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SIR EDWARD DERING, POPULARITY, AND THE PUBLIC, 1640–1644*

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ABSTRACT. *This article reassesses the political career of Sir Edward Dering (d. 1644), a prominent but extremely controversial MP during the Long Parliament, who has fascinated historians because of the way in which he appears to have ‘defected’ from the cause of political and religious reform, who was eventually expelled from the Commons for publishing his parliamentary speeches, and who briefly flirted with royalism before making a humiliating return to Westminster. It does so by focusing upon his relationship with the public, in terms of how he courted popular support in order to secure election, and how people followed his subsequent parliamentary career, not least through the circulation of scribal and printed texts. It highlights how constituents (and others) responded to such activity, not least by making clear what policies he was expected to promote, thereby revealing that Dering’s career was driven not just by his own political and religious views, but also by ideas about his role as an MP, and about his relationship with his constituents. Dering thus provides a rare opportunity to scrutinize the dynamic relationships between MPs and the public, thereby revealing hitherto neglected evidence about transformations in political culture and ideas regarding representation.*

In an early example of the newspaper obituary, *Mercurius Civicus* marked the death of Sir Edward Dering in June 1644 by describing the former MP as ‘that English Seneca ... a man of known and eminent parts and inferior to few or none in these modern times, for eloquence of writing’. Nevertheless, it also reminded readers that he was ‘subject to error as well as other men’, reflecting an opinion which had become common since 1642.¹ In that year, John Vicars claimed that Dering was ‘a scholar and witty acute rhetorician’, but concluded that he had ‘an ill-affected heart’. Dering, to whom Vicars had dedicated his 1641 pamphlet attacking church images and defending iconoclasm, was now accused of being one of those ‘who at the beginning and for some continuance

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¹ *Mercurius Civicus*, 57 (20–7 June 1644), p. 555. For other notices of Dering’s death, see: British Library (BL), Add. 70887, fo. 8v; Bodleian Library (Bodl.), MS Top.Oxon.C.378, p. 408.

of this parliament was well reputed and reported of, but [who] at last broke out into a most violent and virulent opposition' to the 'pious proceedings of the parliament'.² Another author was more blunt: Dering was an 'apostate'.³ The question of Dering's 'defection', and the need to understand his religious and political beliefs, has proved to be of enduring interest to historians, and it is difficult to do anything other than conclude that the position he supported in 1640–1 was inconsistent with that with which he subsequently associated himself.⁴ This article explores less well scrutinized issues regarding his career, moving away from a fixation with his own beliefs to develop a dynamic understanding of his relationship with his contemporaries. Vicars claimed that Dering betrayed the cause by 'printing and publishing a book of all his former and later speeches in parliament', whilst others also bemoaned such publications on the grounds that they were produced 'to infect the people and fire their minds'. Dering was attacked, in other words, as one of the 'popular speech makers'.⁵

Such comments highlight the possibility of interrogating Dering's political career with questions concerning his attitude towards the public, and regarding his own reputation. 'Popularity' has proved a fruitful way of exploring early Stuart political culture, both in terms of those for whom it was a threat, and those who sought to defend reputations, capitalize upon contemporary fame, and mobilize popular support, as well as manipulate public opinion. It feeds into wider discussions of early modern attitudes about public debate, particularly through the medium of print, regarding the status and obligations of 'public' men, and concerning the relationship between MPs and their constituents.⁶ Faced with only limited documentary evidence, however, it has

² J. Vicars, *The sinfulness and unlawfulness* (1641), sig. A3; J. Vicars, *God in the mount* (1642), p. 84. All pre-1800 works were published in London, unless otherwise stated.

³ *Persecutio undecima* (1648), pp. 17–18.

⁴ D. Hirst, 'The defection of Sir Edward Dering, 1640–1641', *Historical Journal*, 15 (1972), pp. 193–208; S. P. Salt, 'The origins of Sir Edward Dering's attack on the ecclesiastical hierarchy', *Historical Journal*, 30 (1987), pp. 21–52; W. Lamont, *Godly rule* (London, 1969), pp. 87–92; W. Lamont, 'The squire who changed sides', *History Today* (May 1966), pp. 349–55; J. Maltby, 'Approaches to the study of religious conformity in late Elizabethan and early Stuart England' (Ph.D. thesis, Cambridge, 1991), pp. 154–7.

⁵ Vicars, *God in the mount*, p. 84; *Persecutio undecima*, pp. 17–18.

⁶ K. Fincham and P. Lake, 'Popularity, prelacy and puritanism in the 1630s: Joseph Hall explains himself', *English Historical Review*, 111 (1996), pp. 856–81; T. Cogswell, 'The people's love: the duke of Buckingham and popularity', R. Cust, 'Charles I and popularity', and P. Lake, 'Puritans, popularity and petitions: local petitions in national context, Cheshire, 1641', all in T. Cogswell, R. Cust and P. Lake, eds., *Politics, religion and popularity in early modern Britain* (Cambridge, 2002), pp. 211–34, 235–58, 259–89; T. Cogswell and P. Lake, 'Buckingham does the Globe: Henry VIII and the politics of popularity in the 1620s', *Shakespeare Quarterly*, 60 (2009), pp. 253–78; E. Shagan, 'Popularity and the 1549 rebellions revisited', *English Historical Review*, 115 (2000), pp. 121–33; P. Lake, 'The politics of popularity and the public sphere: the monarchical republic of Elizabeth I defends itself', P. Hammer, 'The smiling crocodile: the earl of Essex and late Elizabethan popularity', and R. Cust, 'The "public man" in late Tudor and early Stuart England', all in P. Lake and S. Pincus, eds., *The politics of the public sphere in early*

proved difficult to analyse the dynamic relationship between politicians and their audience in detail. Dering provides a means of achieving precisely this, and what follows examines how he became a 'public' individual, the extent to which he sought public attention and popular approval, and whether he was influenced by public expectations. It also explores ways in which contemporaries were influenced by their perception of his beliefs, and by their knowledge of his political life. Indeed, central to this article is analysis of how Dering's parliamentary performance was reported and publicized, and how people outside Westminster responded to Commons proceedings, and sought to influence MPs. Dering's public life raises important questions, in other words, regarding contemporary attitudes towards popular participation and the responsibilities of politicians, as well as about the role of print in political life.

These issues and ideas have been touched on either inadequately or tangentially by Dering's biographers, despite going to the heart of the relationship between politicians and the public in early modern society.⁷ Dering's 'defection' has certainly been analysed in the context of his being 'exposed to the ... fears and beliefs of men of varying stations in his county', but our appreciation of Dering's public life remains superficial and occasionally misguided because of a crucial misunderstanding regarding the way in which he responded to the expectations of, and lobbying by, his constituents. This article will build upon Derek Hirst's recognition that Dering was a willing instrument of local puritans in the opening months of the Long Parliament, but challenge his claim that Dering changed his attitude towards the public, and that he believed that public opinion ought to be consulted only when it 'accorded with the MP's own predilections'. It will show instead that Dering strove to honour the demands of, and to respond to pressure from, those who had elected him and whose views were closest to his own, even if this sometimes proved to be extremely difficult. It will re-evaluate, in other words, Dering's ideas of representation.⁸ Scholars now recognize that representation has tended to be discussed in terms of the extent to which elections were politicized, the size of the electorate, and changing attitudes towards the franchise, and Mark Knights has reconnected parliamentary politics with 'public politics', and demonstrated that ideas about representation were in a state of flux in the late seventeenth century. Nevertheless, Knights's analysis focuses largely upon *formal* and *collective* expressions of public opinion, in the form of petitions, addresses, and electioneering, rather than on ad hoc interaction on a more personal level.⁹

modern England (Manchester, 2007), pp. 59–94, 95–115, 116–43; R. Cust and P. Lake, 'Sir Richard Grosvenor and the rhetoric of magistracy', *Bulletin of the Institute of Historical Research*, 54 (1981), pp. 40–53; D. Hirst, *The representative of the people?* (Cambridge, 1975), ch. 9.

⁷ Hirst, 'Defection', pp. 194, 201, 207–8; Lamont, *Godly rule*, pp. 87–92.

⁸ Hirst, 'Defection', pp. 197, 199, 200, 201, 207.

⁹ L. F. Brown, 'Ideas of representation from Elizabeth to Charles II', *Journal of Modern History*, 11 (1939), pp. 23–40; Hirst, *Representative*; M. A. Kishlansky, *Parliamentary selection* (Cambridge, 1986); R. Cust, 'Election and selection in Stuart England', *Parliamentary History*, 7 (1988),

This is despite clear hints regarding contemporary reflection upon the desirability of constituents placing demands upon their MPs, and concerning the obligation upon representatives to respond, and that this, in turn, influenced attitudes to the reporting of parliamentary affairs, and to the accountability of individual MPs.¹⁰ What follows brings these issues into sharper focus, suggesting that Dering played a prominent part in re-evaluating representative politics earlier in the century, and highlighting wider ramifications for our understanding of early modern political culture.

I

Dering's early career is fairly well known: client and kinsman of the duke of Buckingham; courtier and MP; and zealous local official, not least as lieutenant of Dover Castle.¹¹ Equally well known is Dering's disillusionment with his superiors at Dover, and with Laudian reforms, as well as his growing interest in historical research and religious controversy.¹² Less widely recognized is Dering's fascination with popular performance and cheap print. An avid consumer of almanacs and political gossip, he was a frequent visitor to London's theatres, purchased playbooks in vast quantities, and was himself an amateur player, with pretensions as a playwright.¹³ Later, he developed an interest in Laudian polemics and godly responses.¹⁴ From his youth, therefore, Dering displayed a taste for popular as well as elite culture. Moreover, hints also emerge regarding a concern with his own standing, and Dering once protested that his 'reputation and integrity' were 'equally precious to me as my life'.¹⁵ At times, this anxiety clearly centred on his standing in a community much wider than the court, and Dering was evidently shocked at the hostility provoked by his presence at a meeting to allocate Ship Money

pp. 344–50; M. Knights, *Representation and misrepresentation in Later Stuart Britain* (Oxford, 2005), pp. 37–8, 41, 51, 65, 67, 111, 131–2.

¹⁰ D. Zaret, *Origins of democratic culture* (Princeton, NJ, 2000), p. 211; E. S. Morgan, *Inventing the people* (London, 1988), pp. 47–51; J. Peacey, *Common politics: print and participation in seventeenth century Britain* (forthcoming).

¹¹ Salt, 'Origins', pp. 22–4; J. Peacey, 'Sir Edward Dering' (draft biography, History of Parliament Trust); *Oxford dictionary of national biography*.

¹² Salt, 'Origins', pp. 24–41; Peacey, 'Dering'.

¹³ Centre for Kentish Studies, Maidstone (CKS), U1107/Z12–13, U350/E4; Bodl. MS Add. C.243, p. 247; T. Lennam, 'Sir Edward Dering's collection of playbooks, 1619–1624', *Shakespeare Quarterly*, 16 (1965), pp. 145–53; G. Blakemore-Evans, *Shakespearean prompt-books of the seventeenth century* (8 vols., Charlottesville, VA, 1960–96), 1, part one, pp. 8–11; W. Shakespeare, *The history of King Henry the Fourth as revised by Sir Edward Dering* (Charlottesville, VA, 1974), p. 4; Folger Shakespeare Library, Washington DC (FSL), x.d.206; J. Q. Adams, 'The author-plot of an early seventeenth century play', *The Library*, 4th series 26 (1945–6), pp. 17–27.

