

# An Inverted Dystopia: Margaret Cavendish's Utopia, *The Blazing World*

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## ABSTRACT

*This new interpretation of Margaret Cavendish's *The Blazing World* (1666) shows that women engaged with witchcraft theory in early modern Europe. Remnants of the early modern witch-craze exist in theoretical texts by the men who were at the heart of defining and defending the 'truths' about witchcraft. Notably, as cases of witchcraft were predominantly against women, women's voices remain unheard. Margaret Cavendish, Duchess of Newcastle, was a rare example of a woman attempting to insert herself into intellectual circles like the Royal Society. Having frequented the circles of men that believed they were scientifically proving witchcraft, it is unlikely that Cavendish did not have her own opinions on the subject. By showing how Cavendish's dystopian science-fiction novel echoes men's theories about witchcraft, the parody she makes of their theories is brought to light and earns her a place in the wider scholarship on the subject.*

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Historically, written language has been a male dominated discipline used to shape society. Despite their position on the margins, women held opinions about these predominantly male thought processes. An early and rare example of a woman parodying male perceptions of society can be seen in the work of Margaret Cavendish, duchess of Newcastle (1623-1673). In her work *The Blazing World*, Cavendish subverts elements of witchcraft theory to demonstrate how belief systems are constructed, how they shape society, and the fragility of such constructs.

The early modern European witch-hunts were accompanied by many publications on witchcraft theory. They described witches and explained how to do away with them. Men were predominantly the authors of these texts and frequently cited one another as they continuously redefined witchcraft by building dystopian worldviews. Such dystopias were characterized by women succumbing to devil-worship in the absence of men. An important textual example is the Catholic French jurist Jean Bodin's *On the Demon-Mania of Witches* (1580), which was more widely discussed as witch trials became more common (Clark 116). Other examples include King James I's *Daemonologie* (1597), and medical writer William Drage's *Daimonomogei* (1665). Since women generally existed on the margins of society and were allowed to function only in relation to men, they were defenseless against such accusations. A woman unattached to a man was marginalized further and more easily targeted as a witch. Stuart Clark notes that "the facts of the matter are that witches could not possibly have ridden to sabbats, worshipped devils, and come away with the power of maleficium" (3). And yet, the persecution of mostly women was a reality in Europe well into the seventeenth-century.

Despite women's place on the margins of society, Cavendish was one woman who attempted to participate in its male dominated intellectual circles. Margaret Cavendish frequently struggled to be seen as an intellectual equal by her male contemporaries—namely at the Royal Society, which in the 1660s was beginning to give the "existence of witchcraft scientific credibility" (Clark 303). Unlike some of the great thinkers of her time, Cavendish did not believe in witchcraft. This paper will demonstrate how Cavendish's utopian text, *The Description of a New World, Called the Blazing World* (1666) inverts dystopian ideas by male authors and thinkers by alluding to tropes in witchcraft narratives in ways to render them utopian. Before expanding on this, it is worth knowing more about

Margaret Cavendish and her contemporaries.

Margaret Cavendish was born into the wealthy gentry Lucas family in 1623 as the youngest of eight children. Following the outbreak of the English Civil Wars (1642-1660), Margaret's mother allowed her to become the Queen's maid of honor and join the King's court at Oxford in 1643. A year later, Margaret fled to France with Queen Henrietta Maria and, in 1645, she married a royalist, William Cavendish, Marquis of Newcastle (Mendelson 9). By 1653, Margaret was living in London where she spent her time productively writing, attending lectures, and studying natural philosophy (Mendelson 9-10). The Royal Society was formed in 1660 and only tolerated the presence of women they perceived as potential patrons, which Cavendish was. Thus, Cavendish spent the better part of her career attempting to assert herself in a man's world. She did so by being a prolific writer and publishing opinions on natural philosophy under her own name at a time when women typically published anonymously. Her works often considered issues of gender, putting into question if women were truly in subordination to men in society (Fitzmaurice). Through writing, Cavendish remained in constant dialogue with her male contemporaries.

