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Mind the Map: Fancy, Matter, and World Construction in Margaret Cavendish's *Blazing World*

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Article abstract

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Mind the Map: Fancy, Matter, and World Construction in Margaret Cavendish's *Blazing World*

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Cet article retrace les diverses trajectoires étourdissantes de The Blazing World *de Margaret Cavendish, dans de différents paysages étranges, familiers et très personnels, afin de montrer que les expérimentations de Cavendish représentent une méthodologie pensée pour sa philosophie naturelle. Dans la préface qu'elle écrit pour sa plus importante œuvre de fiction, Cavendish affirme que l'imagination et la raison sont tous les deux « des effets ou, davantage, des actions d'une certaine partie rationnelle de la matière ». Dans une série de démonstrations afin de déterminer l'efficacité de l'imagination ainsi envisagée, Cavendish représente l'impératrice et la duchesse faisant leur chemin dans une variété de mondes nouveaux de leur propre création. Les deux femmes apprennent à se mouvoir au-delà des sphères de la gratification privée, telles que l'autosuffisance de l'herméneutique cabalistique, la propriété foncière, et la pure fiction, vers des nouvelles formes de création d'univers qui engagent véritablement l'action et la rationalité matérielle de l'imagination, et qui entraînent des revendications propres aux mondes nouveaux et anciens. Finalement, ces expériences de genre permettent à Cavendish de créer une fiction qui suggère comment l'imagination peut transcender la fiction, produisant simultanément des représentations textuelles et des transformations matérielles, alors même qu'elle propose un nouveau rapport dans les perceptions de ses lecteurs entre le littéraire et le littéral.*

Although *The Blazing World* has become one of the most widely read, discussed, and taught texts in Margaret Cavendish's expansive oeuvre, it has always presented peculiar challenges for analysis. Cavendish frequently writes in mixed genres. Nonetheless, even a cursory survey of the generic forms of *The Blazing World* suggests it would be hard to find a genre *not* invoked in its pages, which include not only travel narrative and romance but also utopia, epic, biography, cabbala, Lucianic fable, Menippean satire, natural history, and morality

play, among others, each making its own claims on interpretation and each orienting the reader to a different understanding of the text's setting, structure, and central project.[1] The multiplicity of *The Blazing World's* intersecting and competing genres has been more frequently observed than taken as a subject for investigation in its own right. *The Blazing World* has served as prime evidence of an un-disciplined Cavendish, a judgment that has produced both criticism and praise: Cavendish as self-indulgent, flighty, unschooled, or mad,[2] or, conversely, Cavendish as flouter of masculine conventions and champion of hybridity, resistant to and unconstrained by the limitations of genre or discipline.[3] Whether negatively or positively assigned, such characterizations of her work as violating or exceeding generic conventions have overlooked the central importance of genre by taking it as a given rather than attending to the function of genre as a primary object of experimentation in Cavendish's investigation of disciplinary norms. Some of the most important recent work on Cavendish in general and *The Blazing World* in particular has greatly enlarged our understanding of how Cavendish fits into her cultural milieu, stressing less her eccentric (or courageous) distance from convention than her abiding and evolving engagement with, and critique of, the central political, philosophical, and scientific concerns of the mid to late seventeenth century. However, studies that have focused on Cavendish's relation to the important debates of her time have not always attended to the significance of genre in framing and shaping Cavendish's rhetorical strategies for delivering her scientific and philosophical program. Indeed, taking Cavendish seriously as a scientific thinker has often seemed to require bracketing, choosing among, or entirely ignoring her dizzying shifts of genre and subject. Yet putting questions of genre and discipline at the centre of Cavendish's project in *The Blazing World* and understanding Cavendish's literary experimentation as a considered methodology and *modus operandi*, rather than a stylistic, incidental, or compensatory approach to "real" philosophical or scientific work, can lead us to some of the central questions of disciplinarity and knowledge production in the seventeenth century. One of Cavendish's most consistent projects in *The Blazing World* is to demonstrate the material and productive properties of reason and imagination by providing a kind of tropological map of their points of intersection. *The Blazing World*, I will argue, goes beyond offering a fictionalized setting for Cavendish's philosophical musings; it is the work in which she most explicitly works out the relationship between fiction and philosophy. In the process Cavendish traverses

and unsettles familiar genre categories in order to revisit our understanding of both.

The introductory epistle, "To the Reader," begins by addressing Cavendish's decision to conjoin her work of "fancy" to "my serious philosophical contemplations" when she published *The Blazing World* together with *Observations Upon Experimental Philosophy*, an arrangement she preserves in both the 1666 and 1668 editions: "If you wonder, that I join a work of fancy to my serious philosophical contemplations; think not that it is out of a disparagement to philosophy; or out of an opinion, as if this noble study were but a fiction of the mind."[4] If philosophy is distinct from fiction, Cavendish suggests this is not entirely to philosophy's advantage, since the divergent opinions of philosophy clearly fall short of describing the "one truth of nature"[5]: "[F]or though some may come nearer the mark than others, which makes their opinions seem more probable and rational than others; yet as long as they swerve from this only truth, they are in the wrong: nevertheless, all do ground their opinions upon reason; that is, upon rational probabilities, at least, they think they do."[6] Cavendish's defense of fiction seems at first to echo Sidney's assertion that the poet is "the least liar" since "he nothing affirmeth, and therefore never lieth."[7] However, as her argument develops, she outlines her own distinctly paradoxical relationship between the intentions and the nature of reason and fiction making:

> But *fictions* are an issue of man's fancy, framed in his own mind, according as he pleases, without regard, whether the thing he fancies, be really existent without his mind or not; so that reason searches the depth of nature, and enquires after the true causes of natural effects; but fancy creates of its own accord whatsoever it pleases, and delights in its own work. The end of reason, is truth; the end of fancy, is fiction: but mistake me not, when I distinguish *fancy* from *reason*; I mean not as if fancy were not made by the rational parts of matter; but by *reason* I understand a rational search and enquiry into the causes of natural effects; and by *fancy* a voluntary creation or production of the mind, both being effects, or rather actions of the rational parts of matter.[8]

Cavendish reconfigures the distinctions between the operations of reason and fancy elaborated above with the final identification of the "actions" of both with "the rational parts of matter." Moreover, she goes on to assert that, while reason

frequently errs by mistaking its search for truth for truth itself, fiction, whatever its intentions to "withdraw the mind from its more serious contemplations," also participates in and is made up of "the rational parts of matter," no less than reason.[9]

