

**THE BOOK OF HESTER**  
**EDITING AN UNCANONICAL TEXT**  
**LADY HESTER PULTER: Brotherton MS Lt q32, Leeds UK**



**By Maureen E. Mulvihill, Princeton Research Forum, NJ**  
**Writer, Guest Series, *Old Books / New Editions* (2016). Part II of III.**  
**Hosted by Bruce McKinney's [Rare Book Hub](#), San Francisco**  
**Series announcement, [ILAB](#). Part I of Series, "[Anne Killigrew](#)"**



**Brotherton MS Lt q 32, c1645-1665, Leeds UK. 290mm x 190mm x 35mm**

**Two views: Front cover and spine (image of spine, a late addition)**

“Poems Breathed forth by the nobel Hadassas ...”; “written by the Right Honourable H.P.”  
 Spine lettering: “Lady Hesther Pulter’s Poems”. Attributed, by family and by tradition,  
 to Lady Hesther Pulter, *née* Ley (Dublin, c1605? - Hertfordshire, 1678).

With permission, Special Collections, Leeds University Library UK

See [Gallery of Images](#), below, [Image 5](#), for extended caption and other selections.

For information on the binding, from David H. Barry, [Griffin Bookbinding](#),  
 see *Hester’s Book*, page 3.



## HESTER'S BOOK

**E**ditting **Lady Hester Pulter**, an unknown writer of 17<sup>th</sup>-century rural Hertfordshire, was a mighty undertaking, especially for a young scholar. Presently Leverhulme Early Career Fellow, University of Southampton, [Dr Alice Eardley](#) completed her doctoral training in 2008 (University of Warwick), with a dissertation on Pulter's emblem poems (adviser, [Elizabeth Clarke](#)). So Eardley had a longstanding connection to the Pulter subject prior to launching a first-ever edition of Pulter's unusual, uncanonical writings: she had already built a sturdy foundation.

Alice Eardley's *Pulter*, published in 2014 as part of The Other Voice in Early Modern Europe series, University of Toronto (**Image 1**, Gallery of Images, below), is a conservatively modernized print edition (420 pages; soft cover) of Hester Pulter's bound book of manuscript writings: her poetry (120 richly allusive poems, of these 53 numbered but unillustrated emblem poems); and an unfinished prose narrative on sexual violence, "The Unfortunate Florinda." Since 1975, this volume of 17<sup>th</sup>-century writings has been preserved at Leeds University Library (Brotherton Library). (See page 1 and **Image 5**.)

Eardley's edition includes the full text of the bound manuscript, along with a scholarly apparatus, five plates of manuscript selections on high-gloss stock, a glossary of unfamiliar (obscure) references in the writings, a modern map of locations in Pulter's "Florinda," a bibliography, and indices. Hester Pulter's small, personal album of literary jottings and some nicely crafted work, is datable to c1645-1665 (many of the poems' titles include a date). Evidently, Pulter's collected writings were quietly preserved, amended, and possibly expanded since the 1640s by Pulter's family circle and by local Hertfordshire historians, Henry Chauncy and his grandson, Angel Chauncy. The younger Chauncy may have been the main scribe (transcriber) of most of the book's original sheets (see Sarah Ross, "Women and Religious Verse . . .," dissertation, Oxford, 2000).

The writings were collected and assembled by (perhaps) Lady Hester's daughter, Anne Pulter, who took particular interest in her mother's work; likewise, daughter Margaret, of John Milton's circle. Pulter scholars suggest that the bound volume was organized, c1655-1662, during Pulter's lifetime and possibly under her supervision, if not direction, suggesting that Pulter intended the volume for publication, in due course, as a family tribute and a physical artifact of her life, times, and interests. And while Pulter sometimes adopts a penname ("Hadassas", as she spells the Biblical version of her forename), she is not a pseudonymous writer (*cf.* "Ariadne"; "Ephelia"): her identity is not concealed. Pulter's initials are asserted throughout the manuscript and her name appears on the spine of her book (see page 1, above). For locations of "Esther" and the Biblical 'Esther story' in other 17<sup>th</sup>-century writings, see Eardley's Introduction, notes 75, 77.

As apparent in the five handsome plates in Eardley's edition, some of the manuscript is in Pulter's hand (**Image 6**), while most of the folios are transcriptions in the refined, decorative script of an experienced "main scribe", possibly Angel Chauncy (**Image 7**). Many of the poems bear a thick overlay of amendments (marginalia, insertions, revisions) in the hand of Pulter, Angel Chauncy, and a third unidentified contributor (also, **Image 7**). The extent to which Brotherton MS Lt q 32 is a work of corporate authorship by many hands has yet to be considered and worked out. *And that is a serious consideration for all Pulter scholars and future Pulter editors.*

Hester Pulter's writings 'live' in a leather-bound volume (8" x 5"), consisting of 167 inscribed leaves (Eardley's count) and 17 loose sheets; Eardley judges the bound volume to be in "fairly good condition", showing minimal use and handling since Pulter's death in 1678. But there are signs of considerable wear, certainly to the front cover and spine (Page 1, above; **Image 5**); and some of the interior leaves show damage and deterioration (**Image 7**).

