions inherent in Bacon's battle against nominal authority are writ large in the *Instauratio magna*, from the famous engraved title, which recycles this herculean image, even as it trumpets the author and his title, to the withering assault on received authority unleashed in the preface. Bacon, it seems, was alive to the irony that his work, a work which argues for the overhaul of received authority, owed much of its readership and hopes of success to his own political and philosophical authority.

The Preliminaries to the *Instauratio Magna*

As I have suggested, the *Instauratio magna* is a work alive to the tensions inherent in Bacon's fight against nominal authority, and this tension is apparent as early as the engraved title, which seems to privilege the author over the work:

FRANCISCI
DE VERULAMIO/
Summi Angliæ
CANCELLARIS/
Instauratio
magna¹⁶

In the normal order of a book, the reader would expect the engraved and letterpress title pages to be followed by the dedicatory letter, just as Gerard Genette, in the seminal *Paratexts, thresholds of interpretation*, follows his discussion of titles with that of dedicatory letters:

¹⁴ *OFB*, XII, pp. xviii–xix, 5.

¹⁵ *OFB*, IV, p. 55.

¹⁶ See *OFB*, XI, plate 1.

The dedication is always a matter of demonstration, ostentation, exhibition: it proclaims a relationship, whether intellectual or personal, actual or symbolic, and this proclamation is always at the service of the work, as a reason for elevating the work's standing or as a theme for commentary.¹⁷

But what follows the engraved title is not the dedicatory letter, but a short exordium, which begins thus:

FRANCIS
OF VERULAM
REASONING THUS WITH HIMSELF
CONCLUDED THAT
it would be in the interest of the living
and of those yet to come
to hear his words.¹⁸

Genette, naturally, considers the absence of a dedication significant, as the implicit suggestion that 'this book is not dedicated to anyone' is 'an implied message loaded with meaning'. For Genette, it could be 'either "I don't see anyone who deserves this book" or "I don't see anyone whom this book deserves"'.¹⁹ The exordium is untitled and unsigned, affecting anonymity, not least in its choice of the third person. It seems as if it is written about, and not by, Bacon, and as if Bacon were a figure from the past.

While this might be seen as a way of conferring onto Bacon the authority of a past figure, it may also simply be in order to express remote detachment. Whatever purpose it serves, the author's voice in the present – when the present is the moment of reading – is an important consideration. The author describes Bacon's thoughts while adding to his descriptions with a sort of aside ('whence comes manifold ignorance of things'), an acceptance of how Bacon's work appears at the moment of reading ('but while this may seem an endless task from the outset'), and what the author feels about the future ('for this matter can come to a conclusion').²⁰ The author seems to be communicating with the reader the fact that he not only understands (and agrees with) Bacon, but also that he, too, believes that these matters can reach a successful conclusion. In many ways, the exordium reads as if it were an editor presenting a historical text, quite possibly by a dead author,

¹⁷ Gerard Genette, *Paratexts, Thresholds of Interpretation*, trans. Jane E. Lewin (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), p. 135.

¹⁸ *OFB*, XI, p. 3. It was usual practice for the dedicatory letter to come before any letter To The Reader, and Bacon stuck to this order almost exclusively between *De sapientia veterum* (1609) and *Sylva sylvarum* (1627): The *Advancement of Learning* came with no dedicatory letter, with Book One serving this function.

¹⁹ Genette, *Paratexts*, p. 135.

²⁰ *OFB*, XI, pp. 3–5.

and it shares several features with William Rawley's letter To The Reader which accompanied the posthumously published *Sylva sylvarum*.²¹

The work's first, and for Bacon, it's most important reader, might be forgiven for being a little surprised by this point of the volume, if he hasn't simply skipped the exordium in search of his own name. In the dedicatory letter, however, the mood changes. Where in the exordium Bacon appeared to speak through a third party, and to a general readership situated both in the present and in the future, the dedicatory letter is addressed directly to James, and is intended to be read by the 'lay' public.

