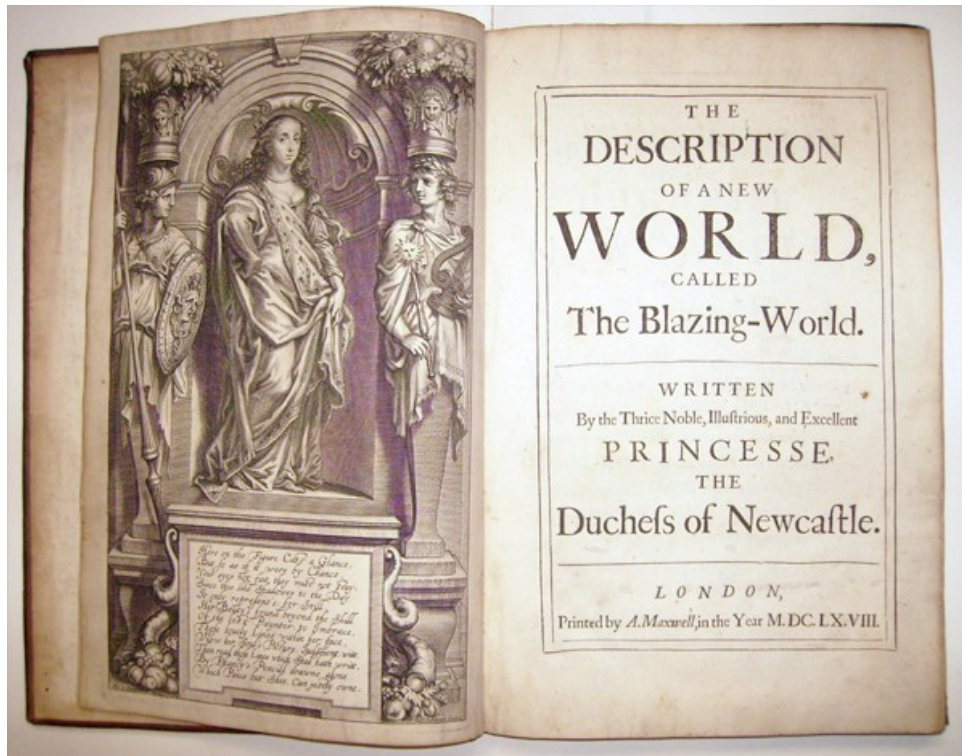


GALACTIC DUCHESS

NEW WORK ON MARGARET CAVENDISH'S *BLAZING-WORLD* (1666, 1668)



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



Back to the Future with Margaret Cavendish

Title-page, with articulate author frontispiece, of Cavendish's "fantastical" novel, *The Blazing-World* (London, 1666, 1668). Self-published by Cavendish, printed by Anne Maxwell. Arguably Cavendish's signature work, the centerpiece of her many publications, 1653-1668. See page 7, below, and this essay's Gallery of Images, for more views and information on the physical book.

IN THE WONDROUS GALAXY of world literature there is a special star. It is called *The Margaret Cavendish*. According to local lore, the star was first sighted the evening of 15 December 1673 by William Cavendish, Duke of Newcastle. It appeared above his estate, Welbeck Abbey, deep in Sherwood Forest, Nottinghamshire. As the Duke would later write, “It was a large, blazing star, almost dancing in the firmament. I knew at once it was the soul and spirit of my beloved wife, the Duchess Margaret, who had died that very day. My Margaret, she knew about infinity.” Astronomers at Gresham College and London’s Royal Society had been summoned at once. They studied the star through special lenses, yet were skeptical. “Why, ‘tis an anomaly,” they said, “an aberration, freakish and unusual. It will soon be lost in time.” And so the event was never recorded.



I

The academic dons were wrong: the Cavendish star was not lost in time. Considerable commentary about the Duchess has been recorded since her sudden death, at 50 years of age, in December, 1673. Most recent assessments have been rehabilitative, seeking to re-represent the Duchess as a serious writer with serious interests (yes, an atrocious speller and, yes, terribly untidy a writer; but with such an imagination, we forgive her anything).