Cavendish's thoroughgoing materialism underwrites this defense of fiction as a transformative activity of the mind, materially produced and productive. As Eileen O'Neil points out, Cavendish's refusal of any incorporeal substances or incorporeal qualities in nature puts her in stark opposition to the views of Descartes, More, Glanvill, and Van Helmont.[10] Her ultimate rejection of a purely mechanist materialism, meanwhile, puts her in equally stark opposition to Hobbes.[11] Cavendish's vitalist materialism had an important impact on her theory of imagination's ontology as well as its operations, and her argument in this introductory epistle does more than make a case for fancy's self-sufficiency or recreational properties. Cavendish reproduces and yet reconstitutes poetic theory to argue for fancy and reason as similarly speculative *and* material. Her description of the ability of fancy to "recreate the mind" insists, moreover, on the inventive, generative, and rational qualities of fancy, in addition to its ludic motives or effects.[12]

To take Cavendish's argument about the relationship of fancy and reason seriously requires that we think of *The Blazing World* less as an escape from the world or a vision of a possible world than as a material engagement with the world that is. Cavendish isn't, in the end, defending poetry so much as anatomizing it and, in the process, enlarging the domain of fancy beyond its fictional effects or artifacts. The narrative trajectory across the multi-generic and multi-sited worlds of *The Blazing World* is, in effect, a map of the material traces of fancy's engagement with reason.

Because Cavendish's fundamental materialism does not oppose, or even distinguish between textual and material practices, tracing *The Blazing World's* realignment of the textual and generic features can allow us to recalibrate the relationship between the literary and the literal, between textual representations and material transformations. In a variety of different discourses and genres and across a dizzying sequence of landscapes, both physically and metaphysically constructed, Cavendish's heroines, the Empress and the Duchess, each struggle to calculate the distance between what they know, what they imagine, and where they are.

Putting paradise on the map

The Blazing World's conceit of travelling through space, materially and spiritually, organizes the narrative around a sequence of unstable trajectories across the boundaries of the known world. From the outset, *The Blazing World* exceeds the scale of a *mappa munda* to require a *mappa mundorum*, a map of its many worlds. Like all early modern travel narratives, actual or fantastical, this text invites the reader to measure the distance between the familiar and the unfamiliar — between a place identified as "here" and an unfolding set of locations, features, and practices that delineate the "there" of the text. Cavendish, however, repeatedly unsettles her readers as the places and spaces as well as the modes of travel begin to proliferate in number and in kind. With the proliferation of worlds in *The Blazing World*, Cavendish induces an unsettling sense of vertigo both to disorient and reorient her readers. In this deeply recursive text, the point of departure is transformed by every arrival, and the richly descriptive narrative present continuously threatens to undo or remake the text's cumulative itinerary. Thus, arriving in a new place is achieved not only by discerning the distance between here and there, but also, as I will discuss more fully below, by reassessing the text's temporal and historical reframing of then and now. In this way, *The Blazing World* challenges the boundaries of the imaginable in no small part by revisiting the presumed certainties of established ground.

Ultimately, following the textual trajectory of *The Blazing World* has much more to do with plotting the coordinates between intersecting worlds than it does with sustaining (or exceeding) a Lucianic travelogue or New World discovery account, or with drawing out the conventional romance plot that Cavendish more or less wraps up in the first few pages. Yet for all of its exotic and unexpected turns, *The Blazing World* begins in a familiar, indeed, a supremely mundane place where predatory violence is confused with "love." In an immediately recognizable, generic, and mobile geography, the narrative thread is taken up at the intersection of romance convention and the world romance is designed to repair when an unnamed merchant seizes a yet-to-be named young lady and carries her off on his ship. But no sooner are the generic expectations of romance invoked than we seem to travel beyond their horizon. The Lady is rescued not by human or magical intervention but by Nature in both elemental and personified forms when her captors freeze to death as the ship passes into the Blazing World at the North Pole and, to her great surprise and ours, she

is greeted by sentient, speaking, and civilized animals or, as Cavendish terms them, beast-men. We are quite clearly in a "New World," as promised in the title of Cavendish's text, but what world is this?[13]

These strange, hybrid, genre- and genus-crossing figures are not, as it turns out, the products of enchantment, sorcery, or a hitherto unknown geography. The beast-men lead the Lady to the capital city of the Blazing World where she makes the remarkable discovery that she has arrived in Paradise. Thus, in the space of a page, it becomes necessary to make a profound recalculation of her location and the nature of this encounter narrative. After what is perhaps romance's most perfunctory courtship, the Emperor of Paradise marries the unnamed heroine, making her Empress and effecting a second and perhaps more dramatic change in place. In generic terms, the elevating nuptials, which confer upon the Lady the title and powers of Empress, might conclude a romance, but here they signal a new beginning. This marriage, rather than offering a confirmation of greatness disguised or denied by circumstance, as might be seen in a conventional romance plot, stands as the necessary precondition of manifesting greatness. Her marriage also provides her with a host of new and very worldly powers and possibilities. The Empress clearly finds herself in a better place, with respect to both geography and social station, yet the precise (or, indeed, the relative) location of this Paradise and what it might mean to rule there have yet to be determined.

The newly formed Empress tries herself to discover more exactly her situation when she asks her spirit guides to inform her "where the Paradise was, whether it was in the midst of the world as a centre of pleasure? or whether it was the whole world, or a peculiar world by itself, as a world of life, and not of matter; or whether it was mixed, as a world of living animal creatures?"[14] The Empress learns that Paradise is a world of both "life" and "matter" and that it is located not in the world she came from "but in the world she lived in at present." In reply to her further inquiry, "wither Adam fled when he was driven out of Paradise?" the spirits inform her "Out of this world… you are now Empress of, into the world you came from."[15] There are several things to note about this description. Paradise is clearly described as uniting rather than dividing between life and matter. It is identified as a "Mixt" world: that is, comprised of both life/spirit and matter and consistent with Cavendish's vitalist materialism. If the diamonds, carbuncles, and rubies had not already tipped us off, this is indeed a worldly Paradise, which, for all of its bejeweled and beastly marvels and

spiritual guides, is not represented as magical or transcendently divine. Nor is it described as beyond the reach of humanity or governed by fundamentally different physical properties than the Empress's home world, even if its creatures, practices, and discoveries are unfamiliar. This point may seem counterintuitive (at the least) given the manifestly bizarre and seemingly otherworldly quality of the Blazing World. Nonetheless, Cavendish is, for the most part, animating and making visible her understanding of the material world, however strange that may look.[16]

My reading of *The Blazing World* as an expression of Cavendish's fundamental vitalist materialist commitments, in form as well as content, departs from some of the most influential readings of *The Blazing World*, which stress the otherworldiness of the text. Catherine Gallagher, for example, has argued that *The Blazing World* constructs a sovereign female subject through the creation of a fundamentally subjective, inward, and private world of a *moi absolu*.[17] Mary Baine Campbell also stresses the alterity of the work, although she has a quite different account of Cavendish's "inwardness" in *The Blazing World*, arguing for Cavendish's engagement with and challenge to the scientific community in her critique of the reductive instrumentalism that would privilege the microscope. Yet Campbell also understands the text as fundamentally compensatory ("vengefully" so, in her account) and defined by and produced out of a profound sense of exclusion.[18] While my own understanding of Cavendish is much indebted to these brilliant readers, I read Cavendish's experiments with genre in *The Blazing World* as performing a series of demonstrations with varying instruments to reveal different aspects of nature that ordinarily exceed representation. Despite any number of citable demurrals about her creation of a world of her own, Cavendish designs *The Blazing World* not so much as a fiction in which such demurrals are unnecessary but as the site where the world itself might be revealed and reconceived. To do this she begins by going back to the origin story that scripts women as deliverers of the Fall to begin again with a new parable of female knowledge.

