

On the Character of a “Great Patriot”: A New Essay Ascribed to Bolingbroke

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Abstract This article presents the first addition in recent years to the canon of the British eighteenth-century statesman and political thinker Lord Bolingbroke (1678–1751), a manuscript essay “On the Character of a Great Patriot.” For the first time, this article identifies Bolingbroke as the likely author of this unasccribed, undated, and untitled essay in the Senate House Library manuscript collection. Using internal and contextual evidence, the article demonstrates that the “Character” is a description of Bolingbroke’s opposition colleague William Pulteney, and that it was written in the final months of 1731, most likely for publication in the opposition journal the *Craftsman*. The “Character” dates from a period in which Bolingbroke wrote very little, and it is thus a crucial addition to his biography as well as an early exposition of his theory of opposition politics. Moreover, study of the essay shows that Bolingbroke drew extensively on the example of Pulteney when formulating his idea about the necessity of a systematic opposition party, not fully formulated until *On the Spirit of Patriotism* (1736). The “Character” thus sheds further light on the important relationship between political practice and theory in the age of Walpole.

Henry St. John, first Viscount Bolingbroke (1678–1751), was one of the most significant polemicists and political thinkers of the first half of the eighteenth century. The canon of Bolingbroke’s political writings has been relatively stable ever since the posthumous appearance of his collected *Works* in 1754, edited, according to Bolingbroke’s friend David Mallet, “from the manuscripts delivered to me by his executors, without the smallest addition or alteration.”¹ In 1982 Simon Varey identified and edited Bolingbroke’s contributions to the opposition journal the *Craftsman*, and Adrian Lashmore-Davies recently collected Bolingbroke’s *Unpublished Letters* (2013), including some significant and previously unknown reflections on contemporary political debate.²

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¹ British Library (hereafter BL), Add. MS 4948.A, fol. 1r. On the publication of Bolingbroke’s *Works*, see Sandro Jung, *David Mallet, Anglo-Scot: Poetry, Patronage, and Politics in the Age of Union* (Newark, 2008), 137–45; John C. Riely, “Chesterfield, Mallet, and the Publication of Bolingbroke’s *Works*,” *Review of English Studies* 25, no. 97 (February 1974): 61–65.

² Henry St John, Lord Bolingbroke, *Contributions to the Craftsman*, ed. Simon Varey (Oxford, 1982) (hereafter Bolingbroke, *Contributions*); Bolingbroke, *The Unpublished Letters of Henry St John, First*

Outside the correspondence, no substantial works have been added to the canon in recent years. This article attributes to Bolingbroke for the first time a hitherto uncatalogued, unpublished, and unscribed manuscript essay transcribed in the Senate House Library, MS 533. We have given the title “On the Character of a Great Patriot” to this work, which has no title in the manuscript.

In demonstrating why the essay was in all likelihood written by Bolingbroke, our arguments are threefold: firstly, it is a description of the character of William Pulteney; secondly, it was written in the final months of 1731, in response to a fresh government assault on the opposition, and most likely intended for publication in the opposition journal the *Craftsman*; and, thirdly, in this essay Bolingbroke outlines principles of opposition that he would not fully articulate until the composition of *On the Spirit of Patriotism* (1736) several years later. The “Character” dates from a period in which Bolingbroke wrote very little, and is thus crucial to our understanding of his nascent ideas about the necessity of a systematic opposition party. We should say at the outset that, in the absence of a contemporaneous ascription, the attribution of this work can be no more than highly likely. While all the available internal and contextual evidence points in the direction of Bolingbroke, we do not claim to have caught him in the act. Nor can the possibility be entirely excluded that it was written for private distribution rather than the *Craftsman*, although there is very good evidence to link it with that publication. Moreover, the sheer volume of circumstantial evidence, especially some strong hints and allusions in the paper wars of the time, coupled with the essay’s distinctive Bolingbrokean arguments, themes, and style, make this a highly credible attribution. To paraphrase William Archibald Spooner, we do not claim to have proved anything, only to have rendered it very probable.³

I

The essay in question describes the character of an unnamed “great Patriot” who is nonetheless readily identifiable as William Pulteney.⁴ Evidence for this identification is ample. The “Person” was formerly a loyal Whig MP who later “took upon him to oppose whatever practices he thought pernicious to its Interest at home, & its Credit & Honour abroad.”⁵ This description fits Pulteney perfectly. The “Person” is said to spend “numerous fatiguing days in Parliament, Maintaining long Debates, the

Viscount Bolingbroke, ed. Adrian Lashmore-Davies, 5 vols. (London, 2013) (hereafter Bolingbroke, *Unpublished Letters*). Most of the letters not included in Lashmore-Davies’s recent edition can be found in Bolingbroke, *Letters and Correspondence, Public and Private, of the Right Honourable Henry St John, Lord Visc. Bolingbroke*, ed. Gilbert Parke, 4 vols. (London, 1798).

³ Spooner, quoted in George Catlin, “Political Theory: What Is It?” *Political Science Quarterly* 72, no. 1 (March 1957): 1–29, at 26.

⁴ On the language of patriotism, see Christine Gerrard, *The Patriot Opposition to Walpole: Politics, Poetry, and National Myth, 1725–1742* (Oxford, 1994); Dustin Griffin, *Patriotism and Poetry in Eighteenth-Century Britain* (Cambridge, 2002).

⁵ All quotations from “On the Character of a Great Patriot” are from MS 533, fols. 17–20v, Senate House Library. The full text is included in the appendix below. In lieu of a modern biography of Pulteney, the standard sources for his public life are William Coxe, *Memoirs of the Life and Administration of Sir Robert Walpole*, 3 vols. (London, 1798), 1:352–66; Stuart Handley, M. J. Rowe, and W. H. McBryde, “Pulteney, William, Earl of Bath (1684–1764),” in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford, 2004).

weight of which lay almost wholly upon himself." Pulteney led the parliamentary wing of the opposition to Walpole because Bolingbroke was unable to enter the Lords, having been struck from the roll of peers after his return from exile in France.⁶ The "Person" is famous for having a "great Fortune" that "he possess[es] in a greater degree than any one in this Country." Pulteney was one of the wealthiest men in England.⁷ The "Person" is "daily exposed to malicious attacks of all sorts [on] his reputation by various aspersions besides even attempts upon his Life contriv'd." Not only was Pulteney the subject of numerous hatchet jobs but he was also challenged to a duel by Lord Hervey in January 1731, both combatants escaping with minor wounds. This incident helps fix the composition of the "Character" to the spring of 1731 or later. Perhaps more significantly, the "Person" is said to have supported the "worthy Cause" of opposition for "five or six years successively." By the second half of 1731, Pulteney had been in opposition for six years, and had been "caballing" with Bolingbroke for five.⁸ The composition date of the "Character" can therefore be pinned down with some accuracy to the autumn of 1731. This conclusion is supported by additional contextual and circumstantial evidence discussed below.

In subject matter, diction, style, and ideas, the "Character" is entirely consistent with Bolingbroke's known writings. Compare the "Character" against Bolingbroke's obituary of the Whig MP and lawyer Nicholas, Lord Lechmere, published in the *Craftsman* on 15 July 1727. Bolingbroke commended Pulteney in similar terms to those he used for Lechmere. For instance, where he praised Lechmere for "sacrificing [his] own particular ease and enjoyments of Pleasure and Plenty to the more general concerns of the Publick," so he would later describe Pulteney in the "Character" as "of an age in which it might be expected, that he would indulge himself, like the Generality of mankind, in a Life of ease and pleasure ... However this Person thought fit to take a more Noble Turn of Acting: For when he saw his Country sinking to Ruine by all sorts of Mismanagements, he took upon him to oppose whatever practices he thought pernicious to its Interest at home, & its Credit & Honour abroad."⁹ In the final part of this passage we find a parallel in Bolingbroke's later reflections on the character of Sir William Wyndham: "He thought this country on y^e brink of ruine, and y^e monarchical but free constitution of Government wherein the glory & y^e happyness of our nation consisted, att y^e point of being dissolved, & sacrificed to y^e support of a weak & wicked administration."¹⁰

Consider too Bolingbroke's portrayal of Lechmere's "generous Benevolence to all Men" and his devotion "to an universal Interest."¹¹ Again there are echoes in the "Character" of Pulteney, who is "so Universal a Benefactour to Mankind, as such a man must be allowd to be." Lechmere's "remarkable resolution" and "noble Sentiment" are renewed in Pulteney's "Uncommon Resolution" and "noble Spirit."¹²

⁶ H. T. Dickinson, *Bolingbroke* (London, 1970), 174.

⁷ Romney Sedgwick, ed., *The History of Parliament: The House of Commons, 1715–1754*, 2 vols. (London, 1970), 2:375 (hereafter Sedgwick, *Commons*, 1715–54).

⁸ Alexander Pope, *The Correspondence of Alexander Pope*, ed. George Sherburn, 5 vols. (Oxford, 1956), 2:291.

⁹ Bolingbroke, *Contributions*, 19.

