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Résumé de l'article

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This essay uncovers the influences of Elizabeth Stanley Hastings, countess of Huntingdon (1588–1633), on household and commercial drama. John Marston's Ashby entertainment (1607) and John Fletcher's The Faithful Shepherdess *(ca 1608) show how Huntingdon drew upon family tradition and conventional ideals of beauty to facilitate her rise as a patron. A focus on patronage reveals these plays' shared emphasis on feminine authority within traditional roles. More broadly, this essay urges scholars to reconceive women patrons as co-makers of plays and value their important contributions to theatrical production.*

After Suzanne Hull titled her 1982 book *Chaste, Silent, and Obedient*, these three adjectives have become a shorthand for patriarchal oppression among feminist scholars. It is now common knowledge that early modern English society judged women by their ability to be sexually loyal to men, remain quietly submissive, and obey male authority. However, Hull's findings derive from printed books aimed at the gentry and emerging middle class, so these concepts might not apply to all women. My research on elite female patrons shows that they were not silent or obedient, nor were they expected to be. A more accurate description of an ideal aristocratic woman comes from the language Edmund Spenser used to praise Alice Stanley, countess of Derby, and her sisters: 'chaste', 'fair', and 'bountifull'.[1] These terms characterize a successful female patron as conventionally virtuous, white, wealthy, and liberal with money and favour. They underscore that women were valued for their 'purity' in a way men never were. They also illustrate, unlike the ideas of silence and obedience, that certain kinds of women held power within conventional roles and could distribute it how they wished.

Some of these 'bountifull' women used their resources to patronize drama. Julie Crawford has argued that female patrons played crucial roles in producing

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non-dramatic texts.[2] The same is true of women who patronized the early modern English theatre. Akin to today's 'producers', patrons helped make theatre in vital ways. They lent their names to professional companies, had playbooks dedicated to them, commissioned plays, arranged masques and private performances, paid actors, provided financial or other support to playwrights, paid to see plays, or used their influence to make theatre happen.[3] A patron's gender mattered less than did her social status; prefatory letters to female patrons do not differ substantially from those written to men. Some patrons made theatre actively, and others were passively involved. Therefore, examining the contributions of individual patrons is useful. David Bergeron provided a list of such patrons in 1981 when he identified fourteen non-royal female dedicatees of English printed playbooks before 1642.[4] By extending the timeframe to 1660 and by using digital tools to which Bergeron did not have access, I have expanded his list to thirty-one. I found twelve of those patrons by using *DEEP: Database of Early English Playbook*s to search dedications.[5] The Records of Early English Drama (REED) *Patrons and Performances* website allowed me to identify four, all with professional playing companies named after them (see Appendix).[6]

One additional patron and the subject of this article — Elizabeth Stanley Hastings, countess of Huntingdon (1588–1633) — appears in none of these sources. She did not name a playing company or serve as a dedicatee for printed plays, but several archival records testify to her influence over male dramatists, especially John Marston and John Fletcher. I came across evidence of her patronage while researching the theatrical activities of better-known members of her family. As the daughter of the well-networked countess of Derby and the wife of the fifth earl of Huntingdon (Henry Hastings), the countess of Huntingdon belonged to two aristocratic families with long histories of theatrical patronage. She built upon her family's support of the theatre and her mother's association with Spenserian pastoral literature when she launched her own patronage career in the first decade of the seventeenth century.[7]

This article identifies Huntingdon as an important dramatic patron and aims to trace some of her specific influences. To do so, I analyze how two male playwrights — Marston and Fletcher — represented and elided Huntingdon's role at the beginning of her patronage career. I focus on these two playwrights because both men wrote of their connections to Huntingdon. She and her husband commissioned Marston to write pastoral pageantry for a public-facing family event at Ashby de la Zouch Castle, their Leicestershire estate, in 1607. In the Ashby entertainment, Marston praised Huntingdon as a chaste, fair, and bountiful queen of northern England, in her mother's image. That image and the kind of elite

pageantry performed at Ashby helped inspire Fletcher's public stage plays, especially the female characters and style of *The Faithful Shepherdess*. In analyzing one 'private' play (Marston's entertainment) alongside one 'public' play (Fletcher's commercial play), I show the breadth of Huntingdon's patronage and consider how women's influences functioned differently in those theatrical spaces. Together, these plays reveal how two male playwrights justified feminine authority in a patriarchal culture. Both represent feminine power as brightness, a trope that connects knowledge and beauty to whiteness and high rank. By investigating how these plays reveal traces of and respond to Huntingdon's influences, I explore the possibilities of a patron-centered approach to early English plays.

The Rise of a Patron: Bountiful Mothers and Fair Queens at Ashby

In his Ashby entertainment, John Marston represents the countess of Huntingdon as continuing an ancestral history of theatrical support. Indeed, Huntingdon grew up around theatrical activity. When she was a child, her parents hosted plays at their house and patronized a playing company.[8] The company belonged to her father, Ferdinando Stanley, and was called the Lord Strange's Men. It included well-known actors Edward Alleyn and Richard Burbage, and some scholars speculate that it gave Shakespeare his start as an actor.[9] When Ferdinando died in 1594, his wife — the dowager countess of Derby — took over the company's patronage for a month.[10] The impact of Derby's patronage lasted longer. She almost certainly helped arrange the transfer of actors to the new Lord Chamberlain's Men, the company for which Shakespeare would be a playwright and shareholder.[11] In short, Huntingdon learned how to be a dramatic patron from both of her parents.

Huntingdon's mother, the countess of Derby, was an especially strong model for her future patronage. French R. Fogle concludes that Derby had 'more close associations with more great literary figures than any other single person that I am aware of' in Renaissance England.[12] Modern networking analysis leads to a similar conclusion: on the Six Degrees of Francis Bacon website, Derby has an enormous 'node' that reveals her many connections.[13] Vanessa Wilkie titled her 2023 biography *A Woman of Influence* to underscore Derby's importance in political, legal, and literary realms. Derby's supposed kinship tie to Edmund Spenser also defined her reputation as a patron. Spenser spoke of Derby, born as Alice Spencer, as a distant cousin — a possibility Derby embraced. In a 1591 dedication, Spenser emphasized their 'priuate bands of affinite, which it hath pleased your Ladiship to acknowledge', and in 1595, he celebrated Derby as part of a

'noble familie: / Of which I meanest boast my selfe to be'.[14] When Derby and her second husband, the renowned lawyer Thomas Egerton, hosted Queen Elizabeth I at Derby's Harefield house in 1602, the couple commissioned elaborate pastoral pageantry. The Harefield entertainment represented Derby as a powerful housewife who governed her family and region, just as England's own housewife, Elizabeth I, ruled the nation.[15] The countess of Huntingdon — then a young, newly married teenager — was likely present at Harefield and surely knew of her mother's extensive preparations for the event.

When Derby travelled to the nineteen year old countess of Huntingdon's Ashby estate in late July and August 1607, Huntingdon and her husband commissioned Marston to write pageantry for the occasion.[16] Marston's entertainment portrayed Derby as a maker of writers' careers. It also represented the countess of Huntingdon as a learned patron in her own right and her home as a notable centre of literary and theatrical creation. When Derby arrived at the estate's entrance, its gate was decorated with three diamond encrusted gold shields inscribed with Latin mottoes in silver that celebrated the longed-for arrival of an exceptional guest: 'Tantum Vni' (only for one), 'Venisti tandem' (you came at last), 'Nostra sera' (our late), and 'Et sola voluptas' (and only joy).[17] These phrases identify Derby and her hosts as erudite and well versed in literary classics, as the last two phrases allude to Virgil's *Aeneid*. Marston's manuscript of the entertainment describes the gate as both 'Antiq*ue*' and 'suddeinly' erected, meaning that it looked old but was newly placed.[18] This visual symbol established Ashby as a new centre of literary activity that upheld tradition. Marston was an appropriate choice for showcasing a family that both adhered to and revised tradition. He had proven himself a writer of well-received plays but was notoriously bold, satiric, and provocative. His Ashby entertainment represents its patron family as both established and cutting edge.

