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'Reformation' or 'ruin'? The impeachment of the Duke of Buckingham and early Stuart politics.

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On 2 May 1626 an important debate took place in the House of Commons. Charles I had called parliament, which met in February, to supply the money he desperately needed to continue his war with Spain. Yet although MPs offered three subsidies and three fifteenths, and later increased their offer, they refused to pass a subsidy bill before their grievances were addressed. Chief among these grievances was the continuation in office of the Duke of Buckingham, the royal favourite and Lord Admiral, who was blamed for the mismanagement of the war with Spain and attacked for his near-monopoly of counsel and patronage. The Duke's opponents in the House of Commons, led by a former client, Sir John Eliot, began their attack by investigating the expenditure of the parliamentary subsidies granted in 1624, as well as Buckingham's alleged responsibility for the decline of Anglo-French relations following his re-arrest of a French ship, the *St. Peter*.¹ When these initial forays failed to produce results, an M.P. named Samuel Turner presented a series of questions about Buckingham's leadership, his sale of offices and his supposed support for Catholic recusants.² Turner's dramatic intervention reinvigorated and widened the attack on Buckingham, forming the basis of an investigation that resulted in the preparation of thirteen charges against him.³

The debate on 2 May was intended to decide whether these charges should be presented to the King or to the House of Lords. Parliament's medieval power to

impeach ministers had only recently been reasserted during the parliaments of 1621 and 1624, when Francis Bacon, Viscount St. Alban, Lionel Cranfield, Earl of Middlesex and others had been impeached for reasons that had as much to do with court politics as corruption. As such, procedures had not yet been formalised and the question of who should judge Buckingham's case was still open. The decision hinged on the larger question of whether the investigation of Buckingham aimed at correcting his faults or removing him from power. Sir William Beecher, Sir George Goring and Sir Robert Harley, all government spokesmen, insisted that by transmitting the charges to the King, the Commons would prove that they aimed at the 'reformation' of the Duke, meaning the correction of his errors, rather than his 'ruin' or 'removal', which, as the recent impeachment of St. Alban and Middlesex suggested would be the likely result of sending the charges to the Lords.⁴

The notion that the investigation into Buckingham aimed at the Duke's 'reformation' rather than his 'ruin' held rhetorical appeal for both sides, at least in the initial stages of the impeachment. On the one hand, Buckingham's critics were anxious to avoid alienating potential supporters or provoking a premature dissolution. It was therefore necessary to proceed carefully. By presenting the impeachment as an attempt to 'reform' the duke's errors rather than 'ruin' him, Turner and his allies were able to reassure uncommitted MPs who might balk at an overt attempt at political assassination.⁵ Buckingham also appealed to the notion that his opponents wanted to 'reform' him. In his response to the charges, he drily expressed a hope that the Commons were proceeding 'out of a Christian charity, to

punish or mend my faults (if fame could have proved them), and not to ruin my reputation or destroy my fortune'.⁶ This hope was to prove unfounded.

By arguing that the charges against Buckingham should be sent to the King rather than the House of Lords, Beecher, Goring and Harley were attempting to call the bluff of Buckingham's enemies and force them to define their aims. If MPs truly wanted the 'reformation' of the Duke, they would send the charges to Charles. By this point, however, Buckingham's enemies in the Commons were no doubt emboldened by events in the House of Lords, where Buckingham had become the subject of a separate attack by the Earl of Bristol. The day before the debate in the Commons, Bristol accused the Duke, among other things, of taking Charles to Spain in 1623 to convert him to Catholicism. In the Commons, MPs argued that judgement by the Lords was the ordinary way, and that Buckingham would receive a 'noble and worthy' trial, like St. Alban and Middlesex before him.⁷ Walter Long even made the astonishingly insincere argument that Charles would find the evidence and charges against his favourite 'too tedious' to consider, and should therefore 'not be troubled withal'.⁸ In the end, the Commons voted to transmit the charges to the Lords, where they were presented on 8 and 10 of May.⁹ Faced with a choice between securing supply or protecting his favourite, Charles opted for the latter and finally dissolved the parliament on 15 June.

The revisionist interpretation of these events was counter-intuitive. One of the challenges for revisionist historians was to explain how attacks on figures like Buckingham could emerge in a supposedly conservative, harmonious and court-centred political culture. In *Parliaments and English Politics*, Conrad Russell therefore

turned the Commons' investigation into Buckingham on its head, arguing that it was not an attack at all, but part of a search for compromise. Russell took MPs' rhetoric about 'ruin' and 'reformation' literally, arguing that the aim of the investigation, at least in its early stages, was not to 'ruin' Buckingham by removing him from power, but to 'reform' the Duke by persuading him to give up the Admiralty and effect a minor ministerial reshuffle. Secret negotiations were supposedly going on between Buckingham and his parliamentary critics about the details of the compromise. Although these talks broke down because of the intransigence of both sides, their existence demonstrated that the impeachment should be interpreted as a search for compromise rather than an episode of political and ideological conflict. Indeed, there were no real ideological differences between Buckingham and his critics. The attack was in any case orchestrated not by members of the Commons but by powerful court patrons like the Earl of Pembroke, and it was in the House of Lords that the real action took place. The House of Commons played only a minor role, since Charles had given up hope of securing subsidies by Easter, and only kept parliament in being in order to secure justice against the Earl of Bristol, who had been accused of treason.¹⁰

Russell's broader interpretation of early Stuart politics has of course come in for wide-ranging criticism.¹¹ Nevertheless, his interpretation of the Parliament of 1626 has remained influential. In a recent debate on Charles I's historical reputation, Mark Kishlansky cited Russell's work as evidence that Charles was willing to offer his opponents a 'gracious compromise' in 1626.¹² Even post-revisionist historians, while disagreeing with Russell about the reasons for the dissolution of parliament and the

content of negotiations, have tended to go along with the notion that a compromise between Buckingham and his enemies was being negotiated behind the scenes.¹³ There have been some important exceptions to this rule. Thomas Cogswell and Alastair Bellany have recently argued that Buckingham's opponents in Parliament hoped to diminish and perhaps destroy the Duke, and that the 'ruin' of the Duke was 'something akin to a holy crusade'.¹⁴ Christopher Thompson has also recently highlighted the lack of evidence for negotiations between Buckingham and his opponents, arguing that opposition to the Duke was so implacable as to make such negotiations highly implausible.¹⁵ Nevertheless, Russell's argument that the impeachment aimed at the 'reformation' rather than the 'ruin' of the Duke has only begun to be challenged. The evidential basis for his interpretation has never been fully analysed, and his persuasive narrative of the parliament has remained relatively immune to post-revisionist reinterpretation.

Critics praised *Parliaments and English Politics* for its 'magisterial handling of detailed evidence' and wrote that Russell's 'superb control of the evidence is immediately apparent'.¹⁶ More recently, his reading of the evidence has been described as 'careful' and his speculations about the reshuffle 'brilliant'.¹⁷ Yet as I hope to show, Russell's interpretation rests on a misreading of the sources. There is no evidence that negotiations of the sort Russell envisaged were taking place. On the contrary, although positions hardened as the investigation proceeded, it is clear that many of Buckingham's critics in the House of Commons sought his 'ruin' rather than his 'reformation' from the outset. Both revisionist and post-revisionist historians have tended to minimise the importance of the House of Commons' impeachment

proceedings, arguing that the Earl of Bristol's intervention in the Lords was more significant. This article aims to reassert the importance of the Commons' attack on Buckingham, arguing that it was much more uncompromising and ideologically charged than historians have previously argued, and that members of the Commons acted much more independently of noble patrons than Russell believed. Russell argued that it was only Bristol's trial in the Lords that kept the parliament in being for so long, since Charles had abandoned hopes of securing parliamentary supply. This article will argue instead that Charles had grounds to believe that he could secure the subsidies he needed, and only dissolved the parliament when it became apparent that the Commons could not grant the money they had promised according to their own timetable.

In addition, this article will argue that ideological divisions between the Crown and some members of parliament were both revealed and deepened by the attack on Buckingham. Throughout the session, Buckingham came to be associated with absolutist policies and support for, or at least a dangerous tolerance of, Catholics and Arminians. The hostility and intransigence of both sides only makes sense in light of ideological conflict in which much more than the fate of a single minister, or even a choice of military strategies, was at stake. A reconsideration of this episode helps us to understand why the political atmosphere soured so quickly at the start of Charles' reign. Although the apparent consensus and optimism of the 'blessed revolution' in 1624 had already largely evaporated by 1626, the attempted impeachment of the Duke of Buckingham intensified the political crisis.¹⁸ The

impeachment and the ideological issues it raised help us to explain the conflicts, misunderstandings and paranoia of the later sixteen-twenties.

I

Russell's claim that MPs were negotiating with Buckingham and merely wanted to 'reform' him rests on four sources. The first two are diplomatic dispatches. According to Russell, 'the existence of negotiations was remarked upon in passing' by the Venetian and French ambassadors.¹⁹ In fact, neither ambassador alluded to negotiations of the kind that Russell imagined. The Venetian ambassador, Zuane Pesaro, merely wrote that Buckingham had 'approached many members with various proposals and inducements to help his cause'.²⁰ In other words, Buckingham was attempting to buy his opponents off with promises of titles and pensions. As a document written by an opponent of the Duke later complained, Buckingham had 'shamefully & basely attempted to drawe diuers of both howses by promises of Rewards & offices to bee for the vpholding of his partie'.²¹ Buckingham's use of patronage to secure his acquittal did not imply that he was negotiating to relinquish his own offices.