Unlike many of her contemporaries at the Royal Society, Cavendish did not believe in witchcraft. In 2007, Jacqueline Broad's article, "Margaret Cavendish and Joseph Glanvill: science, religion and witchcraft," examines differences between Cavendish and Glanvill's approaches to natural philosophy to understand why Glanvill, a fellow of the Royal Society, believed in witchcraft and Cavendish did not (493). Broad's article is a rare exception, as scholarship seldom links Cavendish to witchcraft, even when it links witchcraft to natural philosophy. For example, Stuart Clark's 1997 chapter on the Scientific Revolution and witchcraft excludes Cavendish but focuses on how Royal Society fellows—Joseph Glanvill, Henry More and Robert Boyle—thought of witchcraft as a "proper subject for science" (297) and used it to "protect traditional Anglican theology" (300). More broadly, scholarship on witchcraft has evolved from the belief that witches were real to the examination of witches and witchcraft as textual constructs by intellectuals in the medieval and early modern periods.

These medieval and early modern textual constructs became an enduring and evolving belief system that resulted in the persecution of many across Europe. In his 1997 book, *Instruments of*

*Darkness*, James Sharpe declares interest in studying how so many individuals managed to be convinced that witches were real (8). More specifically, his book aimed to explain how differing groups of people, many intelligent and educated, were able to believe in witches by way of avoiding what Edward Thompson refers to as “the massive condescension of posterity” (6-7).

Recognizing Cavendish as an intelligent and educated person of the time may avoid this “condescension.” Her lack of belief in witchcraft permeates *The Blazing World* by offering a subtle critique of belief in witches. Subtle, because elements of witchcraft, such as the sabbath and witches’ familiars come through the text but are unnamed in any overtly recognizable way. *The Blazing World*, possibly the first science fiction written by a woman, is an alternative world created by Cavendish as a utopia for women. It has been argued that Cavendish “turns Bacon’s *New Atlantis* on its head” (Mendelson 31). The idea of turning something on its head is fitting with how *Blazing World* has been set up globally, whereby the planets are aligned at extreme poles, so that one may travel from one world to another via a narrow tunnel (Mendelson 24). Both of these descriptions insinuate an inversion. European intellectuals frequently viewed and explained things through binaries such as good and evil, male and female, or hot and cold (Briggs 99). Furthermore, in witchcraft theory, inversions signify disorder and the malign. Going forward, this paper will discuss how Cavendish inverts elements of her own society by creating a society that mirrors it; turns it “on its head.” In her society, Cavendish has women rule in place of men, as demonstrated by the story’s protagonist, the Empress. As we will see later, the character of the Empress can be likened to a witch. However, before focusing on her, it would be best to get a sense of the world in which she lives.

The story begins when the main character, known only as the Lady, enters another world, following a ship accident with a merchant who kidnapped her. Upon her arrival, the Bear-men, Fly-men, Bird-men, Fish-men, Ape-men, and other creatures welcome her. The *Blazing World*’s Emperor wants to worship her like a deity but makes her his wife when she explains that she is only mortal. Through their union, she becomes the Empress and acquires power. She asks the creatures and Spirits many questions about the World, finds a Platonick female friend in the Duchess, and makes changes to all she sees as problematic in religion, philosophy, and science. Due to news of war in her homeland, she eventually returns home to fight the enemies.