Letters, Public and Private

The dedicatory letter as published within the *Instauratio magna* is a virtuoso piece of public negotiation, delivered, like the rest of the work, in Latin, the 'universal' language. The letter carefully describes Bacon's hopes for his work, and how these hopes rest on James's actions to be brought to fruition. First, however, he directs a sentence at the 'lay' reader:

*Your Majesty may perhaps accuse me of theft on the grounds that I have stolen from government business the time that I have taken to write this work. And I have no defence to offer.*²²

The informality of the letter's opening sentence, with its talk of Bacon's temporal embezzlement, presents the relationship between king and lord chancellor as one of a relaxed, easy intimacy, highlighting Bacon's powerful position within the government apparatus. Furthermore, the imagining of James's response adds to the impression that it is designed to let the average reader forget for a minute that they are reading a carefully crafted piece of persuasive rhetoric by a master writer, and to feel as if they are party to a truly private communication. The letter's first line, therefore, tells the reader more about Bacon's position and relationship with the king than it does about the accompanying work and its fitness to redound to James's glory: Bacon's line 'I have no defence to offer' is simply a modesty formula, the affected abasement of a man who knows that no such charge will follow.

²¹ For more on this particular letter, see A.P. Langman, "'Beyond, both the Old World, and the New': authority and knowledge in the works of Francis Bacon, with special reference to the *New Atlantis*" (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of London, 2007), pp. 49–67. While there is evidence that Rawley wrote the letter To The Reader for *De augmentis* in 1623, there is no suggestion that he wrote this exordium, though it would go some way to explaining these features.

²² *OFB*, XI, p. 7.

While the printed dedicatory letter given to the ‘lay’ reader carefully presents a single negotiation, which we shall look at carefully in a moment, James himself benefited from another, private letter, a letter which presents both the relationship between king and chancellor and, more importantly, the negotiation underway, in subtly different terms. The private letter suggests, perhaps, that the contents of the public letter are not an entirely accurate representation of Bacon’s actual thoughts, opinions and wishes.

The private letter that Bacon wrote to accompany the presentation copy of the *Instauratio magna* that he delivered to James on 12 October 1620, and which, I shall argue, re-presents the terms and conditions of the instauration to James, exists in three manuscript versions: the letter itself, which resides in the National Library of Scotland; a secretarial draft with annotations in Bacon’s hand, lodged in Lambeth Palace Library; and a later copy of the letter in the Harleian collection at the British Library. The standard edited version, in Spedding, Ellis and Heath’s nineteenth-century *Letters and Life* is perhaps only useful for general consultation, as Spedding never travelled to Scotland to view the original – his footnote reveals that he transcribed it from the draft held at Lambeth Palace.²³

Physically, the letter is unremarkable, other than the fact that it has been folded, five times, and bears no signs of a seal – nor of being substantially cut. The writing is neat, though seems a little hurried at certain points, and a couple of words are crossed out. Unlike the dedicatory letter’s elegant Latin, this private letter is in the vernacular – perhaps a further indication of the type of letter Bacon was writing. It is addressed to James, in Bacon’s hand, on the reverse. Inspection of the folding, which, because of the placement of the address, we can only assume was carried out by Bacon himself, suggests that Bacon was right-handed. Not perhaps a great revelation, but the folds do tell us something else about the nature of this letter – it folds down into a typical package measuring 70mm x 85mm. This is the perfect size to fit into the palm of one’s hand. Where we might expect a letter designed merely as a note to accompany a gift, simply to have been inserted, loose-leaf, into the front of the presentation copy, this letter has been folded so that it may be delivered by hand. Even with the lack of a seal, this suggests that this letter truly was for James’s eyes only (though Bacon may well have expected it to be opened before it reached the king, even considering the status of the writer). Judging by the letter of thanks James sent to Bacon two days later, James was in Royston when the *Instauratio magna* was delivered.²⁴

Again, rather than simply launching into a plea for state support for his project, Bacon opens with some contextual information, specifically regarding his relationship with James, and the relationship of this letter with the printed

²³ *LL*, VII, p. 119, fn. 1.

²⁴ This letter reads: ‘My Lord. I have received your letter, and your booke, / than which you could not have sent a more acceptable present unto mee.’ (BL, Add. MS 5503, fol. 101). It is apparent James was in Royston on reading Buckingham’s letters to Bacon over the same period (*LL*, VII, pp. 117–28).

dedicatory letter. In the private letter, he foregrounds his understanding of the difference between public and private discourse, perhaps indicating to James that it is in *this* letter that the real negotiation can be found:

yt may pleas your most Exc^t Ma^{tie}
It being one thing to speak or write, (specially to a king,) in
publike, another thing in priuate; although I haue dedicated
a woorke, or rather a portion of a woorke, (which at last
I haue ouercomen) to your Ma. by a publike Epistle,
where I speak to yow in the hearing of others: yet I
thought fitt also, humbly to seek accesse for the same,
not so much to your person, as to your iudgment, by
these priuate lynes.²⁵