A 'casual allusion by Mende... to the possibility of Buckingham giving up offices' was also interpreted as evidence for negotiations.²² Mende, the Queen's Almoner, was acting as French ambassador during this period. In fact, Mende wrote that Buckingham would allow his parliamentary opponents to 'strip' him of his offices, knowing that he could rely on Charles' favour to restore him to power in the

end.²³ Negotiating to relinquish offices and allowing them to be forcefully taken from you are not the same things. These comments also need to be placed in the context of Mende's wider analysis of the impeachment. Mende and other foreign observers like the Florentine ambassador, Amerigo Salvetti, wrote that Buckingham would ultimately remain in power as long as Charles continued to protect him, and that the Duke believed that the House of Lords would exonerate him. Even if he was successfully impeached and his offices were taken from him, however, Charles could simply pardon and restore him once the Commons had granted the subsidies that they had promised.²⁴ Buckingham similarly gave the Earl of Clare the impression that he was confident that the Lords would find him innocent.²⁵ By mid-May, Buckingham's position appeared more precarious. The Earl of Bristol's accusations of treason, as well as the allegations of Buckingham's involvement in James' death raised the stakes considerably.²⁶ The release of the Earl of Arundel and his return to the Lords put Buckingham under additional pressure. For much of the investigation in March and April, however, the Duke had reason to believe that he would be exonerated. Mende's comments therefore do not support the claim that Buckingham was negotiating with his opponents. Instead the Duke appears to have believed that his position was strong enough that negotiations were unnecessary.

The fact that Charles allowed the investigation into Buckingham to continue has been presented as evidence that a negotiated compromise was in the works. Russell pointed to a letter written by Benjamin Rudyerd on 22 April, in which he expressed a hope that 'we have ridden out all our storms, for his Majesty hath given us leave to proceed with our grievances'. According to Russell, this letter indicated

that 'a compromise might work'.²⁷ A closer examination of Charles' decision to allow the attack on Buckingham to continue allows us to consider whether it really represented a genuine offer of compromise, let alone evidence of negotiations between Buckingham and his parliamentary opponents.

Charles had made his opposition to the investigation against Buckingham clear from an early stage. His message on 14 March denounced Samuel Turner's 'queries' as 'against the honor and government of himself and his blessed father'. The King called for the Commons to punish Turner and threatened that he was not restrained from doing so himself.²⁸ On 29 March, the Lord Keeper, speaking on the King's behalf, demanded that the Commons end their investigation into Buckingham and 'commit unto his Majesty's care, wisdom and justice the future reformation of those things which you suppose to be amiss'.²⁹ Despite these messages, many MPs, as well as individuals outside of parliament were eager to seize upon any indication that Charles would allow the attack on Buckingham to continue. On 23 March it was falsely rumoured that Charles had sent a letter bidding the Commons to 'goe on cheerfully, and if so they had sufficient matter against any of his he would not protect them'.³⁰ MPs were no doubt encouraged by the recent history of parliamentary judicature. During the impeachment of Lord Chancellor St. Alban in 1621, and Lord Treasurer Middlesex in 1624, James had publicly insisted that if his ministers had committed crimes, he would not stand in the way of their investigation and punishment. It was not unreasonable for MPs to think that Charles would allow and perhaps even welcome the attack on Buckingham if the Duke's alleged offences were uncovered.

Charles' uncompromising speech on 29 March provoked the Commons' remonstrance of 5 April, after which parliament went in to recess for Easter. When they returned, Charles was careful to avoid directly ordering an end to the investigation. Instead he simply asked the Commons to lay their resmonstrance and all other diversions aside and speedily grant him subsidies, without mentioning Buckingham.³¹ When Sir Thomas Grantham claimed that this message amounted to a 'restraint' on the investigation, the Chancellor of the Exchequer swiftly responded that Charles was not restraining them from anything.³² On 20 April Charles reinforced this message by telling the Commons that he did not intend to 'prevent your just grievances or his giving you satisfaction therein', but simply wanted them to grant him subsidies first.³³ The King's ambiguous language was interpreted highly creatively, even perversely, as a green light for the attack on Buckingham. Sir Edwin Sandys praised Charles for using the 'most mild and gracious language', arguing that the Commons should therefore 'hold on our course in our grievances, specially with those that have brought the kingdom into this distress'.³⁴ On 26 April, the Commons decided to vote a fourth subsidy, and it was only after this, on 29 April, that Charles told them that he had 'given way' to the inquiry, asking them to hurry up and present the charges, either to himself or the Lords.³⁵

Seen in this context, Charles' decision to allow the Commons' investigation into Buckingham to continue was neither a generous offer of compromise nor evidence that a negotiated settlement was on the cards. Rudyerd was not alluding to a compromise agreement but was merely expressing relief that Charles had apparently allowed the investigation to continue, despite his earlier opposition.

Charles had been brought, reluctantly and by degrees, to allow the investigation to go ahead in return for the promise of another subsidy. While he had agreed to redress 'just' grievances, it was obvious that he did not regard Buckingham's actions as falling within that category, and he had already made it clear that the Duke had merely acted on royal orders at all times.

The fourth source Russell presented for the existence of negotiations were the speeches made by Sir William Beecher, Sir George Goring and Sir Robert Harley in the House of Commons on 2 May. According to Russell, by advocating the 'reformation' of the Duke, these three speakers, who were all 'well-informed partisans of the Duke', clearly demonstrated a belief that 'a compromise had been worked out' between Buckingham and his enemies.³⁶ Mark Kishlansky has similarly argued that Charles offered the Commons 'a gracious compromise indeed' when he asked them to send him the charges so that he could 'reform' Buckingham personally.³⁷ Yet since Charles had already made it abundantly clear that he considered Buckingham innocent, it is unlikely that any 'reformation' would in fact have taken place if he received them.³⁸ It seems more likely that Charles would simply have exonerated the Duke, effectively ending the impeachment proceedings. This was presumably what government spokesmen liked Beecher, Goring and Harley hoped for when arguing that the charges should be sent to the King rather than the House of Lords. Kishlansky argued that if the charges were sent to the King, MPs would still have leverage, since they could hold the subsidy bill up in committee until they received satisfaction from the King.³⁹ Yet if the King exonerated the Duke, the Commons' investigation would have effectively run its course. While Bristol's attack

in the Lords would continue, and the Duke's enemies in the Commons might come up with other avenues of investigation, one of the central lines of attack would be exhausted, and they would no doubt come under further pressure to grant the subsidies they had promised in return. The likelihood that Charles would simply exonerate his favourite explains why Buckingham's critics voted to send the charges to the Lords. By doing so, they could ratchet up the pressure on the Duke by enlisting the support of his aristocratic enemies. When we place the speeches of Beecher, Goring and Harley in the context of the debate in which they were made, it is clear that they do not imply any belief in a compromise settlement. They were part of a debating tactic intended to end the attack on Buckingham rather than evidence of knowledge about negotiations.

II

While Russell acknowledged that there was no direct evidence of negotiations between Buckingham and his enemies, he nevertheless speculated about their possible terms. In the absence of other evidence, he turned to 'the public demands of the Duke's critics' as embodied in Turner's queries for clues about the terms of any settlement. Since 'the case against the Duke had been put forward in a way which did not make a compromise impossible', one could use Turner's queries 'to consider what concessions might have satisfied' his opponents.⁴⁰ Having committed himself to the position that negotiations were taking place in late April, Russell interpreted Turner's queries, presented on 11 March, as a blueprint for compromise, thereby inverting the traditional Whig interpretation and transforming an overt

attack into an attempt at settlement. But were Turner's queries written in a way that deliberately left the door open to compromise, and would Buckingham's critics have been satisfied by the concessions that Russell imagines?

According to Russell, there was 'no public attack on the Duke's tenure of Court and Bedchamber offices, the real seat of his power'.⁴¹ As such, Buckingham could have given up the Admiralty and replaced some of his dependents, while still retaining a position at court as royal favourite and patronage broker on the scale of the Earl of Somerset, the previous favourite. 'It is surely interesting', as Russell says, 'that Buckingham's leading critics said nothing to close such a line of retreat'.⁴² It might appear that this analysis is simply another example of the revisionist tendency to argue from silence. Since Buckingham's critics did not explicitly call for his removal from all offices, it is assumed that this is not what they wanted. Of course, it would have been tactically unwise for MPs to overtly demand Buckingham's 'ruin' at the outset, given the need to retain the support of uncommitted MPs and to present the investigation as fair and even-handed. Leaving this aside, the claim that Buckingham's critics made no attack on his position at court is false. Three of the six queries Turner presented directly or implicitly criticised Buckingham's role as court patronage broker. The second query complained about the 'unmeasurable gifts and lands' bestowed on Buckingham and members of his family, a practice in which he was at the very least complicit, even if they had been granted by the King. The third criticised his monopoly of office and the fact that he had procured positions for members of his family who were incapable of performing their duties. The fifth query criticised his sale of titles, offices, places of judicature and ecclesiastical

livings.⁴³ Clearly, Buckingham's critics were not leaving the door open for him to retain the near-monopoly of court patronage that he currently enjoyed.