¹⁰ Bolingbroke, *Unpublished Letters*, 5:259.

¹¹ Bolingbroke, *Contributions*, 21.

¹² *Ibid.*, 19.

Lechmere “pursue[d] the Publick Good, and acquire[d] such vast Applause, as regularly procured him all the Honours of the *Long Robe*.”¹³ So too “all people, under all views & Denominations, should unanimously concur to Esteem, Love, & to Admire” Pulteney, “and adhere to him in all his future attempts for the Publick Good.” In the “Character” it is Pulteney’s “Example & Eloquence” that “brought almost the whole Nation (which was before seemingly, nay effectually, sunk into Indolence, Blindness & a Servile Tameness) to move out of the First by degrees.” And again, it is his “Example & Eloquence that brought a Grumbling, useless Minority to become a bold, Generous, considerable sett of worthy Assertors of the Interest of their Country on many occasions, and even when it plainly dash’d with their own private advantages.” The rejection of “private advantages” for the “Interests” of society once again echoes Bolingbroke’s reflection on Lechmere. But it is the dual pairing of “Example & Eloquence” that is most significant here, for in *On the Spirit of Patriotism* Bolingbroke writes that eloquence is of little use unless men also lead by example. Thus Tully’s “eloquence in private causes gave him first credit at Rome, but it was this knowledge, this experience, and the continued habits of business, that supported his reputation, enabled him to do so much service to his country, and gave force and authority to his eloquence.”¹⁴ Pulteney’s rhetoric at the dispatch box and in the press is backed up by his “fatigueing days in Parliament.” Were these simple verbal parallels, it would be possible to dismiss them as commonplace turns of phrase. Buttressing the evidence of the verbal echoes, however, are sustained consistencies of thought, style, and polemical intent.

Bolingbroke had already come to Pulteney’s defense once before. Some months before writing the “Character,” he concluded his *Remarks on the History of England*, first published in the *Craftsman* on 22 May 1731, with a “Vindication” of both himself and Pulteney. Here Bolingbroke wrote that Pulteney “might have done Honour to a Roman Citizen, in the best Times of that Commonwealth.”¹⁵ Yet he also claimed that Pulteney had aimed at “nothing less therefore than a *constant* and *vigorous* Opposition, of which you have set us the Example,” again reflected in the “firm, open, & spirited opposition” of which Pulteney provides the “Example” in the “Character.” We consider the relationship between the “Character” and the paper war initiated by the “Vindication” of Pulteney in more detail below. For now, though, it is important to understand that the “Character” is not a one-off. It belongs to a polemical moment and demands to be read alongside other texts arising from and responding to that moment. That Bolingbroke is known to have addressed the topic of Pulteney’s character earlier in the same year considerably strengthens the case for his authorship.

For what outlet was the “Character” written? A strong possibility is that it was intended for publication in the *Craftsman*. Late in the summer of 1731, the editor and chief author Nicholas Amhurst “publish’d an Advertisement” in the paper

¹³ *Ibid.*, 20.

¹⁴ Henry St John, Lord Bolingbroke, *Political Writings*, ed. David Armitage (Cambridge, 1997), 214 (hereafter Bolingbroke, *Political Writings*).

¹⁵ Henry St John, Lord Bolingbroke, *The Works of the Late Right Honorable Henry St John, Lord Viscount Bolingbroke*, ed. David Mallet, 5 vols. (London, 1754), 1:529 (hereafter Bolingbroke, *Works*). The “Vindication,” or Letter XXIV of the *Remarks*, is regrettably excluded from the modern edition of his *Historical Writings*, ed. Isaac Kramnick (Chicago, 1972).

that, according to a later issue, "made us soon expect a *farther Defence of Mr. P*[ulteney]; but as that *able Hand* hath not yet appear'd, or at least cannot be distinguish'd, I suppose you have laid your Design aside."¹⁶ That the authors of this issue (probably Amhurst in collaboration with Pulteney) expected the defense to be written by an "*able Hand*" is promising. Ministry hacks claimed the non-appearance of this "*farther Defence*" as a sign of weakness in the opposition. Writing in the *Free Briton* on 16 September 1731, Arnall protested that "A further Defence of Mr. P. is promised in one *Craftsman*; that further Defence is deferred in the next *Craftsman* ... After all, the whole is dropped; Weeks and Months are suffered to pass, without the least Appearance of this promised Vindication."¹⁷ The "Character" certainly fits the description of this highly anticipated but unpublished text.

Who else besides Bolingbroke could have written "On the Character of a Great Patriot"? In the absence of a contemporaneous ascription to Bolingbroke, we must ask the question. The short list includes Bolingbroke's fellow contributors to the *Craftsman*, but principally Amhurst. Thomas Davies later remarked that Amhurst "had almost as much wit, learning, and various knowledge" as Bolingbroke and Pulteney, and that "his essays were often ascribed to them."¹⁸ Thomas Lockwood's examination of anonymous contributions to the journal has now recovered Amhurst's reputation as "the best polemical journalist of his day," with "a gift for close partisan political debate leavened with sarcastic mockery."¹⁹ But while Amhurst knew Pulteney very well from their collaborations, it is unlikely that he could have written the "Character." Not only did editorial duties for the *Craftsman* keep Amhurst occupied but the "Character" is out of kilter with Amhurst's distinctive and caustic prose. The "Character" is an exercise in panegyric, not satire.

Peripheral figures associated with the *Craftsman* included Daniel Pulteney, Jonathan Swift, John Arbuthnot, John Gay, and Alexander Pope. Of those five men, Daniel Pulteney had died in September 1731, and the style of the "Character" is simply irreconcilable with the writings of Swift and Arbuthnot.²⁰ Certainly Pope was capable of prose flattery in this genre, as evinced by his "The Character of Katherine, Duchess of Buckingham" (1729), a unique scribal copy of which immediately precedes "On the Character of a Great Patriot" in the Senate House manuscript.²¹ But to our knowledge, Pope never contributed to the *Craftsman*, nor, at this or any time, did he write about detailed party and parliamentary politics.

¹⁶ *Craftsman* 270 (4 September 1731); the advertisement has not been traced, but see 265 (31 July 1731).

¹⁷ *Free Briton* 94 (16 September 1731).

¹⁸ Thomas Davies, *The Characters of George the First, Queen Caroline, Sir Robert Walpole, Mr Pulteney, Lord Hardwicke, Mr Fox, and Mr Pitt, Reviewed* (London, 1777), 42–43.

¹⁹ Thomas Lockwood, "Did Fielding Write for *The Craftsman*?" *Review of English Studies* 59, no. 238 (February 2007): 86–117, at 90.

²⁰ In 1735 Pulteney remembered his cousin fondly in a letter to Swift: "I had a very near relation of great abilities, who was my fellow labourer in the public cause: he is gone; I loved and esteemed him much." *The Correspondence of Jonathan Swift, D.D.*, 5 vols., ed. David Woolley (Oxford, 1999–2014), 4:234 (hereafter (Swift, *Correspondence*). Varey believes that Daniel Pulteney was at least an occasional contributor to the *Craftsman*: see Bolingbroke, *Contributions*, xxvi.

²¹ For the text and attribution of this work to Pope, see Joseph Hone, "Pope, Bathurst, and the Duchess of Buckingham," *Studies in Philology* 116, no. 2 (Spring 2018): 397–416.

Gay would be an altogether more likely candidate. He and William Pulteney were longstanding friends by the early 1730s, having traveled together to Bolingbroke's retreat at Aix-la-Chapelle more than a decade earlier in 1717.²² The opposition press had hailed *The Beggar's Opera* as a crucial blow in the culture war against Walpole; seventeen issues of the *Craftsman* published between February and July 1727 referenced the success of Gay's new play.²³ His sequel, *Polly*, was denounced as a "theatrical *Craftsman*" by Lord Hervey and banned by the court.²⁴ The duchess of Queensbury suspected Pulteney himself of encouraging Gay to "pursue [Walpole], & bring him to punishment" in the sequel.²⁵ Despite ailing health, Gay continued his association with the *Craftsman* group through 1731, when he was working hard on a new and deeply political set of fables about ministerial corruption.²⁶ Certain features of the "Character" tally with Gay's works from this period, not least the short passage concerning princely counsel. Like Bolingbroke, Gay was very interested in the counsel and education of rulers. His first volume of *Fables* (1727) had been intended for the moral instruction of the young Prince William.²⁷ However, while the themes and style of the "Character" are not incompatible with Gay's writings, other features of the text make Gay's authorship very unlikely. By 1731 Gay and Pulteney had been friends for fifteen years, so why would Gay only vindicate Pulteney's conduct over the last "five or six" years? Why would Gay concentrate on Pulteney's actions in Parliament, when their principal common interest was literature and the press? Why would Gay describe the Tories as a "Grumbling, useless Minority" and an "inactive Sett of men," phrases that speak of personal experience rallying that party? Nobody, by contrast, had greater cause than Bolingbroke to complain about the idleness and obstinacy of Tory backbenchers.