The Ashby entertainment celebrated the confluence of several momentous events for the family. As Vanessa Wilkie explains, it marked the recent success of the countess of Derby's lawsuit. She had sued the current earl of Derby, William Stanley, for her daughters' shares of her late husband's estate, and a private Act of Parliament had just confirmed her victory.[19] As James Knowles argues, the occasion also honoured the 'coming of age' of Huntingdon's husband, when he became the lord lieutenant of Leicestershire and responded swiftly to the Midlands revolt of May-June 1607.[20] I propose a third function of the event: its announcement of the countess of Huntingdon's 'coming of age' as a patron, of her decision to follow her mother's path as a mentor for writers. Not coincidentally, the Ashby entertainment also celebrated Huntingdon's productive marriage and the thriving

of her first child, who had been born that winter. To honour her mother, Huntingdon had named the child Alice. The Ashby entertainment casts Huntingdon in her mother's image as a matriarchal authority figure. Representing ideal female patrons as chaste, fair, and bountiful, it offers two central metaphors for female patronage: motherhood and queenship. Both mothers and queens wield authority within the existing social system.

In performance and text, Marston's entertainment aimed to please multiple patrons: the host couple and the guest of honour. Marston dedicated a presentation manuscript to the countess of Derby. After emphasizing her rank as 'the right Noble Ladye', he refers vaguely to her merit:

> If my slight Muse may sute yo*ur* noble merrit
> My hopes are crownd, & I shall cheere my spirit
> But if my ȩ weake quill droopes, or seems vnfitt
> Tis not yo*ur* want of worth, but mine of witt.[21]

Marston seems not to have known the family well, as the manuscript (corrected in his own hand) shows confusion about the names of some of its members.[22] He adopts the conventional posture of a humble writer who fears he might not please his patrons. Although his inscription takes ownership of the writing and dedicates his efforts to Derby, the manuscript's next page clarifies that the entertainment belongs to and serves its hosts, the Huntingdons. Its title reads: 'The hon*ora*ble Lorde & Lady of Huntingdons Entertainement of theire right Noble Mother Alice: Countesse Dowager of Darby'.[23] The three episodes that follow — a welcoming speech, a masque, and a farewell pageant — focus especially on the dual authority of the two countesses, Derby and Huntingdon.

The opening pageant, in which a sorceress named Merimna greets Derby, represents mother and daughter so similarly that they are nearly indistinguishable. After Merimna's first speech, Saturn appears, 'curyiously behoulding the Countesses', both Derby and Huntingdon.[24] His vague references to 'she' and 'you' could refer to either woman. This slippage acknowledges the presence of two important patrons: the honoured addressee and the event's organizing sponsor. After effusive praise of Derby as a long-established patron, Merimna calls Huntingdon the 'Lady whose ambition towers / Only to this to be termed worthy yours'.[25] Whereas Wilkie assumes that this 'Lady' is the ambitious Derby, I understand this reference as acknowledging Huntingdon's desire to reproduce her mother's image.[26] Our ability to read the same moment differently illustrates how Marston's praise applies to both 'Sweete glories of your sex'.[27] The pageant argues

that Huntingdon shares important traits with her mother and will carry on her legacy in supporting artistic causes.

Merimna's descriptions of Derby reveal the entertainment's definition of an ideal theatrical patron. Derby has 'witt' and 'eloquence' and values those qualities in others.[28] She is discerning when assessing the quality of writing and performance, but 'cheerefull' and able to be pleased.[29] Her approval makes even the roughest show appear successful, or as the character Merimna says metaphorically of both mother and daughter, '*yo*ur eyes / makes milde the roughest planet of the skies'.[30] Derby exemplifies ideal femininity by having 'modest virtue', a phrase that indicates chastity.[31] She can let authors shine because she 'abhors much praise' and would 'rather be much graced then tolde so'.[32] The word 'grace' appears often. It signifies goodness, elegance, charm, and exceptional favour, as well as divine benevolence bestowed freely and regardless of merit. God-given grace can bring about worldly benefit. Likewise, a patron's most important quality is her willingness to provide financial support. The opening pageant uses many words with financial connotations, including 'interest', 'offeringe', 'counters', 'worth', and 'fortune'.[33] Merimna praises Derby for embodying the ideal qualities of 'fortune, beauty, witt', a variation on Spenser's triad that prioritizes Derby's mental capacity.[34] Fortune also refers to Lady Fortune, emphasizing that Derby has provided well for her family and that Huntingdon's marriage and baby continue to improve the family's future. Because the pageant emphasizes similarities between mother and daughter, these descriptions also suit Huntingdon's ambitions at the beginning of her patronage career.

The entertainment's emphasis on money hints at the author's and hosts' reliance on Derby's wealth, while insisting that the Huntingdons are generous patrons. Although the Huntingdons probably hired and paid Marston, his inscription to Derby reveals his desire for her support. The Huntingdons had inherited substantial debt from the last earl, and the countess of Huntingdon's letters from 1607 reveal how frequently she worried about money. When her husband was away, she asked him to supply a sum of money by a certain day, writing, 'otherwise I knowe not what to doo, for I doo owe itt euery penny, and ether muste paye that daye, ore ells I am spoyled'.[35] Yet the Huntingdons continued to spend money on the arts. Although their show of largess at Ashby could have indicated financial mismanagement or love despite hardship, evidence suggests that other family members helped finance the event. Derby sent the Huntingdons £40 on 3 June 1607, perhaps to pay for entertainment expenses, and Huntingdon's sister — Frances Egerton, countess of Bridgewater — paid for 'twyce wrytinge my lady's entertainment in Leycestershyre' on 14 July 1607, probably in reference to a scribe making

copies of the text.[36] The Ashby entertainment therefore demonstrates the support of a unified family of influential patrons, headed by two bountiful mothers.

The Ashby entertainment also portrayed female patrons as queens, especially in its second episode, a masque of eight male dancers. Before the dance, a curtain came down to reveal a golden eagle sitting in an oak tree, a scene that celebrated visually the host couple's union. The eagle alluded to the Stanley family crest, and the oak referred to the earl of Huntingdon's role as keeper of Leicester Forest. Likewise, Merimna earlier cast Henry as a 'high siluan' [silvan], a governor of forests, and Elizabeth as his 'bright Nymphe', a semi-divine, beautiful young woman characterized by brilliance.[37] The masque extends this representation by using a bright star as its unifying motif. Stars adorned the masquers' vizards and robes. A male actor playing the goddess Cynthia, who also wore a starry costume, expressed frustration at being 'outshone' by the women spectators, whose beauty and splendour make them appear as 'daring flames' with 'illustrous light'.[38]

The entertainment's repeated descriptions of elite women as 'fair', 'bright', and 'radiant' reveal the extent to which the ideals of English beauty depended on class and racial privilege. The Ashby entertainment's language of bright fairness designates beauty, white skin, high status, moral and sexual virtue, and inner worth simultaneously — as Kim F. Hall has shown — and exemplifies what Hannah Arendt has called 'race thinking', in which a culture uses bodily traits to identify an individual's morality and capabilities.[39] In this kind of thinking, markers of class and racial difference help dominant groups maintain authority.[40] In early modern England, fairness increasingly signified Englishness. Kimberly Poitevin demonstrates that early modern women's use of cosmetics linked national identity to skin colour and established whiteness as the English complexion.[41] The Ashby masque therefore demonstrates how Marston found power for his female patrons within existing social structures — specifically within the radiant whiteness that marks their privileged position.

Marston's rhetoric of fairness and lustre draws on the models of queens as well. Elizabeth I, who whitened her face with makeup, inspired what Peter Erickson has called 'a cult of whiteness' that associated whiteness with beauty, virtue, and political authority.[42] Similar ideas about beauty, gender, and race persisted at Queen Anna's court. The language of white fairness at Ashby, then, does more than claim beauty. It draws on royal models to claim authority for the countesses of Derby and Huntingdon. Previous scholars have argued that the Huntingdons were anti-courtly, but Marston represents them differently: as sidestepping the court instead of opposing it and as preferring to rule northern England than to be in London.[43] The Ashby entertainment underscores how the countess of

Huntingdon followed her mother's example in establishing her own great house as a theatrical and political centre apart from the court, with herself as a regional queen.