Having argued that Buckingham's critics would have been satisfied with the redistribution of a few offices, Russell carried out a speculative reshuffle on Charles' behalf. Firstly, Buckingham would have given up the Admiralty. According to Russell, the sixth query, which criticised Buckingham's failure to lead the recent military expedition against Cadiz in person, was simply a complaint about 'the duke staying at home being Admiral'. As he went on to say, 'In time of war, the case for having a Lord Admiral whose other duties did not tie him constantly to the court was a strong one'.⁴⁴ Buckingham's friends and clients had privately advised him to give up the admiralty, and Russell presents Turner's query as being made in a similar spirit of friendly advice.⁴⁵ By presenting the query as a sensible concern that Buckingham could not run the admiralty while also attending to his other duties, Russell minimised its severity. In fact, the query is much more specific and critical. Turner suggested that Buckingham had appointed 'unworthie' officers to lead the Cadiz expedition, despite being appointed admiral and general of the fleet himself. This had been the 'cause of the bad and dishonourable success' of the expedition, which he implied had not been 'rightly designed' by the Duke.⁴⁶ Other critics went further. Sir William Walter was probably alluding to the Cadiz expedition when he said that Charles should appoint councillors who were 'men of courage such as will execute their own places, and not commit them to base and under-serving deputies'.⁴⁷ Eliot even seemed to imply that Buckingham had deliberately sabotaged the expedition. In a draft of the speech he delivered on 10 February, he complained that 'our honor

is ruin'd, our ships are suncke, our men perisht, not by the sword, not by an enemy not by chance; but apparantly desired beforehand out of strong predictions, by those we trust'.⁴⁸ The Duke's critics did not simply believe that he was spreading himself too thinly, but were accusing him of disastrous incompetence, dereliction of duty or worse. His responsibility for the fiasco at Cadiz, if proved, would surely require a more severe punishment than his replacement as Lord Admiral by the earl of Warwick. In a similar vein, Russell argued that concerns that Buckingham and his kindred received too many gifts of land and money could be allayed (and all previous gifts presumably forgiven and absolved) if Charles appointed a new Lord Treasurer.⁴⁹ Turner's concerns about the growth of recusancy, which he suspected was a result of the Duke's underhand protection of papists, could apparently be alleviated by the replacement of Lord Scrope as President of the Council of the North.⁵⁰

While there is no evidence that Buckingham was negotiating for a reshuffle, we are also entitled to ask whether it was even plausible that he might give up the admiralty and consent to the replacement of his clients. While it is true that Buckingham's friends had advised him to assuage the jealousy of his rivals by giving up some offices, this was very different from having them taken from him. For the most part, Tudor and Stuart ministers, and particularly favourites, did not willingly part with their offices. Ministers like Sir Robert Naunton who returned from disgrace were in a minority; the careers of most ministers did not tend to have second acts. The all-or-nothing nature of politics meant that most ended their careers either by dying in office, or having their offices forcibly taken through disgrace, imprisonment, execution or assassination. Even a minor loss of office tended to be interpreted by

observers as an augury of inevitable destruction, and such small reverses may have had a self-fulfilling potential. Shortly before the parliament, one of Buckingham's supporters referred to a rumour that he had lost the Mastership of the Horse, and alluded to the belief that 'this prime feather of yours being lost... it will not be long ere the rest follow'.⁵¹ Rivals were rarely satisfied with a partial victory, since favourites who were merely wounded might recover and exact revenge. Once courtiers began sliding down the slippery pole of court politics, it was very difficult to prevent momentum from carrying them to the very bottom. It was perhaps this logic that led James and Charles to continue piling yet more honours on the Duke as a sign of royal confidence. Charles exerted pressure for Buckingham's election as Chancellor of Cambridge during the impeachment and prohibited the Commons from discussing it.⁵²

While it seems unlikely that either side would have been satisfied with a reshuffle, and there is no evidence that negotiations for such a compromise took place, there is plenty of evidence that the Duke's enemies wanted him to be dismissed rather than 'reformed', and observers tended to believe that this was the aim of the investigation. Just prior to Turner's speech, a London newsletter writer passed on the rumour that a member had thirteen articles against Buckingham, 'which will either break him or dissolve it'.⁵³ An early list of charges in Eliot's papers alluded to rumours that he was responsible for James's death, concluding that he was 'vicious ergo not fitt to be soe neere a Kinge'.⁵⁴ A forged letter from the King of Denmark that circulated in March claimed that there was 'a *Subiect in your Kingdome that rules it more then your selfe*' and threatened to end the war in

Germany unless Buckingham was removed.⁵⁵ Well before the period during which negotiations are supposed to have taken place, Eliot was calling for the removal of 'those counsels by which those ill effects have been produced', and referred to precedents from the reigns of Henry III and Richard II, when parliament forced the dismissal of an unpopular minister by withholding supply.⁵⁶

Buckingham's supporters also seemed to believe that his opponents aimed for his removal from power. Sir James Bagg warned the Duke that Pembroke and his allies in the House of Commons hoped to ruin him.⁵⁷ Speeches written by Buckingham's supporters asked members to 'consider what a Taske we vndertake in thinking to teare him from the sydes of the king' and claimed that they aimed to 'pull out of [Charles'] bosom... those whom he has cause to affect'.⁵⁸ Rather than defining the terms for a settlement, Turner's queries were interpreted by foreign observers as setting King and Commons on a collision course, and that one or the other would have to yield. The French ambassador wrote that Turner's queries had so inflamed the Commons that they could not easily draw back from the course they had now taken.⁵⁹ The Venetian ambassador wrote that the Duke 'must either fall or be broken' as a result of the Commons' investigation, while the Florentine ambassador wrote that the Commons intended to 'vanquish and cast down the Duke', and that a majority were 'straining to compass the ruin of the Duke'.⁶⁰

III

While the 'reformation of the Duke' that Russell envisaged was clearly not on the cards, a different sort of 'reformation' has been proposed by Thomas Cogswell.⁶¹ In a recent article, Cogswell argued that Russell was correct about the existence of negotiations between the crown and leaders of the attack on Buckingham, but wrong about the nature of the proposed compromise. Rather than the ministerial reshuffle envisaged by Russell, the negotiations focused on the creation of a joint stock company that would wage war on Spain. The company would finance a fleet to attack Spanish possessions in the West Indies and protect English shipping in the channel. Sir Dudley Digges introduced a proposal for such a company in the House of Commons on 14 March, and a committee was set up to discuss it. Shortly afterwards, the Somers Island Company instructed the governor of Bermuda to prepare for the arrival of warships intended to attack the West Indies.⁶² A month later, the committee had worked out many of the details, and Digges reported back to the House, but the proposal slipped off the parliamentary agenda in May and came to nothing. Cogswell does not simply rely on Russell's evidence for the existence of negotiations for this proposal, but also cites the Florentine ambassador, Salvetti, who wrote that 'consultations are being held' about the project.⁶³ In addition, Cogswell points to the fact that several different versions of the proposal were written, suggesting that negotiations were taking place.⁶⁴ By superseding Buckingham's authority as Lord Admiral and setting war finance on a new, voluntary footing, the company would have resolved the conflict between King and parliament, providing a 'soft political landing' for Buckingham and the crown.⁶⁵ As Cogswell has argued, the proposal demonstrates that 'there was indeed a serious effort at the duke's reformation'.⁶⁶

While Salvetti did indeed refer to ‘consultations’ about the project, it is not clear whether he was referring to negotiations between MPs and the government.⁶⁷ The ‘consultations’, as well as the various surviving iterations of the proposal may simply point to internal discussions in Digges’ committee about the details of the company and how it could be made palatable to both parliament and the crown. Even if negotiations really did take place between Digges and the government, the proposal for a West India company was entirely compatible with the removal of Buckingham. As Cogswell points out, the project had the potentially ‘revolutionary’ aim of expanding parliamentary authority by placing the financing and conduct of the war in the hands of a company set up by parliament, thus superseding the Admiralty and Privy Council. The proposal was not a promising basis for compromise between the crown and parliament, and could just as easily complement the attack on the Duke as offer a ‘reforming’ alternative to it.⁶⁸ Digges’ own behaviour suggests that the proposal and the attack went hand in hand. While he did not support Eliot’s early lines of inquiry, he participated in the attack on Buckingham before, during and after the period when negotiations over the creation of a West India Company are supposed to have taken place. On 28 February Digges implied that Buckingham was responsible for the failure of the Cadiz expedition.⁶⁹ On 17 March, a few days after the proposal was introduced, he supported Turner’s charges against Buckingham’s monopoly of office and sale of honours, and on 20 April, he proposed to lay aside all other business until the investigation of the Duke was completed.⁷⁰ By the time the West India Company had slipped off the parliamentary agenda, Digges had been imprisoned for his strongly-worded preamble to the charges against Buckingham presented on 8 and 10 May.