**David H. Barry** (Wales UK / St Petersburg, FL; [Griffin Bookbinding](#); conservator, Mulvihill Collection) valuably contributed, on November 6<sup>th</sup>, 2016, the following information on the binding of the Pulter manuscript in view of limited details in the Eardley *Pulter* and the catalogue record at Leeds (and we trust this will be appreciated and useful): "A reversed calfskin binding was selected as the covering for this book of 17<sup>th</sup>-century manuscripts; this gives the appearance, feel, and texture of suede. But reversing the calfskin increases the skin's susceptibility to 'red rot', a powdery red layer of rotting leather. Reversing the calfskin, the binder had removed the first line of defense (the epidermis) in pre-empting such damage. The boards look to be traditional pasteboards, made from pasting sheets of paper together; in this case, handmade paper was probably used for the lamination of layers. This technique was popular in Europe from the mid-16<sup>th</sup> century, falling out of favor in the late 17<sup>th</sup> century and replaced with rope-fiber millboards. The text block, consisting of sections of signatures, has been sewn onto the cords. Spine decoration looks to be blind-tooling, consisting of double thin lines to the front, back, and spine of the Pulter book, with the exception of a gold-tooled leather label applied to the spine, since detached, with only the impression of the tooling now discernible and the author's name barely readable: **Lady Hesther Pulter's Poems.**" Our thanks to David Barry! (This information is a late addition to the essay.)

Pulter's interesting, if idiosyncratic, set of writings remained with the Pulters at the family seat, Broadfield Hall manor house, Cottered Village, Hertfordshire, for some years; it then passed through the hands of near relations and regional associates until it was purchased at Christie's, 8 October 1975, by the Brotherton Library, Leeds University UK (sale price untraced in Eardley's introductory essay); at the time of sale, the Pulter manuscript (Lot 353) was held by [Sir Gilbert Inglefield](#) (1909-1991), architect, collector, and Lord Mayor of London, 1967-1968. Owing to a cataloguing error at Brotherton, the Pulter manuscript was 'lost' to history and to scholarship from 1975 to 1996, when it was 'discovered' by Mark Robson (University of Dundee). Thank you, Mark Robson!

So the Pulter manuscript comes down to us in the 21<sup>st</sup> century with an interesting history; and since its recent recovery, it has summoned energetic attention from book historians, manuscript specialists, and feminist scholars. Viewing recent websites and webpages on the Pulter manuscript, as well as archival projects at Leeds and Warwick, and also recent dissertations on 17<sup>th</sup>-century women writers, we observe a dynamic vanguard of dedicated Pulter scholars: Stefan Graham Christian, Elizabeth Clarke, Clare Doyle, Rachel Dunn, Alice Eardley, Louisa Hall, Sarah Hutton, Rebekah King, Mark Robson, Sarah Ross ... and the list is likely to continue.



### Who was Hester Pulter?

While scholars have much research awaiting them on the Pulter subject, they have collected, since the recovery in 1996 of Pulter's book at Leeds, the basic facts of her life; and our thanks to Alice Eardley who supplies in her edition's detailed Introduction (pp. 1-38) a documentable narrative from which the following *précis* is redacted:

**Hester Pulter (c1605? – 1678)** had Irish roots, and she was first a Dubliner. Before her (teen-age) marriage in 1623 to Arthur Pulter (1603-1689), trained in the law and a sheriff of Hertfordshire in the 1640s, Hester's first exposure was Irish. Though evidently born of English parents (her father's allegiances were to the English crown and the Church of England), Pulter sometimes writes like a rustic Irish poet, with cherished memories of the River Shannon and "sweet Hibernie, where I first had life" (Poem 6, line 147, Eardley's *Pulter*, p. 71). If we read her verse aloud, we hear that Pulter's voice (her sound) is now and again old-style Irish; and we sometimes hear a brash Irish mouth! See her satire on Sir William Davenant's syphilitic nose, or her scatological ridicule of Cromwell.

Hester Pulter was born at St Thomas Court, Dublin City (c1605?), the eighth of eleven children, and the sixth daughter, of James Ley and Mary Petty. Ley was Chief Justice of the King's Bench in Ireland and, thereafter, a privy counselor and the first Earl of Marlborough. In 1608, James Ley was called back to England by James I, and the Leys would eventually settle in Somerset. Mary Ley, Hester's mother, died in Somerset, 1613 (see Eardley and Verbeke, "Remembering Mary Ley," *Lias* 35 [2008]); and how marvelous that she has been remembered). Some writers on Pulter find her "undereducated", noting her spelling and idiosyncratic diction ("circumvolveth", "The Revolution," line 1). Yet as the daughter of an earl, she would have received a sound education befitting a child of her father's rank and Stuart court connections. (With James Ley's elevation to the earldom of Marlborough, his several daughters enjoyed the courtesy title, Lady.) Penmanship, we see, was not Pulter's strong suit (**Image 6**); and perhaps it was her rather common, unrefined script which invited the lovely scribal transcriptions of her verse by the Chauncy circle (maybe others). Although most of Pulter's life was limited to maternal and domestic concerns at her rural estate, she had associates who kept her current on literary vogues. Among these were John Harrington,

M.P., in London; Pulter's sister, Lady Margaret Ley, later Hobson, a member of Milton's circle (Sonnet X, "To the Lady Margaret Ley"); and Pulter's sister-in-law, Margaret (Ley), later duchess dowager of Marlborough; *et al.*

The writings of Hester Pulter show us a familiarity with Biblical themes, devotional verse, the 'metaphysical' poets (especially George Herbert, Donne, Marvell), and of special interest, the New Astronomy. Above all else, Hester Pulter was an astral poetess; and her lines on spinning planets, space travel, atoms, and extraterrestrial life display extraordinary imagination; "Me thinks I play at football with the stars," she writes to her daughters (Poem 38, line 12, Eardley, *Pulter*, p. 135); see **Image 10**. Direct connections between Pulter and her literary contemporary, the remarkable Margaret Cavendish, also a believer in the other-worldly, have not surfaced, to date, other than the probative fact of Pulter's poem on the death of Cavendish's brother, Royalist patriot Charles Lucas (Colchester, 1648).