We conclude therefore that Bolingbroke is by some margin the most likely author of "On the Character of a Great Patriot," that the text was written in the autumn of 1731, that it is probably related to the "*farther Defence of Mr. P.*" advertised as forthcoming in the *Craftsman* late that summer, and that it responded to the many and varied aspersions cast on Pulteney's honour in those months. Yet these preliminary conclusions also raise questions. Why was the "Character" written? How did the text counter the ministry's accusations? Why was it never published?

II

The autumn of 1731 was a difficult time for the opposition. The opportunity to embarrass the government over the Dunkirk affair had long since passed, yet the general elections were more than two years away. Walpole's minions continued to assault the opposition in the press. Pulteney was chief among their targets.

²² David Nokes, *John Gay: A Profession of Friendship* (Oxford, 1995), 252–61.

²³ *Ibid.*, 434.

²⁴ John, Lord Hervey, *Memoirs*, ed. Romney Sedgwick (London, 1952), 52.

²⁵ L. W. Conolly, "Anna Margareta Larpent, the Duchess of Queensbury and Gay's *Polly* in 1777," *Philological Quarterly* 51, no. 4 (October 1972): 955–57.

²⁶ Nokes, *Gay*, 502.

²⁷ John Gay, *Poetry and Prose*, ed. Vinton A. Dearing, 2 vols. (Oxford, 1974), 2:299.

William Arnall was particularly nasty, writing under the pseudonym "Walsingham" in pages of the *Free Briton*.²⁸ Then, at the beginning of October, James Pitt, another of Walpole's hacks, wrote an article in the *London Journal* observing "that *the Opposition* is very much upon the Decline" and that the "Imprudence and Heat, the Passion and Rage of Mr. P[ulteney]; his vile Usage of the King himself, his betraying the Conscience of his Friends, and charging them with Combinations, Plots, and *Vows of Destruction*, hath made those Friends cool, and caus'd them to *with-draw* from a Man with whom "tis *dangerous* to converse: He is left almost alone, and *deserted at his utmost Need*: Even Lord B[olingbro]ke, if Fame says true, is wisely retired."²⁹ Bolingbroke had perhaps not quite retired as Pitt jibed, but had certainly taken a break from political writing. These and other provocations from government journalists may have persuaded him to pen a defense of his long-time collaborator, who had suffered so much abuse because of his association with Bolingbroke since the launch of the *Craftsman* at the end of 1726.

To understand the immediate pressures felt by the opposition in late 1731, we need to look back to the Dunkirk affair nearly two years earlier. In 1728 Bolingbroke discovered that France had begun to erect fortifications in Dunkirk in breach of the Treaty of Utrecht.³⁰ Bolingbroke's friend and *quondam* Jacobite Sir William Wyndham played a leading role in the debates, presenting evidence and witnesses before the House of Commons. Walpole identified Bolingbroke as the brains behind the opposition's offensive on the Dunkirk matter, forcing Wyndham to defend Bolingbroke after Walpole attacked him "*de la façon la plus cruelle*," in the words of Montesquieu, who witnessed the debate.³¹ It has been noted that Bolingbroke spent a lot of his own money on investigating the goings on at Dunkirk.³² But Pulteney was also heavily involved in the debates,³³ and it is not inconceivable that he had also contributed some of his private funds on this occasion, which he could surely afford to do, and to which the "Character" may seem to allude: "No Expence of Money was wanting that was necessary to forward any good purposes." This remark appears to have been calculated to urge Pulteney to keep funding the opposition. Ultimately, Walpole won the day by obtaining affidavits from two of Wyndham's witnesses, revealing that "Mr. Will. Pulteney, Daniel Pulteney, Sir William Wyndham, and ... Mr Sand[y]s, had a meeting with Lord Bolingbroke to prosecute the enquiry into the works carrying on at Dunkirk."³⁴ The statements were handed to every MP as they entered the House and were sent to absentees. They had the desired effect of forcing Pulteney as well as Wyndham onto the defensive, "stifly deny[ing] their meeting with Lord Bolingbroke to concert the Dunkirk affair."³⁵

²⁸ See, for example, *Free Briton* 83 (1 July 1731), 94 (16 September 1731), 95 (30 September 1731), and 100 (28 October 1731).

²⁹ *London Journal* 640 (2 October 1731).

³⁰ Bolingbroke, *Unpublished Letters*, 5:71–72; Dickinson, *Bolingbroke*, 225.

³¹ Charles-Louis de Secondat, Baron de La Brède et de Montesquieu, *Œuvres Complètes de Montesquieu*, 2 vols. (Paris, 1859), 2:474.

³² Dickinson, *Bolingbroke*, 225.

³³ Historical Manuscripts Commission, *Manuscripts of the Earl of Egmont: Diary of Viscount Percival, Afterwards First Earl of Egmont*, 3 vols. (London, 1920–23), 1:74; Historical Manuscripts Commission, *The Manuscripts of the Earl of Carlisle, Preserved at Castle Howard* (London, 1897), 69.

³⁴ Historical Manuscripts Commission, *Egmont Diary*, 1:83.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 1:85–6.

A string of controversies followed early in the new year, starting with the “Hague Letter” printed in issue 235 of the *Craftsman* on 2 January 1731, assailing the ministry for its reversal on foreign policy. The letter is usually attributed to Bolingbroke, although his biographer denies any involvement and suggests Pulteney as a likelier candidate. Since the “Hague Letter” divulged classified details of preliminary discussions ahead of the second Treaty of Vienna—revealed to Pulteney and/or Bolingbroke through their contacts on the continent—the *Craftsman*’s printer Richard Francklin was promptly arrested on 8 January and “all his Papers and Manuscripts” seized.³⁶ Later in the same month Pulteney and Hervey fought a duel, which originated in a spat between the two men about Hervey’s contributions to William Yonge’s pamphlet *Sedition and Defamation Display’d* (1731), attacking the *Craftsman*, and Pulteney’s *Reply* to the same pamphlet, which responded on the one hand by attacking Hervey for his homosexual affair with Stephen Fox, and, on the other, by implying that Hervey was Walpole’s catamite.³⁷ According to Thomas Pelham, doubtlessly biased toward Hervey, both emerged “slightly wounded” from the duel, which was cut short after Pulteney slipped when he had the chance to strike a more serious blow to his antagonist.³⁸ In Pelham’s rendition, it was Pulteney who had instigated the duel by saying that “whether he (Pulteney) was the author of *The Reply*, or not, he was ready to justify and stand by the truth of any part of it, at what time and wherever lord Harvey pleased.”³⁹ The reality was that Hervey had “sent the challenge,” leaving behind a written declaration that he had instigated the duel and asking the king to pardon Pulteney if Hervey was killed.⁴⁰ Many in the opposition suspected that the duel had been contrived by Walpole as a means of killing Pulteney. In a print issued on 25 January 1731, Walpole is shown watching the duel from a doorway, saying “*Let them cut one anothers Throats.*”⁴¹ Another pamphlet, *Iago Display’d* (1731), identified a plot masterminded by Walpole to rid himself of his opponent: if Hervey killed Pulteney, good; if Pulteney killed Hervey, his execution for murder would achieve the same result. In its portrayal of the duel as “attempt upon [Pulteney’s] Life contriv’d,” the “Character” is entirely consistent with these oppositional responses to the duel.

Matters continued to escalate after the failed duel. Bolingbroke’s “Vindication” of himself and Pulteney in the *Craftsman* was designed to counter the ministerial press campaign being waged by Arnall in the *Free Briton*. Naturally, the “Vindication” provoked a flurry of attacks, including *Remarks on the Craftsman’s Vindication of His Two Honourable Patrons*, probably written by William Arnall but often wrongly ascribed

³⁶ *Daily Courant* 9130 (11 January 1731). In December 1731, he was sentenced to one year in prison for having printed the letter; see T. B. Howell, ed., *A Complete Collection of State Trials*, 34 vols. (London, 1809–28), 17:676.

³⁷ William Pulteney, *A Proper Reply to a Late Scurrilous Libel* (London, 1731), 5.

³⁸ Thomas Pelham to the Earl of Waldegrave, 28 January 1731, quoted in Coxé, *Memoirs*, 3:88.

³⁹ *Ibid.*

⁴⁰ *Carlisle Manuscripts*, 80. On the duel, see Robert Halsband, *Lord Hervey: Eighteenth-Century Courtier* (Oxford, 1973), 113–19; John, Lord Hervey, *The Collected Verse of John, Lord Hervey*, ed. Bill Overton with James McLaverty and Elaine Hobby (Cambridge, 2016), xxix and 54. We are grateful to James McLaverty for sharing his paper “Interpreting Lord Hervey’s Duel with William Pulteney,” originally read at the British Society for Eighteenth-Century Studies meeting at Oxford on 6 January 2017.