Marston reimagines royal panegyric for a network of queen-like female patrons. He adapts the three-part structure of Elizabethan country house entertainment: an invocation by a stern figure who blocks entry before being transformed by the visitor's presence, pageantry featuring the entertainment's central message, and a lamentation at the visitor's departure.[44] One character even announces that the fairy queen, who attended Elizabeth on her progresses, now serves the countesses of Derby and Huntingdon. Each episode at Ashby reinvents earlier pageantry. The opening pageant began not with the male porter of Elizabethan entertainments, but with the sorceress Merimna. The masque and farewell pageant cited royal entertainments from the previous year by recycling (or at least mimicking) costumes from Ben Jonson's *Hymenaei* and repurposing text from a royal eclogue.[45] The countess of Derby's journey to Leicestershire, called a 'p*ro*gress' by the earl of Huntingdon's steward, was modeled after the summer progresses of monarchs.[46] Derby was married to Thomas Egerton at the time, but he did not accompany her. Their marriage had been pragmatic rather than a love match, and he later confessed to his son that it was a miserable alliance.[47] Derby's progress may have declared a kind of independence following her legal success. The Ashby entertainment celebrates her as the queen regnant of dramatic patronage and the countess of Derby as her rightful heir.

After an opening pageant established Huntingdon in her mother's image and a masque described her like an English queen, a third pageant at Ashby brought together motherhood and queenship while ruminating on a third key feature of female patrons: chastity. This pastoral dialogue involves a shepherd named Dorcus and a nymph called Beliza. Although the names were Marston's own invention, he recycled part of the dialogue from a 1606 eclogue staged in London for King James and his brother–in-law Christian IV of Denmark.[48] In the original pageant, a shepherd wishes to marry a shepherdess who vows to refuse him until two suns of equal brightness appear. Upon seeing the two kings, the shepherd happily claims his new wife. Marston changed the impossible event to a daughter loving her mother out of pure piety, and once again, the appearance of two powerful patrons coerces a young woman into marrying a man she intended to refuse. By substituting his female patrons for two kings, Marston elevates Derby and Huntingdon to the level of monarchs.

The Dorcus-Beliza dialogue sits uneasily with the rest of the Ashby entertainment. It begins by promoting feminine choice and independence. When Dorcus

complains about Beliza's decision to remain single, she retorts that she is happy 'w*i*thout subjection'.[49] But it ends by silencing her, following her fierce resistance with an awkward transition to marriage. Once the characters witness Huntingdon's daughterly love, Dorcus announces, 'Th'art mine Beliza', and Beliza says nothing in response.[50] Marston's name for this character recalls the late queen, as well as Elizabeth, the countess of Huntingdon. In the masque performed earlier, Cynthia — the goddess of chastity who praised Elizabeth I in many entertainments — presides over festivities she calls 'Chaste sport*es*'.[51] She also underscores that the women in Derby's and Huntingdon's network let go of 'rare virginity' for a more 'noble choice' of 'well lynkt nuptialls'.[52] The Dorcus-Beliza eclogue makes even clearer that the kind of chastity valued in this entertainment is not the idealized virginity of the late Elizabethan period, but marital fidelity. This pageant's resolution seems potentially less jarring because the entertainment has already demonstrated that marriage does not need to silence a woman's voice or curb her authority. Yet it still claims that Huntingdon's daughterly love forces an assertive woman to marry against her will. Additionally, Marston's manuscript ends by saying that the mythological figure Niobe presented Derby a farewell gift, meaning that its last example of maternal love was a woman who becomes a weeping stone after her children's deaths. Early modern English versions of this myth typically blame Niobe for her children's deaths, and male authors frequently use Niobe as shorthand for women's emotional failures. Thomas Playfere's 1595 Easter sermon, for example, cites Niobe as an example of being unable to control one's emotions and yielding to 'too much griefe'.[53] This final pageant emphasizes that Derby and Huntingdon operate within a patriarchal society and claim privilege from their lineage, social standing, and implicitly race. As members of the white English nobility, they rule their households and communities while fulfilling the socially expected roles of daughter, wife, and mother.

The Ashby entertainment celebrated two female patrons as part of an extended event with broader reach than a simple family gathering. After Derby arrived at Ashby in July, she spent about a month travelling around Leicestershire and surrounding counties with her daughter and son-in-law. Like monarchs on progress, the countesses of Derby and Huntingdon met with hospitality and theatrical entertainment at other estates on their summer journey. Five surviving pageants by William Skipwith address women in Huntingdon's network and seem to be associated with the 1607 progress, especially because Derby and Huntingdon stopped at Skipwith's Prestwold estate. One pageant text survives in a manuscript separate, glued to the binding flap of Marston's Ashby manuscript and signed with Skipwith's initials.[54] It provides fourteen short verses in rhyming couplets,

each attached to a woman's name, and records a game in which women received poems about their merits and futures. Written in the voice of a male author praising important patrons in the love language of a Petrarchan suitor, these poems speak of women's fairness and fortunes, just as Marston's entertainment does. The other four pageants appear in a section of Skipwith's poetry in the miscellany known as the 'Skipwith Manuscript' and are addressed to Derby, Huntingdon, and other women in their network.[55] This manuscript includes another untitled series of verses in the same style as Skipwith's Ashby game, as well as a hermit's speech, a fairy's speech, and a parody of a chancery bill.

Skipwith's pageants underscore the central ideas in Marston's text: feminine brightness and maternal lineage. The hermit emphasizes the strength of Derby's favour, calling her 'the roote soe faire' who produces 'flowers', like Huntingdon, who gain power and virtue from their mother.[56] The fairy compares Derby to a 'heauenly' 'Starr' and stresses her 'absolute commande'.[57] The verses written for women in Huntingdon's network lightheartedly praise conventional feminine virtues, including 'beautye', 'curtesye, / maternall Loue and Pyetye', and hold up marriage as women's most important milestone.[58] At several moments, whether characters praise Derby or Huntingdon is unclear. Mary C. Erler thinks that Derby is not present and that the fairy and hermit speak to Huntingdon, but a reference to Derby's first husband shows that some speeches address her.[59] Skipwith's pageants promote piety, wifely obedience, motherhood, and attractiveness to men as ideal feminine qualities. These pageants circulated beyond the family in seventeenth-century miscellanies, which attests to their cultural value and the wide interest in these women's patronage.[60]

From Leicestershire to London: Huntingdon and Fletcher

The countess of Huntingdon's influence on drama reached beyond pageantry in northern England to the London stage and bookshops, especially through the commercial plays of John Fletcher. A poem Fletcher addressed to 'the Excelent and best Lady the Countess of Huntington' reveals that he benefited from her patronage.[61] This poem, probably written in the 1620s, characterizes Huntingdon as a well connected, bookish, and good-humoured patron.[62] Fletcher describes Ashby as a place he knows and loves, praising its cook by name, and acknowledges his obligation to Huntingdon in a playful tone: 'I must write, yett hange mee If I knowe / of what; or to what End'.[63] Although Huntingdon and her husband were both powerful figures in their region, Fletcher implies that she was the family's leading patron, or as he puts is, the 'best of yo*ur* kinne'.[64] He underscores

Huntingdon's strong reputation as a patron when he calls her 'yow that Euery man, / and euery ayre breaths well of'.[65] In this context, the word 'air' signifies breath and speech, as if everyone talks only of her and does so in glowing terms. Because 'air' could also mean music, these lines additionally allude to dramatic entertainment by evoking an image of panegyric songs like those of her family's pageants. Although Fletcher aims to flatter and therefore employs hyperbole, the ease with which he addresses Huntingdon and describes the environment at Ashby suggests a long-standing, mutually beneficially patronage arrangement.