Once blithely dismissed as “mad Madge,” a silly, conceited creature whose few excellent pieces were buried under a heap of rubbish, Cavendish is now enjoying a new respectability and a second life. Publishers are welcoming scholarly editions of her work, as well as new biographies and historical novels; and teachers and students are greeting Margaret Cavendish in literature surveys, Fantasy Fiction courses, and seminars in Gender Studies. The [International Margaret Cavendish Society](#), an energetic network of scholars, has kept the flame burning with annual conferences, from Sundance to Cyprus, along with social media platforms and now [The Digital Cavendish Project](#) (directors, Jacob Tootalian and Shawn W. Moore). Recent news, posted 11th December 2016 on MarCav-L (the online Margaret Cavendish list), announced a first-ever Cavendish PhD Scholarship, sponsored by Liverpool Hope University UK (contact: Lisa Walters); this level of institutional support signals strong faith in Cavendish studies.

Market values of first and early editions of Cavendish’s writings, a reliable indicator of consumer interest and commercial demand, have shown dramatic appreciation, owing to the rise of Feminism in the 1970s and ‘80s, and the explosion of interest in early women writers. In 1939, for example, a copy of the *Blazing-World* (second edition, 1668) was sold at Maggs Brothers, London, Catalogue 670, for a mere £10.10. By 2004, Cavendish properties were fetching close to \$6000: the sale of her *Playes* (1662) at Christie’s, NY, brought \$5975 (source: McKinney’s [Rare Book Hub](#), Records 670-423, 1460-55).

Margaret Cavendish *redux* is an engaged and engaging figure. Her substantial corpus of work discusses such critical issues as politics and governance, science, education, and gender. And she brilliantly slipped the bonds of time and space to create a new “blazing world” where woman-power reigned supreme. By any standard, her record of 23 published books and impressive generic fluency (poetry, plays, fiction, treatises, letters, biography, autobiography) is extraordinary for a woman writer of her time, especially one judged irredeemably mad, even possibly a sexual hybrid (**Image 11**). Today’s reconstructed Cavendish is a writer of many qualities. Her talent, it appears, existed on two very different planes: the intellectual subjects of her century, and then the “fantastical” material from her own imagination. Very probably, her delightful writings on other realities, such as her faerie-lore juvenilia of the 1650s, lent a healthy balance to the gravitas of headier interests. “**But I wonder,**” she wrote, “[why] any should laugh, or think it ridiculous, to hear of Fairies” (*Poems, and Fancies*, 1653). For the Duchess, the Fairy Queen Mab was as real and physical a subject as Robert Boyle’s new air pump (**Image 9**).

Realizing the *outré* character of some of her work, and sensitive to the reception of women’s writing, Cavendish cultivated a special connection to the London book market. She used its printers, but not its booksellers (its publishers), making Margaret Cavendish one of the earliest of self-published women writers. The Maxwells, profiled in Henry R. Plomer’s *Dictionary of...Booksellers and Printers...* (1928, p.125), were the usual printers for Margaret and her husband, William (Cavendish), Duke of Newcastle (c1593-1676), a dazzling, cultivated fellow and director of the education of the future Charles II; the Duke’s deep contribution to his wife’s career and happiness merits more attention. But back to Margaret’s books:

It was a woman printer, Anne Maxwell in Thames Street, London, whose premises included 2 presses, 3 compositors, and 3 pressmen, who took the lead in managing the printing and overall material construction of the Margaret Cavendish ‘brand’, if you will. We can see that the Duchess had total artistic control over her work, from extraordinary author frontispieces and commendatory verses (some by a loving husband) to the (often) large folio formats of her writings. Her years on the Continent, during the Stuart exile in the 1640s and 1650s, exposed her to quality book production in France and especially Holland. And of particular interest, Margaret Cavendish was her own marketing agent. Readers did not find copies of her writings in the busy bookstalls of St Paul’s Churchyard; the Duchess wisely distanced herself from the commercial book market by hand-distributing copies of her books to selected audiences, such as the universities and members of her inner circle, both in England and Holland. Owing mostly to her husband’s ducal rank, financial assets, and cultural ‘reach’, Margaret had a decisive role in the creation and circulation of her work. She was at the centre of her own career formation. And if her work did not meet with universal favor, her books were certainly noticed for the specialness of their design and the novelty of their content.