¹⁴ FSL, x.d.488, fos. 5–6v, 7v, 9, 10; BL, Add. 47787, fo. 57; CKS, U1107/O12.

¹⁵ BL, Add. 52798A, fos. 53v–4v. See also: CKS, U350/C2/24; BL, Add. 47789, fo. 20, Add. 47788, fo. 10v, Add. 47788, fo. 41.

assessments.¹⁶ Likewise, part of his frustration at Dover centred on perceived attempts by the lord warden of the Cinque Ports (Theophilus Howard, 2nd earl of Suffolk) 'to defame me and disparage me'.¹⁷ Thus, although Dering claimed in the 1630s that 'the circumference which a statesman must fill is a larger orb than my ambition doth stretch unto', this modesty of ambition belied a keen desire for public approval.¹⁸ Dering's scholarly debates with Catholics reveal a determination to prove his 'steadfast constancy in religion, which by your means . . . hath been traduced', and his first publication explicitly refuted claims regarding his religious beliefs, which 'I heard of at London . . . in Westminster Hall, and in the country'.¹⁹

Although such evidence is limited, it nevertheless provides a valuable foundation for an exploration of Dering's electoral ambitions in 1640, which reaffirmed his concern with reputation and popularity. Again, material regarding the Kent elections is well known, but it has generally been studied to assess the extent of political divisions at local and national levels, rather than to analyse Dering's personal motivation.²⁰ Having initially intended to stand for the short parliament at Dover, Dering entered the county election in late February 1640, after mounting pressure from supporters.²¹ It was this decision that provoked the withdrawal of Sir Henry Vane senior and the contest with Sir Roger Twysden, a key aspect of which was Dering's frantic campaigning. Twysden claimed that his opponent 'did never lie still, but rode up and down soliciting everybody', and Dering not only relied upon leading county figures and powerful friends, but also compiled an elaborate list of likely supporters and opponents. Having been flattered by his friends, in other words, Dering courted public support to a degree rarely seen in early modern elections.²² Moreover, his reputation quickly became a key factor in the contest. Eager to dismiss Dering's credentials as an opponent of the court, Vane apparently 'endeavoured . . . to poison the good opinion' which the county had of him, 'by possessing them how diligent and eager a servant you were for the court', while

¹⁶ BL, Add. 47788, fo. 74r-v. See also: *ibid.*, fos. 72, 73r-v; CKS, U1107/O3-4, U1107/C12; BL, Add. 47789, fo. 50v.

¹⁷ CKS, U350/C2/22, U275/C1/6. See also: CKS, U275/C1/7, U350/C2/27, 42.

¹⁸ FSL, v.b.307, p. 71.

¹⁹ FSL, x.d.488, fos. 11v, 12v; CKS, U350/Z2, U275/Z2, pp. 5, 11; E. Dering, *The four cardinall-vertues of a Carmelite-fryer* (1641). See also: CKS, U350/C2/70, 80, U1107/Z3; FSL, x.d.488, fos. 3-4, 7, 10v, 11r-v.

²⁰ Kishlansky, *Parliamentary selection*, pp. 130-3; Hirst, *Representative*, pp. 116-18, 123; A. Everitt, *The community of Kent and the great rebellion* (Leicester, 1966), pp. 70-1; F. W. Jessup, 'The Kentish election of March 1640', *Archaeologia Cantiana*, 86 (1971), pp. 1-10; Salt, 'Origins', pp. 41-7.

²¹ CKS, U350/C2/72-3; BL, Add. 26785, fo. 1; L. B. Larking, ed., *Proceedings . . . in the county of Kent* (Camden Society, vol. 80, London, 1862), pp. 1-3, 7; Bodl. MS Top.Kent.e.6, pp. 81-2.

²² Larking, ed., *Proceedings*, p. 8; BL, Stowe 743, fos. 140, 142; Bodl. MS Top.Kent.e.6, pp. 1-60; J. Peacey, 'Tactical organisation in a contested election: Sir Edward Dering and the spring election at Kent, 1640', in Chris R. Kyle, ed., *Parliament, politics and elections, 1604-1648* (Camden Fifth Series, vol. 17, Cambridge, 2001), pp. 237-72.

Twysden highlighted allegations regarding Dering's supposed puritanism: that he was 'none of our church', and that he declined to 'go up to the rails to receive the communion'.²³ Dering's own psephological analysis, however, indicated that he was defeated, rather than supported, by the county's godly, and frustration over this failure to mobilize local puritans, together with indignation regarding the manner in which the election had been conducted, helped ensure that he redoubled his efforts in the election for the Long Parliament.²⁴ On this occasion, Dering's voluminous papers reveal more than just the enthusiasm with which he and his friends campaigned.²⁵ They also indicate a vigorous courting of local puritans, including ministers who had suffered under Laudian government, as well as conformist anti-Arminian clerics.²⁶ Letters from Dering's wife, meanwhile, reveal apprehension regarding his fixation with success: 'let not this possess thee too deeply', she advised, 'but let it be indifferent to thee what success soever it shall please God to give'.²⁷ Dering's electioneering during 1640 reveals, therefore, capacity to be flattered by personal acclaim, concern with his reputation, and a willingness to court popular support with something bordering obsessive zeal.

An understanding of the tactics and tenacity of Dering's campaign are vital not merely for appreciating his character, but also for explaining the air of expectation surrounding him following the election.²⁸ By courting the godly community, Dering raised hopes that he would be a useful ally at Westminster, in circles far beyond his own family.²⁹ He travelled to London in the company of one ejected minister, Thomas Wilson, and other Kentish puritans clearly solicited his assistance.³⁰ Writing on the eve of the state opening, William Barret of Ashford drew attention to religious grievances, and hoped 'that God would be pleased to double his spirit upon you, that your faithfulness may appear for God and your country, that so your friends that have engaged their credit for your faithfulness may have just cause to bless God for you, and that those that are not as yet persuaded of your sincerity may be of another mind'.³¹ Likewise, promoters of a local 'root and branch' petition also looked to Dering for support. Richard Robson of Cranbrook asked him 'to exhibit the same on our behalf to the said honourable house', while John Elmeston encouraged him 'to lay low the high tower of our lordly church prelacy, and to set up instead thereof Christ's sweet and amiable regiment'. Elmeston pleaded with Dering: 'let it find your kind acceptance and countenance, as also your best help and furtherance,

²³ BL, Stowe 743, fo. 140, Stowe 184, fos. 10v–11. See also: CKS, U350/C2/53, 77.

²⁴ Bodl. MS Top.Kent.e.6, pp. 83–7, MS Rawl. D.141, p. 4; Larking, ed., *Proceedings*, p. 5.

²⁵ BL, Add. 26785, fos. 3, 5, 7, 9, 13, 15, 17, Stowe 743, fos. 149, 150, 153–8, Stowe 184, fos. 15–16; CKS, U350/C2/83–4.

²⁶ CKS, U275/C1/11, U350/C2/83.

²⁷ CKS, U350/C2/82–3, U275/C1/11.

²⁸ Bodl. MS Rawl. D.141, p. 6.

²⁹ Hirst, 'Defection', p. 199; Hirst, *Representative*, p. 184–5; CKS, U350/C2/90; BL, Stowe 744, fo. 10.

³⁰ BL, Add. 26785, fo. 19; E. Dering, *A collection of speeches* (1642, D1104), p. 10.

³¹ BL, Add. 26785, fo. 21.

to make it appear and speak our humble desires in your honourable ears'.³² In early January 1641, meanwhile, William Finch of Woodchurch clearly assumed that Dering would look favourably upon his complaint against the local minister, Edward Boughen, who was perceived to be 'superstitiously affected' for having implemented Laudian altar policy.³³

II

Having courted puritans in order to secure election, and having been lobbied by them, Dering's perception of the role of a knight of the shire becomes clear from his response to such demands. Dering later affirmed that he arrived at Westminster intent on attacking Laud, not merely because of his own views regarding the archbishop, but also because 'the complaints' from his locality 'were fresh with me'. As one 'entrusted by that county where his diocese is seated', and as 'servitor for the shire', moreover, Dering considered himself to be 'as fit as any to strike that stroke'.³⁴ As such, Dering proved willing to respond to promptings of his constituents and correspondents; to the freeholders of Kent rather than merely the narrow group of local grandees who may ultimately have ensured that the election had been uncontested. His first major speech was made on behalf of Thomas Wilson, and he also promoted a petition from another suspended minister, Richard Culmer, the future Canterbury iconoclast.³⁵ Moreover, in line with the requests made to him, Dering also presented the Kent 'root and branch' petition, and spoke in favour of the London petition against bishops.³⁶ It was as a result of such gestures that Dering was identified as a supporter of reform and named to a raft of committees relating to religious grievances and church reform.³⁷

This sense of dynamic interplay between MP and locality can be developed further through analysis of the large number of petitions extant among Dering's papers. By exploring how these documents came into his possession, it is possible to demonstrate ways in which parliamentary performance could influence public perceptions regarding the beliefs of individual members, and how Dering's activity increased the burden of expectation placed on him by the godly community. Dering's political career and private archive provide a rare opportunity, in other words, to examine contemporary awareness of parliamentary processes and personnel, as well as the relationship between representatives and represented.

³² BL, Add. 26785, fos. 23, 27; CKS, U350/C2/86.

³³ BL, Add. 26785, fo. 82.

³⁴ Dering, *Collection*, pp. 4, 162.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 6–10; *Commons Journal (CJ)*, II, p. 25; W. Notestein, ed., *The Journal of Sir Simonds D'Ewes* (New Haven, CT, 1923), pp. 20n, 531, 537; Bodl. MS Rawl. C.956, fos. 14v, 49; J. Rushworth, ed., *Historical collections* (8 vols., London, 1721), IV, pp. 39–40; *Speeches and passages* (1641), pp. 88–90; BL, Add. 26785, fo. 84.

³⁶ BL, Add. 26785, fos. 23, 27, Stowe 184, fo. 23; Notestein, ed., *D'Ewes*, p. 249; Dering, *Collection*, pp. 17–18, 20–4.

³⁷ Peacey, 'Dering'.