Although Huntingdon's specific impact on Fletcher's plays is less clear than her role in Marston's pageantry, I agree with Gordon McMullan that Fletcher's relationship with Huntingdon helped shape aspects of his style and politics.[66] Her influence is especially apparent in Fletcher's earliest solo-authored play, *The Faithful Shepherdess*, first performed about a year after the Ashby entertainment and published in 1609 or 1610.[67] A patron-centred reading of *The Faithful Shepherdess* illuminates how it follows Marston's entertainment in endorsing conventional ideals while validating feminine authority. Like the Ashby pageantry, Fletcher's play implicitly justifies the rise of a female patron who derives power from chastity, intermingled with a brightly white fairness and the right kind of generosity.

Fletcher likely knew the countess of Huntingdon when he wrote and published *The Faithful Shepherdess*. Although her name does not appear in the book, its prefatory material shows Fletcher's connections to many people in her network, including Francis Beaumont, who grew up in Leicestershire and whose cousins knew the Huntingdons well; Walter Aston, who spent time at Ashby; and William Skipwith, whose own pageantry announced Huntingdon as an important theatrical patron.[68] Additionally, the book's printer, Henry Walley, was Marston's friend.[69] By having *The Faithful Shepherdess* printed, Fletcher hoped to find it new audiences despite its poor reception in performance. Commendatory poems by four playwrights and to three patrons replace a disapproving theatre audience with a chorus of men who claim to understand better what makes a good play. Emerging playwrights Beaumont and Nathan Field, whose poems identify them as Fletcher's friends, praise *The Faithful Shepherdess* as something they aspire to write.[70] Poems by established playwrights Ben Jonson and George Chapman, who position themselves as Fletcher's mentors, celebrate *The Faithful Shepherdess*'s virtues as printed poetry for educated readers. All four men agree that *The Faithful Shepherdess* was too sophisticated, smart, and subtle to be popular with the masses, who were ill-equipped to judge it. Instead, it is a serious work of literature for elite readers.

The play's structure and content also suggest the influence of the countess of Huntingdon's network and tastes. An interpretation of Fletcher's play with her in mind helps explain some puzzling things about it, including why it failed on-stage. Scholars often cite moments in *The Faithful Shepherdess*'s prefatory material when writers emphasize generic mixing and categorize the play as an early, failed experiment in tragicomedy. But the play also attempted to bring elite pastoral pageantry to urban, commercial spectators. In a note to readers, Fletcher explains that his pastoral represents *elite* shepherds: 'the owners of flockes and not hyerlings'.[71] The play models itself after aristocratic entertainments with episodic pageants that flatter patrons and encourage intellectual dialogue. Many scholars criticize the play for its lack of a good plot. W.W. Greg quipped that Fletcher 'stole nobody's plot, for his own play has none', and Martin Wiggins has said that it 'crawls slowly through a sludge of rhyming couplets'.[72] Although the play tells a cohesive story, its series of soliloquies and short dialogues resembles the structure of courtly and household entertainments, as do many of the play's characters and tropes, such as a chaste woman's ability to tame 'rude' men.[73] This aspect of *The Faithful Shepherdess* echoes Marston's Ashby entertainment and other pageantry like it. At this early point in his career, Fletcher chose to play around with the same kind of theatre that Huntingdon used to announce her arrival as a patron.

The Faithful Shepherdess follows the attempts of four virgin shepherdesses — Amarillis, Amoret, Cloe, and Clorin — to satiate or tame sexual desire. All four shepherdesses direct their story lines and, as Deanne Williams argues, make independent decisions.[74] By the play's end, they all devote themselves to chastity, a value professed by the male figures who appear to rule their community: the god Pan, the God of the River, the Satyr, and the Priest. Several modern feminist critics interpret the play as misogynist, and I understand why they do so. Catherine Henze uses *The Faithful Shepherdess* as an example of Fletcher's 'obsession with violent sex and misogynistic abuse of women', and Meghan Andrews has argued that the play discourages female agency.[75] Kathleen McLuskie is tempted to argue that it 'acts out fantasies of women who are infinitely available and infinitely controllable', but she notes that the pleasures of the play's theatrical effects 'complicate' such a moralizing interpretation.[76]

Indeed, *The Faithful Shepherdess* is more playful than moralizing, and its treatment of gender is more nuanced than many critics suggest. The play accepts some patriarchal notions without critique. For example, it celebrates feminine chastity as a way to prevent male lust, a responsibility assumed to belong to women. Clorin explains that young virgins need to learn 'stricknes' so that 'grooms / May ever feare to tempt their blowing youth' (5.5.185–6). At the same time, the play uses

this idea to correct misogynist comments. When Perigot claims that all women are deceitful, Amoret defends women as needing to prevent rape at the 'hands of Cruell men' (4.4.76). The portrayal of Cloe is also playful and complex. Before she agrees to reform herself, the play dwells delightedly on her yearning. Brian Pietras argues that the play meditates on feminine desire, using Cloe as a model of poetic productivity fueled by sexual longing. I propose that *The Faithful Shepherdess* also ruminates on feminine authority, an aspect made clear when read alongside the Ashby entertainment.

The shepherdesses' community might appear to be governed by male authority figures, but those gods and men lead less effectually than does the skillful healer Clorin. Many characters evoke Pan, but he never appears. The River God's powers are limited to the river. The Satyr and the Priest — neither of whom consistently monitors the community's goings-on — treat Clorin with deference and respect, and they rely on her judgment. Clorin, by contrast, wields substantial power. She heals and unites the community, which the play attributes to her specialized knowledge and ability to navigate the norms of a male-led society without directly challenging the system. Like Marston argues of the countess of Huntingdon's authority, Clorin's and other women's knowledge is passed down matrilineally in *The Faithful Shepherdess*. Clorin learned to 'keep / My virgin flower uncropt, pure, chaste, and fair' from her mother, just as Amarillis's grandmother taught her magic.[77] The play justifies Clorin's authority by representing her both as dedicated to a man and as purer than those who sleep with men. At the beginning of the play, Clorin vows to remain celibate to honour her recently deceased love, and she derives power from her chastity. Once Clorin has power, she uses it as she wishes. She instructs the Priest how to act, decides whether to pardon Cloe, and announces her decision with authority: 'I am content to pardon'.[78] The Priest follows her orders and submits to her decisions. The play also lets Clorin have the last word, as she delivers its final lines.

Like Marston, Fletcher validates a kind of feminine authority that does not threaten the values of a patriarchal society. Clorin derives her power from chastity, which the play intertwines with whiteness. Like Marston's entertainment, *The Faithful Shepherdess* values women who are brightly fair. Fletcher associates fairness with white skin even more explicitly. When Perigot praises his beloved Amoret, he pays tribute to her 'fair hand' and calls her 'more white, / Than the new milk we strip before day light'.[79] The God of the River likewise refers to Amoret as an 'unpolluted maid' with a 'white hand' and identifies her 'maiden whiteness' as her most appealing quality.[80] In fact, he says, she would be worse than 'a black stormy day' if not chaste.[81] When Alexis woos Cloe, he calls her

'Fairest and whitest'.[82] Amoret even describes the absence of lust as being 'Washd white', and Sullen Shepherd reveals how his lust obscures his morality when he announces that all woman are equal, 'be they faire, or blacke, or browne'.[83] At the play's end, the Satyr addresses Clorin as 'Thou divinest, fairest, brightest, / Thou most powerful maid, and whitest', locating her power in her interconnected whiteness, religious authority, feminine beauty, intellect, and virginity.[84] This language is not unique to Huntingdon's network, but Marston and Fletcher emphasize the value of bright whiteness to a striking degree. In doing so, they show that women — known at the time as the 'lesser sex' — derive great power from their society's privileging of elite whiteness.[85]

The other crucial component of women's authority, according to Fletcher's play, is a particular type of generosity. Cloe is the wrong kind of generous. She offers her body to any willing shepherd, singing, 'Come and have it' and noting, 'It is Impossible to Ravish mee, / I am soe willing'.[86] Amoret and Clorin instead exhibit kinds of liberality that the play endorses. Amoret forgives freely. After her beloved Perigot stabs her, she calls herself 'kinde and free', forgiving him even 'before you aske of mee'.[87] Even when Perigot hurts her a second time, she offers mercy, noting that she can easily 'forget' her 'former griefs.'[88] Other characters speak of Clorin's munificence, her 'great power' that has 'often cur'd' people and animals, and Clorin vows to do whatever she can to better her community.[89] She says simply, 'Clorin is ready to do good to all'.[90]