As a work of fiction, *The Blazing World* allowed Cavendish to safely critique the ideas men published at the time, many of which came to be accepted as fact due to a belief in men's authority on all things intellectual. As Clark says: "The damage that could be inflicted on witchcraft beliefs by skepticism depended on how these beliefs were defended. But because demonology presupposed doubt, it often anticipated the attacks made on it, with the result that the great witchcraft debate became circular and inconclusive" (195). This suggests that theories on the subject were fragile and required regular reaffirmation. Cavendish demonstrates her own way of instilling belief through the Empress. Instilling belief could be done through "Art," which was how she "kept [citizens] in constant belief, without inforcement or blood-shed; for she knew well, that belief was a thing not to be forced or pressed upon the people, but to be instilled in their minds by gentle persuasions" (Cavendish 102). From this, Cavendish appears to suggest how belief systems can be more organically established through trust building. Additionally, it is a subtle critique of witchcraft theorists who managed to instill a belief that led to the persecution of innocent women, as well as advice for political rhetoric. In her *Philosophical Letters*, she wrote of how "many a good, old honest woman hath been condemned innocently, and suffered death wrongfully, by the sentence of some foolish and cruel Judges, merely upon this suspicion of Witchcraft, when as really there hath been no such thing" (Cavendish). This statement demonstrates Cavendish's awareness of the plight of those around her. A stable society requires trust, and trust relies on truths. Here, Cavendish inverts the falsity of witchcraft to the truth of its non-existence in order to render a dangerous world for the persecuted a haven.

Cavendish creates a utopia where persecuted people from her society are permitted to exist. She uses various figures condemned in the seventeenth-century to populate her utopia, namely women. Women were most targeted during the witch-hunts, and there is little in the literature that explains why (Clark 116). In her note to the reader she explains: "I have made a world of my own: for which no body, I hope, will blame me, since it is everyone's power to do the like" (Cavendish 60). This statement ridicules what fictional works by men about witchcraft created in the material world: a witch craze. Though a wealthy woman, she continued to be marginalized within the intellectual circle she wished to frequent, the Royal Society. Regardless of status, the role of women in society remained precarious. Using her position of status to publish under her own name highlighted the implications

a piece of writing could have on society. This act of publishing rendered her vulnerable to scrutiny since she often had different opinions from her contemporaries. Differences lead to factions, which lead to marginalization, negating the agenda in *Blazing World* to create a unified world.

Leaving the religion of *Blazing World* unnamed avoids divisions and unifies the world. Though Cavendish was Anglican, she had minimal interest in any particular religion. Her lack of specification for the religion in *Blazing World* where they “unanimously acknowledge, worship and adore the Only, Omnipotent, and Eternal God” advocates for the root of religion to be the same (Cavendish 72). This unanimity means their religion can be a version of any religion and, therefore, can include anyone. Having the Empress establish a religion and build churches also means it can be any gender’s religion. The Empress’s creation of her own congregation, where she can preach and be head, opposes the exclusion of women. Upon her arrival to the *Blazing World*, she believes them to be Jews or Turks because there are no women. She asks why

“bar them from religious Assemblies? It is not fit, said they, that Men and Women should be promiscuously together in time of Religious Worship; for their company hinders Devotion, and makes many, instead of praying to God, direct their devotion to their Mistresses.” (Cavendish 72-73)

While women’s exclusion insinuates that they are a wrongful presence, the questioning of whether they were Jews or Turks emphasizes that it does not matter. Both religions’ exclusion of women makes them the same. In witchcraft, women were often perceived as the sexually insatiable gender. However, in *Blazing World*, men are also held accountable when it comes to sexual desire. Cavendish portrays administrative beings as eunuchs “To keep them from Mariage: For Women and Children most commonly make disturbance both in Church and State” (73). Thus, if a man in politics has not been “fixed,” he may also make a disturbance.

The initial inability to determine if the men were Jews or Turks is rendered futile by the new religion that unifies and welcomes women. Despite being called by different names, the new religion that unifies and welcomes women. Despite being called by different names, the similar rules likened the religions to one another. Mendelson notes that when Cavendish mentions that “numbers are only marks of remembrance,” she refers to “the mystical numerology of Christian cabbalists from the

'Germatria' of Jewish Cabbalists" (105). This Christian borrowing from Jewish tradition further illustrates the futility of creating differences between religions based on their names while their practices resemble one another. Much of witchcraft theory was intertwined with religious debates. Prior to being intellectual and theoretical, books on witchcraft were evangelical and concerned with piety, aimed "at clerical practice, and their religiosity was the religiosity of churches" (Clark 437-438). Like women, Jews were a marginalized group that was, historically, demonized (Mendelson 172). Additionally, Jews were associated with the anti-Christ and would flock to him (Clark 427). The expectation was that Jews would convert to Christianity (Mendelson 174). However, as mentioned, Christianity borrowed from Judaism. As the group Cavendish refers to in the Congregation is guessed to be a group of Jewish women, they would have been doubly marginalized.