There can be little certainty about the ways in which many of the petitions that Dering preserved came to his hands. Nevertheless, the fact that the vast majority originated in Kent suggests that they were given to him for a particular reason, rather than merely because he was an MP, and it is unlikely that many were thrust into his hands speculatively by members of the public.³⁸ Petitions appear to have reached him, in other words, on the basis of expectation that he would sponsor them in the Commons. Some probably came from family members, while others were passed to him in his capacity as a knight of the shire, to solicit his sponsorship and advice on the petitioning process.³⁹ These can often be identified by their having been addressed to both Dering and Sir John Culpeper, and on these occasions Dering's personal beliefs, and perceptions of them, were probably less significant than his role as one of the county's senior representatives.⁴⁰ On other occasions, this can be deduced from internal evidence. Dering's assistance was solicited, for example, by the Cinque Ports, who sought exemption from 'subsidy' taxation, and who sought assistance from a range of local MPs, whilst other evidence further indicates that Dering was approached as part of a wider lobbying campaign.⁴¹

A more substantial and intriguing portion of the petitions in Dering's papers came into his possession in relation to his committee work, either having been referred to him by the Commons, or else directed to him by members of the public aware of his parliamentary commitments. Most probably, they were connected to the sub-committee of the committee for religion, which Dering had himself proposed establishing to consider cases of oppressed ministers, and to investigate Laudian press policy. This was the committee which Dering subsequently chaired, and which became known as the 'committee regarding printing', or the 'licensing committee'.⁴² Only occasionally do Dering's notes make explicit that the petitions he collected were dealt with by this committee, but many more contained complaints and demands which fitted its remit.⁴³ From January to March 1641, these generally involved complaints regarding the neglected state of particular parishes, bemoaning the lack of a resident cleric, accusing preachers of non-attendance, drunkenness, and disaffection, and challenging powerful rectors and patrons by requesting that ministers' income should be increased. On some occasions, allegations were even more explosive, as charges of non-residency and plurality, as well as 'cursing, swearing and drinking', were combined with claims regarding 'popish' innovations.

³⁸ BL, Stowe 184, fos. 39-40; CKS, U1107/O13.

³⁹ BL, Add. 26785, fo. 66, Stowe 184, fo. 25.

⁴⁰ BL, Add. 26785, fos. 40, 89; Larking, ed., *Proceedings*, pp. 48-9, 121-2, 130-1, 152-4.

⁴¹ East Kent Record Office (RO), Dover, Sa/C1, pp. 68-9; BL, Stowe 744, fo. 2r-v; BL, Add. 26785, fo. 107; Larking, ed., *Proceedings*, pp. 110-11, 162-3.

⁴² Dering, *Collection*, pp. 12-13, 15-16, 42; *Calendar of state papers domestic (CSPD)*, 1640-1641, p. 269; Rushworth, ed., *Historical collections*, III, pp. 1345-6, IV, pp. 55-6; BL, Add. 26786, fos. 1v, 2.

⁴³ Larking, ed., *Proceedings*, pp. 104-6, 106-7, 142-3, 143-4, 144-5.

Dering's committee was clearly inundated, in short, with petitions which alleged both Laudianism and loose living.⁴⁴

Many petitions, in other words, came to Dering merely by virtue of his being involved in the committee for religion, and were preserved by him because of their parochial interest, but other items were directed to him personally. These seem to indicate awareness, not merely that he was a leading member of the committee, but also that he was its chair, and suitors far beyond an immediate circle of friends and family were evidently able to direct papers to his private lodgings.⁴⁵ Moreover, such personal approaches also indicate public awareness of, or perceptions about, Dering's personal views, an expectation regarding his likely reaction, and confidence that he would prove a useful ally. When Richard Culmer wrote to Dering in January 1641, for instance, he claimed that Canterbury's petitioners 'intend to wait upon you with a petition which they have to prefer', adding that 'they moved me to write to you, which I have done to satisfy them, not doubting . . . but you would take their cause into hearty consideration'.⁴⁶ In late March 1641, Robert Darell of Calehill informed Dering that Samuel Kem's parishioners planned to attend the committee regarding scandalous ministers, and sought information regarding 'the certain day and time . . . when some of use are to be there to justify our complaint', and concerning the number of people who ought to attend.⁴⁷ That such expectations of help were well founded is clear from the occasions when Dering sponsored local petitions. In January 1641, Edward Darell commented that Dering was 'the willing instrument the parish of Little Chart is blessed in, to tender their petition against Mr Kem to the select committee for religion'.⁴⁸ Dering may also have presented the February 1641 petition from Boughton Bleau, accusing their minister of being a drunkard, a Laudian, and a critic of both the Scots and parliament. Likewise, in March 1641, the parishioners of Ash, who had petitioned about the suspension of their minister, thanked Dering for his 'loving respect to our petition and readiness to further it'.⁴⁹

Similar themes emerge from Dering's activity in relation to contemporary seditious literature and book licensing. During the spring of 1641, the Commons referred a number of pamphlets to the consideration of Dering's committee, often on his own motion, and this body was able to investigate victims of Laudian censorship, consider scandalous tracts, and license books and pamphlets for publication. Dering was responsible for licensing works by some of the most prominent supporters of godly reform, as well as 'root and branch' change in the church, including William Bridge, Cornelius Burges, Richard Byfield, Thomas Case, Samuel Fairclough, John Gere, John Ley,

⁴⁴ BL, Add. 26785, fos. 78, 87, 218; Larking, ed., *Proceedings*, pp. 113-19, 124-35, 141-2, 145-52, 155-62, 173-8, 180-9, 192-3, 195-8, 201-26, 233-4, 236-40.

⁴⁵ BL, Add. 26785, fo. 84; Larking, ed., *Proceedings*, pp. 143-4, 198-200, 200-1; CKS, U350/C2/89.

⁴⁶ BL, Add. 26785, fo. 84.

⁴⁷ BL, Stowe 184, fo. 33.

⁴⁸ CKS, U350/C2/89.

⁴⁹ Larking, ed., *Proceedings*, pp. 174-5, 193-4.

Henry Parker, John Vicars, and Thomas Wilson, as well as pamphlets by 'Smectymnuus'.⁵⁰ Once again, Dering's activity on such issues became public knowledge, and his papers reveal a number of personal approaches from individuals involved in such cases, such as Richard Carpenter and Robert Codrington, and Richard and Nathaniel Ward.⁵¹ Common to these cases were direct appeals to Dering from beyond his own Kentish constituency, widespread recognition of his status and his private address, and awareness of his reputation as a supporter of the godly. In April 1641, the minister of Cranbrook, Robert Abbot, thus solicited Dering's help on behalf of an unspecified godly bookseller on the grounds that 'God hath given your honour . . . a great deal of honour in the House of Commons.'⁵²

III

Evidence from men such as Abbot indicates that Dering regarded himself as having a responsibility to offer direct representation of the views emanating from their counties, and that constituents could gain a sense of an MP's views, and target them for advice and assistance accordingly. Abbot's letter is interesting, however, not merely as evidence that Dering's assistance was sought on the understanding that he was sympathetic to puritans, but also because it hints at deeper knowledge regarding his parliamentary activity. Abbot highlights public awareness of Dering's parliamentary speeches, and how contemporary interest in parliamentary affairs extended beyond committee appointments. To appreciate the extent to which knowledge of Dering's speeches generated a particular public perception of his views, it is necessary to establish, in more concrete ways, whether, and to what extent, news of his contributions to debate spread beyond the Commons. The existence and circulation of such speeches have received only minimal scholarly attention, even though there is scope for a detailed exploration of the public face of Dering's parliamentary career, and for suggesting that Dering was seeking to influence perceptions of his performance, and courting public fame.⁵³

This is partly a matter of exploring the circulation of Dering's speeches through commercial manuscript 'separates'. The existence and significance of such documents have long been recognized by historians, but they are only now

⁵⁰ *CJ*, II, pp. 136, 139, 148, 148, 190, 190, 198, 206, 212, 221; BL, Harl. 163, fos. 149, 177, 190, 199, 240, Harl. 477, fos. 44, 69, 73, Harl. 479, fos. 53, 66, 86, Add. 26785, fo. 43; Bodl. MS Rawl. D.1099, fos. 98, 155; Stationers' Company, Liber A, fo. 137; M. Jansson, ed., *Proceedings in the opening session of the Long Parliament* (7 vols., Rochester, NY, 2000–7), VI, p. 63. For Dering's licensing, see: *A transcript of the registers of the worshipful company of stationers* (3 vols., London, 1913–14), I, pp. 16, 20, 21, 24–30, 33–4, 36; BL, Stowe 107, fo. 3; Bodl. MS Wood.f.35, fo. 380; Cambridge University Library (CUL), Add. 2609, section 2, p. 568.

⁵¹ BL, Sloane 1467, fo. 38, Stowe 743, fos. 163–4, Stowe 184, fo. 37, 41–2, Add. 26785, fo. 42; Larking, ed., *Proceedings*, pp. 49–51; CKS, U350/Q5; *CSPD, 1640–1641*, pp. 530–1. For his licensing of books by Carpenter and Ward, see: *Transcript of the registers*, I, pp. 20, 36.

⁵² BL, Stowe 184, fo. 35.

⁵³ Salt, 'Origins', p. 49; Hirst, 'Defection', p. 201.

garnering the attention they deserve, and remain to be studied in detail for individual MPs.⁵⁴ The text of Dering's first speech, on behalf of Thomas Wilson, was clearly well known, and evidence from surviving separates and commonplace books indicates that it was considered one of the most important speeches of the period.⁵⁵ It is tempting to suggest that at least some of the parishioners of Ash had read it before writing to Dering in March 1641, given that they appropriated one of his most elegant phrases.⁵⁶ Dering's second major speech was made during a debate in the grand committee for religion on 23 November, containing what became his famous attack upon High Commission and the Laudian *imprimatur*, and this too was circulated fairly widely in manuscript form.⁵⁷ It may have been a copy of this speech that, on 12 December, Richard Skeffington told Dering he had sent to 'my sister Brewerton'.⁵⁸ Almost as widely circulated appears to have been Dering's report

⁵⁴ W. Notestein and F. H. Relf, eds., *Commons debates for 1629* (Minneapolis, MN, 1921), pp. xv–lv; R. Cust, 'News and politics in early seventeenth-century England', *Past and Present*, 112 (1986), pp. 60–90; Hirst, *Representative*, pp. 178, 181, 186. Separates form part of a forthcoming Ph.D. dissertation by Noah Millstone, to whom I am grateful for numerous discussions.

⁵⁵ CKS, U350/C2/86; Historical Manuscripts Commission (HMC), *Cowper* (London, 1888), Part II, p. 263; *CSPD, 1640–1641*, p. 254; HMC, *Tenth report* (London, 1885), Appendix IV, p. 202–4; HMC, *Portland* (London, 1891), Part I, p. 27; HMC, *Fourth report* (London, 1874), p. 370; Bodl. MS Rawl.A.103, fos. 33–5; BL, Add. 22959, fo. 73v, Add. 24863, fo. 22, Add. 26640, fos. 72–5v, Add. 57929, fos. 36v–7; Add. 70081, unbound, Add. 78655, fos. 22–4v, Sloane 1467, fos. 4–5, Harl. 6801, fos. 137–40, Harl. 1327, fo. 33r–v, Harl. 7162, fos. 166–74v, Harl. 813, fo. 8v, Harl. 4931, fo. 94, Lans. 493, fos. 120–3v, Lans. 1232, fos. 84v–5, Stowe 354, fo. 79, RP 3423, unbound; CUL, Add. 39, fos. 57–61, Mm.4.10, fos. 29–30v; National Library of Scotland (NLS), MS 2687, pp. 927–34, Adv.33.1.1, vol. 13, no. 38, Wodrow quarto xxv, fos. gov–2; Beinecke Library, Yale University, Osborn Shelves, b.297, item 19, Osborn shelves b.229, unfol.; FSL, Add. 887, unfol.; Somerset RO, DD/SF/4514/4; Parliamentary Archives (PA), HL/PO/RO/1/72, pp. 65–71; Senate House Library, University of London (SHL), MS 308, fos. 153v–7; Durham University Library, MSP 9 (in reverse), pp. 196–7; Derbyshire RO, D258/10/32/2; Lancashire RO, DDB85/20, fo. 82; Corpus Christi College, Oxford, MS 298, fo. 34; All Souls' College, Oxford, MS 181, fo. 321; University College, Oxford, MS 83, fo. 14; Bodl. MS Clarendon 19, fo. 85, MS Add.C.132, fo. 23; Trinity College Dublin (TCD), MS 867, fo. 240.