Clorin's willingness to share her bounty makes her an ideal patron. McMullan suggests that it is 'perhaps possible' to understand Clorin's character as offering implicit praise of Queen Elizabeth I, the countess of Huntingdon, and the countess of Derby.[91] There are traces of these women in Clorin, I suggest, because Fletcher — like Marston — uses the language of fairness, chastity, and generosity that surrounds Huntingdon and other female patrons in her network. When Thenot meets Clorin, he is amazed 'that such virtue can / Be resident in lesser than a man', a statement that anticipates Henry Hastings, earl of Huntingdon's later praise of his wife's 'masculine vnderstandinge'.[92] Marston's Ashby entertainment explains the authority of a female patron by drawing on imagery associated with other roles in which women lead and support: queens and mothers. To those metaphors, Fletcher adds Clorin's roles of healer, tutor, and judge. Clorin uses magic to make people physically well, teaches women and men the moral values of their community, and judges how well others adhere to those values. It is a small step from Clorin to a woman who patronizes drama — a woman who might serve as a virtuous figurehead, a teacher, or a judge. Karen Britland has argued that Fletcher's plays became popular at the Caroline court because they offered

a new model for courtly behaviour in which 'spiritually strong women' act as 'caretakers of a community's moral health'.[93] Although Britland identifies these themes as a 'new Caroline sensibility' imposed on an older text, they are discernible in the play-text itself, and literature patronized by the countesses of Derby and Huntingdon had promoted this idea decades earlier.

If *The Faithful Shepherdess* reveals Huntingdon's influence, as I have been arguing here, why did Fletcher choose not to dedicate the play to her? Although it is possible that they had not yet established a patron-client relationship, Fletcher's dedications reveal that he and Huntingdon moved in similar circles and likely knew each other at the time of the play's publication. What might his dedicatees offer the play that Huntingdon could not? In Fletcher's preface to *The Faithful Shepherdess*, he argues that his gentlemen dedicatees — patrons Walter Aston, William Skipwith, and Robert Townsend — have a 'touch' that makes plays 'good' or 'heroical'.[94] They have saved this play ('Redeem'd it from corruption') and will continue to elevate its status by virtue of their attachment to it.[95] The countess of Huntingdon's absence from this group indicates two limitations of her authority as a patron: her geography and her gender. She was a powerful figure in her region and had established Ashby as a place of literary productivity, but Fletcher sought wider, urban audiences because he wished to belong in London among like-minded men. Huntingdon's gender probably mattered too. As I showed earlier, elite women supported theatrical production in multiple ways. Several closet, university, and Inns of Court plays were printed with female dedicatees. Yet it was unusual in 1610 to dedicate a printed commercial playbook to a woman. Only one pre-1610 example remains: Ben Jonson dedicated a copy of *Cynthia's Revels* (1601) to Lucy Russell, countess of Bedford. Fletcher dedicated none of his plays to any woman. The idea of the commercial theatre as a boys only club — showcasing the talent of male artists, supported by male politicians and patrons, and printed by and for a network of male readers — is familiar to students of early modern English drama. It is, to a certain extent, a fantasy created and sustained by those men. *The Faithful Shepherdess* helps construct that fantasy by eliding the influence of a female patron behind the scenes.

In *The Faithful Shepherdess*, Fletcher appropriates the women-led theatrical space of pastoral pageantry while treating feminine authority as something that men can define and regulate. The play envisions ways for men to rule governments and institutions, while women reign over moral and social matters. These issues are not purely domestic; instead, they are the values and norms upon which society relies. Clorin sidesteps patriarchal authority by using her knowledge, social position, race, and chastity to carve out a space for herself. Once she has

that power over others, she does not overrule the patriarchy or work to transform social values. Instead, she embraces the conventions of the system that grants her authority and gives back to it. Clorin is generous with her time and knowledge, and the play's happy ending can be attributed to her generosity, together with the chastity and fairness that bring her power. This message is very much in line with the values professed by the countesses of Huntingdon and Derby, who worked within the system to embrace their own privileges. Others may have used patronage as 'a form of activism', as Julie Crawford argues, but Huntingdon and Derby did not seek to change the system, especially the class and racial hierarchies that benefited them.[96] *The Faithful Shepherdess* shares its main didactic message with Marston's Ashby entertainment: if women are chaste (sexually loyal to men), fair (high-ranking and beautifully white), and bountiful (generous with their resources), they can govern themselves and their communities without overturning society.

Future Directions: Women Patrons of Drama

Marston's Ashby manuscript and *The Faithful Shepherdess* quarto are two of many textual testaments to the broad theatrical and literary network of the countess of Huntingdon. My examination of her influence on drama has focused only on a three year span, 1607 to 1610, when Huntingdon was launching her patronage career, but there is more to uncover about her impact. Although Marston turned away from the theatre after he wrote the Ashby entertainment, Fletcher was just getting started, and his other plays are worth re-examining with Huntingdon's patronage in mind. Might Huntingdon and her circle have inspired characters like Maria in *The Tamer Tamed, or The Woman's Prize*? Maria makes space for feminine authority by imagining marriage as a 'fellowship' between two dutiful servants who also possess independent wills.[97] Huntingdon's example may have inspired other women to support theatrical activity too. Her sister–in-law — Katherine Hastings Stanhope, countess of Chesterfield — later patronized playwright Philip Massinger. Especially because the countess of Chesterfield otherwise patronized local writers and ministers connected to her family, it is likely that she met Massinger through Fletcher or someone else in Huntingdon's network. Massinger praised Chesterfield for being morally 'good' because she is 'A Hastings', evoking Huntingdon and her husband as model patrons.[98] David Bergeron has argued that the countess of Chesterfield was Massinger's entry into 'a coterie of related patrons', including at least two male relatives to whom Massinger and Shirley dedicated plays in the 1630s.[99]

Finally, I hope that my study of the countess of Huntingdon will inspire future investigations into female patrons' specific impact. I expect my list of thirty-one patrons to grow as more scholars look for the women behind English drama. Patrons whose influences survive in evidence other than dedications and company names can be challenging to find, but I suggest two ways forward. First, although many patronage studies focus on relationships between one patron and one writer, patrons collaborated too. After all, patrons are useful when they have extensive networks. I invite future scholars to look closely at the mothers, wives, and daughters of famous patrons. Do they correspond with writers? Feature in poems? Second, in addition to looking for moments when a writer names a patron, what might we learn by attending to absence, as I have done with *The Faithful Shepherdess*? When a work has multiple dedications or excerpts of it survive in miscellanies, who is missing but connected to other writers or dedicatees? Once we accept that female patrons contributed in wide-ranging and crucial ways to theatrical production, we can find them even when they seem hidden, and we can understand early modern stages as less exclusively focused on men.

Appendix: Women Patrons of English Drama before 1660

Abbreviations:

- **TPED**: David M. Bergeron, *Textual Patronage in English Drama, 1570–1640* (Aldershot, 2006), 72–91.
- **DEEP**: Alan B. Farmer and Zachary Lesser, eds, *DEEP: Database of Early English Playbooks*, 2016, http://deep.sas.upenn.edu.
- **EDC**: John Tucker Murray, *English Dramatic Companies, 1558–1642* (New York, 1910), 2:406.
- **REED**: *REED: Patrons and Performances*, https://library2.utm.utoronto.ca/otra/reed/.