⁴¹ *A Consequence of the Motion* (London, 1731), no. 1868 in Frederic George Stephens, *Catalogue of Prints and Drawings in the British Museum*, 11 vols. (London, 1870), 2:738.

to Hervey.⁴² Pulteney actually thought that the *Remarks on the Craftsman's Vindication* was written by Walpole himself, and responded with a pamphlet so bold that he lost his place in the Privy Council, and for printing it, Francklin was once again arrested.⁴³ Although Bolingbroke backed away from the limelight, his "Vindication" marked only the beginning of the *Craftsman's* attempts to salvage Pulteney's reputation. On 3 July Amhurst penned a leader stating that Pulteney "hath been most virulently attack'd in a continued Series of Court Libels, for above four Years past, without the least Proof of Corruption, Mismanagement, or and dishonourable Practice."⁴⁴ Here Amhurst expanded on Bolingbroke's "Vindication" and defended some of its statements which had since come under attack. So where Bolingbroke earlier wrote that Pulteney "might have done Honour to a Roman Citizen, in the best Times of that Commonwealth," now Amhurst defended that position against charges that "a Roman Citizen would have been ashamed of his self-interested Spirit, even in the worst of those Times."⁴⁵

Such charges that Pulteney's opposition to Walpole was privately motivated were among the most common leveled in the ministerial press.⁴⁶ For this reason, Pulteney's allies sought to present him as a principled man of unquestionable integrity. This was an essential argument not least because the charge that Pulteney held personal incentives for opposition was partly true. Pulteney and Walpole had once been allies and gone into opposition together in the Whig schism of 1717. The two fell out the following year because (with no little irony) Pulteney was against cooperation with the Tories in opposition.⁴⁷ When Walpole rose to prominence, he left Pulteney out in the cold. The major rift between the two occurred in 1724, when the Duke of Newcastle rather than Pulteney replaced Carteret as secretary of state for the Southern Department. The following year Pulteney went into open opposition together with his cousin Daniel and a splinter group of Whigs. Philip Dormer Stanhope, fourth Earl of Chesterfield, joined the opposition to Walpole during the excise crisis.⁴⁸ He described Pulteney as being driven by "resentment": "He had thought himself slighted by Sir Robert Walpole, to whom he publicly avowed not only revenge, but utter destruction."⁴⁹ The "Character" appears calculated to counter such charges and thus fits neatly into the strategy of the oppositional press.

⁴² Alexander Pettit, "Propaganda, Public Relations, and the *Remarks on the Craftsman's Vindication of His Two Honourable Patrons*, in *His Paper of May 22, 1731*," *Huntington Library Quarterly* 57, no. 1 (Winter 1994): 45–59.

⁴³ BL, Add. MS 18915, fol. 7. The main reason given for Pulteney's ejection was that his pamphlet divulged words of disrespect allegedly uttered by Walpole about George II when Prince of Wales: see Pulteney, *Answer to One Part of a Late Infamous Libel* (London, 1731), 55–56. Stressing that he had not seen the publication, even Swift took issue with "betraying private conversation": Swift to Gay and the Duchess of Queensberry, 28 August 1731, in Swift, *Correspondence*, 3:429.

⁴⁴ *Craftsman* 261 (3 July 1731).

⁴⁵ Bolingbroke, *Works*, 1:529; *Craftsman* 261 (3 July 1731).

⁴⁶ See, for example, Lord Hervey's "Dedication" to William Yonge, *Sedition and Defamation Display'd* (London, 1731); William Arnall, *Remarks on the Craftsman's Vindication of His Two Honourable Patrons* (London, 1731), 46; *Observations on a Pamphlet, Intituled, An Answer to One Part of a Late Infamous Libel, &c. in a Letter to Mr. P.* (London, 1731), 4–5.

⁴⁷ Sedgwick, *Commons, 1715–54*, 2:375.

⁴⁸ On this, see Paul Langford, *The Excise Crisis: Society and Politics in the Age of Walpole* (Oxford, 1975).

⁴⁹ Philip Dormer Stanhope, Lord Chesterfield, *Characters by Lord Chesterfield Contrasted with Characters of the Same Great Personages by Other Respectable Writers* (London, 1778), 27. Chesterfield wrote for the

The second most common abuse directed at Pulteney and at the opposition in general, was that of Jacobitism by stealth. Naturally, Bolingbroke, the one-time secretary of state to the Pretender, bore the brunt of this criticism.⁵⁰ Pulteney was more often portrayed as a collaborator with traitors and as a Jacobite by association rather than conviction. However, by the middle of 1731, Arnall and other ministry hacks had begun to insinuate that Pulteney was himself a traitor.⁵¹ Pulteney's letters were now intercepted so frequently that he joked to his friends about it: "I will be extremely careful what I say," he wrote in one letter, "not to give offence and bring you into disgrace for continuing your friendship with such a Jacobite as I am."⁵²

The opposition responded. One anonymous pamphleteer writing under the sobriquet "Philalethes" quickly answered Arnall by setting forth "the Character of Mr. P[ulteney] fully cleared and justified" in *The Examiner*, published on 23 July 1731.⁵³ The connection of "Philalethes" to Bolingbroke and the opposition is unclear, although his defense of Pulteney in *The Examiner* proceeds in a similar fashion to the "Character." For instance, "Philalethes" accuses Arnall of "many glaring Falsehoods, vile Glossaries, and scandalous Impositions" in his description of "what Mr. P. spoke in the House of Commons relating to the Act of Settlement." "Mr. P.," he writes, "has sufficiently explained and cleared himself of what has been basely imputed to him on that Score."⁵⁴ More recently, during the Atterbury crisis of 1723, "Mr. P. was CHAIRMAN of the *Committee of Secrecy*, and drew up his *famous Report* against the *late Bishop ROCHESTER*; this seems to give great Offence to Mr. *Walsingham* [i.e., Arnall]; but if he be that *real Whig*, which he would persuade the World to believe he is, why should he be offended at the Report, or at Mr. P's drawing it up."⁵⁵ Bolingbroke in the "Character" similarly emphasizes Pulteney's Hanoverian credentials, portraying him as "firmly fixd to the Illustrious House, which he Submitted to." Pulteney was not yet an MP at the time of the passing of the Act of the Settlement in 1701 and therefore played no part in ratifying the act; hence, writes Bolingbroke, he "was not one of them who had the honour of fixing

oppositional *Common Sense* after 1737 and was often identified as a contributor to the *Craftsman*, although this is unlikely; see Varey, introduction to Bolingbroke, *Contributions*, xvii. He said he made his portrait of Pulteney "to the best of my knowledge, from very long acquaintance with, and observation of, the original": Chesterfield, *Characters*, 28.

⁵⁰ In private, however, ministerial Whigs must have known that Bolingbroke was no longer a principled Jacobite. Lord Hervey likened his mobility and flexibility to Handel: "His fortune in music is not unlike my Lord Bolingbroke's in politics. The one has tried both theatres, as the other has tried both Courts. They have shone in both, and been ruined in both; whilst everyone owns their genius and sees their faults, though nobody either pities their fortune or takes their part." Hervey to Digby, 25 November 1735, in *Lord Hervey and His Friends, 1726–38: Based on Letters from Holland House, Melbury, and Ickworth*, ed. Giles Stephen Holland Fox-Strangways, Earl of Ilchester (London, 1950), 239.

⁵¹ See, for example, *Free Briton* 83 (1 July 1731).

⁵² BL, Add. MS 27732, fol. 49r.

⁵³ *The Examiner: Wherein Are Expos'd the Falsities, Misrepresentations, and Invidious Reflections, Contain'd in That Scandalous and Malicious Libel, The Free-Briton* (London, 1731), sig. A1r; see also Pettit, "Propaganda, Public Relations, and the Remarks," 56.

⁵⁴ *The Examiner*, 14.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 18. On Atterbury and his plot, see G. V. Bennett, *The Tory Crisis in Church and State 1688–1730: The Career of Francis Atterbury, Bishop of Rochester* (Oxford, 1975); Eveline Cruickshanks and Howard Erskine-Hill, *The Atterbury Plot* (Basingstoke, 2004).

the happy Establishment." This final statement may well have been designed to counter accusations of Jacobitism that continued to be slung at Bolingbroke, who had, unlike Pulteney, voted through the Act of Settlement during his first session as MP for Wootton Bassett. Arnall chose to ignore this fact in his *Remarks on the Craftsman's Vindication*, where he alleged that Bolingbroke "was one of the *Virtuous 117*, who gave *their Votes to throw out the Bill for settling the Protestant Succession* in the *Illustrious House of Hanover*."⁵⁶ The allegation is seriously misleading. Actually Bolingbroke had seconded a motion to introduce a bill for "the further security of the King and the Protestant succession," including the imposition of a compulsory abjuration oath.⁵⁷ As a final gambit to distance the opposition from Jacobitism, the "Character" drives a wedge between Pulteney and "the publick Pretenders to Jacobitism"—presumably the nonjuring clergy, the University of Oxford, and perhaps the likes of William Shippen MP—by saying that they reckoned him "a Commonwealths-man." Bolingbroke's intention was not to describe his opposition colleague as a Commonwealthman but rather to emphasize the ideological gulf between Pulteney and the Jacobites.