Transforming the irreparable temporal and spiritual rupture of the fall into the material, contiguous, and contemporaneous geography of Paradise, Cavendish asks us to reassess the material, historical, and ethical situation of both the Blazing World and the Empress's world. Cavendish's Paradise is postlapsarian but neither corrupted nor lost to history. It is spiritual and material, resplendent and yet also capable of change and reform. By grounding

her fictional world in a material and historical Paradise, Cavendish does not so much transpose spiritual and material worlds as suspend both in what turns out to be an extended lesson in natural history. An interesting comparison here might be to Bacon, who offers classical parables of natural history in *De Sapientia Veterum*, and a Christian one in *The New Atlantis*. In the latter text, Bacon dramatizes a true miracle in order reciprocally to endorse and verify the knowledge factory of Salomon's House. Cavendish's Paradise is by contrast resolutely secular and part of this world. No miracle is witnessed, no voice of God or apostle is heard. The "other world" for *The Blazing World* is the place of God; and He is not, apparently, materially present in Paradise. This is a worldly site where the lessons of the connection between spirit and flesh lead to a consequential reconsideration of creation.

In his discussion of *The Blazing World's* invocation of Paradise, John Rogers remarks that the absence of any mention of Eve in the story of Adam's flight suggests an identification of the Empress (whom he describes as "one of the figures for the author herself") with the figure of Eve, "left to govern Paradise alone."[19] But Cavendish seems less eager than Rogers suggests to have readers make this association, even if "redeeming Eve" was a prominent literary activity for early modern women writers hoping to revise their inscription in patriarchal exegetical traditions.[20] The Empress's ability to speak with the beast-men might even have been seen to establish her more in the lines of a new Adam. If Cavendish offers a retelling of Genesis, it is far more preoccupied with the nature of creation than the story of the Fall. Cavendish does, in fact, directly reference Eve's "temptation," but it is, tellingly, only after the Empress learns what we recognize as the central tenets of Cavendish's vitalist materialism from her spirit guides:

> [E]very material part has a material natural soul; for nature is but one infinite self-moving, living, and self knowing body, consisting of the three degrees of inanimate, sensitive and rational matter, so intermixed together, that no part of nature, were it an atom, can be without any of these three degrees; the sensitive is the life, the rational the soul, and the inanimate part, the body of infinite nature.[21]

The Empress, although generally quite willing to disagree with her bestial virtuosi or reproach her spirit guides, is described as "very well satisfied with

this answer."[22] Taken with this idea, she proposes a poetic representation for the soul's relationship to the body or "vehicle": "when the soul is in its vehicle… then methinks she is like the sun, and the vehicle like the moon." But the spirits correct her, arguing that "the vehicle is like the sun, and the soul like the moon; for the soul hath motion from the body, as the moon has light from the sun."[23] This extended orbital simile puts several signifying practices on a collision course, as well as extending Cavendish's cosmographical project into celestial realms. Gendering the soul as female has a long history, as does the association of the feminine with matter and the masculine with spirit.[24] If this contested simile invites a renegotiation of Patrician, Petrarchan, Aristotelian, and astronomical paradigms for figuring the relationship between feminine nature and heavenly bodies, Cavendish renders all such debates nugatory as she asserts the fundamental and inextricable union of life, spirit, and matter through this abbreviated celestial cosmography. In much the same way she establishes the unity of nature through her extended, interactive, and multi-terrestrial geography.

This discussion of the soul and its "vehicle" is, significantly, the immediate context for raising the postponed question of the fate of Eve. The Empress asks the spirits "whether it was an evil spirit that tempted Eve, and brought all the mischiefs upon mankind, or whether it was the serpent?"[25] The spirits respond simply that "spirits could not commit actual evils," as they are without material properties.[26] Although the spirits affirm that there is "a supernatural good, which is God," they deny knowledge of a supernatural evil that is comparable to God.[27] Early modern defenses of Eve generally stress her innocence or her passivity, but in Cavendish's account it is clear that both the serpent and Eve, for good or for ill, are material and therefore active. Setting the Empress's quest for knowledge in Paradise allows Cavendish to inoculate her heroine from the anti-feminist account of original sin. She acknowledges human sin and indirectly establishes the case for Eve's free well, yet she still imagines a space where Paradise continues to exist in the present. This, then, is the crux of Cavendish's revisionist exegesis of Genesis.[28] Instead of evading original sin or exculpating Eve, Cavendish takes pains to relocate the arguments about human possibility and female agency to the realm of the material present subject to the laws of natural philosophy. In the process she rediscovers Paradise as a "worldly" and mutable site, capable of change and reform.

At home in Paradise

A further conflation of the Blazing World's mythopoetic postlapsarian Paradise and the material world may come into play here if Cavendish had in mind the more personal but still iconographically charged space of the "Little Castle" at Bolsover, and particularly the lavishly decorated chambers known as Heaven and Elysium, which flanked William's private suite (Figures 1 and 2).[29]

Figure 1. Ceiling detail from the Elysium Chamber, Bolsover Castle. Reproduced by permission of the National Monuments Record.

Figure 2. Ceiling detail from the Heaven Chamber, Bolsover Castle. Reproduced by permission of the National Monuments Record.

While Paradise is clearly distinct from either Heaven or Elysium as a site of doctrinal, historical, or exegetical interest, a comparison of the idiosyncratic representations of these idealized spaces centred around and completed by Margaret and William Cavendish, respectively, offers an interesting object lesson in how Margaret's peculiar experiments in space travel may also have been grounded in the very material practices and challenges of what one might call the architectonics of space and place for the early modern landed classes.