Name	Play, Playwright, or Company	Source
Katherine Brandon, duchess of Suffolk	Duchess of Suffolk's Players (1547–65)	REED
Elizabeth (Bland) Cary	Elizabeth Cary, *The Tragedie of Mariam, the Faire Queene of Iewry. Written by that Learned, Vertuous, and Truly Noble Ladie, E.C.* (London, 1613; STC: 4613)	DEEP
Elizabeth (Tanfield) Cary, Viscountess Falkland	John Marston, *The Workes of Mr. Iohn Marston, Being Tragedies and Comedies, Collected into One Volume* (London, 1633; STC: 17471)	DEEP; TPED
Joan (Wentworth) Cheyney	Henry Cheeke, *A Certayne Tragedie Wrytten Fyrst in Italian, by F.N.B. Entituled, Freewyl, and Translated into Englishe* ([London, 1573]; STC: 18419)	DEEP
Elizabeth (Cromwell) Claypole	Richard Flecknoe, *Love's Dominion, A Dramatique Piece, Full of Excellent Moralitie; Written as a Pattern for the Reformed Stage* (London, 1654; Wing: F1228)	DEEP
Theophila (Berkeley) Coke	Joseph Rutter, *The Second Part of the Cid* (London, 1640; STC: 5771)	DEEP; TPED

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Appendix (*continued*)

Name	Play, Playwright, or Company	Source
Isabella (Sackville) Compton, countess of Northampton	Cosmo Manuche, *The Just General, a Tragi:Comedy, Written by Major Cosmo Manuche* (London, 1652; Wing: M549); William Hemings, *The Fatal Contract, a French Tragedy. As it vvas Acted vvith great Applause by her Majesties Servants. Written by William Hemings, Master of Arts of Oxon. Printed by the Original Copy* (London, 1653; Wing: H1422); George Chapman [or Henry Glapthorne?], *Revenge for Honour, a Tragedy, by George Chapman* (London, 1654; Wing: C1949)	DEEP
Anne (Windsor) Grey	Robert Wilmot, et. al., *The Tragedie of Tancred and Gismund. Compiled by the Gentlemen of the Inner Temple, and by them presented before her Miestie. Newly reuised and polished according to the decorum of these daies. By R.W.* (London, 1591; STC 25764)	DEEP; TPED
Elizabeth (Stanley) Hastings, countess of Huntingdon	John Fletcher; John Marston	
Mary (Sidney) Herbert, countess of Pembroke	Abraham Fraunce, *The Countesse of Pembrokes Yuychurch. Conteining the affectionate life, and vnfortunate death of Phillis and Amyntas: That in a Pastorall; This in a Funerall: both in English Hexameters. By Abraham Fravnce* (London, 1591; STC: 11340); William Gager, *Vlysses Redvx Tragoedia Nova. In Aede Christi Oxoniae Publice Academicis Recitata, Octauo Idvs Febrvarii. 1591* (Oxford, 1592; STC: 11516); Samuel Daniel, *Cleopatra* in *Delia and Rosamond Augmented. Cleopatra. By Samuel Daniel* (London 1594; STC: 6243.4); Philip Sidney, 'The Lady of May' in *The Countesse of Pembrokes Arcadia. Written by Sir Philip Sidney Knight. Now the Third Time Published, with Sundry New Additions of the Same Author* (London, 1598; STC: 22541)	DEEP; TPED

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Appendix (*continued*)

Name	Play, Playwright, or Company	Source
Mary (Cokayne) Howard, Lady Effingham	Thomas Middleton and William Rowley, *A Covrtly Masqve: The Device Called The VVorld Tost at Tennis. As It Hath Beene Diuers Times Presented to the Contentment of many Noble and Worthy Spectators, By the Prince his Seruants. Inuented, and set downe, by Tho: Middleton & William Rowley, Gent.* (London, 1620; STC: 17909)	DEEP; TPED
Lettice Knollys, countess of Essex	Countess of Essex's Players (1576–80)	REED
Anne Leedes	Edmund Prestwich, *Hippolitus Translated Out of Seneca. By Edmund Prestwich. Together with Divers Other Poems of the Same Authors* (London, 1651; Wing: S2512)	DEEP
Katherine Leigh, Lady Mountjoy	Lady Manche's Players (1571–2)	REED
Catherine Mohun	John Ford, *The Queen, or The Excellency of Her Sex. An Excellent Old Play, Found Out by a Person of Honour, and Given to the Publisher, Alexander Goughe* (London, 1653; Wing: Q155)	DEEP
Mary (Waldegrave) Petre	Robert Wilmot, et al., *The Tragedie of Tancred and Gismund. Compiled by the Gentlemen of the Inner Temple, and by them Presented before her Miestie. Newly Reuised and Polished According to the Decorum of these Daies. By R.W.* (London, 1591; STC 25764)	DEEP; TPED
Catherine (Stanley) Pierrepont, marchioness of Dorchester	James Howell, *The Nvptialls of Pelevs and Thetis. Consisting of a Mask and a Comedy, or the The* [sic.] *Great Royall Ball, Acted Lately in Paris Six Times by the King in Person. The Duke of Anjou. The Duke of Yorke. with Divers Other Noble Men. Also by the Princess Royall Henrette Marie. The Princess of Conty. The Dutchess of Roqvelaure. The Dutchess of Crequy. with Many Other Ladies of Honour* (London, 1654; Wing: H3097)	DEEP

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Appendix (*continued*)

Name	Play, Playwright, or Company	Source
Bridget (Morrison) Radcliffe, countess of Sussex	Thomas Kyd, *Cornelia* (London, 1594; STC: 11622)	DEEP; TPED
Lucy (Harington) Russell, countess of Bedford	Ben Jonson, *The Fountaine of Selfe-loue, Or Cynthia's Revels As It Hath Beene Sundry Times Priuately Acted in the Black-Friers by the Children of Her Maiesties Chappell. Written by Ben: Iohnson* (London, 1601; STC: 14773) [inserted dedication, not in all copies]; Samuel Daniel, *Trve Discription of a Royall Masque. Presented at Hampton Court, vpon Sunday night, being the eight of Ianuary. 1604. And Personated by the Queenes Most Excellent Majestie, Attended by Eleuen Ladies of Honour [The Vision of the Twelve Goddesses]* (London, 1604; STC: 6264)	DEEP; TPED
Dorothy (Devereux) Shirley	James Shirley, *Changes: or, Love in a Maze. A Comedie, as It Was Presented at the Private House in Salisbury Court, by the Company of His Majesties Revels. Written by Iames Shirley, Gent.* (London, 1632; STC: 22437)	DEEP; TPED
Martha (Suckling) Southcot	John Suckling, *The Sad One* in *The Last Remains of Sir John Suckling. Being a Full Collection of All His Poems and Letters which Have Been So Long Expected, and Never Till Now Published. With The Licence and Approbation of His Noble and Dearest Friends* (London, 1659; Wing: S6130)	DEEP
Catherine (Hastings) Stanhope	Philip Massinger, *The Dvke of Millaine. A Tragaedie. As It Hath Beene Often Acted by His Maiesties Seruants, at the Blacke Friers. Written by Philip Massigner Gent.* (London, 1623; STC: 17634)	DEEP; TPED
Alice (Spenser) Stanley, countess of Derby	Countess of Derby's Men (1592)	EDC

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Appendix (*continued*)