The long life of Hester Pulter (some 70 years; other sources record 80) was a small life, a life pathetically played out in the dedicated space of Broadfield Hall manor. And while some of her poems sing happily of home, environs, and family, we hear direct, overt utterance of continuing isolation. As she writes in one of her best poems, "Aletheia's Pearl": "Thus have I lived a sad and weary life, / Thirteen a maid, and thirty-three a wife" (Poem 32, lines 118-119, Eardley, *Pulter*, p. 129). Most of her depression resulted from many "sad hours" in her birthing chamber, a 'dark room of shadows' (**Image 4**). Between 1624 and 1648, she gave birth to fifteen children (only two survived her). Interestingly, the father of those children is conspicuously absent in Hester's book. We do not find loving sentiments for Arthur Pulter, suggesting that those 15 pregnancies were not entirely her idea. And then adding to Lady Hester's depression were deaths in the family. Pulter's most poignant poems are on the greatest of human sorrows: the death of children. The passing of daughters, Margaret and Penelope, left her devastated for a time. And there were other losses. Offering some solace were contacts with relatives and friends in Hertfordshire and in London, though the extent to which Pulter was mobile and visited acquaintances outside of Hertfordshire has yet to be determined (she did visit John Harrington, MP, in London in 1652, for three weeks, an exception to her usual way of life).

Hester Pulter was mostly housebound throughout her long marriage; and her poetic voice does not disguise her resentment and emotional toll. Writing was her escape and refuge: the agency of writing, the creative process itself, lifted Hester Pulter out of a small terrestrial space into a parallel universe of light and transcendence. This may sound extravagant to 21<sup>st</sup>-century ears, but Pulter had a genuine belief in such realities. (Students of Margaret Cavendish will say yea!)



## Editing an Uncanonical Literary Manuscript

Eardley's project held her in a challenging dimension; and by any standard, she was doing something entirely brave: Alice Eardley was moving a 'complete' corpus of unrecorded literary writings from 17<sup>th</sup>-century script to 21<sup>st</sup>-century print. This was an ambitious, exacting labor, involving a deep media transference of handwritten work to a wholly different medium. Briefly, these would have been her editorial concerns:

### I.

*Project rationale:* Overall merit; long-term value of the entire intellectual effort.  
*Authenticity* (spurious? forged? a hoax?): Credibility of the MS (dates, paper, binding).  
*Attribution:* Evidence in the MS of the writer's identity, or contemporary verification.  
*Legibility:* Readability of the MS (can it be *read* and worked with?)  
*Medium for the edition:* Print? digital? If print: a facsimile edition? a modern edition?

### II.

*Organization of the material:* Order / sequencing of the writings.  
*Textual Editing:* Changes to the text (modernizing spelling, punctuation, syntax).

### III.

*Apparatus:*  
*Introductory essay:* Positioning the material (contexts; literary merit of the writings).  
*A Note on the Edition:* Principles of scholarly editing adopted in the edition.  
*Annotations:* Explanatory notes (unfamiliar textual references); Contextual notes.  
*Placement of annotations:* Footnotes? Endnotes? Also, the numbering of notes.  
*Images:* Reproduction / display of the original material (critical in such editions).  
*Secondary Images:* In this case, a modern map, keyed to the "Florinda" narrative.  
*Glossary:* Obscure references in the writings (the *Pulter* offers a 17-page Glossary).  
*Bibliography:* A primary and secondary list of selected sources.  
*Indices:* A general index; also a first-line-and-titles index.

### IV.

*Publisher:* An established imprint, with a strong list of scholarly titles and respected editors.

### V.

*Digital adjunct to print edition:* Eardley has constructed a creative multimedia website as an important supplement to the print edition (see her [Digital Companion](#)).

## VI

*Funding:* Too often editors of editions are shouldered with heavy costs, especially permission fees. Such fees, if they must exist at all, should be minimal; and the editor should arrange for even partial funding from his or her employer, a foundation or specialized society, or a personal sponsor. Likewise, travel-to-collections costs.

For an authoritative guide, see G. Thomas Tanselle, *Introduction to Scholarly Editing*. Seminar syllabus. NYC: Columbia University Book Arts Press, second edition, 2002.

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**B**ut there is no perfect book. And for all of its stunning achievements, the Eardley *Pulter* includes a few omissions; some incidental, others somewhat serious (and this list is tendered in a constructive spirit, and it may assist future editors of Hester Pulter):

**(i)** A likeness of Pulter herself (**Image 2**); at the very least, Eardley might have included a ‘stand-in’ image for Pulter, being a portrait of a Hertfordshire woman of Pulter’s social standing, or perhaps an image of a female Pulter relative (see National Portrait Gallery, London, online Search the Collection matches for Pulters, Leys, Hobsons, etc.).

**(ii)** More contextualization of the material in the annotations (footnotes) to the book’s first section (sixty-seven poems); e.g., Pulter’s important Poem 6, “Universal Dissolution” (176 lines), merited a generous note on other ‘dissolution’ poems, particularly John Donne’s.

**(iii)** Information on the physical properties of Pulter’s book; e.g., binding, and especially paper (chainlines, watermarks) and inks; such information is important to all future attributional work on Pulter and also useful in the cataloguing of the Pulter manuscript.

**(iv)** Paleography: Attention to styles of script in the Pulter manuscript; e.g., “Universal Dissolution,” mentioned above, shows us at least three different hands (**Image 7**), meriting a dedicated appendix on this particular poem; such an appendix would discuss the scripts and also show Eardley working textually with that poem and its obvious challenges. (Did the publisher’s editors not engage a specialist in 17<sup>th</sup>-century scripts?)