Bacon's words here highlight the fact that any communication by letter is, in effect, part of a discourse which can be held in several arenas simultaneously. Letters rarely exist in isolation, and these two letters, the printed dedicatory or public letter, and the handwritten private letter, necessarily form part of the same discourse. The fact that the Lord Chancellor, one of the most powerful men in the country, is discussing the difference between speaking to his king in private and in public is also an indication that this second letter is the one he intends James to take more seriously. It is in this letter, to plunder his essay 'Of Counsell', in which Bacon may 'speake plaine'.²⁶ It is important for Bacon to be seen conversing with James in print, in order that he may present the 'official' version of the negotiations, to present the public face of the instauration's relationship with the monarch and state. This is the negotiation for patronage which will go down in the history books. When he speaks with the king privately, however, he may put forward the real negotiations. While it is difficult to tell whether Bacon wrote this letter because even before his fall from power he struggled to gain a private audience with James, or that he was simply too busy to journey to Royston to deliver it in person, there is another possibility, as Bacon wrote in the essay 'Of Negotiating':

It is generally better to *deale* by Speech, then by Letter; And by the Mediation of a Third, then by a Mans Selfe. Letters are good, when a Man would draw an Answer by Letter backe againe; Or when it may serve, for a Man's Justification, afterwards to produce his owne Letter.²⁷

If Bacon wanted to draw James into correspondence on this particular subject, he was partially successful, and it is interesting to note that James is no slouch on the

²⁵ NLS, Adv. MS, 33.1.7 vol. 22, item 11, ll. 1–8. Henceforth line references will be included in the body text.

²⁶ *OFB*, XV, p. 67.

²⁷ *OFB*, XV, pp. 145–46.

letter-writing front himself, re-cycling Bacon's own witticisms from both letters into his reply:

a firme resolution I have taken, first to
 reade it through, with care and attention, though
 I should steale some howers from my sleepe, havi=
 ng otherwise as little spare tyme to read it, as
 you had to write it²⁸

James's reply sadly failed to include any mention of endowing an institute of natural history with vast sums of royal cash, meaning that the carefully crafted letters which Bacon included with the *Instauratio magna* failed to achieve the result he desired.²⁹ While they may have failed to work, however, the letters, and the fact that they appear to have been designed to be read in tandem, provide us with an insight into how Bacon viewed both his king and the instauration.

With the opening lines of the public letter, as I have suggested, Bacon wishes to assert his close relationship with James in the eyes of the lay readership, affecting the form of the personal letter by presenting what Day described as 'the familiar and mutuall talke of one absent friende to another', but doing it in public.³⁰ This opening line, however, also serves another function. It states that the *Instauratio magna* was written in time stolen from James's business, intimating not only that it had the king's tacit approval all along, but that it is already one of the fruits of James's reign. Furthermore, they will serve James's posterity well for, as Bacon tells James, the time he 'stole' from state business cannot be recovered 'unless it happen that the time taken from your affairs can – if such things have any worth – redound to the memory of your age'.³¹ Bacon is presenting the *Instauratio magna* as if it were effectively state policy.³² Bacon's next comment, that the work was more 'the birth of time than of talent', reinforces the feeling that it already belongs to James, as the time which produced it was his.

As he riffs on the theme of the *Instauratio magna* being one of the fruits of James's blessed reign, it appears as if, rather than simply dedicating the work to

²⁸ BL, Add. MS 5503, fol. 101. In the NLS letter, Bacon writes 'Thear be two of your Cownsell, and one other Bisshop / of this Land, that knowe I haue been abowt, some / such woork, neere thyrty years; So as I haue made no / hast' (ll. 18–21).

²⁹ For this exchange of letters, see BL, Add. MS 5503, fol. 101. *LL*, VII, pp. 122, 129–30. *Letters of King James VI & I*, G.P.V. Akrigg (ed.) (Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press, 1984), pp. 374–75.

³⁰ Angel Day, *The English Secretary, or Methode of Writing of Epistles and Letters* (P.S. for C. Burbie: London, 1599), B4^v.

³¹ *OFB*, XI, p. 7.

³² For the argument that Bacon saw philosophy as a vital part of the state enterprise, see Julian Martin, *Francis Bacon, the State, and the Reform of Natural Philosophy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992).