In 1617, William inherited the twelfth-century Norman castle obtained by his father Sir Charles Cavendish.[30] Over the course of the next several years, he completed the work his father began by transforming the Norman

ruin into his personal pleasure palace: Bolsover Castle. While Welbeck served as the Cavendishes' principal residence, Bolsover, some five miles distant in Derbyshire, was reputed to be William's favorite property.[31] It was a space of retreat, recreation, and pleasure. Indeed, the plan and the construction of Bolsover undertaken first by Robert Smythson and, after his death, by his son John transformed the so-called "Little Castle" into a perfect fantasy: a neo-chivalric design, whose materialization, ironically, rendered the castle useless as a fortification in the process.[32]

John Smythson, with whom William worked over many years on Bolsover's improvement and expansion, not only created a space that paid tribute to William's character, appetites, and aspirations; he designed a space, as Timothy Raylor has argued, that was only complete when its master was in residence.[33] Raylor draws attention to the small anteroom that provides an architecturally unusual entry to the Little Castle. Featured on its walls are depictions of three of the four temperaments: phlegmatic, choleric, and melancholic, each portrayed by a male and female couple invested with and surrounded by their iconographically appropriate attributes. Where one might expect a sanguine couple to complement the other humoural pairings, there appears instead an architectural fantasy depicting a series of pillars leading to a temple with a burning flame (Figure 3).

Raylor argues that the conspicuous absence of the sanguine temperament would have been filled by the master at home in the anteroom welcoming his guests. He points to Margaret's *Life of William Cavendish* for his evidence, singling out passages in which she declares her husband's "complexion is sanguine," and describes the ways in which his "outward shape and behaviors" personified that humour.[34] Raylor concludes that "the sanguine temperament is embodied in the person of the host, whom we are to recognize as an integral part of the symbolic program of his castle."[35] Bolsover, in other words, was designed to be incomplete without William at home. By building the man into the castle and the castle into the man, John Smythson and William Cavendish collaborate to perfect a space built around and animated by its master, confounding in the process the distinction between William's figurative and literal relationship to Bolsover.

Figure 3. Detail from lunette in anteroom of Bolsover Castle. Reproduced by permission of the National Monuments Record.

However comprehensively and intricately Bolsover's design reflected the wealth, tastes, and character of William, Margaret Cavendish may also have contrived to build herself into the design of Bolsover by borrowing its iconography for *The Blazing World*. Raylor speculates that the decorative lunette depicting the temple with flame, which appears directly facing the front entrance, may be intended to represent the four elements in balance. However, readers of *The Blazing World* would also find the image suggestive of the portrayal of the chapels of fire-stone and star-stone, where the Empress preached, converting all the inhabitants of The Blazing World "to her own religion."[36] A detail not often noted in the description of the two chapels is their peculiar spatial relation: "The Empress… having employed these two sorts of men [worm-men and bird-men], in the meanwhile builded two chapels one above the other."[37] This architecturally improbable structure, which places the star-stone chapel literally on top of the fire-stone chapel, may contain an oblique reference to Bolsover, since directly above the ground floor antechamber with the lunette of the temple with a burning flame is the Star Chamber, with its star-studded ceiling decoration and gallery of Old and New Testament figures and male and female saints, including St. Mary Magdalene, St. Cecilia, St. Katherine, and

St. Ursula.[38] Much of the decorative program of Bolsover predated Margaret's marriage to William; however, it is not surprising that Margaret might want to inscribe herself both retroactively and prospectively into the space of Bolsover, since it was also the most significant holding in the jointure William bestowed upon her in 1662 to provide for her if she survived him.[39] Cavendish, therefore, had a particular interest in this property and may have desired to ground her own materialist — and material — fantasies upon the foundation provided by Bolsover, an estate whose long history told a story of grandeur, loss, and dispossession, and eventual restoration for the Cavendishes.

How Margaret Cavendish's fantasy differed from her husband's can perhaps be illustrated by comparing the Heaven and Elysium Chambers of the Little Castle at Bolsover to her representation of Paradise in *The Blazing World.* The lavishly decorated rooms in Little Castle, rather than divide between opposed representations of the sacred and profane, virtue and pleasure, offer them as visual (and moral) analogues.[40] Each chamber features a painted ceiling organized around a central apotheosis scene.[41] The neo-Platonic resolution of the Elysium Chamber's ceiling painting barely contains the room's more Ovidian erotic energies, featuring a series of extravagantly embodied depictions of rapture and bliss, which, given their proximity to William's bedroom, were likely designed to be both pornographic and didactic in function.[42] While the Heaven Chamber is somewhat more decorous in its representations of cherubic joy, its symmetry with the Elysium Chamber in design and location clearly suggests that its angelic choirs are enlisted to celebrate the earthly pleasures taken in William's bedroom as well.

In a poem praising the Cavendish properties, Richard Andrews declares that "Hardwicke is rich, Welbecke is fine, Worsope is stately, Bolser divine."[43] This depiction of Bolsover offers exalted praise, but it also asserts a winking familiarity with the intimate regions of the house represented by the Heaven and Elysium Chambers. Andrews's poem seems at first to collapse the country-house poem into a real-estate catalogue. However, even as it compresses the poetic form of estate poetry, it expands and distributes the customary singularity topos of the typical estate poem across so many properties that they end up comprehensible only in relation to the portrait of the man they collectively construct. The poem thus enfolds together both expansive and intimate spaces even as it links discrete architectural sites in and through the person of William.

However, the art of constructing identities and asserting greatness through property would be seriously tested for the Cavendishes during their exile and proved difficult to maintain even after the Restoration. Bolsover was emptied of its rich furnishings and sustained enough damage to require extensive renovations, still underway during the years that Cavendish produced her two editions of *The Blazing World*.[44] Moreover, both poetic conventions and the law made real estate a problematic vehicle for establishing or securing female interests. Pamela S. Hammons describes how "meditations upon real estate frequently conflate women with land, while also summoning anxieties about female chastity."[45] The condition of the estate after it had been seized by Parliament, combined with the royal neglect the Cavendishes experienced after their return from exile, conspired to turn Bolsover from the famous scene of the most lavish royal entertainment ever hosted to a battered and anachronistic chivalric fantasy looted during the Civil Wars and completely severed from the court and courtly affairs during the Restoration.[46] The only direct reference to Bolsover in *The Blazing World*, discussed at the end of this essay, also suggests the inadequacy of great houses in embodying Margaret Cavendish's ambitions.

For all these reasons it is scarcely surprising that if Cavendish invokes a personal geography in oblique and direct allusions to Bolsover, her Paradise rewrites as much as it alludes to William's palace of pleasure. The temples of fire-stone and star-stone, for example, are not the work of giants, the architects of the Blazing World, but worm-men and bird-men, who are identified as the natural philosophers and astronomers of the realm.[47] They also help her obtain the fire-stone and star-stone she uses to fuel the pyrotechnics that provide the backdrop to her sermons, as well as the principal weapons for her conquest of her homeworld. Like her husband, Cavendish translates and adapts secular and sacred iconography to serve her own agenda. Both are interested in the intersection of the earthly and the heavenly, the body and the spirit. Both create structures that depend upon, amplify, and extend the personal charisma of their creators. But for Cavendish, the efficacy of the temples rests less in their physical structure than in the dynamic interaction of reason and rhetoric they put on display. In place of seduction, Cavendish offers a locus of conversion as she harnesses the power of the fire- and star-stones to enhance her persuasive powers. Divinity itself remains unknowable and therefore largely irrelevant to Cavendish's project. The power of the Empress to enflame and inspire the spirits of her people rests on her ability to understand the material world so as not to

be limited by it. By the time Cavendish wrote *The Blazing World*, it was clear that even the lavish reconstructions underway at Bolsover could not recapture the former greatness it had once embodied for William. By contrast, learning to harness the power of the star- and fire-stones not only allows the Empress to preach before congregations of women, but ultimately to reclaim and reconstruct her home world after the devastation of war.