⁵⁶ 'It is the common opinion, that ere long, his grace will be past grace': Larking, ed., *Proceedings*, pp. 193–4. For Dering's use of a similar phrase, see: Dering, *Collection*, p. 10.

⁵⁷ For the speech, see: Dering, *Collection*, 12–13, 15–16, 42; Rushworth, ed., *Historical collections*, III, pp. 1345–6, IV, pp. 55–6; *Speeches and passages*, pp. 91–4. For its circulation, see: *CSPD, 1640–1641*, p. 269; BL, Sloane 3317, fos. 3–4, Harl. 6801, fos. 174–5, Harl. 4931, fo. 95, Harl. 1327, fos. 39–40, Harl. 7162, fos. 175–82, Add. 26640, fo. 104r–v, Add. 57929, fos. 52–3, Add. 24863, fo. 29r–v; Add. 34485, fo. 77, Add. 64921, fo. 126, Add. 78655, unfol., Lans. 493, fos. 124–7v, Lans. 1232, fos. 91–2, Stowe 361, fo. 83v; HMC, *Tenth report*, Appendix IV, p. 202; HMC, *Fourth report*, p. 370; NLS, Wodrow quarto xxv, fos. 100v–3v; Beinecke Library, Osborn shelves, b.297, item 20, Osborn shelves b.229, unfol.; CUL, Mm.4.10, fos. 31–3; PA, HL/PO/RO/1/72, pp. 88–93; SHL, MS 308, fos. 171v–5v; Derbyshire RO, D258/10/32/3; Devon RO, 2547M/FH5; Worcestershire RO, 899:192/BA1714, p. 20; Corpus Christi College, Oxford, MS 317, fo. 253; All Souls' College, Oxford, MS 181, fo. 325; University College, Oxford, MS 83, fo. 15; National Archives, Kew (TNA), PRO 30/24/33/9, fo. 35; TCD, MS 867, fo. 255v.

⁵⁸ BL, Stowe 744, fo. 1.

from the committee for religion, which was delivered to the Commons on 23 December.⁵⁹ There appears to have been no manuscript circulation of Dering's purported speech against the new canons (14 December 1640), thus reinforcing suspicions that it was never actually delivered.⁶⁰ What was publicly known, however, was that Dering presented Kent's 'root and branch' petition on 13 January 1641, because separates circulated and also Isaac Bargrave wrote to the dean and chapter of Canterbury about Dering's speech the following day.⁶¹

It is difficult to assess the extent of Dering's own involvement in the circulation of such separates, but much more can be said about his role in their subsequent printing. Like 'separates', printed speeches have attracted significant attention, not least because they appeared so frequently during the early months of the Long Parliament, and because of the controversy that they generated. Once again, however, analysis has been confined to general comments about the phenomenon, rather than lessons to be learned from particular case studies.⁶² Dering's financial accounts, together with surviving items from his library, indicate that he was an assiduous reader of contemporary pamphlet literature, and as such he was acutely aware of the power of print.⁶³ It is possible, therefore, that he instigated the first attempts to publish his speeches, before the middle of March 1641. It may have been then that *The speeches of Sr Edward Deering* appeared, containing his contributions to debate from 10 and 23 November, and the speech regarding the canons, since Dering told his wife that 'you have seen three of my speeches' in a letter written on 18 March.⁶⁴ Contemporary evidence also permits the dating of *Four speeches made by Sr Edward Deering* to this period,

⁵⁹ For the speech: Notestein, ed., *D'Ewes*, p. 182; Dering, *Collection*, pp. 43–8; BL, Add. 26786, fo. 6v. For its circulation: BL, Sloane 1430, fos. 65–8, Harl. 6801, fos. 133–5v, Harl. 4931, fo. 96, Harl. 1327, fo. 48r–v, Harl. 7162, fos. 183–9v, Add. 57929, fo. 58r–v, Add. 78655, unfol., Lans. 493, fos. 128–30v, Lans. 1232, fos. 106–7, Stowe 354, fos. 94v–5, Stowe 361, fo. 85, RP 3423, unbound; HMC, *Tenth report*, Appendix iv, p. 202; *CSPD, 1640–1641*, pp. 294–5; Beinecke, Osborn shelves b.297, item 21; Osborn shelves b.229, unfol.; FSL, Add. 887, unfol.; CUL, Mm.4.10, fos. 58v–9; PA, HL/PO/RO/1/72, pp. 94–8; SHL, MS 308, fos. 176–80; University College, Oxford, MS 83, fo. 16; TCD, MS 867, fo. 266v.

⁶⁰ Dering, *Collection*, pp. 24–42; *Speeches and passages*, pp. 82–96; J. Nalson, ed., *An impartial collection* (2 vols., London, 1682), I, pp. 667–71; Rushworth, ed., *Historical collections*, IV, pp. 100–4; Notestein, ed., *D'Ewes*, p. 149n.

⁶¹ For the speech: *Speeches and passages*, pp. 97–9; Notestein, ed., *D'Ewes*, p. 249; Dering, *Collection*, pp. 17–18, 20–4. For its circulation: BL, Harl. 7162, fos. 190–4v, Lans. 1232, fos. 125v–6; TCD, MS 867, fo. 328; Canterbury Cathedral Library (CCL), DCc/Cant.Let/84; HMC, *Ninth report* (London, 1883), Appendix I, p. 122; W.J. Smith, ed., *Calendar of the Salusbury correspondence, 1553–c. 1700* (Cardiff, 1954), p. 117.

⁶² A. D. T. Cromartie, 'The printing of parliamentary speeches, November 1640–July 1642', *Historical Journal*, 33 (1990), pp. 23–44.

⁶³ FSL, v.b.297, fos. 4–17v.

⁶⁴ E. Dering, *The speeches of Sir Edward Deering* (1641, D1116–7); BL, Add. 26785, fo. 32.

since it was referred to in a letter of 15 March.⁶⁵ If Dering's role in the appearance of these works is uncertain, he gave no hint of resentment, and he certainly approved of the tracts that followed. The first of these, in mid-April, was entitled *Three speeches of Sir Edward Dearing's*, and contained the speeches of 10 and 23 November, as well as his speech at the delivery of the Kent petition. Dering's approval of this tract is evident not merely from the survival of a copy among his papers, but also from his role as its licencer, to John Stafford and Francis Eglesfield (15 April).⁶⁶ Dering also licensed the appearance of another work, containing two speeches, in late May 1641, once again authorizing Stafford and Eglesfield to publish his attack on the canons, with an undelivered speech regarding the power of bishops in secular affairs.⁶⁷ Dering's involvement in the appearance of this tract thus contradicts his later claim that the second of these speeches had gone forth 'without my appointment'. It is also important for contextualizing an episode in early May 1641, when he, like other MPs, complained about publication of his speeches. At Dering's insistence, the licensing committee was ordered to investigate their appearance on 8 May, but it seems likely that he was merely complaining about their unauthorized appearance, rather than their publication per se.⁶⁸ Indeed, he may have welcomed the reappearance of his four speeches in the substantial collection of *Speeches and passages* published by William Cooke in June 1641.⁶⁹

Dering's speeches were sufficiently popular, therefore, to attract the attention of entrepreneurial publishers, and this popularity and marketability combined to prompt Dering himself to contravene parliamentary traditions by encouraging the production of short, affordable editions. In the light of evidence regarding his willingness to court popular support, and to act as a servant of his constituents, this indicates a developing awareness of the role of print in representative politics. Dering certainly understood that the medium offered a means of publicly associating himself with 'further reformation', and

⁶⁵ E. Dering, *Four speeches made by Sr Edward Deering* (1641, D1111–D1111a); BL, Stowe 184, fos. 27v–8. A copy was purchased by Sir Simonds D'Ewes in the last week of April, for 2d; BL, Harl. 7660, fo. 29.

⁶⁶ E. Dering, *Three speeches of Sir Edward Dearing's* (1641, D11118); CKS, U275/Z3; *Transcript of the registers*, I, p. 20; Hirst, 'Defection', p. 201.

⁶⁷ *Transcript of the registers*, I, p. 24. Two versions of this work survive. One was printed for Eglesfield, entitled *A consideration and resolution*, and another by Thomas Paine for John Stafford, entitled *A consideration upon the late canons*: E. Dering, *A consideration and resolution* (1641, D1106); E. D[ering], *A consideration upon the late canons* (1641, D1107). A third version, printed by Paine for Stafford and Eglesfield, purported to contain both of these speeches as well as the speeches of 10 November, 23 November, and at the delivery of the Kent petition, although the only known copy contains merely the speech against the canons: E. Deering, *A consideration and a resolution* (1641, D1107a). The title page claimed that earlier versions of these three speeches had been 'printed by an imperfect copy'.

⁶⁸ Dering, *Collection*, pp. 48–9, 49–61; *CJ*, II, p. 139.

⁶⁹ *Speeches and passages*, sigs. M4v–O2.

sponsorship of such tracts reveals a desire to court popular approval, and may even indicate recognition of the accountability of MPs.

IV

To appreciate the extent to which Dering became a figure of contemporary repute, whose parliamentary career provoked a response from his audience, and encouraged the godly to regard him as an ally, it is necessary to do more than notice the availability of his speeches and to record their circulation. It is also vital to assess the response that they elicited. Attention to reception is something more often recommended than undertaken, but it can be achieved on this occasion with the assistance of Dering's voluminous private papers, which yield valuable insights into the way in which at least some people responded to his speeches, and wrote to him about them. Such correspondence ensures that the claim made by one of Dering's critics – that his speeches met with 'great applause' – can be subjected to scrutiny.⁷⁰ What emerges is that, unlike earlier in the century, the texts of MPs' speeches could be circulated within days of their delivery, and that they could receive feedback upon their performance almost immediately. It is possible, in short, that by 1640, even before the arrival of newsbooks, there was a novel immediacy to the circulation of news, and greater potential for individuals to gather their own information, rather than be reliant upon county-wide information networks.