James, he is attributing it to him, as its genesis lies in the conditions created by James through his wise stewardship of the realm:

*if there be any good in what I propose it should be attributed to God's infinite mercy and goodness, and to the blessedness of Your Majesty's times [...] Deservedly does this Regeneration and Instauration of the sciences belong to the times of the wisest and most learned of kings.*³³

The blessedness of James's reign is, according to Bacon, to be found primarily in James's own wisdom. Without James, it seems, there would have been no *Instauration magna*. Bacon's continual mentions of time and posterity also appeal directly to James's own sense of self. The dedicatory letter might seem to be a simple festival of flattery, but it was, like all letters of its kind, written for a purpose.

As Genette and others have explored, the dedicatory letter found at the front of a book was generally a vehicle through which the fruits of patronage were displayed, what is effectively the negotiation of a patronage relationship, and this letter is no different, other than for the impression it gives that it is the work which is in need of patronage rather than the author.³⁴ The renaissance concept of patronage was predicated on a mutually beneficial exchange between client and patron, and we can see here what Bacon is offering James, in full view of the public: the eternal fame due the man behind the 'Regeneration and Instauration' of the sciences. Except that there doesn't seem to be a catch, as the combination of this letter and the exordium invites, almost compels, the reader to infer that this glory is already, and rightly, James's – and it is James's through a combination of his Solomonic wisdom and divine blessing.

But in every negotiation there has to be some sort of cost. Bacon asks for no reward for himself, after all, he's only serving his monarch, but he does make a plea for James to make concrete the patron/client relationship, that is, the relationship between king and instauration. And he protects this request with 100 words of Latin, which translate as follows:

It remains for me to submit a petition not unworthy of Your Majesty, and one absolutely essential to the matter in hand, which is that as you stand comparison with Solomon in so many things – in weightiness of judgement, the peace of your realm, largeness of heart, and, indeed, the noble variety of books you have written – you would rival that same king by putting in hand the collecting and perfecting of a true and rigorous natural and experimental history which (stripped of philological matters) may be designed for the

³³ *OFB*, XI, p. 7.

³⁴ See Jonathan Gibson, 'King Lear and the Patronage System', *The Seventeenth Century*, 14 (1997): 95–114. *Patronage in the Renaissance*, Guy Fitch Lytle and Stephen Orgel (eds) (Princeton University Press; Princeton, NJ, 1981).

*building up of philosophy, and which I shall describe in its proper place, so that at last, after so many ages of the world, philosophy and the sciences may be no longer an airy and floating fabric but a solid construction resting on the firm foundations of well weighed experience of every kind. As for me, I have supplied the Organum, but its material must be sought in the things themselves.*³⁵

Bacon encases his request in flattery, in the comparison of James with Solomon and of the *Novum organum* with Aristotle's *Organum*, and with explanations of what he means by natural history, and the actual petition is simple: that James should fund a natural historical programme along Baconian lines. Bacon reiterates the way in which the future will look at James after he has responded positively in order to make it seem inevitable that James will grant his request – perhaps even making it appear that this natural history is already in hand.

It is with regards this subject that we find the first major fissure between the public and the private letters. While the public letter suggests that the *Instauratio magna* may redound to James's glory, it also implies that it requires James's active intervention to make it happen, even if this intervention is inevitable from such a wise monarch. The private letter casts this deal in a different light:

And
to tell your Ma. trewly what I think; I accownt your
faour may be to this woork, as much as an hundreth
years tyme. for I am perswaded, the woork will
gayne upon mens myndes in Ages; but your gracing
it may make it take hold more swiftly (ll. 30–35)

While the public letter works to suggest that this work is inevitably James's, and that should this most wise of kings not place his talents behind the wheel, the wheel shall not be 'sett on going', the private letter allows James to glimpse another possibility: the outcome is certain, it is only the timing which is not. The private letter presents James with an opportunity to put his name to something which is in itself inevitable – what is at stake is the authorship of this monumental change. Bacon has subtly changed the rules of the game. It is almost as if the instauration, as represented by its agent, Bacon, is now patron, and James the client.

An astute reader of the public letter might perhaps have noticed that the Solomonic flattery was not entirely positive. Lynne Magnusson has noted Erasmus's acceptance that flattery, normally something he abhorred, might be justified when giving advice to kings:

³⁵ *OFB*, XI, pp. 7–9.