Imaginary duchesses and material fancies

After she exhausts her reforming spirit upon the inhabitants of Paradise by building the two temples and founding new "societies of the virtuosos" among the beast-men, but before she arms herself to conquer her home world, the Empress turns away from these more material undertakings to take an authorial turn when she decides to write her own Cabbala. Her ultimate selection of the Duchess of Newcastle as her spirit scribe to aid her in this effort brings us to an entirely new dimension in our travels to and through *The Blazing World*. For it is only at this point in the narrative that the reader comes to realize that the Empress's world is *not* the same as the Duchess's, despite their shared postlapsarian and war-torn horizons. Cavendish's surprise is a double one, for she not only manages to make us reconsider how we might have confused the Empress's home world with our own, but she also proceeds to make the historical Duchess's entry into the text the most unfamiliar and challenging construction of place and space we have yet encountered.

The relationship of the Empress and the Duchess in *The Blazing World* has not been a matter of critical consensus. The Empress has been treated as a distinct persona or, more or less, as a projection of Cavendish herself, sometimes within the same works, an effect that Jonathan Goldberg refers to as "the problematic" of "identity and difference."[48] He traces this back to Cavendish's early atomism and the influence of Lucretius, for whom, "at one level of analysis, everything is made of the same stuff; at another, each instance is a unique combination of matter."[49] Focusing on the relationship between materiality and textuality in Cavendish's work, Goldberg also notes the frequency with which Lucretius links the "material components of the world" with the letters of the alphabet, pointing out that the Latin *elementum* refers to both.[50] Lucretius, as

Goldberg shows, goes beyond analogy by "positing an identity at the material level between things and words."[51]

Goldberg's Lucretian reading of the alignment of textuality and materiality in Cavendish puts interesting pressure on the odd scene in which Cavendish is summoned to serve as a scribe to the Empress, even as she describes herself as someone who can't write. In Goldberg's account, Cavendish's notoriously difficult hand produces characters whose "unintelligibility ensures difference and eccentric particularity" while the nature of letters suggests a physical commonality that "also points to a common material basis."[52] This reading, however, produces a rather different conflation: that of the author, her biography, and her "characters." Accepting the Empress as a "fantasy projection of the author," while representing Cavendish as personifying a sort of illegibility in her text, makes a double default out of Cavendish's representational choices rather than attending to Cavendish's introduction of herself as a scribe who in the end refuses to take dictation and requires the Empress to take control of her own fancies. The "same but different" logic of Goldberg's analysis of Cavendish's materialism also leads to difficulties when considering the materiality of female sexuality in *The Blazing World*. Having the Empress and the Duchess embody at once principles of identity and difference would seem to have the effect of turning Cavendish's "platonic seraglio," when the souls of the Empress and the Duchess visit William's body (a scene which Goldberg significantly neglects), into a scene of auto-erotic redundancy or pure narcissism.[53] Although he defends Cavendish's philosophical sophistication, his reading ultimately reduces *The Blazing World* to a parable of Cavendish's personal and textual unintelligibility and thus reinscribes, even as it theorizes, familiar narratives about Cavendish's incoherence without attending to her own arguments about the relationship of textuality and materiality.

To be sure, the inversions and parallels between the Empress and the Duchess are particular, pointed, and repeated. When the Empress's home world, torn by war and strife, is eventually identified by the acronym ESFI, both allegorical comparison and geographic identification with England, Scotland, France, and Ireland are inevitable, and the world of the Empress comes pointedly back into alignment with the "real" world. In this way, Cavendish's complexly interlocking worlds both insist upon and resist clear enumeration — the more minutely detailed and materially realized they are, the more their temporal, biographical, political, and geographical borders bleed into one another. Still, their worlds,

their bodies, and their fancies are consistently represented as distinct in *The Blazing World*; and it is their intellectual collaborations and collective travels where these differences are most dramatically foregrounded. In these accounts Cavendish explicitly features the limits of textuality in order to mobilize her heroines to test the material efficacy of imagination and reason at home.

By the time the Duchess arrives to assist her with her Cabbalistic project, the Empress has already received instruction from her spirit guides about the innumerable spiritual worlds to be recovered or discovered, and the Duchess's spirit instead urges the Empress to abandon her project of writing a Jewish Cabbala, arguing that not even the spirits could guide her to reveal "the mysteries of the great creator, unless he be pleased to inspire into them the gift of divine knowledge."[54] The Duchess similarly dissuades the Empress from attempting, in turn, a philosophical, moral, or political Cabbala on the grounds that reason, nature, and fear of God were all that was required for arriving at the first two; and, as for the third, "the chief and only ground of government, was but reward and punishment, and required no further Cabbala."[55] Instead the spirit of the Duchess urges that she attempt a "poetical or romancical Cabbala, wherein you may use metaphors, allegories, similitudes, etc. and interpret them as you please."[56] Although the Empress seems very pleased with the Duchess's advice, the Duchess herself falls into a profound melancholy due, she says, to her "great ambition" to be a princess and ruler of a world. The seeming disjunction between what Cavendish, *auteur*, says she has achieved with her text *The Blazing World* as a self-crowned Margaret the First and the Duchess's melancholic dissatisfaction with poetical world-fashioning invites the conclusion that either the Duchess has not yet achieved what Cavendish has with the production of *The Blazing World* or more likely that Cavendish would have us understand that the ambition she registers in writing *The Blazing World* is not to create a merely compensatory world of fiction, in which she can "interpret as she pleases."[57]

Beyond a world of one's own

Cavendish registers the inadequacy of purely fictional worlds not only through the Duchess's profound melancholy and unfulfilled ambition but by distinguishing between the invention of a "poetical or romancical Cabbala" and the

advice given to the Duchess by the spirits to create a world of her own. This activity, unlike the women's earlier Cabbala construction, is not identified with fiction, metaphor, and interpretation, but with true invention, nature, and materiality. These worlds are not fictional but philosophical. After the Duchess attempts to fashion worlds in the manner of the ancients (Thales, Pythagoras, Plato, Epicurus, and Aristotle) and the moderns (Descartes and Hobbes), she rejects them all and "resolved to make a world of her own invention,"