**(v)** A first-ever chronology / timeline for Hester Pulter; also pedigrees (genealogies) of the Pulter and Ley families.

**(vi)** A more inclusive bibliography: The edition’s useful list of secondary sources should have included the present authoritative database (“textbase”) on women writers in the British Isles, [The Orlando Project](#) (original project principals: Patricia Clements, Isobel Grundy, Susan Brown); likewise, seminal work on the rubrics of scholarly editing, some conveniently online, by Tanselle (see hyperlink, above), as well as printed work by David

C. Greetham, W. Speed Hill, Michael Hunter, David L. Vander Meulen, *et al.* (Was a consulting textual specialist not engaged by the publisher's editors?)

**(vii)** Images: The edition needed to display more than five folios from the manuscript; and certainly it needed to show the physical book (this essay supplies, on page 1, two images of the book; these images should have appeared in the edition). It is this visual component, especially in the case of an unfamiliar, uncanonical text, which effectively grounds ('authenticates') the entire project for modern readers. Specialists and non-specialists need to *see* what Pulter's book looked like in its original state. (The five manuscript selections are excellent choices and they are appreciated, but more images from -- *and of* -- the book were required.)

**(viii)** Collegial deference: While Eardley's acknowledgments are extensive (xi-xii) and a pleasure to read, some readers may be disappointed not to see a nod to senior colleagues who produced fine precedents of scholarly editions of Pulter's literary contemporaries; we might mention editions by Patrick Cullen, Robert C. Evans, Patrick Thomas, several members of the respected Margaret Cavendish Society, and selected contributors to the (former) Ashgate series of editions of early modern women writers. Eardley stands on their collective (editorial) shoulders, and we imagine she learned much from paging through those earlier editions.



### Assessment & Suggestions for Continuing Research

**E**ardley's long-term contribution to Pulter studies, in addition to her print edition of 2014, is her creative multimedia *Digital Companion*, constructed to accompany and supplement the print *Pulter*. Eardley's capable team on this first-ever 'digital Pulter' included Elizabeth Clarke, Rachel Dunn, and Rebekah King; and we trust they viewed earlier precedents in the new field of the Digital Humanities: Donald R. Dickson and associates, *The Digital Donne*; Maureen E. Mulvihill, '*Ephelia*'; Harriet Kramer Linkin, *Mary Tighe*; the Eaves-Essick-Viscomi *Blake Archive*, *et al.* Eardley's *Digital Companion* is a thoughtfully organized representation of Hester Pulter's work in full context; it includes manuscripts, a blog for reader response, images (analogous contemporary emblems, illustrating Pulter's unillustrated emblem poems, see **Images 8 and 9**), and (lo!) a narrated video tour of Pulter's world in Hertfordshire, with stops at Cottered Church to view Pulter-related artifacts and records. Kudos to producer, Clare Doyle!

Further work on Pulter is a long list. In addition to a possible surfacing of Pulter's emblem illustrations and a likeness of Pulter (**Image 2**), there is also the matter of Pulter's incomplete prose romance, "The Unfortunate Florinda," an unusual offering by an early woman writer on the subject of sexual violence (see Nicole Jacobs, *Appositions*

7, 2014; < [here](#) > .) And as an important textual precedent, unmentioned by Eardley in her footnotes, is the representation of sexual violation (rape) by Christine de Pizan, as discussed by Diana Wolfthal in Marilyn Desmond's collection, *Christine de Pizan: Texts, Intertexts, Contexts*, [MN, 1998]; [e-book](#)); and thank you, Amanda Lepp, Brock University, Ontario, for that excellent reference. While Pulter may have been an 'undereducated' 17<sup>th</sup>-century writer, as some have mentioned, she may have known of earlier writings by women through her London contacts and her own kinswomen, mentioned earlier in this essay. In any case, perhaps Eardley and her dedicated Pulter associates may eventually locate a likeness of Pulter and the final section of the "Florinda" narrative, which may exist in archives and library records as unattributed ephemera, or misattributed, or miscatalogued.

And there is other 'lost' work: Surely Pulter wrote letters, but where are they? Scouring archival sources for the families Pulter, Ley, Hobson, Harrington, Forester, etc., may yield some of Pulter's (missing) correspondence. And surely Pulter's political disposition would have produced important verse on the restoration of the Stuart monarchy in 1660; where are those poems? And, then, what of Pulter's marriage? Nowhere in the Brotherton manuscript is her husband mentioned; one expects to find a lyric to Arthur Pulter, perhaps as yet attributed, or misattributed, or miscatalogued. (Or perhaps there never *was* a lyric to Mr Pulter!)

The Eardley *Pulter* will attract broad attention on several grounds. (i) Canonical achievement: The edition introduces to a 21<sup>st</sup>-century audience the collected work, to date, of an unknown English woman writer of the 17<sup>th</sup> century; in so doing, it establishes and stabilizes, at least for now, that writer's entire (if small) corpus of work. (ii) Historical contribution: the Eardley *Pulter* valuably expands the literary canon in early-modern English women writers and introduces a new literary voice to a modern audience. (iii) Literary reclamation of a 'lost' body of writings. (In some circles, the quality of Pulter's writings will not be respected -- this we expect in all things new and unusual.)

