

PREFACE

LIKE THE herberts, the Howards, and the Sidneys, the Cavendishes are remarkable among aristocratic families of the early modern period both as artistic patrons and as creative figures in their own right. Their enthusiasm for building shaped the landscape of the north Midlands of England, giving rise to prodigy houses such as Hardwick Hall, Bolsover Castle, and the great estate of Chatsworth. As well as the Smythson dynasty of architects, they patronized writers including Ben Jonson, painters such as Anthony van Dyck, and the philosopher Thomas Hobbes. However, family members would themselves produce literary and philosophical works of enduring interest and historical importance. William Cavendish, 1st Duke of Newcastle, was an amateur playwright who collaborated with James Shirley before the civil wars and with Thomas Shadwell after the Restoration, and his daughters Jane and Elizabeth were pioneering female dramatists. His second wife Margaret is a figure of particular significance as a poet, biographer, dramatist, scientist, and author of the science-fiction romance *The Blazing World*. More generally, members of the Devonshire and Newcastle dynasties that sprang from the marriage of Elizabeth Hardwick ("Bess of Hardwick") to Sir William Cavendish in 1547 would go on to play considerable roles in English history, including the 1st Duke (then Marquess), who commanded King Charles I's army in the north of England during the first Civil War, and the Earl (later Duke) of Devonshire, who was one of the signatories to the letter inviting William of Orange to invade in 1688. Arbella Stuart, granddaughter of Elizabeth and William, was the unwilling centre of plots against James VI and I and would become a tragic victim of Stuart succession politics after marrying the grandson of the Earl of Hertford in 1610.

There is already a considerable body of work on the Cavendishes (especially Margaret) in the form of biographies, editions, critical articles, monographs, and essay collections. However, this book attempts to do something new: to treat the Cavendishes as a collective, bringing together specially written essays on key literary figures such as Margaret Cavendish (or the Duchess of Newcastle, as she should properly be termed), her husband the 1st Duke, and the duke's daughters Jane and Elizabeth, as well as on relevant cultural practices such as patronage, horsemanship, and the building of houses and monuments. It also includes chapters on other members of the extended family, such as George Cavendish, the servant and biographer of Thomas Wolsey, and the musician Michael Cavendish. The order is, so far as possible, chronological, beginning with George and proceeding through to Margaret, followed by chapters on Cavendish buildings and funerary monuments.

The editors regret some omissions. We would have liked, for example, to have been able to include a chapter on Sir Charles Cavendish, younger brother of the 1st Duke of Newcastle, one of the foremost mathematicians of his day and the correspondent not

only of Hobbes and Walter Warner but of French luminaries such as Mersenne, Mydorge, and Roberval. However, we offer the book that follows not as the last word on the Cavendishes but as a stimulus to further scholarship: It has been important to us that as well as providing readers with an overview of work that has been done already, the contributions should represent new and ground-breaking research. We hope that their insights will encourage yet greater interest in this diverse and fascinating family.