The context of Jacobitism may go some way toward explaining why the "Character" was never printed individually or in the *Craftsman*. In the essay, Bolingbroke also had the indiscretion to allude directly to the king when writing that "I doubt not but with K[ing] G[eorge] he is a reputed Jacobite, and then a private Incendiary with his Son to make difference betwixt them." Bolingbroke may have felt that this criticism of the king was justified, since George II had recently excluded Pulteney from the Privy Council. But it may also explain why he could have been persuaded not to print the piece as a letter in the *Craftsman*. Earlier in the essay he referred to the need for an "Ill or misguided Prince" to "perceive his errors, and, if he pleases ... amend them." In aggregate, these statements may well have been judged as sailing too close to the wind. Nathaniel Mist had been forced into exile as recently as 1728 after being convicted of libel against the king in his *Weekly Journal*. Although Mist was an unreformed Jacobite who had been arrested on numerous occasions, this was a time when fairly innocuous statements or innuendos could lead to conviction.⁵⁸ Everybody remembered the execution of nineteen-year-old John Matthews for having printed a Jacobite pamphlet little over a decade previous.⁵⁹ Referring to Bolingbroke and Pulteney in notes from his stay in England between November 1729 and 1731, Montesquieu commented, "On le fait conseiller par trois avocats avant de l'imprimer [in the *Craftsman*], pour savoir s'il y a quelque chose qui blesse la loi."⁶⁰ Bolingbroke could be certain that Walpole would pursue all legal options available to him in prosecuting the opposition leaders.

⁵⁶ Arnall, *Remarks on the Craftsman's Vindication*, 30.

⁵⁷ Eveline Cruickshanks, Stuart Handley, and David Hayton, eds., *The History of Parliament: The House of Commons, 1690–1715*, 5 vols. (Cambridge, 2002), 5:341.

⁵⁸ See Philip Hamburger, "The Development of the Law of Seditious Libel and the Control of the Press," *Stanford Law Review* 37, no. 3 (February 1985): 661–765; Ian Higgins, "Censorship, Libel and Self-Censorship," in *Jonathan Swift and the Eighteenth-Century Book*, ed. Paddy Bullard and James McLaverty (Cambridge, 2013), 179–98; Joseph Hone, "Legal Constraints, Libellous Evasions," in *The Oxford Handbook to Eighteenth-Century Satire*, ed. Paddy Bullard (Oxford, forthcoming).

⁵⁹ R. J. Goulden, "Vax Populi, Vax Dei: Charles Delafaye's Paperchase," *Book Collector* 28, no. 3 (Autumn 1979): 368–90.

⁶⁰ Montesquieu, *Œuvres Complètes*, 2:471.

Moreover, the remark that George II suspected Pulteney of deliberately creating tension between him and his son would have been highly controversial. Although Prince Frederick did not go into formal opposition until 1737, when Pulteney proposed the motion demanding an allowance of £100,000 for the prince, various opposition figures had courted his patronage since his arrival in England in the winter of 1728. Bolingbroke most likely referred to the prince as one of his “two beneficial projects” in a letter written to Bathurst soon after the prince landed.⁶¹ In 1729 a new English translation of Fénelon’s mirror for princes, *Les Aventures de Télémaque* (1694), appeared with a dedication to Frederick that looked forward “to your Reign, whenever it commences.”⁶² Association with the Hanoverian successor to the throne was useful for eighteenth-century oppositions, not only because of the so-called reversionary interest—that is, the jobs and favors that could be expected after their succession—but also because it reduced the credibility of charges that oppositional activity amounted to Jacobitism and treason.⁶³ In the early days, George’s suspicion of his son prompted him to keep the prince on a tight leash, restricting his income to £2000 per month from the civil list plus £9000 per annum from the Duchy of Cornwall.⁶⁴ The precise nature of Pulteney’s attempt in 1731 “to make difference betwixt” George and Frederick is somewhat of a mystery. However, Bolingbroke describes it as a “private Incendiary,” which suggests that the incident occurred behind closed doors and in the context of baseless rumors about Pulteney’s alleged Jacobitism. The accusation may have been unfounded gossip or, worse, a deliberate attempt by counselors to mislead the king. At a time when the printer of the *Craftsman* had repeatedly been arrested, it would have been extremely foolhardy to publish this sort of allegation. Bolingbroke could of course have removed these controversial sentences before publication, but little would then have remained of an already short essay.

Although “On the Character of a Great Patriot” remained unprinted, the text did achieve a limited circulation in manuscript. We know this because the only scribal copy of the “Character” in Senate House MS 533 is written not in Bolingbroke’s hand but rather in the professional script of one of the duchess of Buckingham’s servants. Determining how the essay came to be transcribed here is not straightforward. It was perfectly normal in the early eighteenth century for politically subversive materials to be circulated in manuscript and not print, and for that circulation to occur in a closed network.⁶⁵ While the duchess and Bolingbroke certainly moved in the same

⁶¹ Bolingbroke, *Unpublished Letters*, 5:73.

⁶² François de Salignac de la Mothe-Fénelon, *The Adventures of Telemachus: Attempted in English Blank Verse* (London, 1729), sig. A4r.

⁶³ This association did not stop Walpole from commenting some years later that George II was confronted by two “Pretenders to the King’s crown ... one at Rome, the other at Norfolk House”: Sir George Henry Rose, ed., *A Selection from the Papers of the Earl of Marchmont*, 3 vols. (London, 1831), 2:113.

⁶⁴ Matthew Kilburn, “Frederick Lewis, Prince of Wales (1707–1751),” *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford, 2004).

⁶⁵ Harold Love, *Scribal Publication in Seventeenth-Century England* (Oxford, 1993); Love, *English Clandestine Satire, 1660–1702* (Oxford, 2004); Stephen Karian, *Jonathan Swift in Print and Manuscript* (Cambridge, 2010); Peter Beal, *In Praise of Scribes: Manuscripts and Their Makers in Seventeenth-Century England* (Oxford, 1998); see also Noah Millstone, *Manuscript Circulation and the Invention of Politics in Early Stuart England* (Cambridge, 2016).

circles, her friendship with Bolingbroke was fraught, as were most of her relationships.⁶⁶ Horace Walpole later described her as "more mad with pride than any mercer's wife in Bedlam" and ridiculed her habit of attending "the opera *en princesse*, literally in robes red velvet and ermine."⁶⁷ Her vain nature often alienated those around her. Nonetheless, the duchess was sufficiently friendly with Bolingbroke to visit him at Aix-la-Chapelle with her son Edmund, the short-lived second Duke of Buckingham, in September 1723.⁶⁸

The duchess was in many ways *la grande dame* of the opposition—or at least its Jacobite wing. She preserved Buckingham House as a center of oppositional politics and culture long after her husband's death in 1721. There she observed Stuart anniversaries such as the martyrdom of Charles I, for which, as Lord Hervey noted, she put the entire household into deep mourning.⁶⁹ It does not seem far-fetched to assume that she gained access to the manuscript through one of her and Bolingbroke's mutual friends among both Jacobites and oppositional loyalists. Although Pope spent "almost all my time [with Bolingbroke] at Dawley" during this period, he had quarreled with the duchess and so could not have passed on the manuscript. While we cannot exclude the possibility that Pulteney may have done it himself, Bolingbroke's friend Lord Bathurst, of whom the duchess remained very fond, is our prime suspect.⁷⁰ Pope's "Character of the Duchess" on the preceding pages includes an addendum by Bathurst in the same hand as that of "On the Character of a Great Patriot."⁷¹ Although Bathurst remained aloof from the grubby business of anti-ministerial journalism, he appears to have acted as the duchess's main contact in the opposition around this time. No other intermediary is more likely. It is possible that Bathurst, the transcriber, or whoever communicated the "Character" to the duchess of Buckingham tinkered with the text in some way, as was perfectly common in this period. But there can be little doubt that Bolingbroke was the guiding spirit behind the essay.

Nor is it impossible that the "Character" was written solely for private circulation and for the eyes of the duchess of Buckingham in particular. As Bolingbroke wrote in the essay, the Tories, which contained a strong contingent of Jacobites, had only recently been "drawn ... to a Worthy, active part" in the opposition. It was in fact only in 1730 that the Tories began to lend their support en masse to the opposition, and Jacobite historians have argued that that this was due to instructions from the Stuart Pretender in Rome. Indeed, the exact dating of James Francis Edward's letter outlining his support for Tory-Whig cooperation has been revised from January 1730 to January 1731—in either case, well before the likely date of the essay here discussed.⁷² This case is bolstered by the fact that the duchess may have

⁶⁶ On the failure of the duchess's friendship with Pope, see Hone, "Pope, Bathurst, and the Duchess of Buckingham."

⁶⁷ Horace Walpole, *The Yale Edition of Horace Walpole's Correspondence*, ed. W. S. Lewis, 48 vols. (New Haven, 1937–83), 17:253–54.

⁶⁸ Bolingbroke, *Unpublished Letters*, 5:36.