Dating from contemporary accounts by Samuel Pepys, Dorothy Osborne, and others, Margaret Cavendish was indeed a piece o' work. Giving the lie to time-worn clichés of shyness, the Duchess proved to be a shameless provocateur, astonishing contemporaries with extravagant spectacles of self-importance. As she explained, "*Though I cannot be Henry the Fifth, or Charles the Second, yet I will endeavor to be Margaret the First.*" Her amusing public 'stunts' were really the clever *modus operandi* for her immediate goal: **literary celebrity**. And then, the ultimate goal: **Fame**. Margaret's visits to the new London Royal Society and the court of Charles II were recounted by London newswriters and diarists as extraordinary events. The long trains of the Duchess's self-designed gowns, for instance, required several women attendants. And recent historical novels on Cavendish by Katie Whitaker (*Mad Madge*, 2002) and Danielle Dutton (*Margaret The First*, 2016) have added some unusual stories to the Duchess's reputation for outrageous public acts. Did Margaret really appear at a London playhouse tricked out like a bare-breasted, rouge-nipped Amazon? Whether lore or fact, she was a climber and a striver; no woman writer of her century tried harder.

Born with quill in hand, we gather, Margaret Cavendish was a writer of fanciful fictions from childhood days at St John's Abbey, Colchester, Essex. She was the precocious eighth child of Thomas Lucas (c1573-1625) and Elizabeth Leighton (d.1647). The Lucases were prosperous landed gentry, not titled aristocrats, and the future Duchess of Newcastle received but a rudimentary education. (In her published work, she candidly admits to ignorance of foreign languages and asserts that "women are incapable of spelling".) Her first writings ("baby-books") set her on course, and she evidently received strong encouragement and guidance from her (widowed) mother. Indeed, one might say that Margaret Cavendish felt predestined for that "**glorious Fame**" she had coveted all of her life, but that journey involved two decades of challenges. While it is true that her marriage in Paris, in 1645, at the age of twenty-two, to the titled William Cavendish, a widower thirty-one years her senior, was the best and happiest event of her life, Margaret Cavendish had not really 'arrived' as her own woman until 1665. Prior to that, owing mostly to the English civil war, she suffered personal losses, relocations, and financial embarrassment (**Image 12**). But with the return of the Stuarts in 1660 and the elevation of her husband to the dukedom of Newcastle, Margaret (Lucas) Cavendish from Colchester, Essex, had become Margaret (Cavendish) Duchess of Newcastle, a young member of the Stuart nobility (**Image 1**). Though always an 'outlier', Margaret's pride in her new prestige and authority is strongly asserted on her books' title-pages. With her high ducal rank and financial stability, young Margaret's ambition was limitless, as big as the sky ~ and, as her writings show, the sky and what it held had always captured her.

A.S. Turberville, in his respected history of Welbeck Abbey, wrote: "The Duchess was passionately anxious for posthumous fame. In dedicating her *Philosophical and Physical Opinions* [1665] to the Universities of Oxford and Cambridge, she explains, '*And who knows, but that after my Honourable Burial, I may have a Glorious Resurrection in Following Ages, since Time brings Strange and Unusual Things to pass*.'" And Time was good to the Duchess. (*Welbeck Abbey* [London: Faber & Faber Ltd., 1938], I:178; copy, Mulvihill Collection.)

For particulars concerning Margaret Cavendish's formative years in Colchester, Essex; her lackluster interval as maid-of-honor to the exiled Queen Henrietta Maria; and her marriage in Paris (1645) to a remarkable and generous man, see James Fitzmaurice's authoritative article, with extended Sources list, in the *Oxford DNB* (2004). Among many online resources, see the website of the [International Margaret Cavendish Society](#), [The Digital Cavendish Project](#), and Duke University's [Project Vox](#). The Cavendish family papers and manuscripts, collected to date, are preserved in several archives: Portland MSS, University of Nottingham; Nottinghamshire Archives; British Library (Sloane MS 1950, ff 35-38; Add. MS 41295); Bodleian Library (MS Rawlinson); Huntington Library (Ellesmere collection); and, we trust, continuing additions. This essay's Gallery of Images (13 selections) offers two likenesses of Margaret Cavendish (in two different mediums: canvas and page); four images of her printed books; and images associated with her life, contemporaries, and oeuvre. Also of interest, this Sundance Portfolio (Cavendish conference, Utah, 2013): <google: Mulvihill + some images & sources > <<https://www.scribd.com/document/152459896/Mulvihill> >

II

Sara Mendelson's edition (2016) of Margaret Cavendish's utopian feminist fantasy, *The Blazing-World* (London: Anne Maxwell, 1666, 1668), is a welcome contribution to Cavendish studies (**Image 4**). The edition brings fresh, contextual attention to arguably the most popular of Cavendish's works; moreover, the edition shows scholars, generalists, teachers, and students how a modern edition of a 17th-century text may be assembled. There have been earlier editions of this 1666 novel, by Kate Lilley (Penguin, 1994) and Susan James (Cambridge UP, 2003), but the Mendelson *Blazing-World* will be the current edition of choice.