That news of Dering's activity provoked an immediate reaction is clear. In a letter dated 23 November, Richard Skeffington wrote that 'your action there sounds your praise to all eternity . . . your praise sounds in all corners of the land', and he encouraged Dering to 'lay aside all your own affairs, and not break up until businesses be thoroughly settled'. Skeffington wrote again on 12 December, to tell Dering about the circulation of, and response to, his speeches: 'if you did but hear how much good people are joyed with your proceedings'.⁷¹ More interesting, and more specific to Dering, is a letter from John Elmeston, dated 1 December, which observed 'the common rejoicing of all well affected people hereabouts for your worthy speaking and doing in this present parliament, and our good and hearty wishes for your encouragement to continue and go on therein'. Elmeston and his fellow parishioners were evidently 'much affected with the report and view of your first speech . . . to see your zeal for God's matters in the first place to be handled, and your constant resolution in that way, whatsoever dangers or necessities of the commonwealth's affairs might seem to call away to another course'. But they had also seen Dering's second speech, and wrote of how much 'our affection was advanced upon the tidings and sight of your latter speech, full of the like zeal, sound judgement and courage against the two prime adversaries of this our church's and kingdom's peace'. The impact of these speeches was clear: 'you have won

⁷⁰ *Persecutio undecima*, pp. 17–18.

⁷¹ BL, Stowe 184, fo. 19, Stowe 744, fo. 1.

much honour in our hearts and in the hearts of all that wish well to Zion, nor do or shall you want your due praise, as oft as occasion is or shall be to make mention of your name'. Like Skeffington, Elmeston's purpose was not merely to praise Dering's speeches, but also to encourage further good works.⁷²

Not everyone in Kent supported Dering, and according to Edward Kempe of Tenterden, 'some small divines' at Canterbury Cathedral mused that Dering was 'dangerously sick in mind (in plain terms mad) otherwise you would never have uttered such things as you have done in parliament'. Writing to Dering at his London lodgings on 15 December, however, Kempe explained that 'I need not send to London to satisfy myself, for that the country hath lately been satisfied tis otherwise.' Kempe further testified to the circulation of Dering's speeches, and also added words of encouragement: 'I beseech God bless your labours, and give good success to it, tis the prayers, I hope, of all good men. In this town, now, tis not Sir Ed[ward] Boy[s] but Sir Ed[ward] Dering that God hath sent from heaven.'⁷³ Other letters, meanwhile, revealed knowledge of, and a willingness to respond to, more than merely Dering's set-piece speeches, and George Hawle noted that 'the city of London took it something unkindly that they had not your furtherance to their petition in the house of parliament' (4 January 1641).⁷⁴

As already indicated, and as Hirst recognized, such lobbying probably helped convince Dering to present the Kent 'root and branch' petition, and to defend the London petition, and at least some of those who sought Dering's support for such measures did so because they had seen concrete evidence of his parliamentary performance.⁷⁵ Indeed, it is likely that news of Dering's promotion of the Kent petition explains why he continued to receive encouragement from within the Kentish community. On 16 January, a minister from Thanet, John Bankes, sent Dering a lengthy account of the ways in which 'the honour of God is daily and desperately wounded throughout the whole kingdom', through idolatry and the 'odious foul sins' of 'drunkenness, swearing and whoredom'. He was moved to put Dering 'in remembrance of these things' not merely by godly zeal, or by the fact that 'the cause of God' was 'now in hand', but specifically because Dering had 'already spoken freely in that House, for the maintenance of the cause of God'.⁷⁶ Further encouragement came in early February from Thomas Wilson, who expressed thanks that 'you were called of God and raised up by him at this day, to put your hand . . . to the present work', and who wondered 'how can our hearts be but towards you, who offered yourself so willingly and have done so worthily for the House of the Lord?' Wilson encouraged Dering to 'let the zeal of God's glory and his house eat you up, let your spirit be stirred within you, while you see the manner of God's worship so marred with superstitions'. Subsequently, Wilson dedicated the

⁷² CKS, U350/C2/86.

⁷³ BL, Add. 26785, fo. 25.

⁷⁴ BL, Stowe 184, fo. 23.

⁷⁵ BL, Add. 26785, fos. 23, 27, Stowe 184, fo. 23; Notestein, ed., *DEwes*, p. 249; Dering, *Collection*, pp. 17–18, 20–4; Hirst, 'Defection', p. 200.

⁷⁶ CKS, U350/C2/88.

printed version of his parliamentary sermon to Dering, recommending renewed 'zeal', and reflecting upon his record by claiming that Dering's 'abilities, in conjunction with zeal, graced with magnanimity and modesty, render you amiable to all that know you and honourable in the minds that hear of you'. He added that 'your forwardness for the good of the church ... hath been my comfort, [and] hath warmed many a heart'.⁷⁷

Thus far, Dering's correspondents had only responded to speeches that circulated in manuscript form but, by the spring of 1641, Robert Abbot had almost certainly read the printed versions. Writing on 15 March, he announced that 'we are happy in our choice', and by adding that Dering's 'noble service' had only slowly been recognized once his speeches achieved wider circulation, he was probably referring to the recent appearance of *Four speeches*. Upon reading Dering's speeches, Abbot claimed, local people began to describe him and his allies as 'good patriots of the church and commonwealth'.⁷⁸ More than previously, Dering's speeches were now being circulated widely, published repeatedly, and consumed avidly, and at least some of those who read them engaged with them and their author, not least in order to encourage Dering to further good works. Such reporting ensured that he became a figure of significant public standing, and this popularity is evident most obviously from Dering's experience during the tumults surrounding the earl of Strafford's trial in May 1641. Writing to his wife, Dering claimed that 'we did appease and send away the citizens, and they did regard my advice as much, perhaps more, than any of the rest ... many took me by the hand whom I knew not, many said ... there goes Sir Edward Dering, that is Sir Edward Dering, and god bless your worship'.⁷⁹ If true, this comment indicates that Dering's reputation as a reformer extended to London's crowds, and that he relished such popular applause.

V

There is, however, much more to the dynamic nature of the relationship between Dering and his constituents than expressions of public approval for his parliamentary performance and his enjoyment of popular notoriety. By exploring Dering's reaction to his audience in greater detail over the following months, it is possible to show how this renown became a burden from which he sought to extricate himself, but to do so by demonstrating that his 'defection' represented an ongoing sense of his desire to consider the public response to his speeches, rather than a willingness to ignore the views of his constituents in favour of his own 'predilections'. Dering's 'defection' had less to do with him

⁷⁷ BL, Add. 26785, fo. 28; T. Wilson, *Davids zeale for Zion* (1641), sigs. A3, A3v, A4.

⁷⁸ BL, Stowe 184, fo. 27. For copies of Dering's speeches within the library of Henry Oxinden, see: CCL, Elham 417* (45-7). I am grateful to Sheila Hingley for these references.

⁷⁹ BL, Add. 26785, fo. 38.

abandoning his former supporters than with his determination to clarify the ground on which he and they stood, and to do so by means of ongoing dialogue.⁸⁰

The first indication of Dering's dissatisfaction with reformers at Westminster involved reservations about Strafford's guilt, but more important were doubts about the direction of church reform.⁸¹ Although he was responsible for introducing the bill for the abolition of episcopacy on 27 May 1641, Dering declined to publish his speech, and his growing reluctance to support reform is also evident from subsequent speeches on the issue, as the policy of the 'fiery spirits' became notably more aggressive.⁸² On 21 June, at a committee of the whole House, Dering questioned what would replace the current church hierarchy, and declared his preference for abolition of 'domineering prelacy', in favour of 'pure primitive episcopal presidency'.⁸³ On 17 July, he expressed concern that the proposed legislation was 'a growing bill', and he drafted, but did not deliver, another substantial speech to the same effect, whilst also beginning to attack the twin evils of Independency and Presbyterianism, something which became a familiar thread running through later speeches.⁸⁴ Dering's disillusionment appears to have prompted a withdrawal from the Commons between 3 August 1641 and the end of the 'recess', prompting rumours that he had been expelled from the House, and even imprisoned in the Tower of London. On his return to the Commons in late October, moreover, Dering emerged as a powerful conservative figure.⁸⁵ He became embroiled in a row over parliament's orders of 8 September—regarding the removal of 'popish' innovations—which revealed his hostility not merely to radical reform, but also to enhanced parliamentary power.⁸⁶ He may also have delivered another speech, on 22 October, in which he denied that ministerial meddling in secular affairs was 'inconsistent with their function' and, on the following day, he certainly proposed the creation of 'a free, learned, grave, religious synod' to discuss church settlement.⁸⁷

⁸⁰ Hirst, 'Defection', p. 201.

⁸¹ BL, Add. 26785, fo. 36.

⁸² For Dering's speech, see: BL, Harl. 477, fo. 105, Harl. 163, fo. 237; M. Jansson, ed., *Two diaries of the Long Parliament* (Gloucester, 1984), p. 119; Bodl. MS Rawl.D.1099, fo. 17b; Dering, *Collection*, pp. 63–5. This speech was known outside Westminster: BL, Sloane 1467, fo. 70. For signs of growing moderation, see: Peacey, 'Dering'.

⁸³ Dering, *Collection*, pp. 66–7, 68, 74, 76; Rushworth, ed., *Historical collections*, iv, pp. 293–6; Bodl. MS Rawl.D.1099, fo. 79b. See: Maltby, 'Approaches', p. 158.

⁸⁴ BL, Harl. 479, fo. 72; Dering, *Collection*, pp. 98, 99, 106, 120–53, 141–2.

⁸⁵ BL, Harl. 479, fo. 117; Dering, *Collection*, p. 78; CKS, U350/C2/94–5.

⁸⁶ BL, Add. 26785, fo. 47; W. H. Coates, ed., *The Journal of Sir Simonds D'Ewes* (New Haven, CT, 1942), pp. 19–20; M. Aston, 'Puritans and iconoclasm, 1560–1660', in C. Durston and J. Eales, eds., *The culture of puritanism, 1560–1700* (Basingstoke, 1996), p. 115.

⁸⁷ Dering, *Collection*, pp. 89, 90, 93, 94; Coates, ed., *D'Ewes*, p. 30; Rushworth, ed., *Historical collections*, iv, p. 394. See: Maltby, 'Approaches', p. 159n. Dering may also have backed, or been involved in organizing, a Kent petition calling for such a synod: BL, Add. 26785, fo. 49, Stowe 744, fo. 13; Maltby, 'Approaches', pp. 159–60.

Subsequently, Dering also emerged as a leading critic of the 'grand remonstrance', a role recognized by at least some contemporary observers.⁸⁸ His opposition stemmed from what he regarded as an unwarranted attack on the established liturgy and a generalized hostility towards the bishops, but it also reflected his views regarding the relationship between parliament and the people.⁸⁹ On 21 October, Dering claimed that the public 'sent us hither as their trustees, to make and unmake laws', but he insisted that 'they did not send us hither to rule and govern them by arbitrary, revocable and disputable orders, especially in religion'. Of the remonstrance, he famously asked: 'wherefore is this descension from a parliament to a people?', and he claimed that, while the public 'do humbly and heartily thank you for many good laws and statutes already enacted, and pray for more . . . They do not expect to hear any other stories of what you have done, much less promises of what you will do'. In perhaps the most famous single objection to the remonstrance, Dering said 'I did not dream that we should remonstrate downward, tell stories to the people, and talk of the king as of a third person.'⁹⁰ The import of this speech has not always been correctly understood. For Dering, MPs were trustees of, and ought to be responsive to, their constituents, but they exceeded their authority by endeavouring to set the political agenda and by promoting measures which lacked popular support. Contrary to the views of Derek Hirst, therefore, opposition to the remonstrance does not imply an abandonment of views regarding the legitimacy of constituents placing pressure on their MPs. Indeed, Dering consistently regarded MPs as public servants, rather than as political masters.⁹¹

In the light of such comments, it is particularly important to reconsider Dering's 'defection' from the reformers, to suggest that it was provoked by a concern that he was regarded, both inside parliament and without, as a supporter of radical reform, as well as by pressure from his constituents to show restraint and to undermine radical sectaries. As early as March 1641, correspondents in Kent such as Abbot sought to convince Dering that proposed reforms were unlikely to satisfy religious extremists, that the latter were close followers of Dering's career, that 'Brownists' were inclined to petition against him, and that 'there are some things which they . . . have catcht at in your worship's fourth speech'. In the first week of July, Abbot relayed reports that Dering, having 'fought in the front, wheelles about', and he also noted the vehement hostility towards the prayer book, warned Dering of the perils 'by rigour either for or against' bishops, and he asked that 'speedy motion be made

⁸⁸ Coates, ed., *D'Ewes*, pp. 117, 219–20; *CJ*, II, pp. 322, 327, 328; Dering, *Collection*, p. 107; BL, Add. 64922, fo. 65.