I suspect that panegyrics of princes were invented for this very purpose, that under the semblance of praise they should, without offence or shame, be reminded of their faults. Otherwise what would be more repulsive than such flattery?³⁶

Bacon's use of the Solomonic commonplace is not simply to flatter James, but also serves to remind him of one simple fact, that James has yet to equal the famously wise biblical king: stripped of the panegyric, the exhortation reads as 'that you who resemble Solomon in so many things would further follow his example'.³⁷ The private letter takes up this baton, and effectively reinterprets the public letter, suggesting that if James fails to act the public letter will, in the future, find James wanting. If, however, he acts as Bacon wishes, it will show that he truly was a wise monarch, concerned with the present and future comfort of his people.

As well as being able to re-draw the terms of his negotiation in the private letter, Bacon is also freed from the constraints of performative necessity. This means that he can more directly target James's own preoccupations, indulging in types of flattery which might be considered too strong or risky for public consumption. He is also freed from the need to present the relationship between king and chancellor in any particular light, as there's no public to convince, so he can simply say whatever he feels he needs, to get his point across. Naturally, Bacon wields his rhetorical whip with masterly control even as he seeks to 'speake plaine'.

James was nothing if not a believer in the divine right of kings, and Bacon may well have felt that appealing to this weakness of his monarch's was best done in private. Accordingly, he changes the public re-cycling of a Solomonic commonplace into a direct image of king as creator:

This woork is but a new body of Claye, whearunto your Ma.
by your Cowntenance and protection, may breath life (ll. 29–30)³⁸

Bacon has changed a simile, 'you who resemble', into a direct metaphor.³⁹ We can also see something of Bacon's thought patterns as the letter was written in the secretarial draft, as the secretary's crossings out show us how this line evolved:

³⁶ Lynne Magnusson, *Shakespeare and Social Dialogue: Dramatic Language and Elizabethan Letters* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), pp. 69–70 (citing Erasmus, *On Writing Letters*).

³⁷ See *OFB*, IV, pp. 4, 35–36. In his letter To The Reader which accompanied James's 1616 *Workes*, Montague mentions Solomon six times, directly comparing him to James once, while James regularly compared himself to Solomon.

³⁸ Cf. Genesis 2.7, where God 'formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul'.

³⁹ Cf. *De sapientia veterum*: 'tradition says that Man was made by Prometheus, and made of clay' (*SEH*, VI, p. 745).

This worke, is but a newe body of clay, wherein
 your Majestie ^by^ bring your Countenance and protection
 may breath life.⁴⁰

This may be subtle, but Bacon seems to change his mind about the word ‘bring’, allowing for a more direct image to form in the king’s mind – he is no longer ‘bringing’ something to the work, but actively breathing life into it. Bacon re-draws the Solomonic James as a promethean James.⁴¹

Prior to this, Bacon has already rhetorically divorced James from his corporeal body in the letter’s first sentence when, following on from the Solomonic flattery of the public letter, Bacon writes that ‘I thought fitt also, humbly to seek accesse for the same, not so much to your person, as to your iudgment, by these priuate lynes’ (ll. 6–8). As well as de-personalising their relationship, Bacon is working on James’s belief that judgement, Solomon’s other great virtue, lay at the heart of kingship.⁴² The private letter once more takes tropes found within the public letter and complicates them.

In the private letter, Bacon gives his reasons for publishing the *Instauratio magna*, beginning with a reiteration of his worries about his personal health, as he suggests that ‘the reason why I haue published it now, (specially being unparfite) is (to speak plainely) bycause I number my daies, and would haue it saued’ (ll. 21–23). Naturally, this is not all:

Thear is another reason of my so doing, which is to trye, whither
 I can gett help in one intended part of this woorke; namely
 the Compiling of ^A^ Naturall and Experimentall History,
 which must be the Mayne foundation, of a trew and
 Actiue Philosophie (ll. 24–28)

Bacon has already asked James for help in public, and yet he feels the need to ask again in private. Yet in private he does not state that he expects this help from James – here Bacon talks about his reason for publication only. Having already stated that his ideas will take root with or without James’s help, it seems possible that Bacon here is simply reminding James that he has first refusal on this project, the results of which will help mankind ameliorate his position on earth,

⁴⁰ LPL, MS 939, art. 129, ll. 35–6.

⁴¹ John Donne used the same conceit, though without the explicit connection to Genesis and the Promethean myth, in a letter he writes to Buckingham in 1621: ‘All that I meane in usinge thys boldness, of puttinge myselve into your Lordship’s presence by this rage of paper, ys to tell your Lordship that I ly in a corner, as a clodd of clay, attendinge what kinde of vessel yt shall please you to make of.’ (Quotations in John Stubbs, *Donne, The Reformed Soul* (London: Penguin, 2007), p. 365, citing Bald, p. 381).