This new offering from Broadview Press, Ontario, is a modern scholarly edition (soft cover, 235 pages, \$15.95), with full apparatus. The 2016 *Blazing-World* reprints in modern dress the first edition (1666) of Cavendish's futuristic novel (pp. [55]-164), with an introductory essay (pp. 9-49); a chronology of Margaret Cavendish (pp. 51-52); a note on the text (p. 53); four appendices (pp. 165-227); a works cited list with select bibliography (pp. 229-235); footnotes on specialized terms and references; and five illustrations.

Cavendish's *Blazing-World* was originally published in 1666 as an appendix, or companion volume, to Cavendish's important *Observations upon Experimental Philosophy*, a critique of Robert Hooke's empirical method as set out in his *Micrographia* (1665), an important, illustrated work on lenses. Cavendish's novel of 1666 was then republished in 1668 as a separate, freestanding volume (**Image 2**). The book is often

considered the first fictional depiction by a woman writer of the intersection of women and the New Science (familarly, ‘the first science fiction work by a woman writer’).

The novel’s complex and inventive narrative foregrounds a figure called ‘the Empress’ (Cavendish’s heroine and alter-ego), whose utopian world is only reachable through the North Pole. This blazing new world is a charged, hallucinatory zone, animated by talking animals and curious hybrid creatures of some intelligence. The enlightened, forward-looking Empress adopts a busy agenda: she establishes for her domain a royal society of scientists, organizes scholarly conferences, critiques existing knowledge, and speculates on natural philosophy. She also forms a lively intellectual collaboration with a female character from planet Earth: this is yet a second ‘double’ for the author and indeed called “the Duchess of Newcastle.” Yes, all quite amusing, if not to everyone’s tastes.

The novel’s 21st-century cinematic potential, we should add, is perfectly obvious; and masters of the fantasy genre, such as George Lucas and Stephen Spielberg, should take a look at Cavendish. Likewise, J.K. Rowling, who could deliver a brilliant script for a film adaptation of *The Blazing-World*, especially as many sections of the narrative already read like a film script. (Film Studies enthusiasts, take note!)

Regarding the uniqueness of Cavendish’s narrative, science fiction devotees appreciate that the novel was not so very unusual, even in 1666, as it found inspiration and various fictional tropes and effects from a few earlier precedents in the genre of the imaginary voyage, such as Kepler’s *Somnium* (1634), John Wilkins’s *Discovery of a World in the Moone* (1638), Francis Godwin’s *Man In The Moone* (1638), and others (**Image 8**). But Cavendish valuably distinguished her fantasy with an inventive utopian frame and by presenting its central figure as a woman and a militant feminist. On balance, the novel was light years ahead of its time.

Among the many strengths of the Mendelson/Broadview *Blazing-World*, two features of the edition merit special praise, beginning with editor credibility. As an editor of Cavendish’s 1666 novel, Dr Mendelson (McMaster University, Ontario) was securely poised for the task, as she brought to the project a strong record of scholarly publication: *The Mental World of Stuart Women: Three Studies* (UMass Press, 1987; cloth, 235 pp); *Women in Early-Modern Europe, 1550-1720*, with Patricia Crawford (Oxford UP, 2000; cloth, 504 pp); *Paper Bodies: A Margaret Cavendish Reader*, co-editor Sylvia Bowerbank (Broadview Press, 2000; paper, 350 pp); and *Margaret Cavendish* (Ashgate / Routledge, Critical Essays series: Volume 7, 2009; cloth, 432 pp). In her 2016 project for Broadview Press, Mendelson was drawing upon some 30 years of scholarly research and publication on the world of Cavendish and her contemporaries. All of this background garners confidence: readers trust the editor.