⁸⁹ Dering, *Collection*, pp. 95, 97, 105, 110, 111–12; Coates, ed., *D'Ewes*, pp. 151–2, 181n, 183n; *CJ*, II, pp. 317; J. Bruce, ed., *Verney papers* (Camden Society, vol. 31, London, 1845), p. 122; Rushworth, ed., *Historical collections*, IV, pp. 425–8; Nalson, ed., *Impartial collection*, II, pp. 668–74.

⁹⁰ Dering, *Collection*, pp. 79, 108–9.

⁹¹ Hirst, 'Defection', p. 201; Hirst, *Representative*, p. 185.

... against this disorder'.⁹² Dering may also have been influenced by a petition from John Reading in defence of tithes, which he subsequently mentioned in his speech on 23 October, among the 'many mournful sad complaints I have of late received'.⁹³ Dering also received at least three copies of the October 1641 Kent petition, in response to plans for the abolition of episcopacy and abrogation of the prayer book, which demanded 'a severe reformation, not an absolute innovation', and which called for 'a free national synod'.⁹⁴ Dering's subsequent speeches were clearly in line with these demands from his constituents.

In January 1642, moreover, Dering received a lengthy letter from Augustine Skykker, a rising star of Kentish parliamentarianism, which probably reinforced fears that his views had been misinterpreted. Skykker claimed that Dering had once been 'our county's delight', that 'in the infancy of this ... blessed parliament you gave us all cause to praise God for you, who put it into your heart to ... give the first assault ... on the Goliath of hierarchical episcopacy', and that his parliamentary activity had 'cast the prayers and eyes of all God's people ... upon you above all others'. Nevertheless, Skykker felt that there was much still to be done. While he claimed to be a supporter of moderated episcopacy and 'no separatist', and while he applauded Dering's 'pious and seasonable motion for a national synod', he nevertheless feared 'a recidination'. Thus, while professing that 'our eyes and hopes are still upon you', Skykker encouraged Dering to deliver 'our enlargement and deliverance from the epidemical disease of our nation and county, the licentious and careless clergy'.⁹⁵

Dering's 'defection' in the second half of 1641 was a reaction, therefore, to pressures which he considered to be a natural and desirable part of his role as an MP, as well as those resulting from the public's interest in, and ability to follow, parliamentary business, and from his attempt to court popular reputation. Dering's sense that the public perception of his views was mistaken, and that those whom he considered to be his supporters wanted to moderate proposals from the reforming zealots both at Westminster and in their locality, combined to push Dering towards confrontation with the 'fiery spirits'.

VI

The debates over the 'grand remonstrance' confirmed Dering's status as a leading MP, provoked rumours that he would be punished for his speeches, and prompted his withdrawal from parliament in December 1641.⁹⁶ What can also be detected during these tumultuous weeks, however, was Dering's heightened

⁹² BL, Stowe 184, fos. 27-8, 43, 47r-v; Hirst, 'Defection', p. 202.

⁹³ BL, Add. 26785, fo. 52; Dering, *Collection*, p. 93.

⁹⁴ BL, Add. 26785, fos. 53, 55, 56.

⁹⁵ BL, Stowe 744, fos. 13r-v.

⁹⁶ *CSPD, 1641-1643*, p. 188; *CJ*, II, p. 349; BL, Add. 26785, fos. 59-60.

concern regarding his public reputation. In his planned speech against the abolition of episcopacy the previous summer, Dering had asked that his opposition could be 'posted up from Westminster to the Tower, and from Dover to Berwick', and it was this desire to account for his actions, and to make a public declaration of his views, which underpinned the decision to publish a collection of his parliamentary speeches in January 1642.⁹⁷ The rhetoric with which these parliamentary discourses were surrounded yet further illuminates Dering's concern with both his audience and his reputation.

Dering's decision to publish his speeches was almost certainly a response to their unauthorized publication, in the form of illicit editions of his defence of the liturgy and his call for a national synod.⁹⁸ On 24 January 1642, he wrote that this speech 'crept out from his fellows by stealth', and he promptly returned to the Commons to complain about its appearance.⁹⁹ Dering was also struck, however, by the popularity of this edition, telling his wife that 'above 45 hundred' copies had been sold, that there were 'more in printing', and that 'never anything sold like that', and also informing her about its favourable reception at court.¹⁰⁰ Thus, although Dering repeated his complaint to the Commons on 29 January, his concern was once again with the unauthorized appearance of his words, rather than their publication. Indeed, at the moment these tracts were going through the press, Dering was planning his own edition, and he once again used his power to license their publication on 27 January.¹⁰¹

If Dering wanted to capitalize on the popularity of his speeches, and on his sense that he was in tune with a public mood of moderation on church reform, then he also sought to clear his name. For although he professed that he had 'no need to apologise', he nevertheless sought to correct misapprehensions regarding his views.¹⁰² In essence, Dering denied ideas that he had ever supported 'root and branch' as it had come to be understood, as well as allegations that his conscience was 'not so good as in the beginning of the parliament'. After printing his speeches of 10 and 23 November, Dering asked: 'what is here for root and branch?' Presenting his speech in support of the Kent petition, Dering claimed that he reduced the latter 'to less than a quarter of its former length, and taught it a new and more modest language'. Defending his speech against the canons, Dering asserted 'I might easily have pressed the

⁹⁷ Dering, *Collection*, p. 153. See: Cromartie, 'Printing', p. 37.

⁹⁸ Three editions of this survive: E. Dering, *A most worthy speech* (1641?, D1112-14). See: CCL, Elham 417*(46), Elham 420*(30).

⁹⁹ KKS, U350/C2/96; W. H. Coates, A. S. Young, and V. Snow, eds., *Private journals of the Long Parliament* (3 vols., New Haven, CT, 1982-92), I, pp. 120, 125; *CJ*, II, p. 387; *Diuall Occurrences*, 6 (7-14 Feb. 1642), sig. A3.

¹⁰⁰ CKS, U350/C2/96-7. See: D. Gardiner, ed., *The Oxinden letters, 1607-1642* (London, 1933), p. 270.

¹⁰¹ Coates, Young, and Snow, eds., *Private journals*, I, pp. 216, 220, 261; CKS, U350/C2/96; *Transcript of the registers*, I, p. 39; Dering, *Collection*.

¹⁰² Dering, *Collection*, sig. A3. He told his wife that he was 'almost tired out with swimming against the stream': CKS, U350/C2/96.

abolition of the founders and of the whole order of prelacy ... yet nothing of root and branch therein.' Dering likewise justified printing his undelivered speech against the clergy exercising secular power, on the grounds that it demonstrated the moderation of his position, and revealed that 'so far am I from the rooters'.¹⁰³ Dering then explained his sponsorship of the bill against episcopacy by asserting that it was 'pressed into my hand' by Sir Arthur Hesilrige, at the instigation of Sir Henry Vane and Oliver Cromwell, and that 'the bill did hardly stay in my hand so long as to make a hasty perusal'.¹⁰⁴ Dering also claimed that he presented the bill with 'fain recommendations', and that it had been much more moderate than it subsequently became. The aim, in other words, was to show that the moderation of his more recent speeches had been evident all along.¹⁰⁵

Dering's concern to manage his popular reputation also explains the attempt to claim credit for, and exert control over, his oeuvre.¹⁰⁶ By publishing his scheme of 'church government reduced into a few heads', for example, Dering was able to defend his credentials as a supporter of limited episcopacy, while also claiming credit for a document which had been thrice printed 'without my knowledge or consent' and without attribution.¹⁰⁷ Likewise, Dering justified printing the text of his planned speech against the clergy exercising secular power on the grounds that it had 'gone forth without my appointment, into print', and he printed the speech defending the liturgy by claiming that a copy had 'issued lately forth ... unknown to me'.¹⁰⁸ At other moments, however, Dering was explicitly responding to critics who regarded him as a turncoat. Discussing his sponsorship of the bill against episcopacy, therefore, he noted that this had brought about 'the obloquy I suffer', while in justifying the publication of his speech of 21 June 1641 he claimed that 'many have importuned me for copies', and that 'this was the first which was distasted abroad'. In addition, Dering responded to overt criticism of his speech on 20 November, which he claimed had been 'entertained abroad' with 'exception' as well as 'applause', perhaps referring to the concern of people like Abbot that

¹⁰³ Dering, *Collection*, pp. 2, 11, 16, 17, 24, 48–9, 61–2, 162.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 62–3. See: E. Hyde, earl of Clarendon, *The history of the rebellion*, ed. W. D. Macray (6 vols., Oxford, 1888), I, p. 314.

¹⁰⁵ Dering, *Collection*, pp. 3–4, 5, 65, 81, 88, 107, 119, 120.

¹⁰⁶ It is interesting that Dering neglected to publish two of his speeches. One, a report regarding Henry Burton's *Protestation protested*, survives in Dering's own hand: BL, Stowe 354, fos. 111–12. A second was prepared during the recess, but was unable to be delivered before his removal from the Commons: Lambeth Palace Library, MS 943, pp. 735–7. Pym claimed that Dering neglected to deliver the report into Burton's pamphlet: Beinecke Library, Osborn files 12398.

¹⁰⁷ Dering, *Collection*, pp. 155–61. *The order and forme for church government* (1641), pp. 1–4; *Master Grimstons argument concerning bishops* (1641), pp. 2–5; *Sixteene propositions in parliament* (1642), pp. 1–4. The first of these had been referred to Dering's committee on 23 July, although it is not known whether Dering sponsored its appearance: Jansson, ed., *Proceedings*, vi, p. 63.

¹⁰⁸ Dering, *Collection*, pp. 48–9, 96.