IV

By arguing that the investigation of Buckingham was a matter of high political negotiation and reshuffle, Russell was able to present it as a court conflict that happened to be played out in parliament. Members of the House of Commons were denied any real independent initiative and were instead cast as the loyal but overly-enthusiastic attack dogs of their noble masters.⁷¹ 'Not for the last time', as Russell wrote, 'it had proved easier to call in the Commons as critics of an unpopular minister than it was to call them off when they had served the purpose of those who first called them in'.⁷² Pembroke and Arundel were portrayed as the real driving force behind the attack, although Arundel's influence was limited by his imprisonment.⁷³ Many of the leaders of the attack in the House of Commons, including Eliot and Turner, were 'Pembroke men' who either owed their seats to the earl or were actively seeking his patronage.⁷⁴ Simon Adams made a similar though more nuanced case that Pembroke co-ordinated the attack.⁷⁵

The claim that Buckingham's enemies in the Commons were acting on the orders of their noble patrons is certainly plausible. Buckingham's friends believed that Pembroke had worked to 'ruin' him through his clients in the House of Commons in 1625 and 1626.⁷⁶ Sir James Bagg claimed that William Coryton, the key figure in Pembroke's powerful patronage network, had boasted to him that he had secured the return of several MPs, including John Eliot, Sir Robert Mansell, Sir Francis Stuart, Sir Clippesby Crewe, Samuel Turner and William Murray.⁷⁷ Other prominent critics of Buckingham, like Sir Dudley Digges, had strong links with the

Archbishop of Canterbury, George Abbott, and Digges was later questioned about whether Abbot had been behind the attack.⁷⁸ Pembroke was the brother-in-law and close friend of the Arundel, another powerful enemy of Buckingham who had been imprisoned to prevent him from taking his seat in the House of Lords. In the Autumn of 1625, Pembroke had also visited the Earl of Bristol, and may have provided him with information that he used against Buckingham in his sensational speech on 1 May.⁷⁹ Bristol was also known to have supporters in the Commons. A warrant drawn up after the dissolution called for Bristol, along with MPs including Sir John Strangeways, Walsingham Gresley and Simon Digby to be examined for their behaviour during the session.⁸⁰ The Earl of Middlesex, another discontented victim of Buckingham, also explored the possibility of allying with the Duke's parliamentary enemies in April, although he abandoned these plans when they began implicating the Duke in the death of James I.⁸¹

While it is easy to find ties of friendship and patronage between Buckingham's enemies at court and in the House of Commons, precisely how these ties translated into political action is less clear. While Coryton, Eliot, Mansell, Stuart and Pembroke's kinsman Sir Edward Herbert were of course prominent opponents of Buckingham in 1626, other 'Pembroke men' named by Bagg were not. Crewe played no discernable role in the attack, while Murray was moderately supportive of the Duke.⁸² The fact that Eliot thought it necessary to bribe Pembroke's attendants in order to secure an office from the Earl shortly before parliament met indicates that their relationship was not initially close, and it seems that his alliance with Pembroke was the result, rather than the cause, of his attack on Buckingham.⁸³

Indeed, Eliot's strenuous efforts to bring Bishop Williams and the Earl of Middlesex in on his side suggests that the initiative for the formation of an alliance against Buckingham came as much from members of the House of Commons as from their allies in the Lords.⁸⁴ Other leaders of the attack, like Christopher Wandesford, do not appear to have owed their seats to court patrons, and it is not clear that opponents like Mansell, who had already attacked Buckingham in 1625, were doing anything under Pembroke's patronage that they would not have done if they had secured seats through other means. In fact, the experience of 1625 suggested that Members of the Commons were quite capable of taking the lead in attacking Buckingham. Eliot later wrote that in 1625, Buckingham's enemies at court had only begun to encourage the attack through their clients once it had already developed some momentum in the House of Commons. According to Eliot, the Duke's court enemies 'did infuse into the humor that was stir'd what gall and vinegar they might, and by their privat instruments blowing the coales then kindled, added also more fewell to the fire'.⁸⁵ As Ann Hughes has argued, peers needed members of the Commons just as much as the reverse, and describing such a reciprocal relationship as 'dependency' is misleading.⁸⁶

Pembroke's role in the attack is also ambiguous. Russell points out that it was Pembroke, rather than members of the House of Commons, who Buckingham attempted to conciliate after parliament was dissolved, implying that it was Pembroke who played the leading role in the attack. Buckingham made Pembroke Lord Steward of the Household and completed a marriage alliance between his daughter and the Earl's nephew.⁸⁷ In fact, it was the Pembroke's brother, the Earl of

Montgomery, who had suggested the marriage alliance as a means to reconcile the two camps as early as October 1624.⁸⁸ There had been several attempts to reconcile Buckingham and Pembroke, and rumours of his elevation to the Lord Stewardship had been circulating before parliament met.⁸⁹ As John Chamberlain wrote, 'the Lord Chamberlain is like to be Lord Steward this parliament *pro tempore* [for the time being] or further as he shall carry himself and give cause'.⁹⁰ The implication was that Pembroke's reward depended on his good behaviour *during* the parliament, rather than simply sealing any reconciliation with Buckingham after the dissolution. The fact that the Lord Stewardship and marriage were concluded so soon after the dissolution also implies that the reconciliation had been worked out well in advance but was withheld during the parliament.⁹¹

Pembroke's outward behaviour during the early part of the session certainly gave Charles and Buckingham little to complain about. He spoke strongly in favour of supply and military preparations against Spain.⁹² One of Buckingham's allies, Lord Montagu, wrote that Pembroke 'performed his trust very nobly'.⁹³ Although these speeches alone did not imply any endorsement of Buckingham, Pembroke also went further than might be expected in defending the Duke. He gave a qualified defence of Buckingham's conduct over the loan ships to France, and confirmed that the Duke had pawned his own jewels to raise £30,000 for the King of Denmark.⁹⁴ At least initially, Pembroke hedged his bets and kept his distance from the attack. According to Bagg, he preferred to 'appear publicly rather by strangers' than to act through well-known clients of his such as Sir Benjamin Rudyerd.⁹⁵ In short, Pembroke appears to have acted to maximise his freedom of manoeuvre and maintain plausible

deniability, giving Buckingham some public support while patronising his critics. It was only in May, when the charges against Buckingham had been presented and the Earl of Bristol had launched his own devastating attack, that Pembroke appeared to throw his weight against the Duke. In his representation of the Commons' charges in the House of Lords, Pembroke went well beyond a neutral account, adding additional commentary to the charges that made his own opposition to the Duke and his endorsement of the impeachment clear.⁹⁶ Nevertheless, characterising MPs as 'Pembroke men' or arguing that Pembroke 'orchestrated' the impeachment is misleading. While the circumstantial evidence for Pembroke's involvement in the attack on Buckingham is strong, the ties of patronage and friendship between the Earl and Buckingham's opponents in the Commons do not necessarily imply that he directed the attack from behind the scenes, or that they were simply his obedient spokesmen. We do not need to see MPs as either purely independent actors or the lackeys of their noble patrons. Instead the relationship between members of the Commons and their patrons in the Lords was one of deferential partnership rather than subordination.

Both Conrad Russell and, more recently, Thomas Cogswell, have tended to downplay the importance of the attack on Buckingham in the House of Commons and have instead emphasised the importance of the Earl of Bristol's attack in the House of Lords. In his oration to parliament in 1624, Buckingham had accused Bristol of misleading the King during the Spanish match negotiations, and Bristol was determined to strike back. He had been kept away from parliament, but in April Bristol petitioned the House of Lords to take his seat and to be heard as

Buckingham's accuser. Charles responded by asking the Lords to send for Bristol as a delinquent, so that he could answer for his supposed offenses in Spain. Bristol, it was claimed, was a lackey of Spain and had tried to convert the prince to Catholicism during his trip to Madrid in 1623. Bristol entered parliament on 1 May. Before the Attorney General could begin his indictment, Bristol accused Buckingham of high treason. He claimed that Buckingham had planned the trip to Spain in order to convert Charles to Catholicism, also implying that Buckingham had poisoned James in order to prevent Bristol from talking to him, thus alluding to allegations that were already being investigated in the Commons.

Russell pointed out that the Lords spent most of their time considering Bristol's case rather than the Commons' impeachment charges.⁹⁷ Ignoring the many surviving copies of Turner's queries and the impeachment proceedings, Russell used a single contemporary summary of the parliament, which did not mention the impeachment, to claim that contemporaries did not view the Commons' proceedings as particularly important.⁹⁸ According to Russell, Charles kept parliament in being to secure a public condemnation of Bristol, rather than to gain subsidies, which Charles had supposedly lost hope of securing.⁹⁹ Cogswell has similarly focused attention on Bristol and other pro-Spanish ministers who had been forced out of power in 1624 and now sought their revenge on Buckingham. Compared to the damaging accusations made by Bristol and Dr. Eglisam, the Commons' charges were something of a damp squib. The impeachment was 'not necessarily career-ending' for Buckingham because the commons were almost comically incapable of substantiating their charges with adequate evidence and witnesses, as they had

done during previous impeachments.¹⁰⁰ Buckingham's position therefore appeared to be secure until Bristol intervened.

While there is no denying that Bristol's intervention in the House of Lords represented a major escalation of the attack on Buckingham, the impeachment proceedings were certainly not a minor matter, as Russell implied, nor was the Commons' attack floundering for lack of evidence. The documents produced by the various committees investigating Buckingham certainly show that they tried to substantiate their charges and encourage witnesses to come forward, particularly when it came to the *St. Peter* case, Buckingham's alleged extortion of the East India Company, the loan of ships to France and of course the Duke's 'transcendent presumption' in offering medicine to James.¹⁰¹

Nevertheless, many of the charges did not require extensive documentation or witnesses. The only evidence needed to prove that Buckingham monopolised offices, elevated members of his family or 'intercepted revenues' by receiving royal gifts were the relevant royal patents and warrants. Indeed, rather than disputing the evidence, Buckingham did not even deny many of the charges against him. He admitted that he held many offices, that he had bought offices, that he accepted money for honours and procured them for his kindred, and that he had received many grants of land and money from James and Charles. He simply denied that any of these things were against the law.¹⁰² While some offences were virtually self-evident, others, such as the failure to guard the narrow seas, were charges of incompetence rather than criminality. Indeed the one of the most threatening novelties of the attack on Buckingham was that many of the offences complained of

were not technically crimes at all. Pembroke argued that the sale of office was illegal, but as he admitted when he represented the charges in the Lords, Buckingham's plurality of offices and purchase of the Admiralty and Wardenship of the Cinque Ports were not 'against any particular law... yet they may be justly offered as the roots and causes of the great following crimes, and more'. Moreover, they were 'against the highest law and assume the nature of the highest offenses... the welfare and safety of the people and state is the supreme law'.¹⁰³ Since the attack on Buckingham was as much political as legal, the fact that the Commons failed to provide conclusive evidence for some of their charges becomes less significant. Regardless of the evidence, Charles might be persuaded to part with Buckingham in return for the subsidies that he needed so desperately. The House of Lords might decide that Buckingham should be found guilty because his removal would clear the political logjam and end a dangerous impasse between king and parliament during wartime, even if his guilt had not been proved.