The edition’s second principal strength is Mendelson’s editorial judgment; and this we observe chiefly in the edition’s apparatus, beginning with its substantial introductory

essay, textual annotations (footnotes), and four appendices. This is where we see Mendelson working critically with her 1666 text; and she keeps a close eye on that 17th-century text but not without some necessary side-glances to her 2016 readers. Her apparatus, for example, effectively educates, clarifies, and contextualizes her specialized subject for a broad range of reader, mostly students and generalists. The edition's introductory essay (40 pages) is a generous canvas on which Cavendish's life, contemporaries, and writings are clearly figured-forth. Readers learn about Cavendish's connections with the New Science, her strong views on certain scientific methodologies, and her subversive reworking (repurposing) of the fantasy-fiction tradition. In her annotations (footnotes), Mendelson also educates readers; see, for example, her detailed annotation on Cavendish's "fideistic skepticism" (p. 90, n.1, 5 lines). The Cavendish chronology (pp 51-52) is especially useful as it supplies hard (documentable) facts about the writer's biography, associates, and the arc of her public career in writing (1653-1668). The best of the edition, for some specialists, are Appendices A through D, which supply supplementary material on Cavendish's interests and those of her contemporaries. Readers are given a wider angle on the material, and reliable information on the Duchess's reading tastes and influences. There is e.g., Bacon's *New Atlantis* (1627); Huygens' letter to the Duchess, written from The Hague, 1657; and Behn's preface to her translation of Fontenelle's *Entretiens sur la pluralité des mondes* (1688), an especially good choice for its window into Cavendish and other women writers. The appendices were intelligent editorial selections; and, again, Mendelson's related goals of context and reader-education are handsomely served.

But no book is perfect, and all editions could have been better editions. The 2016 Broadview *Blazing-World* would have been a more authoritative, scholarly product had its editorial methodology included necessary attention to the 1666 physical book; and this could have been managed in the edition's Note on the Text (p. 53, a surprisingly brief four lines). Some readers will wonder why the edition does not discuss the publication history of *The Blazing-World* (was it not published four times during Cavendish's lifetime?), as well as the editor's rationale for reprinting the 1666 edition rather than the 1668 (second) edition. And, then, which surviving copy of the 1666 book was used as copy text for this edition? And while readers will appreciate the five black-and-white illustrations in this new edition, the edition needed to include a few color plates, on quality stock, of the original book in its original physical state (see Images 2, 3, 5). **David H. Barry, Griffin Bookbinding** St Petersburg, Florida, originally trained in Wales UK, had the following observations on the Newberry Library's copy of Cavendish's novel:

"The Chicago copy of the famous *Blazing-World* by the Duchess of Newcastle (second edition, 1668) is a tall, impressive folio (about 12 x 8 x 2"), with a full calfskin tightback binding. The spine displays 6 sewn-on raised cords. Traditionally, 5 cords were the norm; but owing to its height, a 6th cord was added for extra strength and stability. The book looks to have been finished in the Cambridge style: the boards have been decorated with a blind two-line fillet close to the edges and on each side of the panel, and a blind narrow

flower roll is worked on each side of the panel close to the lines. The center panel was probably stained, but the deterioration of the calfskin makes this difficult to distinguish. The raised bands, on the spine, have blind lines above and below each band. One sees the impression of a title on the spine, but no gilt remains now. It also appears that the binding, in this copy, has been rebacked at some point, evidence being ‘newer’ leather at the joints. Red Rot also appears to be evident, though the condition does not seem extensive. Overall, an elegantly designed 17th-century English book, fit for a Duchess.”

Some users of the new 2016 *Blazing-World*, primarily textual specialists and book historians, expect this level of detail and attention in a responsible edition; and certainly informed readers expect to see images of the 1666 physical book. Moreover, as only nine (9) institutional copies of the book are presently recorded (1668 ed., ESTC, R13228), a provenance census, with a list of physical marks in all of the nine copies, would not have been a great labor, indeed a labor netting highly useful results, one wagers. For all of its many strengths, the edition should have done more and shown more. But we hasten to add that, in view of the editor’s strong record as a responsible scholar, it is possible that her project was not fully realized, as she intended, owing to constraints from the publisher, beginning with budgets. And this is too often the case.

We might also mention some additional omissions of a wholly different order, suggesting haste in the final stages of the book’s production; and these oversights should have been noticed by the edition’s series editor. For example, why does this new edition, brimming with 17th-century names, titles, and locations, not include an index? An index is essential in all responsible editions and scholarly books; and not to include one, in a 2016 edition, especially as most publishers routinely use software programs for book-indexing, is unacceptable. The absence of an index in any kind of historical book renders the entire product incomplete and unprofessional. Likewise, this edition lacks a list of illustrations. An omission of this nature is not minor: it is a discourtesy to readers and it diminishes the book’s utility as a convenient resource. Finally, some readers would have appreciated a pedigree (a genealogical chart) of the intersecting Lucas and Cavendish lines. The edition’s bibliography is an entirely serviceable list of most essential scholarship on the Cavendishes and their world; and we are pleased to see Marjorie Hope Nicolson included, also Anna Battigelli, James Fitzmaurice, Brandie Siegfried, and others of the online Cavendish List; but specialists will notice the (surprising) omission of Leona Rostenberg’s important *Library of Robert Hooke: The Scientific Book Trade in Restoration England* (Modoc, 1989).