While the Eardley *Pulter* is the first edition of the writings, it must not be the last edition, nor the definitive edition, in view of continuing work and scrutiny on the subject (see Elizabeth Clarke, "[There is a great deal of research to be done on Hester Pulter](#)"; see also Clarke's important *Perdita Project* on early-modern women's literary manuscripts, University of Warwick). And we would recommend that any future edition of Pulter engage an interdisciplinary team of specialists, in literary manuscripts, book history, textual editing, paleography, the visual arts (for a likeness of Pulter), and so on. Regardless of further developments, Alice Eardley's *Pulter* introduces its poet as an engaging 'other voice' of her century: Hester Pulter is no longer uncanonical, she is now in the fold. We offer appreciation and collegial best wishes to Alice Eardley and her Pulter associates; likewise, to the edition's forward-looking publisher and its Other Voice series editors: Margaret L. King, Albert Rabil, Jr., and (for English texts) Elizabeth H. Hageman. ~ **A Gallery of Images follows** ~

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## A GALLERY OF IMAGES

captions & notes by Maureen E. Mulvihill



- (1) *Lady Hester Pulter. Poems, Emblems, and The Unfortunate Florinda*  
 edited by Alice Eardley. Toronto, 2014  
 420 pp. 5 plates of manuscript selections. Soft cover. 6" x 9". USD\$45.95

This is the first-ever edition of Pulter's bound volume of manuscript writings, preserved (1975 -) in the Brotherton Collection, Leeds University Library UK. The Eardley *Pulter* is edition 32 in *The Other Voice in Early Modern Europe* series (Toronto: Iter Academic Press / Centre for Reformation and Renaissance Studies, University of Toronto, 2014). Cover art, in lieu of untraced likeness of Pulter, to date, Annibale Carracci, *Dawn with a Torch, Scattering Flowers*, c1602-1603, Musée Condé, Chantilly, France. This is a stunning selection, as Aurora, Roman goddess of Dawn, inspired the Aurora poems in Pulter's collection. Cover design: Maureen Morin, University of Toronto.

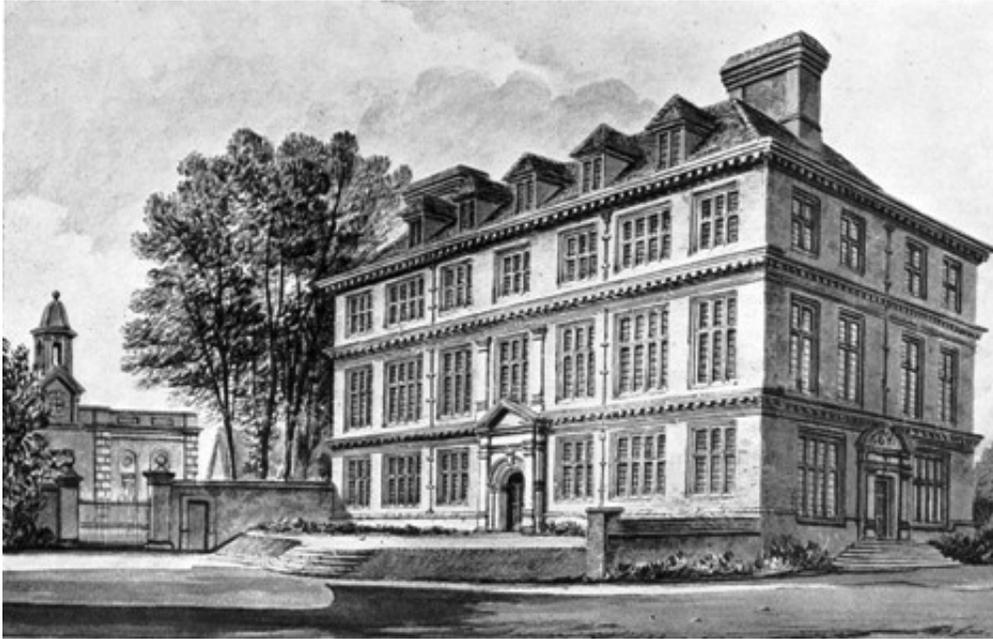
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## (2) Where is the Face of Lady Hester Pulter?

To date, researchers have yet to locate a likeness of Pulter. In view of her social status, as the daughter of an earl and the wife of a county sheriff, it is entirely likely that her portrait was painted, or that she was included in a group or family portrait. There are numerous unidentified paintings of women of Pulter's era, generically catalogued as, e.g., *Portrait of a Lady. British School, circa 17<sup>th</sup> Century*; and extensive databases for portrait research are at the [Yale Center for British Art](#), New Haven, CT; the [Heinz Archive](#), National Portrait Gallery, London; the [Witt Library](#), Courtauld Institute of Art, London; and the principal auction houses and fine art galleries, such as [Philip Mould Historical Portraits](#), London. But the first step in such research would be the possible tracing of even an incidental reference to a likeness of Hester Pulter in extant papers associated with the Pulters and their circle; likewise, in local chronicles compiled by Hertfordshire antiquarians; e.g., *Antiquities of Hertfordshire* (London, 1700; EEBO 135:7). Another line of inquiry would be to identify portrait painters engaged by Pulter's immediate family, as well as painters active in 17<sup>th</sup>-century Hertfordshire. And queries should be posted on selected art history e-lists and websites ([The Art Newspaper](#), London) and in fine arts magazines (*Apollo*; *The Burlington Magazine*). In view of energetic interest in Pulter, some likeness of her (a portrait, a sketch, a miniature) will probably be found over the next ten years, or less, and it will yield new information. (We hope that the present fact of a missing likeness of Pulter, along with her limited mobility, does not suggest some personal handicap or disfigurement.) Image, above, Pinterest.com.