⁶⁹ Horace Walpole, *Reminiscences* (London, 1818), 119.

⁷⁰ On the quarrel and on Bathurst's friendship with the duchess, see Hone, "Pope, Bathurst, and the Duchess of Buckingham," and Pope, *Correspondence*, 3:91, 110, 116, 122, 295–6, 481.

⁷¹ MS 533, fol. 17r, Senate House Library.

⁷² Andrew Hanman, "So Few Facts": Jacobites, Tories and the Pretender," *Parliamentary History* 19, no. 2 (June 2000): 237–57; Eveline Cruickshanks, "Jacobites, Tories and 'James III,'" *Parliamentary History* 21, no. 2 (June 2002): 247–54.

been on friendly terms with Pulteney, at the very least with his wife.⁷³ Perhaps it was deemed that the essay would encourage the duchess to support—and make her Jacobite friends support—cooperation between Whigs and Tories against Walpole under a Country party banner. We might, however, expect to find more manuscript witnesses for a text that was primarily intended to be circulated in this format. Furthermore, plenty of contextual evidence discussed above suggests that this essay was intended as a public “further Defence” of Pulteney in the *Craftsman*, although it is impossible to remove all doubt on this matter. We only add that the statement about the ideological gulf between Pulteney and the Jacobites discussed earlier in this section would have made little sense if the “Character” was intended for the duchess only.

III

We now turn from the political context of “On the Character of a Great Patriot” to its intellectual significance. Only one other text has been attributed to Bolingbroke between July 1731 and February 1733, namely issue 319 of the *Craftsman* published on 12 August 1732. Crucially, in that text Bolingbroke was once again defending Pulteney’s character against accusations and rumors.⁷⁴ Why did Bolingbroke not write and publish more at this time? Politics may not have been his main occupation for much of this period, before the excise crisis gave the opposition a new opportunity toward the end of 1732. Already in August 1731, he had expressed to Swift a sense of hopelessness about the fate of the opposition: “When all the information which can be given is given, when all the spirit which can be raised is raised, and all to no purpose, it is to no purpose to write any more.”⁷⁵ Contrary to this dispirited assessment of the opposition’s chances, Bolingbroke’s interest in philosophy and history had been rekindled. In fact, it appears as if at this point he diverted his attention to his philosophical projects and in particular his criticism of revealed religion, writings that would be published posthumously as “Fragments” and acquire a great deal of notoriety.⁷⁶ He wrote to Swift the following March, “I have ventured to start a thought, which must, if it is push’d as successfully as I think it is, render all your Metaphysical Theology both ridiculous and abominable.”⁷⁷ This was

⁷³ Pulteney wrote to his diplomat friend Francis Colman in August 1731: “Mrs Pulteney has received a letter from the Duchess of Buckingham, it is filed with praises of you and Mrs Colman, and gives a long account of you civility.” BL, Add. MS 18915, fol. 9r. For discussion of additional manuscript evidence linking Pulteney and the duchess, see Eveline Cruickshanks, *Lord Cornbury, Bolingbroke and a Plan to Restore the Stuarts, 1731–1735*, Royal Stuart Papers 27 (Huntingdon, 1986), 2–3.

⁷⁴ Bolingbroke, *Contributions*, 139–40.

⁷⁵ Swift, *Correspondence*, 3:423.

⁷⁶ Samuel Johnson is reported by James Boswell as having said the following: “Sir, he [Bolingbroke] was a scoundrel, and a coward: a scoundrel for charging a blunderbuss against religion and morality; a coward, because he had not resolution to fire it off himself, but left half a crown to a beggarly Scotchman [Mallet], to draw the trigger after his death!” James Boswell, *Life of Johnson*, ed. David Womersley (London, 2008), 145.

⁷⁷ Swift, *Correspondence*, 3:458. Bolingbroke was so optimistic that he said he believed that Dean Swift would “come into my way of thinking on this subject,” but this may have been a joke. Interestingly, the first part of the letter is written by Bolingbroke and the second part by Pope (“Adieu: Pope calls for the paper”).

presumably also a time when Pope worked on *An Essay on Man* (1733–34), which he dedicated to Bolingbroke and which Bolingbroke heavily influenced.⁷⁸

This was also the period and environment in which Bolingbroke began to expand upon the local ideas conveyed in his polemics and develop a more coherent theory of oppositional politics. In this context, "On the Character of a Great Patriot" is significant as one of Bolingbroke's earliest expressions of his theory about the necessity of a concerted political opposition. Bolingbroke is usually caricatured as the "standard anti-party writer" and the "fountain-head of anti-party thought,"⁷⁹ and yet recent work has unearthed the extent to which Bolingbroke supported the formation of a systematic parliamentary opposition party in resistance to the government.⁸⁰ Contrary to the view of John Gunn, who argues that Bolingbroke "contributed little to the understanding of party conflict," we now know that his theory of opposition represents a watershed in the history of political thought, since no formal opposition party existed at the time and opposition was widely considered illegitimate and immoral.⁸¹ Political division had traditionally been condemned in the history of western political thought until Machiavelli's praise of tumult in his *Discourses on Livy*.⁸² After the rise of the Tory and Whig parties at the time of the Exclusion Crisis and their continuation after the Williamite revolution, "party," as opposed to the social forces discussed by Machiavelli became a crucial subject in British political discourse. Few political writers before David Hume wrote as extensively on the subject as Bolingbroke. Of course, Bolingbroke's views on this subject were shaped through political practice rather than in the abstract. In his *Remarks on the History of England* he defended opposition implicitly by countering the cry of the ministerial press that such activities were necessarily "factious."⁸³ In the final part of the *Remarks*—the "Vindication" published on 22 May 1731—he had made the case for a "constant and vigorous Opposition."⁸⁴ Not until *On the Spirit of Patriotism*, written five years later and published eighteen years later, would he flesh out his ideas about the necessity of opposition. "On the Character of a Great Patriot" provides crucial insights about the development of these ideas and about Pulteney's role in them.

Historians have largely underestimated the extent to which Pulteney may have inspired Bolingbroke's writings on opposition. When later writing *On the Spirit of Patriotism* Bolingbroke appears to have abandoned his coalition with Pulteney—he

⁷⁸ Brean S. Hammond, *Pope and Bolingbroke: A Study of Friendship and Influence* (Columbia, 1984), 69–91. The *Essay* was first mentioned by Bolingbroke in a letter to Swift on 19 November 1729: see Swift, *Correspondence*, 3:266.

⁷⁹ Richard Hofstadter, *The Idea of a Party System: The Rise of Legitimate Opposition in the United States, 1780–1840* (Berkeley, 1970), 10, 18; Terence Ball, "Party," in *Political Innovation and Conceptual Change*, ed. James Farr Ball and Russell L. Hanson (Cambridge, 1989), 155–76, at 170.

⁸⁰ Max Skjönsberg, "Lord Bolingbroke's Theory of Party and Opposition," *Historical Journal* 59, no. 4 (December 2016): 947–73.

⁸¹ J. A. W. Gunn, ed., *Factions No More: Attitudes to Party in Government and Opposition in Eighteenth-Century England* (London, 1972), 95.

⁸² Machiavelli, *Discourses on Livy*, trans. Harvey C. Mansfield and Nathan Tarcov (Chicago, 1998), bk. 1, chaps. 4–6, 16–23. Machiavelli himself differentiated between beneficial and harmful divisions in his *Istorie Fiorentine* (c.1525); see Nicolai Rubinstein, "Italian Political Thought, 1450–1530," in *The Cambridge History of Political Thought, 1450–1700*, ed. J. H. Burns (Cambridge, 1991), 30–65, at 57.

⁸³ Bolingbroke, *Works*, 1:439.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 1:524.

claimed in letter of 1736 that he “quits with my friends, party friend I mean”—and to have turned his “eyes from the generation that is going off, to the generation that is coming on the stage.”⁸⁵ *On the Spirit* is addressed to the twenty-six-year-old Lord Cornbury, who, as Clarendon’s grandson and MP for the University of Oxford, was one of the most promising Tories in Parliament. Bolingbroke may also have alluded to a group of young opposition politicians led by Lord Cobham (the so-called boy patriots), which included William Pitt and George Lyttelton, who would later form an opposition group centered on Prince Frederick.⁸⁶ The shift to the next generation to some extent eclipsed Pulteney’s role in the story. And yet, as the “Character” makes clear, Pulteney was Bolingbroke’s original model of an oppositional politician: “He did not sluggishly aim, only at a little opposition just enough to save his own Credit in this Country, but he served it effectually ... He shew’d an uncommon Intrepidity against all fears of displeasing the greatest Power ... [He] rowse[d] his Fellow Subjects from the most servile Submission to all the ill practices that were flourishing and successful to a firm, open, & spirited opposition. It was his Example & Eloquence that brought a Grumbling, useless Minority to become a bold, Generous, considerable sett of worthy Assertors of the Interest of their Country.” Pulteney had learned these tactics from his period with the Walpole-Townshend opposition between 1717 and 1720.⁸⁷ And they are precisely the touchstones of Bolingbroke’s stance in *On the Spirit of Patriotism*. The “Character” demonstrates that these principles were inspired not by the actions of the new generation but rather by Pulteney at the height of his opposition several years earlier.