The claim that Charles had essentially given up hope of obtaining subsidies by Easter was a key element in Russell's argument about the relative unimportance of the House of Commons during the impeachment. Since the possibility of supply was remote, the prosecution of Bristol in the Lords was 'the only thing which kept the Parliament in being'.¹⁰⁴ Yet while the attack on Bristol was no doubt important, there were reasonable hopes that Charles could secure subsidies, and this seems the most fundamental and obvious reason that he allowed parliament to continue. In March the Commons resolved to give the King three subsidies and three fifteenths, although they would only proceed to a bill once their grievances were addressed. In

late April they added a fourth subsidy. While these sums were inadequate for Charles' purposes, they were still very substantial. Given his many commitments and the threat of invasion by Spain, the hope of obtaining them was more than enough reason to keep parliament in being. While the leaders of the impeachment hoped that Charles would remove Buckingham in order to secure the subsidies, the King hoped that either Buckingham would be acquitted or that the precariousness of the international situation would induce the Commons to proceed to supply.

There were several reasons for the dissolution. As Richard Cust has argued, Charles increasingly saw in the activities of Buckingham's enemies in the House of Commons a threat to his own authority.¹⁰⁵ As Charles complained, the attempt by the House of Commons to publish a remonstrance attacking Buckingham was an important factor.¹⁰⁶ The King may also have felt that the tide was finally turning against Buckingham in the Lords, particularly after the return of the earl of Arundel on 8 June.¹⁰⁷ Nevertheless, the refusal of the House of Commons to keep to their own timetable for the payment of subsidies was probably the decisive factor.¹⁰⁸ When MPs had resolved to give three subsidies in March, they had promised that the first would be paid at the end of June.¹⁰⁹ On 9 June, Charles sent the Commons a letter pointing out that unless the subsidy bill was enacted very soon, he would be unable to raise money or credit by the time the Commons had themselves prefixed for payment.¹¹⁰ Instead of proceeding with the subsidy bill, the Commons resolved to proceed with their remonstrance, which called for the removal of Buckingham.¹¹¹ As Charles later claimed, the Commons' refusal to proceed to supply in June was the final straw, since it had 'put an impossibilitie vpon themselues to performe their

promises'.¹¹² Parliament was only dissolved when it became clear that subsidies would not be granted in time to put them to use that summer unless Buckingham was removed.

Charles seems to have had a wider audience in mind in his decision to dissolve the parliament. By banning the publication of the Commons' remonstrance and publishing a justification of his actions, Charles indicated how important it was to win the propaganda war and convince a wider adjudicating public that he was not to blame for the dissolution. As he pointed out in his message to the House of Commons on 9 June, if the Commons' intransigence resulted in a foreign invasion 'we may call God and man to witness that we have done our part to prevent it'.¹¹³ His own honour and sense of kingly responsibility was satisfied. If Charles had dissolved parliament after Easter, he would have ended any possibility of securing supply. By keeping parliament in being, he kept this possibility alive but also demonstrated to his subjects how far he was willing to go, despite the threat of foreign invasion and the urgency of supply, to satisfy the demands of the Commons.

V

A compromise between Buckingham and his enemies was possible, according to Russell, because there were no real ideological or religious divisions between them. 'The gulf between Pembroke and Buckingham was not a gulf of principle', he wrote, 'and therefore could have been bridged by alterations of men rather than of measures'.¹¹⁴ Only two 'ideological' issues are identified by Russell among the

charges brought against Buckingham: his patronage of recusants and arminianism, both of which were supposedly minor and easy to resolve.¹¹⁵ Secular ideological divisions, according to Russell, did not exist. 'It is remarkable, when we look at the public attacks on the Duke', he wrote, 'how little sign there is of any ideological gulf dividing him from his critics'.¹¹⁶

As post-revisionist historians have argued, ideological conflict was an important feature of early Stuart politics.¹¹⁷ Yet even here, the influence of the political narrative established by Russell is important. While arguing persuasively for the existence of ideological conflict, J.P. Sommerville wrote that the impeachment of Buckingham was part of a 'carefully orchestrated campaign masterminded by Buckingham's great rival the Earl of Pembroke' and, as such, 'may have had little to do with constitutional disputes'.¹¹⁸ In fact, the charges against Buckingham had important constitutional implications, and ideological divisions were brought in to sharp focus during the process of the investigation and impeachment. Under the pressure of events, Buckingham became a symbol for a particular set of royal policies, and the precedent of his removal from power or continuation in office had implications well beyond the fate of a single favourite. Different assumptions about the constitutional plans of the leaders of the attack on one side, and 'evil councillors' like Buckingham on the other, meant that political moves by the 'other side' came to seem much more threatening than initial appearances would seem to suggest. Indeed, the intransigence and unwillingness to compromise of both sides only makes sense in light of these fears and ideological divisions.

One of the basic principles at stake was parliament's right to investigate and try the King's councillors. Although no-one disputed Charles' right to choose his advisers, this right would be of limited use if parliament could remove those it disapproved of for purely political reasons, rather than for committing crimes. Charles did not want to establish any such precedent, and told the House on 29 March that their 'course of inquiring was an example which by no means he could suffer, although it had been against his meanest servant much less against one so near him'.¹¹⁹ A tract circulating in Buckingham's circle after the dissolution claimed that impeachment would merely have been the first step in a parliamentary power-grab. If Charles had allowed Buckingham to be toppled, MPs would soon 'appoint him Councillors, Servants, Alliances, Limits of his expences, Accompts of his Revenue'. The 'decourting' of Buckingham would therefore be 'the Corner-stone on which the demolishing of this Monarchy will be builded'.¹²⁰ A list of questions drawn up by the government for Eliot to answer, presumably during his imprisonment, included questions about whether and with whom he had discussed 'the deposing of kings' and 'how farr any kings had bene heretofore compelled to give way to the will of the people'.¹²¹ On the other side, MPs argued that questioning ministers was one of parliament's ancient and inalienable privileges. In the remonstrance to Charles, they claimed that 'it has been the ancient, constant, and undoubted right and usage of Parliaments to question and complain of all persons, of what degree or quality soever, found grievous to the commonwealth'.¹²²

Charles made it clear from an early stage in the investigation that the very existence of parliament was at stake. In his speech of 29 March, the Lord Keeper,

speaking on Charles' behalf, instructed the Commons to cease the investigation into Buckingham and to vote adequate supply. Some MPs, the King believed, were cynically using his need for wartime supply for their own political ends. As the Lord Keeper said, they appeared to think that the King was 'so far engaged' in war that there was 'no retreat', but warned them that this was 'no way to deal with kings'. As he reminded them, 'parliaments are altogether in my power for the calling, sitting and continuance of them. Therefore as I find the fruits either good or evil they are to continue or not to be'.¹²³ The King reinforced this in a message of 20 April, in which he insisted that supply should precede the redress of grievances and warned that if he did not receive swift satisfaction he would be 'driven to change his counsels'.¹²⁴ The reference to a 'change of counsels' was menacing but ambiguous. Could it perhaps refer to a change in the King's military plans? As Sir Dudley Carleton confessed on the same day that Charles' message was delivered, he did not know what 'other counsels' might be, but 'what other princes have done in the like cases all do know'.¹²⁵ In his speech of the 12th May, Carleton elaborated further. Parliaments had existed in other countries, until their kings had become so distasted with their 'tumultuary endeavors' that they had abandoned them altogether. This constitutional change was what 'new counsels' meant.¹²⁶ These comments appear to have anticipated the Venetian ambassador's later claim that Charles had asked the Bishop of Mende about 'the means used by the kings of France to rid themselves of parliament'.¹²⁷

Buckingham was perceived as playing a central role in attempts to undermine parliament. The pricking of MPs who had opposed Buckingham during the Oxford

session of the parliament of 1625 as sheriffs and the imprisonment of Arundel, one of his most powerful enemies at court, were thought to have implications for the future of parliament. As John Rous wrote, these actions were thought to make way for 'the utter bringing under of parliamentary power'.¹²⁸ The Venetian ambassador believed that Buckingham's 'chief design... is to destroy the authority of parliament and impose taxes at pleasure', and passed on rumours that Buckingham had attempted to convince the Lords that they alone could grant taxation, without the support of the Lower House.¹²⁹ These rumours probably sprang from the debate in the House of Lords on 7 March, in which it was agreed that the Lords should propose to the Commons that they provide a supply for military expenditure. Buckingham's efforts to create new peers were also seen as part of an attempt to 'destroy the authority of parliament'.¹³⁰ The declaration the Commons drew up against Buckingham in June blamed the Duke for the King's decision to collect Tonnage and Poundage without parliamentary consent and warned that any who advised him to adopt 'new counsels' would be accounted 'vipers and pests to their king and commonwealth'.¹³¹