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**(3) Broadfield Hall, Cottedred Village, Hertfordshire**  
**Family seat of Arthur & Hester Pulter**  
**(1832)**

A drawing of the Pulter manor house by distinguished British architect, John Chessell Buckler, published in Reginald L. Hine, *Relics of an Un-Common Attorney* (London, 1951). Buckler, whose work included restorations of country homes and also Jesus College, Oxford, may have overseen some restoration and repair work on Broadfield Hall. Most of Hester Pulter's hours were spent within its confines; and while she had the comfort of loving children, a garden, and an enviable residence, her verse includes explicit statements of oppressive isolation; she describes her poems as "the fruit of solitary...sad hours" and as the "sighs of a sad soul" (Eardley, *Pulter*, pp. 42, 185). The births, deaths, and burials of several of her fifteen children are recorded in the Cottedred parish registers. Alice Eardley's [\*Lady Hester Pulter: A Digital Companion\*](#) includes a delightful [video documentary](#), produced by Clare Doyle, on modern-day Hertfordshire and environs, including a visit to St John the Baptist church (Church of England), and views of the Pulter estate whose grandeur has declined since Buckler's rendering in 1832.

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**(4) A 17<sup>th</sup>-century Birthing Chamber (perhaps)**

This is but a stand-in image, not included in Alice Eardley’s work on Pulter, to date. The above selection (Google Images) is far from ideal, and it may not reflect all that Pulter’s chamber included, such as heavy rugs, tapestries, drapery, and bed curtains, all to absorb distressing sounds. The room would also include extra bedding, chairs for the midwife and (female) attendants, tables for fresh linens and water, herbal concoctions (anodynes, many with ale, beer, or wine), a cradle for the infant (as above), and certainly a Bible and religious icons. Adding to the ‘ceremonial’ character of such spaces, some chambers displayed images of the family’s coat-of-arms and portraits to remind the woman in the bed of serious duty to lineage. On too many occasions, the birthing chamber became a death chamber for mother and /or infant. While Hester Pulter’s poetry discloses periods of physical illness and depression, Lady Hester (mother of fifteen children) was remarkably durable, with great powers of recovery. Many of her writings were penned (“breathed forth”) during her confinements; writing, as she says, was her franchise. Lady Hester! she had a special connection to the creative process.

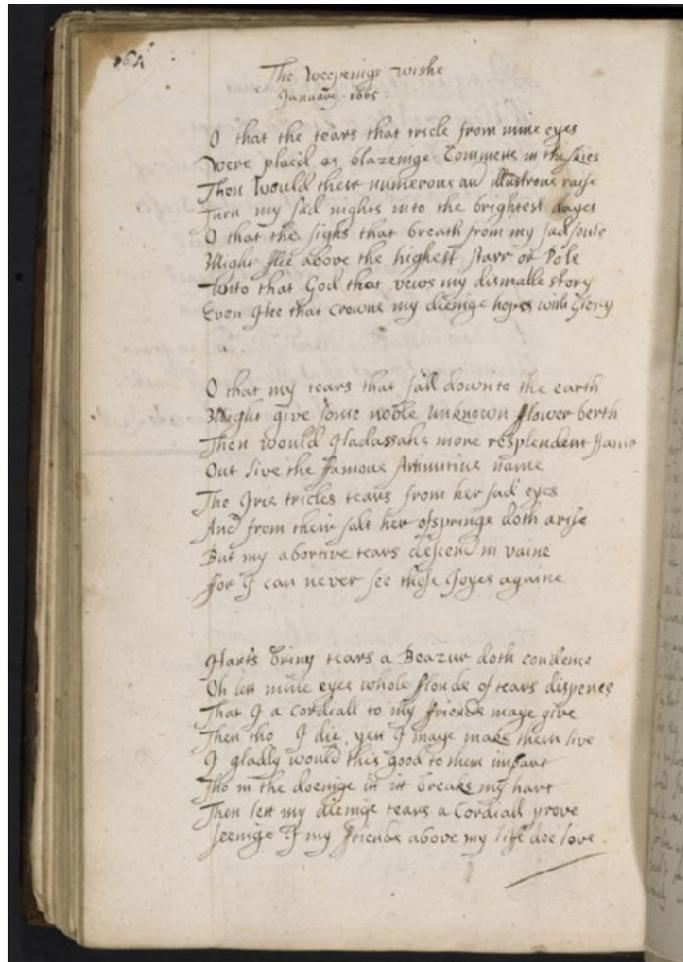
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**(5) Leeds University Library, Brotherton MS Lt q 32. c1645-1665. Front cover**  
**“Poems Breathed forth by the noble Hadassas, and The Unfortunate Florinda” by “H.P.”**  
**Attributed by family and tradition to Hester Pulter, *née* Ley (“Hadassas”), c1605? – 1678**  
**Broadfield Hall manor, Cottered, Hertfordshire. With permission, Special Collections**