Name	Play, Playwright, or Company	Source
Mary (Villiers) Stuart, duchess of Lennox and Richmond	Leonard Willan, *Astraea, or, True Love's Myrrour. A Pastorall. Composed by Leonard Willan, Gent.* (London, 1651; Wing: W2262); Richard Flecknoe, *Ariadne Deserted by Thesevs, and Found and Courted by Bacchus. A Dramatick Piece Apted for Recitative Musick. Written and Composed by Richard Fleckno* (London, 1654; Wing: F1209); Lodowick Carlell, *The Passionate Lovers, a Tragi-comedy. The First and Second Parts. Twice Presented before the King and Queens Majesties at Somerset-House, and Very Often at the Private House in Black-Friars, with Great Applause, by His Late Majesties Servants. Written by Lodowick Carlell, Gent.* (London, 1655; Wing: C581)	DEEP
Lucy (Mervyn) Touchet, Lady Audley	Samuel Brandon, *The Tragicomoedi of the Vertuous Octauia. Done by Samvel Brandon* (London, 1598; STC: 3544)	DEEP; TPED
Joanna (Granville) Thornhill	T.R., *The Extravagant Shepherd, or, The History of the Shepherd Lysis an Anti–romance; Written Originally in French, and Now Made English* (London, 1654; Wing: S4704)	DEEP
Maria Thynne	Samuel Brandon, *The Tragicomoedi of the Vertuous Octauia. Done by Samvel Brandon* (London, 1598; STC: 3544)	DEEP
Frances Wildegoss	Leonard Willan, *Orgula, or, The Fatall Error a Tragedy. Composed by L. W. Whereunto, Is Annexed a Preface, Discovering the True Nature of Poesie, with the Proper Use and Intention of Such Publique Divertisments* (London, 1658; Wing: W2264)	DEEP
Anne Willoughby	William Sampson, *The Vow Breaker. Or, The Faire Maide of Clifton. In Notinghamshire as It Hath Beene Diuers Times Acted by Severall Companies with Great Applause. By William Sampson* (London, 1636; STC: 21688)	DEEP; TPED
Mary (Sidney) Wroth	Ben Jonson, *The Alchemist. VVritten by Ben. Ionson* (London, 1612; STC: 14755)	DEEP; TPED
Mary Wyrley	John Ford, *The Ladies Triall. Acted by Both Their Majesties Servants at the Private House in Drvry Lane* (London, 1639; STC: 11161)	DEEP; TPED

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1 Edmund Spenser, *Colin Clouts Come Home Againe* (London, 1595; STC: 23077), C4r–v.

2 Julie Crawford, *Mediatrix: Women, Politics, and Literary Production in Early Modern England* (Oxford, 2014), 4, https://doi.org/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780198712619.001.0001.

3 For excellent research on theatrical patronage, see Paul Whitfield White and Suzanne R. Westfall, eds, *Shakespeare and Theatrical Patronage in Early Modern England* (Cambridge, 2002).

4 David M. Bergeron, 'Women as Patrons of English Renaissance Drama', in *Patronage in the English Renaissance*, ed. Guy Fitch Lytle and Stephen Orgel (Princeton, 1981), 274–90, https://doi.org/10.1515/9781400855919.274. A revised version appears in Bergeron, *Textual Patronage in English Drama, 1570–1640* (Aldershot, Hants, 2006), 72–91, https://doi.org/10.4324/9781351148047.

5 Alan B. Farmer and Zachary Lesser, eds, *DEEP: Database of Early English Playbooks*, 2016, http://deep.sas.upenn.edu. In addition to twenty-five non-royal women dedicatees, extant printed playbooks (through 1660) have dedications to five queens and princesses.

6 *REED: Patrons and Performances*, https://library2.utm.utoronto.ca/otra/reed/, accessed 9 January 2024.

7 I follow Barbara J. Harris and Vanessa Wilkie in understanding aristocratic women's activities as 'careers' to emphasize their social importance. Harris, *English Aristocratic Women, 1450–1550: Marriage and Family, Property and Careers* (Oxford, 2002), 5–6, https://doi.org/10.1093/oso/9780195056204.001.0001; Wilkie, 'The Context for the Text: The Masque Entertainments of the Egerton-Hastings Family', *Huntington Library Quarterly* 83.2 (2020), 291–304, 294, https://doi.org/10.1353/hlq.2020.0011.

8 Lawrence Manley and Sally-Beth MacLean, *Lord Strange's Men and Their Plays* (New Haven, 2014), 12–30, https://doi.org/10.12987/9780300206890.
9 Ibid.
10 John Tucker Murray, *English Dramatic Companies, 1558–1642* (New York, 1910), 2.406.
11 The countess of Derby was related to the lord chamberlain by marriage; her sister, Elizabeth Spencer Carey, married the lord chamberlain's son. Leeds Barroll speculates that she was involved in the company's move because the transfer happened quickly and to someone in her network, and I agree. Barroll, 'Shakespeare, Noble Patrons, and the Pleasure of "Common" Playing', in White and Westfall, *Shakespeare and Theatrical Patronage in Early Modern England*, 105–9.
12 French R. Fogle, '"Such a Rural Queen": The Countess Dowager of Derby as Patron', in Fogle and Louis A. Knafla, *Patronage in Late Renaissance England: Papers Read at a Clark Library Seminar, 14 May 1977* (Los Angeles, 1983), 25.
13 'Alice Spencer Network [2, 1560–1637, 61–100%]'. *Six Degrees of Francis Bacon*. http://www.sixdegreesoffrancisbacon.com/?ids=10011359&min_confidence=60&type=network. On the dramatic patronage of Alice, countess of Derby, see Vanessa Wilkie, '"Such Daughters and Such a Mother": The Countess of Derby and Her Three Daughters', Ph.D dissertation, University of California at Riverside, 2009, 164–95.
14 Edmund Spenser, *Complaints. Containing Sundrie Small Poemes of the Worlds Vanitie. VVhereof the Next Page Maketh Mention* (London, 1591; STC: 23078), E2r; Spenser, *Colin Clouts*, C4r.
15 I discuss the Harefield entertainment in greater detail in *The Elizabethan Country House Entertainment: Print, Performance, and Gender* (Cambridge, 2016), 109–22, https://doi.org/10.1017/cbo9781316460818. Derby's second husband, Thomas Egerton, was also a notable patron of the arts, though not of drama. On his patronage, see V.B. Heltzel, 'Sir Thomas Egerton as Patron', *Huntington Library Quarterly* 11.2 (1948), 105–27, https://doi.org/10.2307/3816073.
16 On dating the entertainment, see Arnold Davenport, *The Poems of John Marston* (Liverpool, 1961), 40; James Knowles, 'Marston, Skipwith and *The Entertainment at Ashby*', *English Manuscript Studies* 3 (1992), 150–1.
17 Ellesmere 34/B/9, ff 2r–v.
18 Ibid, f 2r.
19 Wilkie, 'Context for the Text', 291–304.
20 Knowles, '*Entertainment at Ashby*', 137. See also Richard Cust, 'Honour, rhetoric, and political culture: the earl of Huntingdon and his enemies', in *Political Culture and Cultural Politics in Early Modern England*, ed. Susan D. Amussen and Mark

Kishlansky (Manchester, 1995), 84-111. Henry Hastings became earl of Huntingdon in 1604 upon his grandfather's death but did not assume the role of lord lieutenant until he turned twenty-one in April 1607.

21 Huntington Library, Ellesmere MS 34/B/9, f 1r. Modern editions of Marston's Ashby entertainment include Davenport, *Poems*, 192–207 and 'The Entertainment at Ashby', ed. Martin Butler, in *The Complete Works of John Marston*, forthcoming from Oxford University Press.

22 Knowles, '*Entertainment at Ashby*', 158.

23 Ellesmere 34/B/9, f 2r.

24 Ibid, f 4r.

25 Ibid, f 5r.

26 Wilkie, 'Context for the Text', 296–7.

27 Ellesmere 34/B/9, f 4v.

28 Ibid, f 4r.

29 Ibid, f 3v.

30 Ibid, f 4v. Likely, 'makes' is an error for 'make'.

31 Ibid, f 5v.

32 Ibid, ff 5r–v.

33 Ibid, ff 4r–v, 5v.

34 Ibid, f 4r.

35 Huntington Library, Hastings 4819.

36 Knowles, '*Entertainment at Ashby*', 151–3.

37 Ellesmere 34/B/9, f 3r.

38 Ibid, f 8r.

39 Kim F. Hall, *Things of Darkness: Economies of Race and Gender in Early Modern England* (Ithaca, 1995), 177–8, https://doi.org/10.7591/9781501725456; Hannah Arendt, 'Race-Thinking before Racism', *The Review of Politics* 6.1 (1944), 36–73, https://doi.org/10.1017/s0034670500002783. For a model of Arendt's applications to early modern literature, see Patricia Akhimie, *Shakespeare and the Cultivation of Difference: Race and Conduct in the Early Modern World* (New York, 2018), 23, https://doi.org/10.4324/9781351125048. For more on 'fair' as a racialized term with moral implications, see Bernadette Andrea, 'Black Skin, The Queen's Masques: Africanist Ambivalence and Feminine Author(ity) in The Masques of *Blackness* and *Beauty*', *English Literary Renaissance* 29.2 (1999), 246–81, https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1475-6757.1999.tb01150.x, and Edith Snook, *Women, Beauty and Power in Early Modern England: A Feminist Literary History* (Houndmills, Basingstoke, 2011), 39, https://doi.org/10.1057/9780230302235.