Religious divisions were also deeper and more intractable than Russell believed. According to Russell, Turner's query about Buckingham's support of recusants 'his mother and father-in-law being known papists' was merely a criticism of the Duke's 'readiness to patronize all his kindred' rather than a 'pure issue of religion'.¹³² In fact, the query cast an obvious aspersion on Buckingham's own religious allegiances. Rumours that Buckingham was a Catholic had been circulating since at least 1623.¹³³ Further fuel was added to such fears when the French

marriage treaty, which Buckingham played a major role in negotiating, established *de facto* Catholic toleration, although the government had swung once again towards persecution by the time parliament met. The charge relating to Buckingham's support of recusants was dropped during the investigation, but the issue was reignited later in the Parliament, when it was alleged that the Duke had bowed to the sacrament during a public procession in Spain.¹³⁴

Similarly, while Russell claimed that Arminianism was only a minority concern, there were certainly worries that Buckingham was either insufficiently opposed to Arminians or an active supporter of them.¹³⁵ The York House conference had demonstrated that Buckingham would not come down decisively on the anti-Arminian side, and in the initial stages of the attack, his critics accused him not so much of crypto-Catholicism as of 'Juglynge in matters of Religion to bolster vp his factions'.¹³⁶ During the debate about whether the charge that Buckingham supported recusants was a cause of the grievances of the commonwealth, Sir Walter Erle said that 'Mr. Montagu receives too much countenancing from the Duke'.¹³⁷ Dr. Meddus similarly told the reverend Mead that Buckingham was the 'great protector of the Montagutians; so that the business of religion is like to follow his standing or downfall'.¹³⁸ In this context, Buckingham's appointment as Chancellor of Cambridge, giving him control over the training of large numbers of clergy, could be construed as part of a wider Arminian conspiracy. Even for those who did not go so far, Buckingham's reputation as an unprincipled 'juggler' who sought support from all sides made him potentially dangerous. Anti-Arminian MPs wanted a staunch defender of orthodox Calvinism near the King rather than someone who inclined

whichever way the religious winds happened to blow. Nicholas Tyacke has followed Russell in arguing that religion played a 'negligible element in the charges' against Buckingham.¹³⁹ While this is true in the narrow sense that the charge that he encouraged recusants was dropped early on in the investigation, Buckingham's critics clearly connected him with the threat of popery and Arminianism in 1626, and this gave his removal or continuation in office a wider significance for the future of religion than might otherwise have been the case.

As we have seen, the weight of evidence overwhelmingly suggests that Buckingham's critics sought his 'ruin' rather than his 'reformation'. When placed in their proper context, Russell's sources do not imply that negotiations between Buckingham and his enemies were taking place. Critics of the Duke were much less amenable to compromise than Russell suggested, and there is plenty of evidence to suggest that his enemies sought his disgrace. While MPs considered setting up a West India Company to prosecute the war against Spain, there is no reason to believe that this was necessarily intended as an alternative to the Duke's removal from power. Nor were MPs merely the agents of their aristocratic court patrons. They were quite capable of taking the initiative in attacking the Duke, and the House of Commons continued to be an important site of political conflict throughout the session, not least because Charles still hoped to secure parliamentary subsidies and wished to avoid the blame for the dissolution.

Finally, the impeachment demonstrates the extent to which ideological assumptions could sharpen political conflict and vice versa, even relatively early in Charles' reign. Although we might expect something of a honeymoon period

between King and Parliament, it is striking how quickly the atmosphere soured following the 'blessed revolution' in foreign policy of 1623-4. Buckingham's critics might have been satisfied with his 'reformation' if his perceived faults were merely a matter of incompetence. But in a context of growing ideological conflict between the crown and its critics, his actions appeared to be much more sinister, and only the 'ruin' of the Duke would do. After failing to remove Buckingham in 1625 and 1626, his enemies in the House of Commons initially declined to attack him in 1628 and concentrated on restoring the liberties of the subject instead. Yet during the negotiations over the Petition of Right, Sir Edward Coke named Buckingham as the 'grievance of grievances', and the remonstrance presented to Charles on 17 June urged the King to remove him from power.¹⁴⁰ In the end, the conflict between Buckingham and his enemies was settled not by parliamentary impeachment but by the knife of John Felton.

¹ For Eliot's role in the impeachment, see J.N. Ball, 'Sir John Eliot and Parliament, 1624-1629' in K. Sharpe (ed.), *Faction and Parliament: Essays on Early Stuart History* (Oxford, 1978), pp. 173-207. For the failure of these early lines of attack, see C. Russell, *Parliaments and English Politics* (Oxford, 1979), pp. 278-89.

² As I hope to argue elsewhere, Turner's queries point to wider divisions in early Stuart political culture about the legitimacy of the *vox populi*. See D. Coast, 'Rumor and 'common fame': The impeachment of the Duke of Buckingham and public opinion in early Stuart England', *JBS* (forthcoming).

³ For the impeachment of Buckingham, see Russell, *Parliaments and English Politics*, ch. 5; R. Lockyer, *Buckingham: the life and career of George Villiers, First Duke of Buckingham 1592-1628* (Harlow,

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- 1981), ch. 8; T. Cogswell, 'The Warre of the Commons for the honour of King Charles': the parliament-men and the reformation of the lord admiral in 1626', *Historical Research* 84:226 (2011), pp. 618-36; T. Cogswell, 'The Returne of the 'Dead Alive': The Earl of Bristol and Dr Eglissham in the Parliament of 1626 and in Caroline political culture', *English Historical Review* 128:532 (2013), pp. 535-70; C. Tite, *Impeachment and Parliamentary Judicature in Early Stuart England* (1974), ch. 7; J. S. Flemin, 'The dissolution of Parliament in 1626: A revaluation', *English Historical Review* 87:345 (1972), pp. 784-90; J.N. Ball, 'The impeachment of the Duke of Buckingham in 1626' in *Mélanges Antonio Marongiu: Studies presented to the international commission for the history of representative and parliamentary institutions* 25 (Palermo, 1967), pp. 35-48; R. Zaller, *The Discourse of Legitimacy in Early Modern England* (Stanford, 2007), pp. 632-41.
- ⁴ See in particular speeches by Sir John Finch, Sir George Goring, Sir William Beecher and Sir Robert Harley, *Proceedings in Parliament 1626*, ed. William B. Bidwell and Mija Jansson, iii (1992), pp. 124, 129-130.
- ⁵ 'A defence for Doctor Turnor', Bodleian Library, Tanner 72, fo. 78r.
- ⁶ *Proceedings*, i, p. 565.
- ⁷ *Proceedings*, iii, pp. 124, 130.
- ⁸ *Proceedings*, iii, pp. 123, 129.
- ⁹ For Charles' belief in Buckingham's innocence, see Charles' speech to the Commons, 15 March 1626, *Proceedings*, iii, p. 294; Lord Keeper's speech to the Lords and Commons, *Proceedings*, iii, p. 393.
- ¹⁰ Russell, *Parliaments and English Politics*, ch. 5.
- ¹¹ See in particular P. Lake, 'Review: *The Causes of the English Civil War; The Fall of the British Monarchies, 1637-1642; Unrevolutionary England* by Conrad Russell', *Huntington Library Quarterly*, vol. 57, no. 2 (Spring, 1994), 167-197; C. Thompson, 'Court politics and parliamentary conflict in 1625' in *Conflict in Early Stuart England: Studies in Religion and Politics 1603-1642*, ed. R. Cust and A. Hughes, (Harlow, 1989), pp. 168-92; J.P. Sommerville, *Royalists and Patriots: Politics and ideology in England 1603-1640* (2nd edition, Harlow, 1999), pp. 224-265.
- ¹² See M. Kishlansky, 'Debate: Charles I: a case of mistaken Identity', *Past and Present* 205 (2009), p. 233.
- ¹³ Cogswell, 'The Warre of the Commons', 618-36; R. Cust, *Charles I, A Political Life* (Harlow, 2005), p. 56; Sommerville, pp. 2, 219; A. Thrush, *The House of Commons 1604-1629* vol. I, (Cambridge, 2010), p. 428; D. Colclough, *Freedom of Speech in Early Stuart England* (Cambridge, 2005), p. 191; D. Hirst, *England in Conflict 1603-1660* (1990), p. 117.