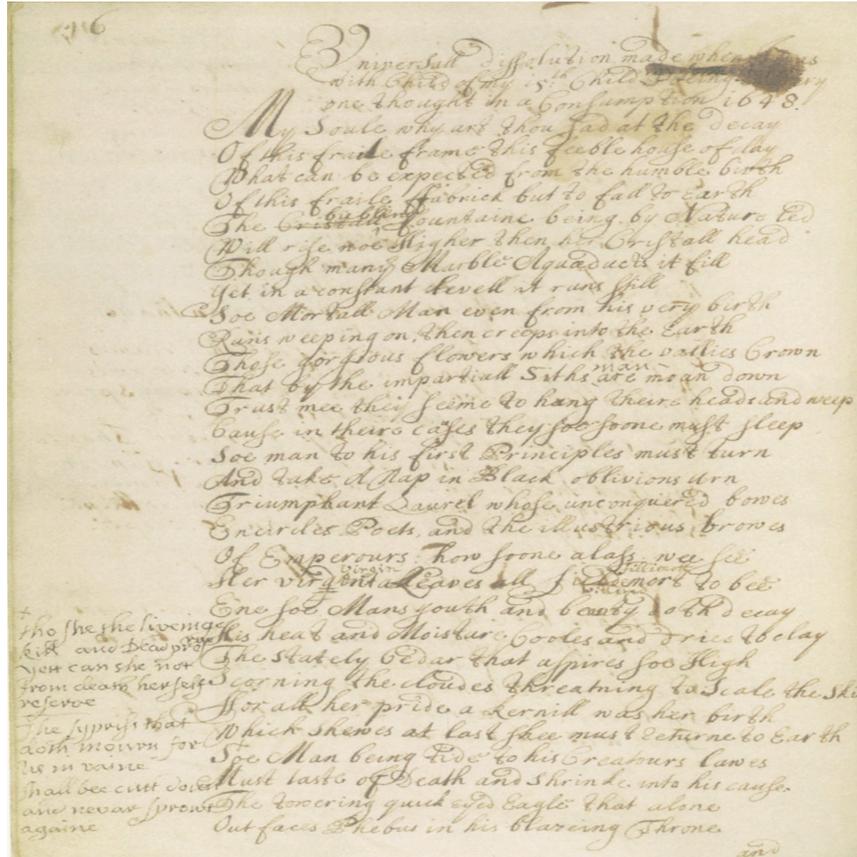
**B**ound in reversed brown calf. Lettered spine (gold-tooled): “Lady Hester Pulter’s Poems” (see page 1 for image of spine). 290mm x 190mm x 35 mm (approx., 8” x 5”). Purchased (Christie’s, 1975, Lot 353), Brotherton Library, property of Sir Gilbert Inglefield. Miscatalogued at Leeds (1975-1996), discovered (1996) by Mark Robson. **Authorship:** “Poems Breathed forth by the noble Hadassas”; “Poems Wroughten By ye Rt Honorable H.P.”; identification of poet on spine (page 1). 167 inscribed leaves + 17 loose sheets. 120 poems (of these, fifty-three unillustrated emblem poems, misnumbered as fifty-four), and an incomplete prose romance, “The Unfortunate Florinda” (Part II, in Pulter’s hand). Angel Chauncy, Hertfordshire regional historian, may have been Pulter’s “main scribe”, or transcriber, with emendations (insertions, revisions, marginalia) by Pulter, Chauncy, and a third hand (Pulter kin, or a member of the Pulter inner circle. For details on the book’s binding, from David H. Barry, see ‘Hester’s Book’, section one, above, p.3.

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(6) A Selection from Hester's Book, in her Hand: Poem 61  
 "The weeping wishe / January. 1665"  
 ("O that the tears that tricle from mine eyes")  
 Leeds University Library. Brotherton MS Lt q32, Folio 84v  
 With permission, Special Collections

This poem is remarkable for Pulter's voice and direct emotional candor; the poem also refers to the poet's Biblical name and literary namesake: "Hadassah's more resplendent fame" (stanza two, line 3, above). According to Alice Eardley, this poem is not in the hand of the manuscript's main scribe, but rather in Pulter's own hand, thus valuably supplying scholars with a handwriting specimen to be used in further attributional work on Pulter. For a discussion of the poem, see Sarah Ross, "Tears, Bezoars, and Blazing Comets," *Literature Compass* 2 (2005). For a lightly edited printed text of the poem, with five annotations (footnotes), see Eardley's *Pulter*; Poem 61, pp 175-176. The notes, however, do not discuss paleography: the poem's script.



(7) A Selection from Hester's Book, in Three Hands: Poem 6,  
 "Universal Dissolution, Made when I was with Child of my 15th Child.  
 [My Son John], I Being, [as Eve]ryone Thought, in a Consumption, 1648"  
 Leeds University Library, Brotherton MS Lt q 32, f.10v  
 Eardley, *Pulter*, Plate 1, p. 44. With permission, Special Collections

The three hands at work on this important, long poem (176 lines) are, according to Eardley, the manuscript's main scribe, Angel Chauncy (text of the poem); with interlinear insertions and a marginal side note (11 lines) by Hester Pulter; and amendments by an unidentified hand. For a lightly edited, printed text of Pulter's "Dissolution," with some fifty annotations (footnotes), see Eardley's *Pulter*, Poem 6, pp 65-72. Readers will appreciate Eardley's many explanatory and descriptive notes, but close readers would expect some attention to the poem's many scripts and especially to Pulter's side note and other additions to the poem, justifying perhaps a dedicated appendix in the edition on the editorial challenges of Poem 6 (an attractive, but lost, opportunity in the planning of the edition).



**(8) Woodcut: Unicorn, inspiring Pulter's Emblem Poem 14**

("In Africa, about the fountain's brink ...")

See Eardley, *Pulter*, pp 203-204, 14 lines

Image, Edward Topsell's [Four-footed Beasts](#)

2 vols (1658), with woodcuts. Folio, 12.5" x 8"

Vol. I: 551. Mulvihill Collection

Copy purchased from Sullivan Goss Books,  
Santa Barbara, California, 2000

**P**ulter's fifty-three emblem poems (misnumbered as "54" in her MS) are verbal descriptions of various emblematic objects (including mythical, fantastical creatures); the poems are not graphic images in the manner of Quarles or Wither. Alice Eardley, in her creative multimedia *Digital Companion* to her print *Pulter*, valuably supplies contemporary analogous images (stand in images) for several of Pulter's "emblem", such as the unicorn image (above) from Edward Topsell's popular *History of Four-footed Beasts and Serpents* (1658), a classic bestiary, with woodcuts, of curious creatures, drawing upon earlier work by Conrad Gessler. [Rebekah King](#) is at work on Pulter's emblematic uses of animal imagery. As Alice Eardley suggests, Pulter's emblem poems, with accompanying images from the family library, may have served as children's literature for the many young Pulters. For an illustrated discussion of 17<sup>th</sup>-century emblem books, see [Mulvihill, "Emblems"](#) (*Appositions*, August 2015).