Three other key Bolingbrokean techniques feature prominently in the “Character”: the association of Walpole with the betrayal of Whig principles, the importance of political counsel, and the appeal to impartiality. The first of those tactics has received the greatest attention from scholars such as Quentin Skinner, and thus needs to be addressed only briefly here.⁸⁸ Walpole consistently appealed to Whig principles in his speeches. At the height of the excise crisis, for instance, Walpole professed that he was “not pleading [his] own cause, but the cause of the Whig party,” adding that “it is in Whig principles I have lived, and in Whig principles I will die.”⁸⁹ In the *Dissertation upon Parties* (1733–34), Bolingbroke sought to demonstrate that Walpole and his cronies actually espoused the antiquated Tory doctrine of passive obedience, as they denounced all opposition as treasonous and labeled it Jacobite.⁹⁰ Essays in the *Craftsman* were designed to remind the Court Whigs of the “Country”

⁸⁵ Bolingbroke, *Unpublished Letters*, 5:168; Bolingbroke, *Political Writings*, 208.

⁸⁶ Gerrard, *Patriot Opposition*, 46–67; Gabriel Glickman, “Parliament, the Tories and Frederick, Prince of Wales,” *Parliamentary History* 30, no. 2 (June 2011): 120–41; Oliver J. W. Cox, “Frederick, Prince of Wales, and the First Performance of ‘Rule, Britannia!’,” *Historical Journal* 56, no. 4 (December 2013): 931–54.

⁸⁷ Archibald Foord, *His Majesty’s Opposition, 1714–1830* (Oxford, 1964), 142.

⁸⁸ Quentin Skinner, “Augustan Party Politics and Renaissance Constitutional Thought,” in *Visions of Politics*, 3 vols. (Cambridge, 2002), 2:344–67.

⁸⁹ Hervey, *Memoirs*, 1:182–3.

⁹⁰ Bolingbroke, *Political Writings*, 6, 65, 66. For tactical reasons, Bolingbroke did not mention the high-water mark of Toryism that was the last four years of Queen Anne’s reign, when Bolingbroke led the more extreme faction within the Tories; for the same reasons, he appears to have discouraged Swift from writing his deeply partisan *History of the Last Four Years of the Queen*, first published posthumously in 1758. See Ashley Marshall, *Swift and History: Politics and the English Past* (Cambridge, 2015), 118–56.

and popular roots of Whiggism and thereby, in Skinner's words, "to establish that their behaviour as a government was gravely out of line with the political principles in which they professed to believe."⁹¹ Pulteney, on the other hand, was said to have retained true Whig ideology in the face of the oligarchy. "The Whigs themselves owe to him the honour of having kept up & supported the true Spirit & Credit of their Party," Bolingbroke wrote in the "Character," "whilst so many under that denomination, were prevailed on some how to shew, though to their own dissatisfaction, the utmost passive obedience even to the Ministry." His choice of phrase here was undoubtedly intended to undercut Walpole's support among independently minded Whigs.

If Walpole had failed to uphold the principles of his party, how could he be expected to counsel his sovereign? More than two years earlier, in issue 142 of the *Craftsman*, Bolingbroke had utilized the technique of pointing out "Parallels" in the past as a means to "forewarn all Ages against *evil Counsels* and *corrupt Ministers*."⁹² This method of extracting political advice from historical commentary had been key to the most important historical works of Bolingbroke's formative years and subsequently became an important part of his *Remarks on the History of England*.⁹³ The "Character" was in many ways designed to encourage politicians to join the opposition and hold on to it consistently. And yet Bolingbroke also takes a potshot at the court by suggesting "An Ill or misguided Prince may perceive his errors, and, if he pleases, may amend them." We find similar guidance in *The Idea of Patriot King* (1738), where Bolingbroke instructs his prince to "correct error" and "reform or punish ministers."⁹⁴ Bolingbroke's appeal for "every Sensible, Impartial-Judging man" to "Esteem, Love, & to Admire this great Patriot; and adhere to him in all his future attempts for the Publick Good" brings us to the close of the "Character." Needless to say, from the perspective of Walpole and the ministerial Whigs, this appeal was not impartiality but an expression of partisanship in its purest form.⁹⁵

IV

Although Bolingbroke expressed his dissatisfaction with the opposition in *On the Spirit of Patriotism*, it would be wrong to think that, in exile in France after 1735, he stopped caring for Pulteney. Hearing about his old colleague's near-fatal disease in 1736, he wrote to Wyndham's son, saying that he had "lived in great intimacy with Mr Pulteney of late years, and therefore cannot hear the bad account you

⁹¹ Skinner, "Augustan Party Politics," 366.

⁹² Bolingbroke, *Contributions*, 82–83.

⁹³ On history as counsel, see Paulina Kewes, "History and Its Uses," in *The Uses of History in Early Modern England*, ed. Kewes (San Marino, 2006), 1–30. On Bolingbroke as an historian, see David Womersley, "Lord Bolingbroke and Eighteenth-Century Historiography," *Eighteenth Century* 28, no. 3 (September 1987): 217–34.

⁹⁴ Bolingbroke, *Political Writings*, 261.

⁹⁵ On this theme, see Alexander Pettit, *Illusory Consensus: Bolingbroke and the Polemical Response to Walpole, 1730–1737* (Newark, DE, 1997).

give of his health without much concern.”⁹⁶ As far as evidence related to the protagonists themselves is concerned, Hervey’s assertion that in March 1734 “Mr. Pulteney and Lord Bolingbroke hated one another” makes little sense at that point.⁹⁷ However, Bolingbroke certainly began to feel more dissatisfied with Pulteney toward the end of the decade.⁹⁸ By this time, Pulteney had already been dispirited for some time; he wrote to his fellow opposition Whig George Berkeley in November 1735 to admit that “you may have perceived this resolution arising in me for some years, it is in vain to struggle against universal corruption, and I am quite weary of the opposition.”⁹⁹ Bolingbroke’s disappointment turned into dismay when Pulteney became a courtier after Walpole’s resignation at the start of 1742, accepting a seat in the Lords as the Earl of Bath and abandoning the Tory opposition. Pope made his discontent clear in a letter of December 1742: “I am sick of *this* World & the Great ones of it, tho they have been my intimate Acquaintance.”¹⁰⁰ William King, the principal of St Mary Hall, Oxford, said that

NO INCIDENT in this reign astonished us so much as the conduct of my Lord BATH who chose to receive his honours as the wages of iniquity, which he might have had as the reward of virtue. By his opposition to a mal-administration for near twenty years, he had contracted an universal esteem, and was considered as the chief bulwark and protector of the British *liberties*. By the fall of WALPOLE, he enjoyed for some days a kind of sovereign power. During this interval, it was expected that he would have formed a patriot ministry, and have put the public affairs in such a train as would necessarily, in a very short time, have repaired all the breaches in our constitution. But how were we deceived! He deserted the cause of his country: he betrayed his friends and adherents: he ruined his character; and from a most glorious eminence sunk down to a degree of contempt.¹⁰¹

Even more saddened, however, was Bolingbroke. In November 1742 he penned a short attack on Bath in the form of an epistle. As Adrian Lashmore-Davies has pointed out, a version of this text was published in the *Westminster Journal* in 1747 with author, addressee, and Bath’s name suppressed.¹⁰² In this epistle Bolingbroke sought to shame Bath for apostasy, reminding him of his previous commitment to the opposition and how he had “resolutely continued the Battle” after Bolingbroke had retired.¹⁰³ He attacked Bath for now adhering to measures that he had formerly opposed, most notable septennial parliaments and the maintenance of the standing army. The biggest betrayal for Bolingbroke, however, appears to have

⁹⁶ Bolingbroke to Charles Wyndham, 9 May 1736, in *Unpublished Letters*, 5:163–4. News of Pulteney’s illness also reached Swift in Dublin, who wrote to Pope, “Common reports have made me very uneasy about your neighbour, Mr. Pulteney. It is affirmed that he hath been very near death: I love him for being a Patriot in most corrupted times, and highly esteem his excellent Understanding”: Swift to Pope, 24 April 1736, in Pope, *Correspondence*, 4:12.

⁹⁷ Hervey, *Memoirs*, 1:256.

⁹⁸ Bolingbroke to Wyndham, 23 July 1739, in Coxe, *Memoirs*, 3:522; Pope to Lyttelton, [c. 1 November 1738], in Pope, *Correspondence*, 4:142.

⁹⁹ BL, Add. MS 22628, fol. 73r.

¹⁰⁰ Pope, *Correspondence*, 4:431.

¹⁰¹ William King, *Political and Literary Anecdotes of His Own Times* (London, 1818), 42–43.