Dering needed to elucidate further his plan for a national synod.¹⁰⁹ More importantly, however, Dering responded to a personal letter from ‘T.R.’, dated 21 January 1642, which subsequently became a very public printed attack, and which was based upon ‘perusal of your last speech in parliament’, albeit in an unauthorized and inaccurate edition. The author clearly considered Dering to be renegade, and told him that he was duty-bound to pursue a particular political course by the ‘trust reposed in you by God and your country . . . to contribute your best abilities to make up the hedge in the thorough reformation of the church and kingdom.’¹¹⁰

Dering’s attempt to portray his own attitudes towards the church as having been consistent since November 1640, and to suggest that others had merely become more radical, was not entirely credible, given his parliamentary record and his licensing activity. That Dering should nevertheless have sought to do just this in January 1642 reflects less a perverted psychology than a concern that his motives and ambitions had been misinterpreted, and a sense of responsibility to his public. The collected edition of Dering’s speeches makes much more sense as part of an ongoing conversation with his constituents than as an intellectual autobiography. A concern with his public image, in other words, helps to explain why Dering suggested that his views had been misapprehended, and a sense of obligation to his constituents renders comprehensible the attempt to claim credit for the things he had done. This was not a straightforward task, but what made these goals particularly problematic was that Dering had himself ensured that his reputation now extended far beyond the borders of Kent. The response to Dering no longer came only from his own constituents, and no longer simply took the form of private letters, and Dering thus felt compelled to address his comments to this national audience, and to explain himself in the public domain. To the extent that Dering was a political figure of national importance, however, it was no longer clear precisely what relationship he had with his Kentish constituents. Dering’s career thus appears to expose the paradoxical nature of the representative role which he sought to assume. Print clearly facilitated his service as an MP, by making it easier to ensure that constituents were aware of his activity, aims and objectives, but at the same time it turned him into a political partisan on a national stage.

VII

The final phase of Dering’s life, from publication of his speeches in January 1642 to his death in June 1644, reveals the consequences of Dering’s flirtation

¹⁰⁹ Ibid., *Collection*, pp. 62, 65, 96, 161–2; Coates, Young, and Snow, eds., *Private journals*, 1, p. 253; BL, Add. 26785, fo. 49.

¹¹⁰ BL, Add. 26785, fo. 63; Larking, ed., *Proceedings*, pp. 70–3. See: Hirst, ‘Defection’, pp. 206–7. This letter was published as: *A message of peace* (1642). See: Dering, *Collection*, p. 102.

with print, his concern with his reputation, and his popularity on a national stage. Having chosen to become a figure of national rather than merely local importance, Dering discovered he could be held to account at a national level rather than merely by his constituents, and that this process could be both humiliating and very visible. By January 1642, therefore, Dering had cause to be more concerned by enemies at Westminster than by constituents in Kent. He recognized that 'such of the prelatial party as are in love with present pomp and power will be averse unto me, because I pare so deep', while 'the rooters ... declaim against me because I will not take all away'.¹¹¹ He must also have anticipated the likely response from parliament. When the Commons questioned Dering about his book of speeches on 2 February, he was forced to make a humiliating apology, before witnessing the reformers' wrath. Their speeches reveal that Dering's book was deemed scandalous not merely for 'discovering the secrets of the House', but also because it contained speeches 'pretended' and 'intended' to have been spoken. As such, it was considered 'vainglorious'.¹¹² Dering was duly expelled from the House and imprisoned in the Tower, and his book was ordered to be burnt by the hangman.¹¹³

Such adverse attention nevertheless had its advantages, and Dering's punishment merely increased his fame and enhanced his power. Sir Simonds D'Ewes worried that the sentence 'might make the book to be enquired after by many who would else never hear of it', that its price would rise from 14*d* to 14*s*, and that this would encourage a new edition.¹¹⁴ Indeed, news of Dering's censure circulated rapidly and widely, in both manuscript and print, and his fate became a topic of nationwide conversation, and the resulting demand for his book duly inflated its price as predicted.¹¹⁵ Moreover, Dering capitalized on his notoriety by courting popular support during his journey to the Tower. Rather than travelling by private coach, removed from public gaze, he instead 'went up and down the streets and the Exchange in London, with hundreds of boys and girls at his heels to see him'. Parliament even feared that Dering would become the focal point for dissent and unrest, as rumours circulated regarding planned protests by his supporters. When some 4,000 Kentish men arrived in London to lobby parliament, it was 'imagined they came on behalf of

¹¹¹ Dering, *Collection*, p. 161.

¹¹² *CJ*, II, pp. 409, 411; Coates, Young, and Snow, eds., *Private journals*, I, pp. 253, 255, 257; 261–5; Bruce, ed., *Verney papers*, p. 152.

¹¹³ *CJ*, II, pp. 411, 414, 419; Coates, Young, and Snow, eds., *Private journals*, I, pp. 253–5, 264–5, 268, 270, 283, 304.

¹¹⁴ Coates, Young, and Snow, eds., *Private journals*, I, pp. 254–5; D. Cressy, 'Book burning in Tudor and Stuart England', *Sixteenth Century Journal*, 36 (2005), pp. 359–74, at p. 373.

¹¹⁵ HMC, *Portland*, Part I, p. 31; Gardiner, ed., *Oxinden letters*, pp. 286, 287, 292; *Newses from the Tower* (1642), sig. A2; Devon RO, 73/15, p. 110. For evidence that copies were selling for as much as 4*s* 6*d*, see: CKS, U269/A4/1, U269/A390/1; BL, Add. 26785, fo. 65v. For copies in Kentish libraries, see: CKS, U951/Z49/5, 13; CCL, Elham 420*(29).

Sir Edward Dering ... many being sorry for the censure and imprisonment upon him'.¹¹⁶ On 11 February, a Surrey man was cited in the Commons for declaring that 'it was by malicious procurement that Sir Edward Dering was sent to the Tower, where those who sent him thither did better deserve to be'.¹¹⁷

Such popularity, however, ensured that Dering's opponents strove even harder to undermine his reputation, not least in print. One pamphlet opined that he was no longer 'the glory of the people, the fame of the House, the credit of his country, the object of each eye'.¹¹⁸ Cromwell argued that Dering's book would cause people to be 'deceived and led into an ill opinion concerning the proceedings of this House', and he recommended that 'some able member ... might be appointed to make a short confutation of the same'.¹¹⁹ The result was the printed text of a letter by John Pym, which lamented Dering's 'strange unadvised and sudden differing from himself', and which suggested that 'admiration' had been his downfall: 'the world so doting on your accomplishments ... set you idolatrously above others, that at last you stepped up above yourself, scanning the words and conceptions of others, if not with a diffident difference, yet with a reserved distance, expecting that what you either voted or writ should be taken as authorised'. Pym responded to Dering's claims that he had remained consistent throughout his time in parliament, and suggested that he had fallen away after sixteen months of 'worthy deportment and unmatchable heedful travail amongst those peerless worthies', and although he credited Dering with 'powerful rhetoric' and 'sound and profound arguments', and with 'wounding and bruising' notorious delinquents amongst the 'Straffordian faction', he nevertheless accused him of being 'poisoned with the dregs of that cup'. Thus began the process of refuting Dering's professed consistency on church reform, and of suggesting that he had 'defected'.¹²⁰

It was not immediately apparent, however, that such tactics would be successful, and Dering's response revealed both defiance and a consciousness that his was a *cause célèbre*. He promised to renew his campaign both 'by word and by writing', and predicted that 'my book and I shall do you more mischief out of the House than if I were still among you'.¹²¹ He fairly quickly managed to secure release from the Tower, not just because he submitted a petition in which he did 'most humbly acknowledge his fault', but also because there

¹¹⁶ *CSPD*, 1641-3, pp. 273, 275, 278, 281-2; HMC, *Second report* (London, 1871), p. 47; BL, Add. 39936, fo. 258.

¹¹⁷ Coates, Young, and Snow, eds., *Private journals*, 1, p. 349.

¹¹⁸ *News from the Tower*, sig. A2.

¹¹⁹ Coates, Young, and Snow, eds., *Private journals*, 1, p. 293.

¹²⁰ J. P., *The copie of a letter written unto Sir Edward Dering* (1641), sigs. A2v-3v. D'Ewes did not think Dering guilty of apostasy, 'for I never thought him a convert': Coates, Young, and Snow, eds., *Private journals*, 1, p. 253. Henry Oxinden, however, said 'Sir Edward Dering has so used to turn around in his study that he would do the like in the parliament house. Pray God his much turning hath not made his head dizzy and that he doth not turn out of his right wits': Gardiner, ed., *Oxinden letters*, p. 296.

¹²¹ BL, Add. 26785, fo. 65v.

remained in the House people like Sir John Culpeper who were sympathetic to his views and his plight, and perhaps also because others genuinely feared that his prolonged detention might provoke disorder.¹²² Dering also honoured his promise to cause more trouble by helping to promote the controversial Kentish petition, which seemed to augur the emergence of a royalist 'party', as Sir John Coke described it, with its calls for a national synod and for accommodation between Westminster and the king, and with its denunciation of recent parliamentary orders concerning the militia. This petition was circulated fairly vigorously in order to secure signatures, and Dering secured renewed public notoriety by allegedly seeking to rally a crowd of 40,000 men at Blackheath in order to march with the petition to parliament en masse. Naturally, the Commons voted the petition 'scandalous, dangerous, and tending to sedition' on 28 March, but although they managed to interrogate Dering on 4 April, he quickly disappeared, prompting an order to block the routes which might permit flight to the continent, and then legal impeachment on 22 April. The charge against Dering was that he had a 'malicious and wicked intention' to undermine the militia ordinance, to 'interrupt and scandalise the proceedings of Parliament', and to 'set division between His Majesty and the parliament, and to raise sedition and tumult', and it was alleged that he had capitalized on his popularity in Kent by promoting the petition through 'false and sinister suggestions, persuasions and solicitations', and through massed gatherings. This mischief, MPs concluded, was likely to prove 'fruitful and generative', and to produce 'a new brood of serpent ... continually hissing, maligning and practising against the pious and noble endeavours of both Houses', and Dering was described as 'a man of mark and eminency, of wit, learning and zeal', and as the 'ringleader' in Kent, who was prepared to stop at nothing for the 'compassing' of his own ends. Indeed, the fear of Dering's power led Pym to express concern that the Kent petition's delivery would 'prove a bloody day', and prompted MPs to mobilize the militia to meet the 500 men who arrived in London armed with 'a bundle of printed petitions'.¹²³ These men were probably as emboldened as parliament was alarmed by the fact that such events coincided with the appearance of yet another edition of Dering's speeches.¹²⁴ Thus, when Dering joined the king in the summer of 1642, his influence in Kent was clearly feared by parliamentarians, who tried in vain to arrest him,

¹²² *CJ*, II, p. 426b; Coates, Young, and Snow, eds., *Private journals*, I, pp. 348, 352, 354.

¹²³ BL, Add. 64923, fo. 2; 'Sir Roger Twysden's narrative', *Archaeologia Cantiana*, I (1858), pp. 201-3, 211-12; *CJ*, II, pp. 501, 502-3, 507, 510, 511, 513, 514, 533, 535, 536, 537; Coates, Young, and Snow, eds., *Private journals*, II, pp. 100-2, 107, 133, 184, 189, 198, 203, 237-8, 248; *Lords Journal (LJ)*, IV, pp. 676a, 678b, 703a; *LJ*, V, pp. 9, 14, 17-19; HMC, *Buccleuch* (London, 1899), Part I, pp. 295-6; HMC, *Cowper*, Part II, p. 311; *Many remarkable passages* (1642), sig. A2v; HMC, *Montagu* (London, 1900), pp. 148, 151; BL, Add. 33512, fo. 72; *CSPD, 1641-1643*, p. 316; NLS, MS 2687, p. 1117.