Cavendish had close friends in the crypto-Jewish Duarte sisters who, like her and her husband, were "singled out for persecution for their religio-political allegiance" (Mendelson 184). For some theorists, the persecution of witches was similar, as it may have had an anti-Catholicism agenda, as in *Discoverie of Witchcraft* by Reginald Scot (Sharpe 54). This is significant because, as Robin Briggs argues, "The stereotype is obvious; it consisted of inverting all the positive values of society, adding a lot of lurid detail (often borrowed from earlier allegations), then throwing the resulting bucket of filth over the selected victims" (32). By using an illustration that encompasses many factors, Cavendish demonstrates being cognizant of more than she often receives credit for. Contrary to these converging variables, the Empress's religion remains vague and is only specified insofar as being a religion and exclusively for women.

The idea of an all-female congregation is like a witches' sabbath. Cavendish's Congregation of Women resembles a coven where women possess qualities unseen by men, including their true female power. The Empress established "a Congregation of Women" where the women "had quick wits, subtile conceptions, clear understandings, and solid judgments, became, in a short time, very devout and zealous Sisters" (Cavendish 100). This illustration of the congregation inverts what witchcraft theory describes as the sabbath. For witches, the sabbath was a meeting of women that followed the making of a pact with the Devil filled with "nocturnal conspiracy, black magic, child murder, orgiastic sexuality and perverted ritual" (Briggs 32). For Cavendish, though, there was no coercing from the

Devil's part, as the Empress is the leader of the other women. Rather, the fact that she is a female author reporting on a female meeting offers an inside scoop, whereas a female meeting as reported by man can only have the legitimacy of hearsay. The witches' sabbath depended on frailty and gullibility as elements of the female condition (Clark 117). Another element of the female condition in witchcraft concerns emotions.

The Empress's friendship with the Duchess demonstrates a palette of emotions associated with witches. Ambition, melancholy, and lust were seen as traits that women and the Devil had in common (Clark 113). To associate certain emotions with witches renders those emotions negative. Cavendish decriminalizes those emotions by endowing her main characters with them. These emotions were expressed when "Truly said the Duchess to the Empress (for between dear friends there's no concealment, they being like several parts of one united body) my Melancholy proceeds from an extreme ambition" (Cavendish 121). The Duchess's ambition is to be a Princess. Cavendish was cursed with a similar ambition, as she prefaced and concluded her book with the idea that she could not be Caesar or Alexander. From this, an ambition to rule from the position of having a major title can be seen as predominantly masculine, as her model references are male. Melancholy was seen as an illness. Based on what is known of Cavendish, this form of sadness may be a result of the disappointment caused by rejection from a male dominated society. Like the aforementioned unnoticed intellectual qualities, these emotional aspects of the female condition were misunderstood by men. Cavendish defends these gender differences by reminding the reader that "there are so many irregular motions in Nature, and 'tis but a folly to think that Art should be able to regulate them, since Art itself is, for the most part, irregular" (100). Thus, the condemnation of these emotions as diabolical was a consequence of male fears.

Lust was another sinful emotion throughout the period and can be seen in the relationship between the Empress and the Duchess. Their relationship was such that "they became Platonick Lovers, although they were both Females" (Cavendish 121). The "although" in the sentence implies the unusual nature of such a relationship between women. This emotion may be perceived as lust given that "Souls of Lovers live in the bodies of their Beloved" (Cavendish 118) and "Your Soul, said the Empress, shall live with my Soul, in my Body; for I shall onely desire your Council and Advice"