¹⁰² Bolingbroke, *Unpublished Letters*, 5:276.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, 5:274–75.

been Bath's abandonment of the Tories (and indeed the Cobhamite opposition Whigs). According to Bolingbroke, one week's conduct had ruined ten years of fame as "Mr Pulteney was on a sudden against a Coalition of Parties which with me he had so often & often approved Prosecuted & determined to obtain, what could I say but in Imitation of Shakespear Frailty thy name is Man."¹⁰⁴ But ultimately, as far as Bolingbroke was concerned, Bath's failure to persist with opposition resulted from defects in his character; he had become "an Hipocritical Senator a False Friend & a Concealed Enemy of his Country."¹⁰⁵ Whereas Pulteney's personal virtue was earlier said in the "Character" to have spurred him to lead the opposition, so now his tergiversation stems from his dishonesty.

Bolingbroke's disappointment in 1742 does not prove that he wrote the "Character" in 1731. What this article has done is present a range of internal and contextual evidence identifying him as a very likely candidate. His attack on Bath in the 1740s, initially suppressed, becomes a great deal more intelligible if we take him as the probable author of a panegyric of the same man ten years earlier. The key argument in the "Character" was a Bolingbrokean one about the importance of steadfast opposition. The essay thus helps to elucidate the extent to which Pulteney may have inspired Bolingbroke's theoretical writings, something historians have underestimated. Indeed, the "Character" amply demonstrates that Bolingbroke appears to have based his theory of opposition to a great degree on Pulteney's conduct, in the same way as his earlier experience of working together with Harley in early 1700s may well have influenced his thoughts on a coalition of parties. When we study a thinker-cum-practitioner like Bolingbroke, political ideas cannot be separated from political action.¹⁰⁶ This is not to say that practice constitutes "reality" to which theory must be related, but simply that separation of the two makes little sense when writing history.

APPENDIX

Textual note: The text printed here is transcribed from Senate House Library, MS 533, fols. 17v–20v. This large-folio volume was originally the account book of John Sheffield, earl of Mulgrave and duke of Buckingham, and contains expenses for the construction of Buckingham House. After Buckingham's death, the duchess continued to use the book as a miscellany containing poems, recipes, and essays. In her will, she left "All her private Papers & those of her Correspondents" including her "Treasonable Correspondence" to Lord Hervey, effectively spurning the opposition.¹⁰⁷ Precisely how this manuscript volume became separated from the Hervey papers deposited in the Suffolk Records Office and ended up in Senate House Library is unclear. The antiquarian bookseller Horace Alexander "Barry" Duncan sold the volume to Goldsmith's College, University of London, in 1961, and from there it was procured for the central University of London library at

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, 5:276.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁶ For a recent exemplar of the approach of combining political and intellectual history, see Richard Bourke, *Empire and Revolution: The Political Life of Edmund Burke* (Princeton, 2015).

¹⁰⁷ Pope, *Correspondence*, 4:446.

Senate House. Duncan specialized in theater history and owned a small bookshop in St Martin's Court just off Charing Cross Road in the west end of London. Unfortunately his ledgers have not been preserved, so we have no way of knowing how or from whom he purchased the manuscript volume.

The transcription below preserves the spelling, punctuation, and capitalization of the original manuscript exactly, except for occasional end-line hyphenation, which has not been preserved. The text was copied out in a large but neat italic hand, probably the work of a professional scribe or secretary. "The Character of Katherine, Duchess of Buckingham" by Pope on the immediately preceding pages is in the same hand, making it likely that the scribe was a member of the duchess's household. The pages that follow "On the Character of a Great Patriot" in MS 533 contain poems transcribed in various hands, dated between 1732 and 1735. One line (in italics below) was recopied in the manuscript over faded ink, probably by the original scribe. Presumably he had run out of ink.

[17v]

There is a Person amongst us of an age in which it might be expected, that he would indulge himself, like the Generality of mankind, in a Life of ease and pleasure: For his great Fortune & other uncommon Advantages, which he possesses in a greater degree than any one in this Country, and might entitle him to pursue & enjoy as entertaining a life a possible, without the least pretence of being wondered at, or objected to even by Enemys.

However this Person thought fit to take a more Noble Turn of Acting: For when he saw his Country sinking to Ruine by all sorts of Mismanagements, he took upon him to oppose whatever practices he thought pernicious to its Interest at home, & its Credit & Honour abroad. [18r]

He did not sluggishly aim, only at a litle opposition just enough to save his own Credit in this Country, but he served it effectually.

He set a vigorous & noble Example for others to imitate. He shew'd an uncommon Intrepidity against all fears of displeasing the greatest Power, in a worthy Cause which he has supported five or six years successively; Spending numerous fatiguing days in Parliament, Maintaining long Debates, the weight of which lay almost wholly upon himself: And Replying to the great & various Malices which were levelled peculiarly at him whom they look'd upon to be the Fountain head, the main Spring from which all that did not please arose. All gave publick admiration willingly or unwillingly.

This Person has not gone on in the usual slow Methods to Fame & Honour, but has shone out all at once upon his Country with various Talents for its Service; Such as are generally dispersed among other men Singly, who by Slow Steps & a Long Experience arrive by degrees to be famous or Useful to their Country. But all these Advantages appear'd at once in him to please, Surprize & serve Great Britain. [18v]

He has with an Uncommon Resolution exerted a noble Spirit which no Violences or Powerfull Ill-will could sink. He was dayly exposed to malicious attacks of all sorts *his reputation by various aspersion besides even attempts upon his Life contriv'd.*

Notwithstanding all this, he persisted to give up his Ease and Time, whenever the business of the Publick was to be done. No Expence of Money was wanting that was necessary to forward any good purposes and great has been the charges he has many ways been put too.

At last by his own Example & Eloquence he brought almost the whole Nation (which was before seemingly, nay effectually sunk into Indolence, Blindness & a Servile Tameness) to move out of the First by degrees; Secondly to open the eyes & Understanding of all who could read & hear; And Thirdly to rowse his Fellow Subjects from the most servile Submission to all the ill practices that were flourishing and successfull to a firm, Open, & Spirited opposition. It was his Example & Eloquence that brought a Grumbling, useless Minority to become a bold, Generous, considerable sett of worthy Assertors of the Interest [19r] of their Country on many occasions, and even when it plainly dashd with their own private advantages.

This is an impartial Relation of a Successfull work, which is all of it owing to this Person noble behaviour. This Account is a Justice one owes to so Universal a Benefactor to Mankind, as such a man must be allowd to be.

Now whoever will make a proper use of Reflection & Observation of the Virtues & Practices of this, truly great man, will plainly perceive that all men of all partys, & of all Ranks, under all views, may find a peculiar advantage to themselves from his proceedings.

An Ill or misguided Prince may perceive his errors, and, if he pleases, may amend them.

A Well-designing Prince may hear and read the way to govern well, and thereby deserve & gain the affection of the People, and learn the just difference between a worthy & an unworthy Counselour.

Great Britain might long ago have seen [19v] how their Trade, their Honour & their Glory were sinking all together.

The Whigs themselves owe to him the honour of having kept up & supported the true Spirit & Credit of their Party, whilst so many under that denomination, were prevaild on some how to shew, though to their own dissatisfaction, the utmost passive obedience even to the Ministry.

The Torys owe to him the having at last drawn them to a Worthy, active part in contradiction to the common Aspersion thrown on them, that they are a numerous but too unactive sett of men to serve either themselves or others effectually.

So even those who have already, or may hereafter come in, like the Labourers in the Gospel, at the last hour, may find their Advantage various ways, with those who have borne the heat & burden of the day.

Now should ever a certain event happen it would appear as if this Persons merits had been appointed some how by Providence as his [20r] Instrument to act upon motives productive in the end of good purposes.

Observations from these plain Facts.

One should naturally conclude from all these plain Facts. That all people, under all views & Denominations, should unanimously concur to Esteem, Love, & to Admire this great Patriot; and adhere to him in all his future attempts for the Publick Good.

Yet it may possibly happen, though I hope it never will, that some of his side may grow envious & Jealous, to say no more, & fall back when he hath brought matters to a certain Crisis; and instead of joining more vigorously, may be prevaild upon to separate, & underhand act like Enemys, by spreading numerous & inconsistent motives for his plain & worthy Actions.

I doubt not but with K— G— he is reputed a Jacobite, and then a private Incendiary with his Son to make difference betwixt them.

With the publick Pretenders to Jacobitism [20v] (whom I deny to be the assertors or assistant of the Cause they drink succes to) he is a Commonwealths-man, Or firmly fixd to the Illustrious House, which he Submitted to, 'tis true, with others, but was not one of them who had the honour of fixing the happy Establishment.

In this manner do Artful, Indolent & Malitious people blast, poison & misrepresent the Motives & purposes of Worthy Actions which 'tis impossible for them to come to the knowledge of; tho without hesitation they dare decide boldly & ignorantly.

But every Sensible, Impartial-Judging man must Conclude within himself, that a man possess'd of an uncommon good Understanding & a known honour & Love to Justice must have a Tendency in his Actions consistent with them all, whosoever they may appear to Ignorant Gazers.