Mendelson’s 2016 project, for all of its obvious strengths, deserved a grander and more complete edition, ideally in hardcover, with a few color plates, dedicated attention to the physical 1666 book and its publication history, a detailed index, a list of illustrations, and surely a more attractive (contemporary) cover with the title accurately displayed (as Margaret might scold: ‘My novel is not ‘*A Description of the Blazing-World*’, but ‘*The Description*’ ~ my book is one of a kind, you see’). On balance, the 2016

Mendelson/Broadview *Blazing-World* will be a popular, affordable text for all readers and students of 17th-century science and women writers, especially initiates; and we are grateful to Sara H. Mendelson and Broadview Press for their commitment. The 2016 *Blazing-World* responds to a market need and an instructional need: it will be welcomed as a new resource on a writer whose continuing appeal is assured.

~ A Gallery of Images follows ~

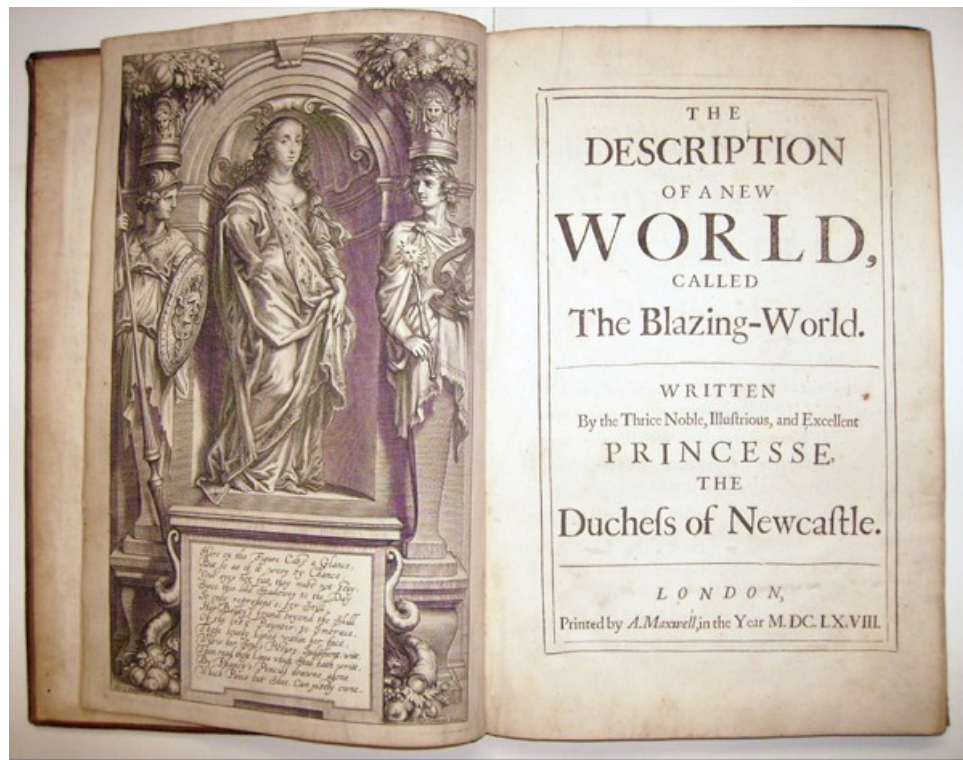
A GALLERY OF IMAGES

Images, Captions, and Notes Contributed by Maureen E. Mulvihill



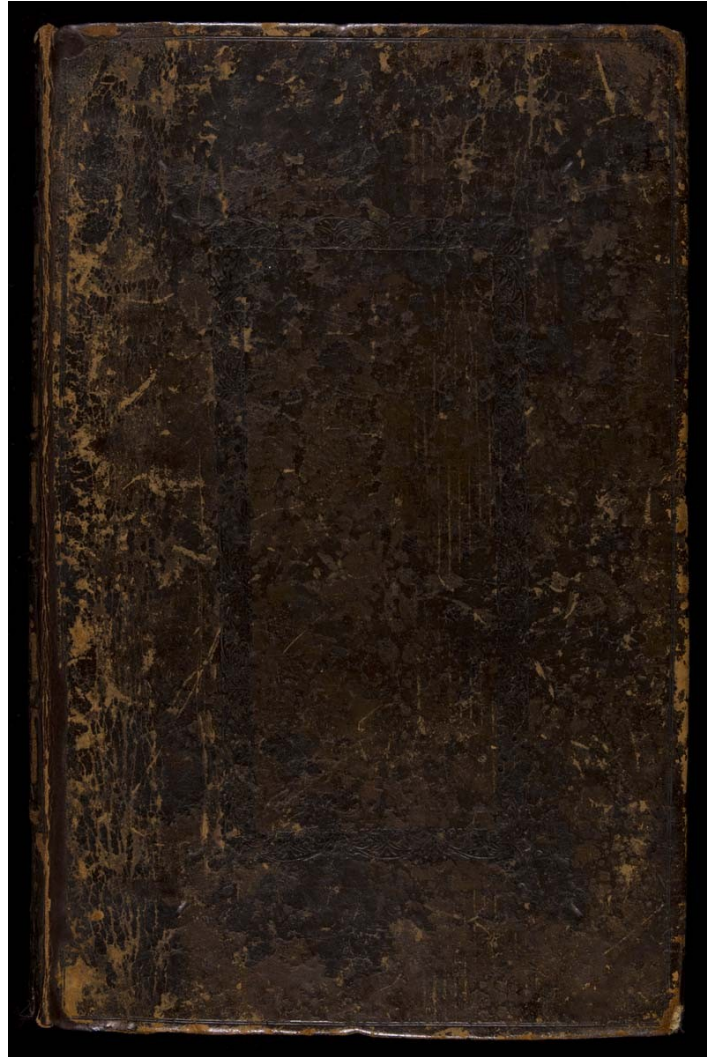
(1) Margaret (Cavendish, *née* Lucas), Duchess of Newcastle