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- ¹⁴ A. Bellany and T. Cogswell, *The Murder of King James I* (New Haven, 2015), pp. 202, 229.
- ¹⁵ C. Thompson, *Working Notes* (Wivenhoe, 2015), pp. 103-5. I am grateful to Christopher Thompson for this reference.
- ¹⁶ D. Underdown, 'Review: *Parliaments and English Politics, 1621-1629*', *The American Historical Review* 85:1 (1980), 120; A. Woolrych, 'Review article: Court, country and city revisited', *History* 65:214 (1980), 236-45.
- ¹⁷ Cogswell, 'The warre of the Commons', 618; Kishlansky, 233, n 74.
- ¹⁸ T. Cogswell, *The Blessed Revolution: English Politics and the coming of war, 1621-1624* (Cambridge, 1989).
- ¹⁹ Russell, *Parliaments and English Politics*, 294-5.
- ²⁰ Zuane Pesaro to the Doge and Senate, 24 Apr. 1626 (ns), *Calendar of state papers and manuscripts relating to English affairs existing in the archives and collections of Venice and in other libraries of Northern Italy* ed. Allen B. Hinds (CSPV) 1625-6, p. 390.
- ²¹ 'Charges against the Duke of Buckingham' (undated), T.N.A., SP 16/26, fo. 165r. This may have been one of the documents taken from Sir John Eliot's study when he was arrested. Salvetti similarly wrote that the purpose of the Easter recess was to allow time to 'win Members over to the Duke's side'. See Amerigo Salvetti to the Grand Duke of Florence, 17 Apr. 1626 (ns), *Skrine*, p. 56.
- ²² Russell, *Parliaments and English Politics*, p. 295.
- ²³ 'Le Duc m'a dit qu' à l'extrémité, il les contentera de la despouille de ces charges, et qu'il ne de'cherera point dans le faveur de son maistre'. 'L'Eveque de Mande to Cardinal Richelieu, Apr. 1626, T.N.A., PRO 31/3/63, fo. 63v.
- ²⁴ Amerigo Salvetti to the Grand Duke of Florence, 17 Apr. 1626 (ns), *Skrine*, pp. 49, 56, 61; 'L'Eveque de Mande to Cardinal Richelieu, Apr. 1626, T.N.A., PRO 31/3/63, fos. 61r-63v. Mende wrote that Buckingham's confidence in his supporters in the House of Lords was misplaced, however. Several leading Lords had secretly informed Mende that they were likely to vote against him.
- ²⁵ John Holles to the Earl of Exeter, 16 May 1626, *Letters of John Holles 1587-1637*, ed. P.R Seddon, vol. 3 (Thoroton Society Record Series vol. xxxv), pp. 329-30.
- ²⁶ Bellany and Cogswell, *Murder of King James*, pp. 227, 258-9, 262-3..
- ²⁷ Russell, *Parliaments and English Politics*, p. 298; *Proceedings*, iv, p. 309.
- ²⁸ *Proceedings*, ii, pp. 284-5.

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- ²⁹ Lord Keeper's speech to the Lords and Commons, 29 March 1626, *Proceedings*, ii, p. 393.
- ³⁰ London newsletter, 24 March 1626, Harl. 390, 31r; See also Countess of Bedford to Jane Lady Cornwallis, 31 March 1626, *The Private Correspondence of Jane Lady Cornwallis 1613-44*, ed. Joanna Moody (1842), p. 146
- ³¹ *Proceedings*, ii, p. 436. Cf. *Proceedings* iv, p. 279.
- ³² *Proceedings*, ii, p. 437.
- ³³ *Proceedings*, iii, p. 36.
- ³⁴ *Proceedings*, iii, p. 33.
- ³⁵ *Proceedings*, iii, p. 98.
- ³⁶ Russell, *Parliaments and English Politics*, p. 294.
- ³⁷ Kishlansky, 233.
- ³⁸ In a speech to the Commons on 15 March, Charles assured MPs that Buckingham had done nothing wrong and had always acted on his orders. See *Proceedings*, ii, p. 294.
- ³⁹ Kishlansky, 233.
- ⁴⁰ Russell, *Parliaments and English Politics*, pp. 295, 297.
- ⁴¹ Russell, *Parliaments and English Politics*, p. 296.
- ⁴² Russell, *Parliaments and English Politics*, pp. 296-7.
- ⁴³ Turner's queries, TNA, SP 16/22, fo. 100r; *Proceedings* ii, pp. 263, 268.
- ⁴⁴ Russell, *Parliaments and English Politics*, p. 296.
- ⁴⁵ Williams to Buckingham, 2 March 1624, *Cabala, sive, Scrinia sacra mysteries of state & government* (1654), pp. 101-2; James Howell to Buckingham, 13 Feb. 1626, *Epistolae Ho-Eliauae* ed. J. Jacobs (1892), pp. 320-1. Buckingham did eventually give the office of Warden of the Cinque Ports to an ally in 1628. See Lockyer, p. 448.
- ⁴⁶ 'Dr Turners Speach in Parliament, 11 March 1625', British Library, Additional MS. 22474, fo. 11v; Turner's queries, T.N.A., SP 16/22, fo. 100r; Turner's queries, *Proceedings*, ii, pp. 261-2.
- ⁴⁷ Speech of Sir William Walter, 20 March 1626, *Proceedings*, ii, p. 324.

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- ⁴⁸ J. Forster, *Sir John Eliot: A biography* (London, 1864), i, pp. 480-8; Cornwall Record office, EL 655/1, fo. 27r. Since Eliot did not name Buckingham in this speech, it is possible that he was referring to his rivals James Bagg and Sir John Coke, clients of Buckingham who were involved in naval affairs. Nevertheless, Eliot's speech on 27 March clearly blames Buckingham's failure to accompany the Cadiz fleet or properly provide for it as the cause of the failure of the expedition. See *Proceedings*, ii, p. 377.
- ⁴⁹ Russell, *Parliaments and English Politics*, pp. 295-6.
- ⁵⁰ Russell, *Parliaments and English Politics*, p. 297.
- ⁵¹ Lord Cromwell to Buckingham, 8 Sept. 1625, *Cabala*, pp. 262-3.
- ⁵² Lockyer, p. 325.
- ⁵³ London newsletter, 10 March 1626, Harl. 390, fo. 24v.
- ⁵⁴ Cornwall Rec. off., EL 655/2, fo. 14r.
- ⁵⁵ 'The King of Denmark's Lettre to the King of England in march 1626', T.N.A., SP 75/7, fo. 64r. Similar views to those in the letter supposedly written by the King of Denmark were expressed by a Palatine administrator in October 1626, who wrote that Buckingham was essentially an evil councillor. See Bellany and Cogswell, *Murder of King James*, p. 265.
- ⁵⁶ See Eliot's speeches of 29 Feb. and 27 March. *Proceedings*, ii, pp. 129, 377.
- ⁵⁷ Sir James Bagg to Buckingham, [3 March 1626 or shortly thereafter], *Notes and Queries* 4th series, x (1872), 325-6.
- ⁵⁸ Anonymous speech, [March 1626], T.N.A., SP 16/23, fo. 55v; *Proceedings* 1626, ii, p. 393.
- ⁵⁹ Le Marquis de Blainville au Roy, 3 Apr. 1626, T.N.A., PRO 31/3/63, fo. 50r. For similar comments, see James Palmer to Scudamore, 25 March 1626, T.N.A., C115/108/8633.
- ⁶⁰ Zuane Pesaro to the Doge and Senate, 13 March 1626 (ns), CSPV 1625-6, p. 358; Amerigo Salvetti to the Grand Duke of Florence, 3 Apr. 1626 (ns), *Skrine*, p. 53; Amerigo Salvetti to the Grand Duke of Florence, 17 Apr. 1626 (ns), *Skrine*, p. 56. Salvetti later said that the House was 'resolved to overthrow him'. See 10 Apr. 1626, *Skrine*, p. 55.
- ⁶¹ Cogswell, 'The Warre of the Commons', 618-36. See also Thompson, *Working Notes*, pp. 103-5.
- ⁶² The Company to Captain Henry Woodhouse, 21st March 1626 in J.H. Lefroy, *Memorials of the Discovery and Early Settlement of the Bermudas or Somers Islands 1515-1685* (London, 1877) vol. i, p. 375. I am grateful to one of the anonymous reviewers for this reference.

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- ⁶³ See Amerigo Salvetti to the Grand Duke of Florence, 1 May 1626 (ns), *Skrine*, p. 60.
- ⁶⁴ Cogswell, 'The Returne of the 'Dead Alive'', 540.
- ⁶⁵ Cogswell, 'The warre of the Commons', 629.
- ⁶⁶ Cogswell, 'The warre of the Commons', 632. Cogswell's more recent argument that allegations about Buckingham's involvement in James's death, which were aired during the impeachment, exacerbated a bitter conflict between Buckingham and his critics in the parliament of 1626, arguably represents a modification of this position. See Bellany and Cogswell, *Murder of King James*, chs. 8-12.
- ⁶⁷ Salvetti referred to 'consultations' for a West India Company, yet in the same letter he wrote that the Commons 'will not stir from the course which they have undertaken' against Buckingham and that 'the discussion is now so warm that the Duke must yield, or the King must dissolve Parliament without having obtained money'. See Amerigo Salvetti to the Grand Duke of Florence, 1 May 1626 (ns), *Skrine*, pp. 59-60.
- ⁶⁸ As Russell wrote, 'there is no reason to believe that the creation of such a company would have met any of their resentments, or discouraged them from prosecuting the Duke'. Russell, *Parliaments and English Politics*, p. 300.
- ⁶⁹ *Proceedings*, ii, pp. 150, 153.
- ⁷⁰ *Proceedings*, ii, p. 307, *Proceedings*, iii, p. 34.
- ⁷¹ Russell argues that the attack on Buckingham during the Oxford session in 1625 was the only independent move by the Commons against a crown minister during the 1620s. See Russell, *Parliaments and English Politics*, p. 252.
- ⁷² Russell, *Parliaments and English Politics*, p. 322.
- ⁷³ Russell, *Parliaments and English Politics*, p. 266.
- ⁷⁴ Russell, *Parliaments and English Politics*, p. 289. For Eliot's ties with Pembroke, see C. Russell, 'Parliamentary History in Perspective' in *Unrevolutionary England, 1603-1642* (1990), p. 49.
- ⁷⁵ S. Adams, 'The Protestant Cause: Religious Alliance with the West European Calvinist Communities as a Political Issue in England, 1585-1630', Oxford DPhil Thesis (1973), p. 381-92.
- ⁷⁶ For Buckingham's belief that Abbot, Williams, Arundel and Pembroke had collaborated with each other and with members of the Commons against him in 1625, see J. Briley

, 'A Biography of William Herbert, Third Earl of Pembroke, 1580-1630' (PhD thesis, University of Birmingham, 1961), p. 758.