> and this world was composed of sensitive and rational self-moving matter; indeed, it was composed only of the rational, which is the subtlest and purest degree of matter; for as the sensitive did move and act both to the perceptions and consistency of the body, so this degree of matter at the same point of time (for though the degrees are mixt, yet the several parts may move several ways at one time) did move to the creation of the imaginary world; which world after it was made, appeared so curious and full of variety, so well ordered and wisely governed, that it cannot possibly be expressed by words, nor the delight and pleasure which the Duchess took in making this world of her own.[58]

Where the construction of a poetical Cabbala could accurately be read as a retreat into a private, interior, or mystical world, the world creation that the Duchess undertakes with the instruction of the spirits is represented as fully engaged with the world of ideas *and* matter as it reconsiders the function of, and interaction between, imagination and reason. Cavendish achieves this, on the one hand, by emphasizing the materiality of the worlds created by the mind and, on the other, by satirizing what she portrays as the unstable and chaotic worlds of the philosophers. The Duchess's failure to be satisfied with the untenable worlds of a long line of great philosophers in no way signals a retreat but rather allows Cavendish to level the playing field, as she reveals how fictions can be mistaken for rational thought as well as the reverse. By rejecting a sequence of fantastical worlds filled with daemons (Thales), "dusty and misty" atomic particles (Epicurus), and "ethereal globules" (Descartes),[59] Cavendish re-describes philosophy as a mixed world, part reason and part invention, as she aligns the philosophers' speculations with the Duchess's world creation while granting all the status of creation and the substance of rational matter. Thus, if Cavendish's *Observations Upon Experimental Philosophy* is offered as a

work of serious philosophy, *The Blazing World* she attaches to it is both a lesson in reading natural philosophy and a fantastical animation of its principles.

The satisfaction enjoyed by both the Duchess's spirit and the Empress in creating their own worlds, while great, is not represented as an end in itself and certainly not a means of leaving their home worlds behind; rather, the exploration of their "spiritual" worlds provides a necessary precondition of a productive return. It is finally in charting out the material efficacy of what Cavendish refers to as spiritual worlds — but instructs us to understand as the finest refinement of rational matter — that Cavendish offers us the navigational map for moving profitably between worlds and finally for returning to and reconceiving home. Cavendish conjoins her texts, therefore, not to polarize them but to reconsider their points of conjunction and correspondence. Rejecting any number of dualisms (Aristoteliean, Cartesian, Neo-Platonic, gendered) Cavendish refuses the oppositions of masculine spirit and feminine matter, body and soul, philosophy and fancy as she builds her infinite number of worlds on a tripartite base: the Empress's World, the Blazing World and the Duchess's World, three worlds, moreover, that can be visited in material and spiritual forms, and that are not so much discovered as recovered. Lefebvre's three-dimensional analysis of spatial production is suggestive here, especially his description of space as physical, mental, and social: space as perceived, conceived, and lived.[60] Spatial practice for Lefebvre is analogous to the syntagmatic dimension of language; it is a system that depends upon and is made intelligible by the articulation of elements or activities and their relationship. Both space and language make their meaning in relation.

Having abandoned her atomist view of space as a vacuum or void, Cavendish, too, could be said to understand space as having physical, mental, and social dimensions, since she believed space to be coextensive with self-moving and self-knowing matter. However, she is more Baconian than poststructuralist in her analysis of the human limitations of perception, representation, and convention to attaining a true understanding of nature. Cavendish develops her spatial analysis both at the level of scientific argument and narrative structure; that is, in the language of philosophy and fancy. Cavendish's poetics of space is described in the preface to *The Blazing World* as having a tripartite structure: "the first part whereof is romancical, the second philosophical, and the third is merely fancy or (as I may call it) fantastical."[61] If we understand these as sequential and syntactical, then the romance would seem to be clearly concluded

with the Lady's marriage and coronation as Empress; the philosophical section to carry at least through the discussion of spiritual worlds and the creation of the self-designed worlds of the Duchess and Empress; with the final "fantastical" section corresponding to the Second Part of *The Blazing World* and the account of the Empress's military victories upon her return to her home world. The visit of the Empress and the Duchess to the Duchess's home world, then, is somewhat ambiguously located somewhere in or between the philosophical and fantastical sections. Yet, wherever one ultimately locates the spectral visit of the Duchess's and Empress's souls to London and Welbeck, understanding the transition between Cavendish's philosophical and fantastical sections is less about compensatory fiction after her philosophical discourse than a fictional representation of what mastering and applying her philosophical principles might look like. Moreover, the sequence from philosophical to fantastical offers an epitome and recapitulation of what Cavendish attempts in attaching *The Blazing World* to her *Observations upon Experimental Philosophy*.

Domestic spheres

So what, then, are we to make of the section of *The Blazing World* that describes the journey of the Empress's and Duchess's souls to the Duchess's home world, interposed as it is between Cavendish's powerful evocation of philosophical world creation and her representation of the Empress's conquest of her home world? Either philosophical or fantastical might seem an odd way to describe this autobiographical section of the narrative. However, it is immediately clear that this ostensible homecoming brings us to a world in which neither space nor time resolves into a self-consistent or familiar prospect, as the Empress and Duchess move through the generically constructed spaces of theatre, court, and country house.

The Duchess is called upon to explain how it is possible that she and the Empress can travel as spirits and pass through the Duchess's world undetected, saying that "although thoughts are the natural language of souls, yet by reason souls cannot travel without vehicles, they use such language as the nature and propriety of their vehicles require."[62] Cavendish goes on to describe their two souls as "being made of the purest and finest sort of air, and of a human shape";

this was why they could neither be seen nor heard by anyone, and, "had they been of some grosser sort of air, the sound of that air's language would have been as perceptible as the blowing of Zephyrus."[63] In this account, the textuality of the "air's language" has evanesced into pure thought. Cavendish is therefore able to recast feminine invisibility in the public sphere into a kind of material and ethereal linguistic refinement. Because neither of the women is travelling in their bodies, their first view of the Duchess's world is an impossibly comprehensive one, like Scipio's disembodied dream vision, where "in a moment [they] viewed all the parts of it, and all the actions of all the creatures therein."[64] But rather than move from the earthly to the celestial, as in Scipio, the souls of the Empress and Duchess embody both spiritual and material worlds.