(Cavendish 146). Similar situations were less frequently discussed in theoretical texts, though they did exist. Women in Fez allegedly “seduced women who came to seek their counsel,” which turned them away from their husbands. Gerhild Williams argued this type of sexual activity to be a threat to the social order (81). However, Cavendish redeemed Blazing World’s society from this in an act with the Duke. When “the Duke had three Souls in one Body,” the Empress and the Duchess, the Duchess grew jealous, but realized “that no Adultery could be committed amongst Platonick Lovers” (Cavendish 133). By having everyone participate, lust is legitimized, or neutralized. The male authority, the Duke, also partakes. Alternatively, this lustful encounter echoes the sex that allegedly took place with the Devil at the Sabbath, when all the witches at the meeting engaged with him. From this exchange with the Duke, and the Empress getting her power from the Emperor, the male figures are most like the Devil throughout the narrative. The act of sex may be seen as an act of worship within a context “[t]hat the Power the Devil gives, is on condition of worship to him” (Drage 24). By endowing these characters with these diabolical traits, Cavendish sheds light on how man created what came to be known as the witch, or the Empress, via a certain union. Within this context, the legitimization of the act comes from the legitimization of marriage where the Devil, as known in witchcraft, does not exist. However, if man creates the witch, man is the devil. Despite this, generalizations cannot be made of men at the time, as evidenced by the support Cavendish received by her husband, from whom she herself received her title.

Generally, the Duke and the Emperor empower rather than control or stifle women. Contrary to the Devil having power over Witches, the Emperor gifts the Empress power. When the Emperor meets the Lady, “he conceived her to be some Goddess, and offered to worship her,” before she refused and gave her worldly possessions through marriage (Cavendish 69). In this moment, Cavendish subverts the theories of witchcraft by writing: “But her subjects, who could hardly be perswaded to believe her mortal, tender’d her all veneration and worship due to a Deity” (70). Alternatively, witches were seen to be possessed by the Devil and thus burned as opposed to worshipped. As King James clarifies “the Witches ar servants onelie, and slaues to the Devil” (9). Contrary to this, rather than answer to the Emperor, the Empress finds freedom in their union. By showing a man who encourages women in society, Cavendish reasserts that women are creatures of

intelligence who merit being consciously active members of society, as opposed to the servants of their male counterparts. Her husband may have been her real-life model for this, as he frequently lent her the support and encouragement the rest of society did not. Additionally, she affirms that she is not against men and does see the potential for equality among the sexes.

The power of one's sex can be superseded by the power of the sexless soul. The question of how many souls can occupy a body arises in witchcraft theory and is addressed in *The Blazing World*. In witchcraft theory, Satan typically possesses a woman, making her a witch, while in *Blazing World*, the Empress succeeds in entering the vehicles of others, rather than being entered by others. The vehicle is the body that a soul uses to travel. This contrast demonstrates how the female controls as opposed to succumbs to being controlled, or possessed, in *Blazing World*. In the case of Mary Hall of Gadsen in 1664, two devils allegedly possessed her. When they spoke from within her, they often said: "We are onely two little Imps...sometimes we are in the shape of Serpents, sometimes of Flyes, sometimes of Rats or Mice" (Drage 33). Imprisoning a witch was a solution to having Satan leave her "if Satan will give leave; however, her bewitching of others is prevented" (Drage 24). From this perspective, the woman has no agency and acts only as a conduit for the Devil who sends his minions. Alternatively, in *Blazing World*, when the Empress asks the Spirits "whether souls did chuse bodies? They [answer], That Platonicks believed, the souls of Lovers lived in the bodies of their Beloved" (Cavendish 113). By enabling her to do this, Cavendish returns power and agency to the female figure. It also renders positive something perceived as negative: possession. Sending her animal-men to do things the way witches allegedly did with their imps likens the Empress to a witch. However, while narratives told by men depict witches as villainous, Cavendish renders similar actions done by the Empress pure, as it is for the beloved. And unlike Cavendish's experience with the Royal Society, what she can and cannot do is not at the mercy of a male figure. Instead, the Empress has her own assistants.