⁷⁷ Sir James Bagg to Buckingham, [3 March 1626 or shortly thereafter], *Notes and Queries*, 325-6. For Pembroke's powerful network of patronage and his enormous influence in placing MPs, see Ball, 'Sir John Eliot and Parliament', pp. 184-5; Briley, 'Pembroke', pp. 729-43. For his many connections to Turner, see B. O'Farrell, *Shakespeare's Patron: William Herbert, Third Earl of Pembroke, 1580-1630, Politics, Patronage and Power* (London, 2011), p. 169.

⁷⁸ *The House of Commons 1604-1629*, ed. A. Thrush and J. Ferris, vol IV (Cambridge, 2010), p. 78. Williams and Pembroke were both suspected of orchestrating attacks on Buckingham in the parliament of 1625. See *Scrinia Reserata: a memoriall offered to the great deservings of John Williams*, ed. John Hackett, ii (1693), p. 17; Kellie to Mar, 11 Nov. 1625, *Supplementary Report on the Manuscripts of the Earl of Mar and Kellie*, ed. H. Paton, HMC 60 (1930), p. 237.

⁷⁹ Briley, 'Pembroke', pp. 760, 795-7.

⁸⁰ Brit. Libr. Egerton MS. 2978, f. 18r.

⁸¹ Bellany and Cogswell, *Murder of King James*, p. 208.

⁸² *HOC* vol. III, pp. 730-1; *HOC* vol. V, p. 450.

⁸³ Briley, 'Pembroke', pp. 783-4.

⁸⁴ Bellany and Cogswell, *Murder of King James*, p. 206.

⁸⁵ *Negotium Posterorum*, Cornwall Rec. off., EL 655/2, p. 234; M. Jansson and W. Bidwell (eds.), *Proceedings in Parliament 1625* (Yale, 1997), pp. 487-569.

⁸⁶ A. Hughes, *The Causes of the English Civil War* (Basingstoke, 1998), p. 147.

⁸⁷ Russell, 'Parliamentary history in perspective', p. 333.

⁸⁸ Goring to Buckingham, 4 Oct. 1624, Brit. Libr. Harley 1580, fo. 445r.

⁸⁹ O'Farrell, *Shakespeare's Patron*, p. 177-8.

⁹⁰ John Chamberlain to Sir Dudley Carleton, 19 Jan. 1626, *Letters of John Chamberlain* ed. N. E. McClure, vol. II (1979), p. 628.

⁹¹ See Lockyer, pp. 332-3.

⁹² Lockyer, p. 312; 'My Lord Chamberlynes speech', Folger Shakespeare Library, V.b. 291, fo. 6r. John Briley argued that Pembroke was deliberately damning Buckingham with faint praise in these

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- speeches, and has directed an ironic or patronising tone that I have not. See Briley, 'Pembroke', p. 788-9.
- ⁹³ *Report on the Manuscripts of the Duke of Buccleuch and Queensberry*, ed. R.E.G. Kirk, HMC 45, iii (1926), p. 273.
- ⁹⁴ *Proceedings*, ii, p. 411; 'My Lord Chamberlynes speech', Folg. Shak. Libr., V.b. 291, fo. 6r; Adams, p. 389.
- ⁹⁵ O'Farrell, *Shakespeare's Patron*, p. 168.
- ⁹⁶ *Proceedings*, i, pp. 412-3; Briley, 'Pembroke', p. 801.
- ⁹⁷ Russell, *Parliaments and English Politics*, p. 309.
- ⁹⁸ Russell, *Parliaments and English Politics*, p. 305.
- ⁹⁹ Russell, *Parliaments and English Politics*, pp. 310-11.
- ¹⁰⁰ Cogswell, 'The Returne of the 'Dead Alive'', 538, 540, 551-2. See also Bellany and Cogswell, *Murder of King James*, pp. 204-5.
- ¹⁰¹ S.R. Gardiner, *Documents Illustrating the Impeachment of the Duke of Buckingham in 1626* (1889); Bellany and Cogswell, *Murder of King James*, ch. 9.
- ¹⁰² *Proceedings*, i, pp. 564-79; Lockyer, pp. 326-9.
- ¹⁰³ *Proceedings*, i, pp. 412-3.
- ¹⁰⁴ Russell, *Parliaments and English Politics*, pp. 302-3, 305-6, 309.
- ¹⁰⁵ R. Cust, *The Forced Loan and English Politics, 1626-1628* (Oxford, 1987), pp. 16-23.
- ¹⁰⁶ 'A declaration of the true causes which moued His Maiestie to assemble, and after inforced him to dissolue the last two meetings in Parliament' STC 9246 (30 June 1626), pp. 24-5.
- ¹⁰⁷ Flemion, 787.
- ¹⁰⁸ For the crown's financial needs in 1626, see Bellany and Cogswell, *Murder of King James*, pp. 245-6.
- ¹⁰⁹ *Proceedings*, ii, pp. 381-2.
- ¹¹⁰ *Proceedings*, iii, p. 406.
- ¹¹¹ *Proceedings*, iii, pp. 423-30.

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- ¹¹² 'A declaration of the true causes', p. 25.
- ¹¹³ *Proceedings*, iii, p. 406.
- ¹¹⁴ Russell, *Parliaments and English Politics*, p. 297.
- ¹¹⁵ Russell, *Parliaments and English Politics*, p. 297-8.
- ¹¹⁶ Russell, *Parliaments and English Politics*, p. 295.
- ¹¹⁷ Sommerville, pp. 224-265; P. Lake, 167-197
- ¹¹⁸ Sommerville, pp. 2, 219.
- ¹¹⁹ Lord Keeper's speech to the Lords and Commons, 29 March 1626, *Proceedings*, ii, p. 392.
- ¹²⁰ 'To his sacred majesty, Ab Ignoto', *Cabala Sive Scrinia Sacra* (1691), p. 256-7. Conway similarly told Buckingham that if Turner went unpunished, it would leave 'noe king the glory of his sacred rule and dignity'. See Bellany and Cogswell, *Murder of King James*, p. 248.
- ¹²¹ 'Questions to be propounded to Sir John Elliott', SP 16/27, fo. 24r.
- ¹²² *Proceedings*, ii, p. 433.
- ¹²³ *Proceedings*, ii, p. 395.
- ¹²⁴ *Proceedings*, iii, p. 36. The threat that he would 'take other resolutions' was also repeated in his message of 9 June. See *Proceedings*, iii, p. 406.
- ¹²⁵ *Proceedings*, iii, p. 32.
- ¹²⁶ *Proceedings*, iii. pp. 241-2.
- ¹²⁷ Antonio Rossi to the Doge and Senate, 14 Aug. 1626, CSPV 1625-6, p. 508. Mende advised against Charles attempting to do away with parliaments, since his position was too weak. He may have been alluding to similar discussions in April when he wrote that 'l'ay vea aussy le Roy, et come je l'ay voulu presser d'entrer dans un dessein d'apprimé la liberté des Parlements, et de maintenir fortement son Bouquingham'. See L'Eveque de Mandé to Cardinal Richelieu, Apr. 1626, T.N.A., PRO 31/3/63, fo. 63r-v.
- ¹²⁸ *Diary of John Rous*, ed. M.A.E. Green (Camden vol. 66, 1856), pp. 2-3.
- ¹²⁹ Zuane Pesaro to the Doge and Senate, 24 Apr. 1626 (ns), CSPV 1625-6, p. 390. See also Zuane Pesaro to the Doge and Senate, 29 May 1626 (ns), CSPV 1625-6, p. 432. The French ambassador similarly wrote that many believed Buckingham intended to destroy the authority of parliament.

See L'Eveque de Mandé to Cardinal Richelieu, Apr. 1626, T.N.A., PRO 31/3/63, fos. 61v-2r; Zuane Pesaro to the Doge and Senate, 4 Apr. 1626 (ns), CSPV 1625-6, p. 380. An early version of the charges against Buckingham also blamed him for extra-parliamentary taxes like Impositions. See Cornwall Rec. off. EL 655/2, fo. 2r.

¹³⁰ Zuane Pesaro to the Doge and Senate, 24 Apr. 1626 (ns), CSPV 1625-6, p. 390.

¹³¹ *Proceedings*, iii, p. 440.

¹³² Russell, *Parliaments and English Politics*, p. 297.

¹³³ Henry Rochford to Buckingham, [1623], Brit. Libr. Harley MS. 1581, fo. 379r; Castle to Trumbull, 9 July 1624, Brit. Libr. Add. MS. 72276, fo. 109v.

¹³⁴ *Proceedings*, iii, pp. 162-3.

¹³⁵ Russell, *Parliaments and English Politics*, p. 298-9.

¹³⁶ Accusations against Buckingham, Brit. Libr. Add. MS. 4155, fo. 144r; Cornwall Rec. off., EL 655/2, fo. 13r.

¹³⁷ *Proceedings*, ii, p. 358.

¹³⁸ Dr. Meddus to Mead, 22 May 1626, *Court and Times of Charles I*, ed. T. Birch, vol I (1848), p. 105.

¹³⁹ N. Tyacke, *Anti-Calvinists: The Rise of English Arminianism, c. 1590-1640* (Oxford, 1987), p. 180.

¹⁴⁰ Lockyer, pp. 426, 439-42.