40 Ibid, 23–4.

41 Kimberly Poitevin, 'Inventing Whiteness: Cosmetics, Race, and Women in Early Modern England', *Journal for Early Modern Cultural Studies* 11.1 (2011), 59–89, https://doi.org/10.1353/jem.2011.0009.
42 Peter Erickson, 'Representations of Blacks and Blackness in the Renaissance', *Criticism* 35.4 (1993), 499–527; Farah Karim-Cooper, *Cosmetics in Shakespearean and Renaissance Drama* (Edinburgh, 2006), 18, https://doi.org/10.3366/edinburgh/9780748619931.001.0001.
43 Philip J. Finkelpearl, *Court and Country Politics in the Plays of Beaumont and Fletcher* (Princeton, 1990), 29–31, https://doi.org/10.1515/9781400860722; Gordon McMullan, *The Politics of Unease in the Plays of John Fletcher* (Amherst, 1994), 32–5.
44 See, for example, the three entertainments published as *Speeches Deliuered to her Maiestie This Last Progresse at the Right Honorable the Lady Russels, at Bissam, the Right Honorable the Lorde Chandos at Sudley, at the Right Honorable the Lord Norris, at Ricorte* (Oxford, 1592; STC: 7600).
45 Matthew Steggle, 'John Marston's *Entertainment at Ashby* at the 1606 Fleet Conduit Eclogue', *Medieval and Renaissance Drama in England* 19 (2006), 249–55, 252–5.
46 Ashby's steward John Burrowes calls the journey a 'progress' in his account book: Huntington Library, Hastings Financial Papers (HAF) 6/4.
47 Huntington Library, Ellesmere 213.
48 Steggle, 'Fleet Conduit'.
49 Ellesmere 34/B/9, f 14v.
50 Ibid, f 15r.
51 Ibid, f 9v.
52 Ibid, f 9r.
53 Thomas Playfere, *The Meane in Mourning. A Sermon Preached at Saint Maryes Spittle in London on Tuesday the Easter Weeke. 1595* (London, 1596; STC: 20015), B5r; William Shakespeare, *Hamlet*, in *The New Oxford Shakespeare: Modern Critical Edition*, ed. Gary Taylor, et al. (Oxford, 2016), 1.2.147–8, https://doi.org/10.1093/oseo/instance.00148657.
54 Knowles, '*Entertainment at Ashby*'.
55 British Library Add MS 25707.
56 Ibid, f 173v.
57 Ibid, f 174v.
58 Ibid, ff 175r–v.
59 Mary C. Erler, '"Chaste Sports, Juste Prayes, & All Softe Delight": Harefield 1602 and Ashby 1607, Two Female Entertainments', *The Elizabethan Theatre* 14 (1996), 1–25, 19.

60 An excerpt from Marston's entertainment appears in British Library, Sloane MS 848, ff 9r–10r.
61 Huntington Library, HA 13333, f 1v.
62 HA 13333, f 1r. The Huntington Library estimates the letter's date as 1626; McMullan says 1620 in *Unease*, 16.
63 HA 13333, f 1r.
64 Ibid.
65 Ibid.
66 McMullan, *Unease*, 35.
67 Most scholars date the play's composition and early performances to 1607–9. I follow Martin Wiggins's best guess of 1608 in *British Drama 1533–1642: A Catalogue, Vol. 5: 1603–1608*, Oxford Scholarly Editions Online, # 1582, https://doi.org/10.1093/oseo/instance.wiggins1582. Its quarto text was published without a date; for the 1609–10 estimate, see John Fletcher, *The Faithful Shepherdess*, ed. W.W. Greg, in *The Works of Francis Beaumont and John Fletcher* (London, 1908), 3.3.
68 McMullan, *Unease*, 15–16, 63. McMillan connects Aston to the Huntingdons through Drayton and the Beaumonts; the three surviving copies of John Donne's letter to the countess of Huntingdon are ascribed to Aston.
69 Philip J. Finkelpearl, 'Henry Walley of the Stationers' Company and John Marston', *The Papers of the Bibliographical Society of America* 56.3 (1962), 366–8, https://doi.org/10.1086/pbsa.56.3.24300757.
70 John Fletcher, *The Faithfull Shepheardesse* ([London, 1610]; STC: 11069). I discuss the prefatory matter in the order it appears in the Huntington Library copy (shelfmark 128958), one of the fullest versions available. Some copies of the quarto — including the British Library copy, included in facsimile in Early English Books Online — exclude the poems by Jonson and Chapman. Instead of leading with Field and Beaumont, they begin with Fletcher's dedications to gentlemen patrons, foregrounding elite patronage as an antidote to foolish public opinion.
71 Fletcher, *Faithfull Shepheardesse*, ¶2v.
72 Fletcher, *Faithful Shepherdess*, ed. Greg, 7; Martin Wiggins, *Shakespeare and the Drama of His Time* (Oxford, 2000), 114.
73 Fletcher, *Faithful Shepherdess*, ed. Greg, 1.1.105.
74 Deanne Williams, *Girl Culture in the Middle Ages and Renaissance* (London, 2023), 149, https://doi.org/10.5040/9781350343238.
75 Catherine A. Henze, 'Unraveling Beaumont from Fletcher with Music, Misogyny, and Masque', *Studies in English Literature, 1500–1900* 44.2 (2004), 379–404, 391, https://doi.org/10.1353/sel.2004.0016; Meghan C. Andrews, *Shakespeare, the Inns of*

Court, and the Jacobean Court: Authorial Networks in Early Modern Drama, unpublished manuscript.

76 Kathleen McLuskie, *Renaissance Dramatists: Feminist Readings* (Atlantic Highlands, NJ, 1989), 203–4.
77 Fletcher, *Faithful Shepherdess*, ed. Greg, 1.1.103–5.
78 Ibid, 5.5.137.
79 Ibid, 1.2.61–6, 75.
80 Ibid, 3.1.389, 423.
81 Ibid, 2.2.60–1, 129–31.
82 Ibid, 1.3.163.
83 Ibid, 1.1.91; 2.3.11.
84 Ibid, 5.5.236–7.
85 I am thinking here of Melissa E. Sanchez's call for feminist scholars to think about race when studying white women writers. Although I analyze language written by men, their female patron benefited from the ways they justified feminine authority. Sanchez, 'What Were Women Writers?' *Criticism* 63.1–2 (2021), 63–73, https://doi.org/10.13110/criticism.63.1-2.0063.
86 Fletcher, *Faithful Shepherdess*, ed. Greg, 1.3.83, 3.1.212–13.
87 Ibid, 4.4.33–4.
88 Ibid, 5.5.49.
89 Ibid, 5.3.74–5.
90 Ibid, 5.5.26.
91 McMullan, *Politics of Unease*, 70.
92 Fletcher, *Faithful Shepherdess*, ed. Greg, 2.1.83–4; Huntington Library, Hastings MS 5515, f 1r.
93 Karen Britland, 'Queen Henrietta Maria's Theatrical Patronage' in *Henrietta Maria: Piety, Politics, and Patronage*, ed. Erin Griffey (Aldershot, 2008), 66, https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315253428-12.
94 Fletcher, *Faithful Shepherdess*, ed. Greg, 15–17.
95 Ibid, 15.
96 Crawford, *Mediatrix*, 4.
97 John Fletcher, *The Tamer Tamed*, 1.2.140, ed. Lucy Munro (London, 2010), 19, https://doi.org/10.5040/9781408167045.00000017.
98 Quoted in Percy Simpson, 'Two Poems of Philip Massinger', *The Athenaeum* 4115 (1906), 273.
99 Bergeron, *Textual Patronage*, 193–6.