Rather than being subordinate, the Empress has her own subordinates. The males in *Blazing World*, aside from the Duke and the Emperor are generally half man and half animal. The Empress assigns each a specialized profession for their species (Cavendish 71). In witchcraft, these hybrid creatures are known as Imps. According to William Drage, "sometimes the Witches send their Imps" (11). This signifies that witches had assistants to do their bidding. However, because the witches are at

the service of the Devil, they are somewhat at the service of the Imps: “These Imps that the Devil commands some Witches to nourish, do instigate them to give them command to do evil” (Drage 16). By being at the Devil’s command, witches lose power over the Imps through a feedback loop created by this triad. Contrarily, Cavendish restructures the hierarchy by removing the Devil—an overseeing male. In the *Blazing World*, when the hybrid-men first appear, the Lady has just arrived in the strange place where the Bear-men and Fox-men are “waiting on her” (Cavendish 64). They are immediately established as servants and Imp-like. Later, when the Empress is displeased, the Bear-men seemingly cower as they were “troubled at her Majesties displeasure concerning their Telescopes, kneel’d down, and in the humblest manner petitioned that they might not be broken” (Cavendish 79). Again, the Bear-men appear like witches’ Imps. The Empress, then, had employees fitting the same profile as witches. The Empress herself appears witch-like by having Imps at all. Cavendish has orders come directly from the Empress as opposed to her being a conduit used by the Devil. However, unlike the service her fictional characters received, Cavendish’s reality was marked by continued opposition.

Many fellows of the Royal Society challenged Cavendish’s belief in keeping religion and philosophy separate. Where religion is the immaterial, philosophy is the material. This is where believers in witchcraft differ from non-believers. The aforementioned Glanvill, More, and Boyle endorsed the immaterial (Clark 298), while Cavendish believed that something from nothing was impossible:

For how is it possible, that a natural nothing can have being in Nature? If it be no substance, it cannot have a being, and if no being, it is nothing; Wherefore the distinction between subsisting in another body, is a meer nicety, and non-sense; for there is nothing in Nature that can subsist of, or by it self (89).

Alternatively, William Drage believed the world did come from nothing:

This world was made of nothing, by Spiritual Power, and may be resolved into nothing again by the same Power; and we can resolve dense Bodies into Air, and coagulate Air into Water; and the Devil, quatenus a Spirit, can do that, that a Spirit can do; but as being the worse, and weaker then God, he varies; but by Gods permission he is able to do much (19).

By opposing intangible ideas of witchcraft, such as Drage’s argument in support of making something

out of nothing, Cavendish demonstrates the impossibility of the existence of witches by mocking Glanvill's ideas that the immaterial activity can exist in nature (Clark 302).

Cavendish uses the idea of an army going to war to criticize the idea that immaterial spirits can have material effects to counter ideas like those of Glanvill. The Spirit without a body accomplishes nothing. Though the spirits are present throughout, they become useless at a time of war because:

Spirits could not arm themselves, nor make any use of Artificial Arms or Weapons; for their Vehicles were Natural Bodies, not Artificial: Besides, said she, the violent and strong actions of War, will never agree with Immaterial Spirits; for Immaterial Spirits cannot fight, nor make Trenches, Fortifications, and the like. (Cavendish 143)

Cavendish refutes the idea that the immaterial can affect the material in a material way. This contradicts what theoretical texts believed to be possible, such as Drage's belief "[t]hat one Spirit may destroy an Army of men" (25). Unlike basic travel, war must deliver material results. Bodin discusses travel in these terms of how

[s]ometimes both the body and the soul are transported, and this ecstasy is common with witches who have a formal pact with the Devil. They are sometimes transported in spirit, with the body remaining insensate; and sometimes in body and soul when they go to night assemblies. (65)

These night assemblies would have been the sabbaths, as previously mentioned. It was believed that witches could physically be asleep, while their spirit flew itself to elsewhere (Roper 104). Such a superpower proposes a contradiction to the weaker female sex that typically succumbs to the devil in witchcraft theory.