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**(9) Woodcut: The Curious Su (Patagonia, South America),  
praised for mobility and independence in Pulter’s Poem 57  
 (“Why must I thus forever be confined /  
Against the noble freedom of my mind?”)  
See Eardley, *Pulter*, Poem 57, pp. 166-168, 100 lines  
Image, Topsell’s *Beasts*, I: 511. Mulvihill copy (see caption, Image 8)**

Above, an image of the Su from Edward Topsell’s popular bestiary of real and (mostly) fantastical creatures, *The History of Four-footed Beasts and Serpents*, 2 vols (London, 1658); with woodcuts. Pulter’s “Su” poem is not among the grouping of emblem books in the Pulter manuscript, though it surely qualifies as one, suggesting that Poem 57 may have been mis-placed during the collation and binding of the book’s 167 inscribed leaves (some records give a slightly higher count). The Su, a four-footed mammal, resembled a badger, in its furry body, snout, and ferocious disposition; it was hunted, to extinction, in Patagonia, South America. The female Su carried her young on her back, covering them protectively with her long tail. (Topsell’s note on the violent fate of the Su, if factual, is disturbing.) Pulter writes of the female Su emblematically as a capable mother of enviable mobility and freedom, qualities painfully lacking in Pulter’s circumscribed life at Broadfield Hall (she was no Su!): “The swiftest Su, no liberty can lack / That bears her sprightly offspring on her back” (ll. 80-81). “Liberty” is a charged word in women’s writings of Pulter’s time; constraints to individual freedom for 17<sup>th</sup>-century women were marriage, maternity, financial dependence on fathers and husbands, limited education, and few (if any) employable skills.

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(10) **Galileo. *Dialogo Matematico Sopraordinario* (Florence, 1632)**

4to. 220mm x 160mm. With numerous woodcut diagrams, as above

[Addison & Sarova Auctioneers](#) (Macon, GA). Sale 1014,

Rare & Fine Books, 5 November 2016: [Item 11](#)

Estimate, \$15,000 - \$20,000 USD. Sold, \$14,400 (buyer, confidential).

With permission, Michael Addison

Scholars are investigating the Pulter-Galileo connection. And while scholarship to date has not discussed a Pulter family library, nor a (complete) Pulter estate inventory, Pulter's writings show an enthusiasm for natural philosophy, cosmology, and the New Astronomy. Her sister-in-law, Margaret (Ley), countess dowager of Marlborough, may have been a conduit and guide in such interests, as she had connections to the London Royal Society. Imagine Lady Hester's fascination with the book illustration, above. See Sarah Hutton, "Hester Pulter... A Woman Poet and the New Astronomy," *Etudes Epistémè* 14 (2008). (This image and sale information are late additions to this essay.)



**(11) Mulvihill Collection of Rare & Special Books (Selections)**  
**Conservator: David H. Barry, Griffin Bookbinding, St Petersburg, FL**

**Displayed:** Aphra Behn, ‘Ephelia’, Ann Fanshawe, Lucy Hutchinson, Mary Shackleton Leadbeater, Katherine Philips, Hester Lynch Thrale Piozzi, Mary Tighe, Anna Maria Van Schurman, *Herself*, *Long Ago* and *Lament for Art O’Leary* (handcrafted books, Irish-English facing pages; Malachi McCormick’s Stone Street Press, Staten Island, NY).

**Profile of collector, *Fine Books & Collections* magazine (Autumn, 2016)**



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*This essay is dedicated to the memory of*

**Margaret P. Hannay (1944-2016),**

*an example and inspiration to all scholars of women writers*

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### **A Note On The Writer**

**Maureen E. Mulvihill**, an elected member of The Princeton Research Forum, Princeton, NJ, and formerly Associate Fellow, Institute for Research in History, NYC, is an established literary specialist and rare book collector. She studied at Wisconsin (PhD, 1982), with post-doctoral work at Columbia University Rare Book School, the Yale Center for British Art, and (as NEH Fellow) Johns Hopkins University. She is [profiled](#) in the autumn 2016 issue of *Fine Books & Collections* magazine. **Book credits:** An edition of Mary Shackleton Leadbeater (Alexandria Street Press, Va.; Irish Women Poets series); two scholarly editions of ‘Ephelia’ (with digital companion, [‘Thumbprints of ‘Ephelia’](#)); and Advisory Editor, *Ireland And The Americas*, 3 vols (ABC-Clio). **Essays** (many are illustrated, and now hosted online): On such figures and subjects as Jane Austen, Frances Burney, Lady Anne Bacon Drury, Emblem Books, ‘Ephelia’, the Flight of the Earls (Donegal, 1607), Anne Killigrew, Paula Peyraud Collection and auction, Rubens, [Jonathan Swift](#), Mary Tighe, Van Dyck, Margrieta Van Varick (Dutch NY), Veronese, Oscar Wilde, Virginia Woolf, ‘Bloody Sunday’ (Derry, 1972), etc. **Contributor to reference works:** *Oxford DNB*, *Dictionary of Irish Biography*, *The Orlando Project*, *Dictionary of Literary Biography*, and (in 2017) *The Literary Encyclopedia*. In 2012-2015, she was Vice President, [Florida Bibliophile Society](#). Dr Mulvihill will be a guest speaker, Selby Library, Gelbart Auditorium Sarasota, FL, April 2017. She is at work on Irishwomen’s political writings, c1660-1801.

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