

that both the author and the purpose of this book were clearly stated on the title page, by the publication of the second part, entitled *The Continuation of an Historical Discourse of the Government of England, Until the End of the Reign of Queene Elizabeth. With a Preface Being a Vindication of the Ancient Way of Parliaments in England. By Nath. Bacon of Grays Inn, Esq.* However, anyone who chose to go further than the title page of 1647 would have found a piece entitled 'To Consideration' in which Bacon (even if he did not identify himself) made clear the purposes of the work. He says the book had its beginnings in a 'private debate concerning the right of an English King to Arbitrary rule over English Subjects as Successor to the Norman Conqueror' and that it is being offered as 'an Idea for them to consider, who doe mind the restitution of this shattered frame of policy'. The reader he evidently has in mind is one who is well read, in a position to influence the direction of society, and willing to assess present circumstances in the light of relevant knowledge (which may be new) about the past. Bacon is careful not to give his analysis an absolute authoritativeness but instead describes it as a 'small modell' or 'Map' which will assist the reader to a 'right apprehension of the true nature' of the English nation. In particular he stresses its status as 'discourse' and its function to affect the way judgements are made and hence actions determined upon. By going to antiquity and presenting a view of the origins of government in England through a narrative woven out of the existing records, he endeavours to protect his discourse from error. The opposing method which, he claimed, was used by the apologists for the monarchy, is vigorously defined in these terms: 'Ambition hath done much by discourse and action to bring forth Monarchy out of the wombe of notion, but yet like that of the Philosophers stone the issue is but wind, and the end misery to the undertakers.' Against any theory or proposal for a system of government which gives disproportionate power to one of its parts he would affirm that 'the utmost perfection of this nether worlds best government consists in the upholding of a due proportion of several interests compounded into one temperature'. On this basis, and an appeal to '[Him] that knoweth the secrets of all mens hearts', Bacon affirms that his 'aime in this Discourse is neither at Scepter or Crozier, nor after popular dotage, but that Justice and Truth may moderate in all'.⁸

How far Bacon was successful in his aim can, in one respect at least, be gauged by the subsequent fortunes of his book which appeared to at least one annotator to be written on 'violent Republican principles'. In the *Dictionary of National Biography* entry for Bacon it is said that the 1665 edition was suppressed and the printer of the 1676 edition prosecuted. A censored version apparently was printed in 1682 but not published until 1689. It was not