In her representation of both theatre and court, Cavendish parses the relationship between fancy and fact in a new register as the Empress expresses wonder at the artificiality of what the reader is expected to recognize as familiar and natural. In the theatre of the Duchess's world the Empress asks if the poets' "actions" do not "comply with their judgments," wondering if the poets would condemn her for "preferring a natural face before a sign-post, or a natural humour before an artificial dance."[65] When the two women travel to court they view the royal family and attendants in "a very magnificent show," language that seems to praise statecraft for producing better stagecraft than the theatre itself. While her praise of the court is effusive and the Empress seems to find no fault, saying that the royal family seemed to her "to be endued with divine splendour," the Duchess's soul, nonetheless, again becomes very melancholy and eager to leave to be reunited with her lord and husband's soul.[66] They travel to Welbeck and the Duchess's soul laments how the estate was half deforested during the Civil Wars. When the Empress learns that the Cavendishes have another property, "a very fine castle called Bolsover," she immediately expresses the desire to see it, but the Duchess replies, "Alas… it is but a naked house."[67] The richness of the visit is supplied instead by the platonic concord established in the Duke's body, where the Duchess and the Empress are entertained "with scenes, songs, music, witty discourses, pleasant recreations and all kinds of harmless sports."[68] Here the deficits of the material world are not so much erased as put into relief by the rational entertainments of the souls of the Duke, the Duchess, and the Empress. But even these are shown to be ultimately unsatisfying precisely because they are only private, domestic, and interior compensations (though not, pointedly, gendered as specifically or exclusively female).

Cavendish's defamiliarizing and yet increasingly personal spatial reconstructions in the Duchess's world ultimately refuse transcendence, inversion, or idealization as they invite us to recalibrate the relationship between metaphor and matter in philosophical, topological, and tropological terms. Even (or especially) at home, the instruments of generic convention are shown both to reveal and deform experience. In what is arguably the most artificial of the representations of home, William's military and courtly disappointments are represented as an allegorical lawsuit pursued by Fortune against him. The hyper-literary context of this personified allegory offers a moralizing tale of an immoral world. Although the rhetorical force of Truth carries the argument, she cannot control the worldly outcome or undo the damages that have already been done; literary conceits or poetic justice do nothing to compensate the Cavendishes for what they have lost. Still, the Duchess leaves behind the fullness and order of her invented world and chooses instead to stay at home with her disappointed Duke. It is left to the Empress to personify the power and example of feminine world transformation in her home world in the second part of *The Blazing World*, where she rains fiery conflagrations down upon her enemies in a convincing if alarming demonstration of what she has learned from natural philosophy. Cavendish is not entirely reassuring to those who regarded learning in a woman to be a dangerous thing, and her portrayals of women as natural philosophers in *The Blazing World* do not restrict their learning or their efficacy to a separate feminine sphere. To be sure, there is both threat and promise in what Cavendish portrays as the rational and material comprehension of the world.

Notes

Special thanks to Katherine Larson and Alysia Kolentsis for organizing the RSA panel "Gendering Time and Space in Early Modern England," for which this paper was originally written, and for the skill, patience, and generosity that went into putting together this special issue.

1. In earlier work, I examined *The Blazing World* specifically within the utopian genre. See Marina Leslie, *Renaissance Utopias and the Problem of History* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1998). As additional evidence of Cavendish's self-conscious experiments with mixing genres, one might consider the subtitle of *Nature's Pictures*

(1656): "In this Volume there are several feigned Stories of Natural Descriptions, as Comical, Tragical, and Tragi-Comical, Poetical, Romancical, Philosophical, and Historical, both in Prose and Verse, some all Verse, some all Prose, some mixt, partly Prose, and partly Verse. Also, there are some Morals, and some Dialogues; but they are as the Advantage Loaves of Break to a Bakers dozen; and true Story at the latter end, wherein there is no Feignings."

2. Although it has been a critical commonplace that Cavendish was called "Mad Madge" by her contemporaries, Kate Lilley and others have suggested there is no real textual evidence for this claim. Several other disparaging remarks about her do appear, however, in the diaries and letters of both male and female contemporaries, including Samuel Pepys, John and Mary Evelyn, Dorothy Osborne, and Henry More. More recently, Frank and Fritzie Manuel used *The Blazing World* to diagnose Cavendish as a schizophrenic in *Utopian Thought in the Western World* (Belknap Press, 1982), p. 7.
3. On the liberatory effects of mixing genres, see, for example, Emma Rees, "Triply Bound: Genre and the Exilic Self," in *Authorial Conquests: Essays on Genre in the Writing of Margaret Cavendish,*" ed. Line Cottegnies and Nancy Weitz (Farleigh Dickenson Press, 2003), pp. 23–39; Oddvar Holmesland, "Margaret Cavendish's *The Blazing World*: Natural Art and the Body Politic," *Studies in Philology* 96.4 (1999), pp. 457–79.
4. Margaret Cavendish, *The Blazing World and Other Writings*, ed. Kate Lilley (New York: Penguin Books, 1992), p. 123. All further citations taken from this edition.
5. Cavendish, *The Blazing World*, p. 123.
6. Cavendish, *The Blazing World*, p. 123.
7. Sir Philip Sidney, *An Apology for Poetry*, ed. R.W. Maslen (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2002), p. 103.
8. Cavendish, *The Blazing World*, pp. 123–24.
9. Cavendish, *The Blazing World*, p. 124.
10. Margaret Cavendish, *Observations upon Experimental Philosophy*, ed. Eileen O'Neill (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), p. xxiii.
11. There have been various accounts of the timeline and sources of Cavendish's changing views as she moved away from her early atomist position toward an animist or vitalist materialism. See, for example, John Rogers, *The Matter of Revolution: Science, Poetry, and Politics in the Age of Milton* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1996); Eileen O'Neill's Introduction to *Observations upon Experimental Philosophy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001); and Lisa Sarasohn,*The Natural*

Philosophy of Margaret Cavendish: Reason and Fancy during the Scientific Revolution (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2010).

12. Cavendish, *The Blazing World*, p. 124.
13. In both the 1666 and 1668 editions, the full title of the text is *The Description of a New World, Called the Blazing-World written by the thrice noble, illustrious, and excellent princess, the Duchess of Newcastle.*
14. Cavendish, *The Blazing World*, p. 170.
15. Cavendish, *The Blazing World*, p. 170.
16. Even the talking beast-men represent not so much a wholesale fantasy as Cavendish's considered philosophical position on the sentience of animals, an issue on which both she and her husband shared strong views. In a letter addressed to William Cavendish dated 23 November 1646, Descartes insists that the prattle of a magpie demonstrates nothing of the human qualities of intelligence. See *The Writings of Descartes: The Correspondence* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), pp. 302–03. For Margaret Cavendish's views on animal intelligence, in which she responds to both Descartes and Hobbes, see for example *Philosophical Letters* (London, 1664), pp. 34–35, 40–41.
17. Catherine Gallagher, "Embracing the Absolute: The Politics of the Female Subject in Seventeenth-Century England," *Genders* 1 (1988), pp. 24–39. Jennifer Mi-Young Park's essay in this volume similarly reads Cavendish's *Blazing World* as constructing a fundamentally private and inward world, although she is less interested in absolutist politics than in gendered epistemologies.
18. Mary Baine Campbell, *Wonder and Science: Imagining Worlds in Early Modern Europe* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1999), pp. 181–213.
19. John Rogers, *The Matter of Revolution: Science, Poetry, and Politics in the Age of Milton* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press), p. 178.
20. I take the phrase from the title of Elaine Beilin's foundational study of early modern women writers, *Redeeming Eve: Women Writers of the Renaissance* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1990). The interest in revisiting Eve's representation not only concerns well-known writers treated by Beilin and others, but is a central feature of the skirmish in popular print culture known as the "woman debate." See Diane Purkiss on the difficulty of assessing with any certainty the actual gender or politics behind many of these pseudonymically published tracts: "Material Girls: The Seventeenth-Century Woman Debate," in *Women, Texts, & Histories*, ed. Clare Brant and Diane Purkiss (New York: Routledge, 1992), pp. 69–101.
21. Cavendish, *The Blazing World*, p. 176.

