"Part three: MS 228, Houghton Library, Harvard University, Pestell papers" in "A survey of the poetry collection in manuscript of the Noble family of Huntingdon"

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As noted in the introduction, a volume of manuscript poems “by the Rev. Thomas Pestell (1613–1701 [sic]), vicar of Packington” was recorded among the Rawdon-Hastings papers. This manuscript would have belonged to the Huntingdon papers, rather than the Rawdon or the Bramhall papers, since the senior Thomas Pestell (1586 [baptism]–1667) served as rector of Coleorton under the patronage of Sir Thomas Beaumont. The senior Pestell allegedly succeeded to the vicarage of Packington with the help of Elizabeth, countess of Huntington, wife of Henry, fifth earl. Hannah Buchan notes that Pestell may have obtained this living from the fifth earl, with whom he attended Queens’ College, Cambridge.

The senior Pestell was followed into the ministry by two of his sons, Thomas and William, and all three contributed to the volume Lachrymae Musarum on the death of Henry Hastings in 1649. Caught up in the political chaos of the Civil War, which took a heavy toll on Leicestershire, the elder Pestell was imprisoned. He took as his pseudonym “Perditus,” thus the title of the Pestell collection at Harvard University in Houghton MS Eng 228: Perditi Poemata.

3.1. Perditi Poemata

The Pestell manuscript, a small quarto of fifty-seven pages in Pestell’s italic hand, contains over seventy poems written between 1620 and 1634 and includes (on fols. 19v–21r) an Elegie on the Countesse of Huntingdon on the death of his patroness in 1633. The manuscript was acquired by Houghton Library of Harvard

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73 HMC Hastings, 4:358.
74 According to the ODNB. The Harvard University catalog (Hollis) gives the dates as 1584–1659?.
75 Gordon McMullan, “Pestell, Thomas (bap. 1586, d. 1667),” in ODNB. The younger Thomas Pestell, also a clergyman and poet, was born in 1613 and died in 1690, which accounts somewhat for the conflation of dates with the elder Pestell.
77 A complete list of the poems in this manuscript is accessible online in the Union First Line Index.
University in 1926 from Maggs Bros. (catalog no. 481). In 1940, as already noted above, Hannah Buchan used this manuscript along with Bod. MS Malone 14 to prepare her edition of Pestell’s poems. (See figures 3.1A and 3.1B.)

MS Eng 228

78 Maggs Bros., *English Literature & Printing from the 15th to the 18th Century*, Part II (London: Maggs Bros, 1926): 549–550, lot #1496. It was entered into the Harvard collection in November 1926. I am most grateful to Elizabeth A. Falsey of Houghton Library for her assistance in locating this information (letter to author, December 17, 1990).

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Contributors

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