Contrary to witchcraft theory, the Devil is only present in the Blazing World when discussing the Creation of the World, or the book of Genesis. Witchcraft theory depends on the presence of the Devil. When discussing good and evil, there is no evil to match or supersede good. That there was a supernatural Good, which was God; but they knew of no supernatural Evil that was equal to God" (Cavendish 114). The good of God is always superior. Some believe that Eve was the first witch, having been seduced by the Devil and tempting Adam (Clark 113). As argued by King James I, among others, the reason for Eve and women's seduction by the Devil is because "that sexe is frailer then man" (114).

By that logic, how did the weaker sex, Eve, then succeed in tempting the stronger sex, Adam? From this, it can be said that theories of witchcraft are irrelevant, from Cavendish's perspective, since the supernatural Good of God would always supersede it, rendering the demonic notion of evil inferior and nonthreatening. The Spirits tell the Empress that, in the Creation of the World, "the Devil was within the Serpent" (Cavendish 109). As seen earlier, the Imps sometimes take the shape of a serpent. This is the only instance that the Devil is perceived as anyone. This drove them out of Paradise.

Belief and imagination play a role in the creation of reality. The immaterial is a suspension of reality. For instance, the Spirits explain that Any Mortal can be a Creator "for every humane Creature can create an Immaterial World fully inhabited by immaterial Creatures, and populous of immaterial subjects" (Cavendish 123). In reevaluating the Ancients, she realizes that "no patterns would do her any good in the framing of her World; she was 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 onely of the rational, which is the subtilest and purest degree of Matter" (Cavendish 126). Her society and its imagined societies displeased and neglected her, so she made her own.

Cavendish had a difficult time fitting in with the intellectual men because she was their inverted counterpart. In 1667, a year following the publication of *The Blazing World*, Cavendish was stereotyped by Samuel Pepys as ignorant on a visit to the Royal Society (Mendelson 13). It does not seem unlikely that she was accustomed to this perception of her, as her frustration pours out of *The Blazing World*, which functions as a translation of these real-life experiences into fiction. Cavendish's utopia creates space for women, primarily by having women rule it, as the Empress leads conferences as well as preaches in the congregation. This creation of a female space due to male ineptitude is not unlike her real life, as seen in her experience with printers. While earlier on Cavendish went through several printers and complained about their work, she eventually settled on Anne Maxwell in 1666, whom she worked with for a long time, printing and re-printing her works (Montgomery 25). Kaylor Montgomery notes how Maxwell is then one with technological aptitudes and parallels their friendship to that of the Duchess and the Empress (26-27).

Given the theories on witchcraft having been invented or perpetuated to push certain agendas, such as re-Christianization or explaining the inexplicable, it seems understandable that theories were

seldom set in stone. Authors managed to take on languages and adopt formats that looked familiar and were thus understood to propagate the desired thoughts for the time. With *Blazing World*, Cavendish offers a voice to women by publishing under her own name, as this was atypical of women. By creating a world where the female characters are central and leaders, she inverts the expectations of women as often dictated by men. This interpretation means to uncover, perhaps, another layer to Cavendish's *Blazing World*, further demonstrating its nuanced composition and her critique on the Royal Society but, more specifically, analyzing the consequences of work by men as it led to the deaths of innocent women.

Hopefully, this is only the beginning of Margaret Cavendish's inclusion into the study of witchcraft theory. To continue excluding her would be to continue proving her point as we enter the mid twenty-first century. Whether moving backwards or forwards in time, the tragedy of the present is that change has been minimal for women, as women continue to parody their societies as Cavendish did. For instance, *The Washington Post* published "The Hideous, Diabolical Truth about Hillary Clinton," a satirical piece by Alexandra Petri about Clinton which reads like an early modern text on witchcraft, weeks before the 2016 election. Though it is meant to be a "light" take on the news, the public's comments suggest that individuals would read such a piece as fact. Other commentators explicitly advocated for the satire's accuracy. That such parody persists over three hundred years later renders Cavendish's work all the more relevant today, as neglecting works from the past only brings our present closer to it.

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