22. Cavendish, *The Blazing World*, p. 176.
23. Cavendish, *The Blazing World*, p. 176.
24. On representations of the soul as feminine, see Patricia Cox Miller, *Women in Early Christianity: Translations from Greek Texts* (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 2005), pp. 315ff.
25. Cavendish, *The Blazing World*, p. 176.
26. Cavendish, *The Blazing World*, p. 176
27. Cavendish, *The Blazing World*, p. 176.
28. Cavendish is not primarily interested in entering into theological disputes here, but her formulations seem careful not to trespass on well-known heretical ground by engaging and refuting a Manichaean account of the equal potency of good and evil. She treads rather nearer to Pelagianism in her emphasis on free will and a description of Paradise that seems free of the taint of original sin, which may explain why she chooses in the end to leave Eve free but unredeemed.
29. I want to thank Mary Baine Campbell for alerting me to Bolsover's suggestive iconography.
30. Charles Cavendish purchased the property from Sir George Talbot, Earl of Shrewsbury, who was the fourth husband of his mother, the famed Elizabeth "Bess" of Hardwick (1518–1608). William's grandmother's advantageous marriages and shrewd management of her estates made her the wealthiest woman of her generation.
31. Alistair Fowler, *The Country House Poem: A Cabinet of Seventeenth-Century Estate Poems and Related Items* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1994), p. 317.
32. Ironically, the uselessness of Bolsover as a defensive fortification probably contributed to the preservation of much of its original design during the Civil War and Interregnum, since it was not suitable for converting into barracks.
33. Timothy Raylor, "'Pleasure Reconciled to Virtue': William Cavendish, Ben Jonson and the Decorative Scheme of Bolsover Castle," *Renaissance Quarterly* 52.2 (1999), p. 410.
34. Margaret Cavendish, *The Life of The Thrice Noble, High and Puissant Prince, William Cavendishe* (London, 1667), p. 150.
35. Raylor, p. 409.
36. Cavendish, *The Blazing World*, p. 164.
37. Cavendish, *The Blazing World*, p. 163.
38. St. Ursula's life and iconography, in particular, as a British princess with 11,000 virginal attendants, may have influenced Cavendish's representation of the Empress

preaching before the women of the Blazing World, although the Empress avoids Ursula's grim fate by slaying her enemies rather than being martyred by them.

39. Married in 1645 during their exile, Margaret had no dowry and William had lost his great estates. See Katie Whitaker, *Mad Madge: The Extraordinary Life of Margaret Cavendish, Duchess of Newcastle, the First Woman to Live by Her Pen* (New York: Basic Books, 2002), p. 242.
40. Raylor, pp. 402–39.
41. Although presumably Jesus is the subject of the apotheosis in the Heaven Chamber and Jove in the Elysium Chamber, Raylor notes that the figure ascending skyward on the ceiling of the Elysium Chamber looks rather more like Apollo with a wand than Jove with a thunderbolt (p. 427, note 65).
42. Valerie Traub discusses the homoerotic representations of several pairs of female allegorical figures in *The Renaissance of Lesbianism in Early Modern England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), pp. 160–62.
43. Alastair Fowler, *The Country House Poem: A Cabinet of Seventeenth-Century Estate Poems and Related Items* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1994), p. 150.
44. William's daughter Jane Cavendish was left as custodian of Bolsover while he was serving as a general in Charles I's army. When the royalist forces were defeated at the Battle of Marston Moor and William was forced into exile, Jane was able to preserve some household furnishings and artwork before Parliamentary forces seized the property. Later, William's younger brother Sir Charles managed to save Bolsover and Welbeck from ruin by purchasing them under the Commonwealth. For Margaret's account see *The Life of William Cavendish*, pp. 73–74, 91–92.
45. Pamela S. Hammons, *Gender, Sexuality, and Material Objects in English Renaissance Verse* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate), p. 6. Hammons's book helpfully discusses connections between Bolsover and *The Blazing World*, with an emphasis on the importance of the Cavendish properties to Margaret's poetic and worldly ambitions. Lisa Hopkins makes connections between Bolsover and the dramatic works of the Cavendishes in "Play Houses: Drama at Bolsover and Welbeck," *Early Theatre* 2 (1999), pp. 25–44.
46. For descriptions of Charles I and Henrietta Maria's visit to Bolsover in 1634 see Raylor, pp. 415–18; Lisa Hopkins, pp. 26–31; Lucy Worsley, *Cavalier: A Tale of Chivalry, Passion, and Great Houses* (New York: Bloomsbury 2007), pp. 79–118.
47. Cavendish, *The Blazing World*, p. 134.
48. Jonathan Goldberg, *The Seeds of Things: Theorizing Sexuality and Materiality in Renaissance Representations* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2009), p. 124.

Goldberg reviews the critical responses to the appearance of Cavendish "*in propria persona*" as a character in *The Blazing World* on pp. 126–37.

49. Goldberg, p. 124.
50. Goldberg, p. 124.
51. Goldberg, p. 125.
52. Goldberg, p. 135.
53. Goldberg, p. 126.
54. Cavendish, *The Blazing World*, p. 182.
55. Cavendish, *The Blazing World*, p. 183.
56. Cavendish, *The Blazing World*, p. 183.
57. Cavendish, *The Blazing World*, p. 183.
58. Cavendish, *The Blazing World*, p. 188.
59. Cavendish, *The Blazing World*, pp. 187–88.
60. Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, trans. Donald Nicholson-Smith (Oxford: Blackwell Press, 1991).
61. Cavendish, *The Blazing World*, p. 124.
62. Cavendish, *The Blazing World*, p. 193.
63. Cavendish, *The Blazing World*, p. 192.
64. Cavendish, *The Blazing World*, p. 190.
65. Cavendish, *The Blazing World*, p. 192.
66. Cavendish, *The Blazing World*, p. 192.
67. Cavendish, *The Blazing World*, p. 194.
68. Cavendish, *The Blazing World*, p. 195.