 Oil on canvas. Attributed to Lely, c1665. 2370 x 1490mm, framed
 Harley Gallery, Welbeck Abbey, Nottinghamshire
 Bridgeman Image 000218. With permission.

Born, c1623, St John's Abbey, Colchester, Essex; died, 1673, Welbeck Abbey, Nottinghamshire. Canvas inscription in gold-yellow pigment: "Margaret Daughter to Tho^s. Lucas Esq^r. of Essex. 2d wife to W^m. Duke of Newcastle". A *catalogue raisonné* of Lely's paintings and drawings, with accompanying exhibition, is being prepared by [Catharine MacLeod](#) (NPG, London) and [Diana Dethloff](#) (UCL). The Duchess designed her own gowns and headwear; in this portrait, she displays a blue-and-white gown, with ermine-lined velvet robe and matching hat. "Dressing is the very Poetry of Women" (*World's Olio*, 1655). Studio copy (?), attributed to van Diepenbeek, Wentworth Castle (earls of Strafford), Yorkshire, Christie's sale, 13 November 1919, Lot 37; 87" x 50 ½", £60; buyer, Leggatt; exhibited, 1868, National Exhibition of Works of Art, Leeds.



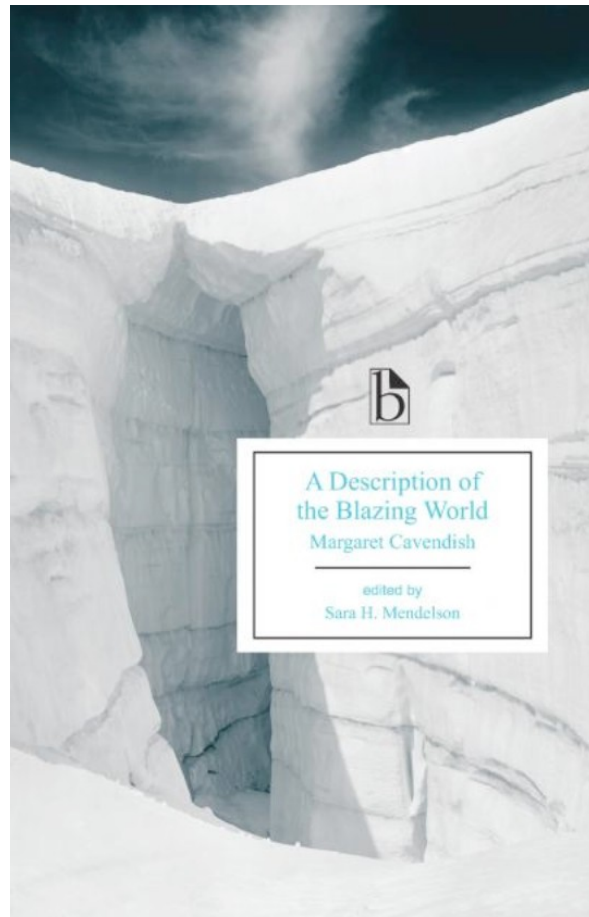
(2) **Title-page & Frontispiece.** Cavendish’s “fantastical” novel, *The Blazing-World* (London, 1666, 1668). Self-published by the author. Printer, Anne Maxwell