⁴² Alan Stewart, *The Cradle King, A Life of James VI and I* (London: Chatto and Windus, 2003), p. 233.

and restore man to his pre-lapsarian power over nature. When he states that the natural history must be the ‘Mayne foundation, of a trew and Actiue Philosophye’, Bacon reminds James of the point he made at the end of the public letter: ‘*As for me, I have supplied the Organum but its material must be sought in the things themselves.*’⁴³

In a letter to Father Fulgentio in 1625, Bacon wrote that the natural history was a work ‘for a King or Pope’, perhaps suggesting a growing conviction that the instauration itself was more important than confessional or national boundaries.⁴⁴ The nature of, and publishing strategy behind, the parts of the instauration produced after Bacon’s fall from grace reinforces this idea that he was no longer automatically relating the instauration to the English nation/state. Bacon’s final private lines serve to reinforce this suggestion that the *Instauratio magna* is a work which will find an audience throughout Europe, lines which in the draft of the letter held at Lambeth Palace are revealed to have been added by Bacon himself after the letter’s initial dictation:

I hear my former book of
Aduancement of Learning is well tasted in the Uni-
uersities hear, and the English Colleges abroad: And
this is the same Argument sunken deeper (ll. 42–45)

While this re-reading of the public letter’s preoccupations certainly suggests that Bacon is presenting a new argument, and to James only, the difference in intention between the private and public letters can also be traced more obliquely through the tone which Bacon employs: where we find direct language in the private letter, we find something very different in the public. The public letter creates a nexus of possibility and contingency, with phrases such as, ‘*if such things have any worth*’, ‘*may perhaps*’, ‘*unless it happen*’, ‘*I may perhaps*’, ‘*I myself am certainly inclined*’, ‘*and doubtless there is an element of chance*’, and ‘*may no longer*’, which makes meaning hard to pin down.⁴⁵ Bacon even affects uncharacteristic uncertainty on the worth of the *Instauratio magna* itself: ‘*if there be any good in what I propose.*’⁴⁶ This contrasts markedly with the private letter, in which he states that:

The woork, in what Colors soeuer it may be sett foorth,
is no more but a new Logique: teaching to inuent and
judg by Induction (as fynding Syllogisme incompetent

⁴³ *OFB*, XI, p. 9.

⁴⁴ *LL*, VII, p. 531.

⁴⁵ *OFB*, XI, pp. 7–9.

⁴⁶ *OFB*, XI, p. 7. Compare this to his comments on the *Novum organum* in *Historia naturalis*: ‘they prefer to follow the old ways and not the way of my *Organum* (which seems to me to be either the only or the best way)’ (*OFB*, XII, p. 13).

for Sciences of Nature) and thereby to make Philosophy
and Sciences both more true, and more Actiue.

This tending to enlarge the bowndes of Reason, and to endowe
Mans Estate with new vawle (ll. 9–15)

The private letter is, as this extract demonstrates, more direct, using phrases such as ‘I have’; ‘is no more but a new Logique’; ‘was no unproper Oblation’; ‘the reason why’; ‘to speak plainely’; ‘there is’; ‘this woorke is but’; ‘trewly what I thinke’; ‘I am perswaded’; ‘I Confesse’. These phrases refer either to the author or to the work itself. The subtly vacillating Bacon of the public letter and the Bacon of the exordium with his variable authorial positions have disappeared. In the public letter, Bacon obscures meaning, allowing for it to be fixed in retrospect, specifically in light of James’s actions regarding the work. In private, Bacon continues with the themes of the public letter, but presents them in a more forthright manner: Bacon tells James what will occur, and allows him to decide whether to attach his own name to these advances, or not. This strong sense of the future looking back on the present is a feature of much of Bacon’s output, especially to the end of his life.

The private letter allows James to see how the public letter will be viewed in posterity, a luxury not granted to the lay reader. To the lay reader, the public letter is designed to demonstrate the close bond between the king and chancellor, and to present Bacon’s desires and requests as a *fait accompli* – to make the authority for Bacon’s instauration King James and his times. To James, the public letter is designed to be read by posterity, a posterity which will judge him, in natural philosophical terms, as either the king who rivalled Solomon, or the fool who allowed the prize of the regeneration of sciences to slip from his grasp. In the private letter, Bacon renegotiates the relationship between king, chancellor, instauration and future that he presented in the public letter. The private letter, read in the light of the public letter, makes this reading of the new relationship between King James and the *Instauratio magna* possible.