¹²⁴ Coates, Young, and Snow, eds., *Private journals*, II, p. 248; *CJ*, II, p. 549b; NLS, MS 2687, p. 1118. See: E. Dering, *A collection of speeches* (1642, D1103); CKS, U275/Z4. Dering's speeches would be republished in 1660: *Sir Edward Dering revived* (1660).

and who suggested that he had ‘seasoned’ the ‘chiefest sort’ in the region and created a ‘malignant and seditious sect’, which explains by one John Marston was questioned for threatening to ‘stab the heart-blood’ of anyone who criticized the Kent petition.¹²⁵ Such was Dering’s celebrity by this stage that he began to receive plaudits from royalist balladeers, as well as mockery from parliamentary journalists, one of whom jeered that he might be made archbishop of Canterbury.¹²⁶

Comments by parliamentary authors are important because they indicate that the political net was beginning to close around Dering and that print was integral to this process. By late 1642, Dering found himself having to travel under an assumed name and to sport a false beard, although even these precautions could not prevent his capture by parliamentary troops in December 1642. After his escape from custody, Dering made his way to Shrewsbury before pleading with the governor of Warwick Castle to return property he had been forced to leave behind, and it is extremely revealing that a particularly prized possession was his book of speeches, which was preserved in ‘a little red box with lock and key’.¹²⁷ In the end, however, Dering was made to realize that print, the weapon he had sought to make his own, was likely to be used ruthlessly against him. After brief military service in 1643, which involved raising a regiment for the king, and which may have involved action at Southampton, Newbury and Arundel, Dering grew disillusioned with the Oxford court—some said because he was refused the position as sheriff of Kent—and he returned to Westminster in January 1644, when MPs signalled a willingness to rehabilitate disgruntled royalists.¹²⁸ Dering was briefly taken into custody, but was fairly quickly granted liberty after some debate in the Commons, after subscribing the Solemn League and Covenant, and after submitting a contrite petition in which he acknowledged his ‘great weakness’, his conviction that cavaliers sought ‘all possible ways to destroy the liberty of the subject’, and his concern about their tolerance of Catholics, even if he could not bring himself to criticize the king personally.¹²⁹ Following his release,

¹²⁵ HMC, *Hastings* (London, 1930), Part II, p. 87; *Cf.* II, p. 733; HMC, *Fifth report* (London, 1876), p. 22; *A true relation of a brave exploit* (1642), pp. 4, 7; CKS, U275/F3, U350/C2/99; BL, Add. 18777, fo. 78; *A continuation of certaine speciall and remarkable passages*, 5 (30 Aug.–6 Sept. 1642), p. 6; *LJ*, v, pp. 244–5.

¹²⁶ Bodl. MS Rawl.poet.26, fos. 124v–5; J. De Groot, *Royalist identities* (Basingstoke, 2004), p. 66; *Parliament Scout*, 24 (1–8 Dec. 1643), p. 205.

¹²⁷ Lincolnshire Archives, 10ANC/347.

¹²⁸ TNA, C 231/3, p. 25; HMC, *Portland*, Part I, p. 130; HMC, *Bath* (London, 1968), Part IV, p. 353; Huntington Library, San Marino, HA 8060; HMC, *Hastings*, Part II, p. 118; BL, Add. 64923, fo. 101.

¹²⁹ BL, Harl. 166, fos. 6, 7, 8, 9; Bodl. MS Carte 223, fo. 143; HMC, *Cowper*, Part II, p. 341; *Cf.* III, pp. 390, 393, 401; *Parliament Scout*, 33 (2–9 Feb. 1644), pp. 278, 280; *A declaration wherein is full satisfaction given concerning Sir Edward Deering* (1644), sig. A3; B. Whitelocke, *Memorials of the English affairs* (4 vols., Oxford, 1853), I, p. 238; Rushworth, ed., *Historical collections*, v, pp. 383–4; *CSPD*, 1644, pp. 13, 16.

Dering retired to Kent in late February 1644, where he sought to devote his energies to scholarly studies, but where he instead faced financial ruin as a result of lingering hostility and persistent suspicions regarding his loyalty, not to mention fears about whether he would be forced to flee to France in the event of a royalist victory.¹³⁰

More importantly, Dering's decision to abandon the king enabled parliamentarians to exact very public revenge, and he also faced the deliberate attempt to break his spirit and undermine his reputation, as newsbooks pounced on the humiliation of 'a man of singular wit and learning', and as publishers made available his petition to parliament.¹³¹ More Machiavellian still was the demand by the Kent committee that Dering should publicly recant and denounce royalism. The committee insisted, moreover, that he should produce 'no volume, but an epitome . . . a little pamphlet, which will better sink into the common people's brain than any long volume'. Recognizing that Dering had successfully courted public support, they insisted that a popular tract was required, because the populace included 'the men you have misled'. Dering eventually relented, and he promised that 'the pamphlet you command shall go out sudden and unpolished', and that it would 'be a piece of a penny, fit . . . for the vulgar'.¹³²

VIII

Reconstructing Dering's political life thus reveals an early concern with his reputation and a willingness to court popular puritan support to ensure electoral success. The result was that Dering was expected to support reform, and when this appeared to be confirmed by his activity at Westminster, he was inundated with pleas for support and fêted as a godly grandee. Having received plaudits for his speeches and his parliamentary performance, Dering evidently succumbed to public applause and courted popular support among a mass, as well as a literate, audience. He quickly discovered, however, that 'popularity' was a double-edged sword, and that the public could be as quick to censure as they

¹³⁰ E. Dering, *A discourse of proper sacrifice* (Cambridge, 1644); M. Green, ed., *Calendar of the proceedings of the committee for compounding* (3 vols., London, 1889-93), p. 832; HMC, *Hastings*, Part II, p. 122; I. G. Philip, ed., *Journal of Sir Samuel Luke* (3 vols., Oxfordshire Record Society, 1947-53), II, p. 147, III, p. 188. For Dering's financial troubles in Kent, see: CKS, U1107/A13, E43, U350/O13, U350/C2/101; TNA, SP 23/223, p. 638; Bodl. MS Tanner 62, fo. 575; *CJ*, III, pp. 513, 572, 603; BL, Stowe 184, fos. 78-105, Add. 70887, fos. 14v, 27, 41, 57v.

¹³¹ *Mercurius Anglicus*, 1 (31 Jan.-7 Feb. 1644), p. 5; *A declaration wherein is full satisfaction given*, sig. A2; *Certaine Informations*, 51 (1-8 Jan. 1644), p. 400; *Parliament Scout*, 33 (2-9 Feb. 1644), pp. 278, 280; *Perfect Diurnall*, 24 (1-8 Jan. 1644), pp. 188-9; *Kingdomes Weekly Intelligencer*, 38 (2-9 Jan. 1644), p. 296; *Kingdomes Weekly Intelligencer*, 42 (30 Jan.-7 Feb. 1644), pp. 327-8; *Kingdomes Weekly Intelligencer*, 43 (7-14 Feb. 1644), p. 331.

¹³² BL, Stowe 184, fos. 62, 64r-v, 66, 68, 69, 71, 73, 75-7; E. Dering, *A declaration by Sir Edward Dering* (1644).

were to praise. Under pressure to abolish episcopacy, Dering felt that he had been misunderstood, and so 'defected' from the radical reformers, albeit in ways which demonstrate an ongoing attachment to local supporters, and persistent willingness to listen to their demands. By justifying himself in print, however, Dering became publicly notorious, and an early example of a novel phenomenon: the use of cheap print by political authorities in order to destroy an individual's reputation.

Although Dering may not have been typical of the politicians of his age, there is little indication that the hostility towards him sprang from his attitude towards his constituents. It is likely, indeed, that his career reflected more general trends, and he offers a particularly dramatic example of the speed with which political culture was transformed during the seventeenth century. Having emerged as a client of aristocratic patrons into a life on the fringes of court, Dering became a public and indeed popular figure, through membership of parliament and the medium of print. Dering's political life in the 1640s was played out in public, and on a popular stage, and if he was unique in the extent to which this was true, he was certainly not alone. Part of the way in which he differed from other contemporary MPs was in anticipating a trend which became much more obvious in the late 1640s, whereby public figures could assume a symbolic popular power on the back of a reputation forged more or less deliberately in print, and who were regarded as potential rallying points for dissent and popular unrest.

Dering's career also, however, highlights changing attitudes towards representation and MPs' relationship with their constituents. By examining Dering's public life alongside his Commons career, it is possible to demonstrate the extent to which the public was interested in, and able to follow, parliamentary proceedings. Contemporaries were aware of his committee activity, and they were able to obtain news of his interventions in debate and to secure copies of manuscript and printed editions of his speeches. What also emerges are fascinating glimpses of a dynamic relationship between the public and its representatives, which scholars have overlooked because of limited archival evidence. Dering's public engaged with his speeches and endeavoured to influence his behaviour in ways which alter our appreciation of parliamentary politics and popular participation. Since the 1620s, it had become increasingly clear that partisanship affected parliamentary elections, that collective parliamentary performance affected electoral chances, and that individual political activity—such as support for the Forced Loan or Ship Money—could have electoral repercussions. Dering reveals, however, that the parliamentary performance of individual MPs could now be monitored, and that constituents could go some way towards holding their representatives to account. The fact that Dering's constituents could claim some success in influencing him reflects his understanding that the role of MPs involved being responsive to constituents, at least insofar as conscience would allow. Dering may have been unusual in the early 1640s, but perhaps less so thereafter, and it seems more

probable that his behaviour reflected a hitherto neglected contemporary debate about the nature of representation.¹³³

That this debate has been overlooked may reflect the fact, also evident from Dering's career, that early modern concepts of representation were simultaneously affected by deepening political divisions and by the impact of cheap print upon political debate. What complicated Dering's career was the interplay of his commitments as an MP and his desire for wider public acclaim. At times, such impulses worked in harmony, as Dering supported reform in the early months of the Long Parliament, but disintegration of consensus over the direction of religious and political change made it harder to serve his constituents and increasingly important to perform on a national political stage. It was far easier to promote the views of his constituents, in other words, when attention was focused on attacking Laudianism than when divisions emerged over positive proposals for reform. Faced with profound disagreement among his constituents, it was unclear how Dering could adhere to his vision of the duty of elected representatives. Although he continued to respond to the views of local men, and to react to calls for moderation and mounting alarm over sectarianism, he was listening to an ever smaller group of constituents with whom he himself sympathized. Without abandoning his views on the nature of representation, Dering nevertheless became increasingly concerned with the views of an audience larger than the community he represented. As he became known outside Kent, Dering felt compelled to respond to criticisms and complaints from within this national audience, and he may ultimately have come to regard himself as representing particular views, rather than a geographical area, and to be accountable at a national rather than a local level. To the extent that he grappled with these issues, Dering was participating in profoundly important developments regarding representation and public culture in the mid-seventeenth century.

¹³³ P. Little and D. Smith, *Parliaments and politics during the Cromwellian protectorate* (Cambridge, 2007), p. 233.