A richly iconographical frontispiece of Cavendish in a raised niche, with architectural borders and paired caryatids of Minerva and Apollo. Designer, Abraham van Diepenbeeck (3 frontises of Cavendish); engraver, Peter Ludwig van Schuppen. Her engraved frontises circulated separately on the commercial market as prints and collectibles. In the above image, the script below the plinth directs readers to “... read those Lines which She hath writt, / By Phancy’s Pencill drawne alone, / Which Peece but She Can justly owne.” Cavendish recycled and repurposed this frontis in earlier and later publications (*The Worlds Olio*, 1655; her unique Leiden *Cavendish*, 1658; *Plays*, 1668; *Grounds of Natural Philosophy*, 1668). Duchess Margaret is wearing her ducal coronet and striking a stately, if raffish, classical (*contrapposto*) stance. Ever the subversive (and quite the humorist), her demeanor parodies the pomposity of contemporary power portraits; their authority and *gravitas* are mocked by Cavendish’s hauteur. Collation: 2° [8], 158, [2]p., [1] leaf of plates; signatures [A]⁴ B-X⁴. Leaf A1, blank. Wing N850. ESTC R13228. EEBO digital copies: 1666, Harvard copy; 1668, BL copy. ESTC records 9 institutional copies (five, UK; four, U.S.). **Image, above**, website of writer Andrew Liptak, Vermont. A copy of the *Blazing-World* (second edition, 1668), published as a separate text and with above frontis inserted, was sold at Maggs Brothers, London, Catalogue 670, 1939, for £10. By 2004, Cavendish properties had appreciated considerably, fetching close to \$6000; e.g., her *Playes* (1662), Christie’s, \$5975. (Source: McKinney’s [Rare Book Hub](#), Records 670-423, 1460-55.)



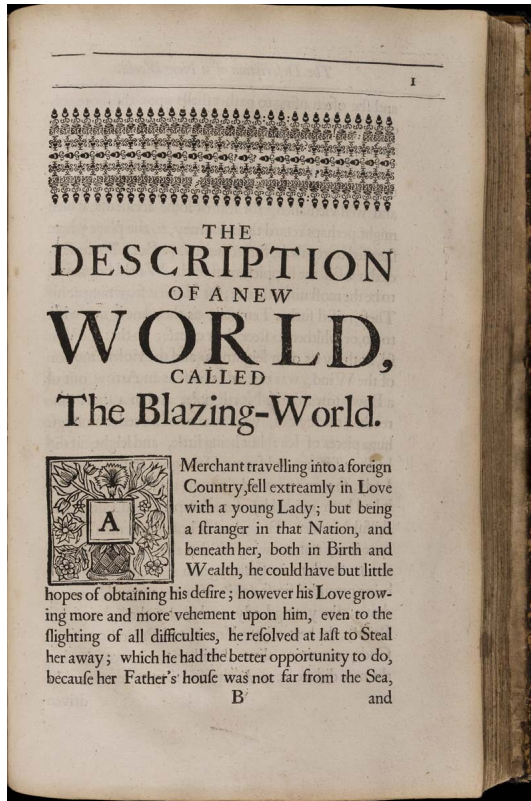
(3) **Top Board, *The Blazing-World* (1666; second edition, 1668)**
Newberry Library copy, Chicago. With permission.

Format: 2° (folio). Dimensions: 11 $\frac{3}{4}$ " (height) x 7 $\frac{1}{2}$ " (width) x 2" (depth). Binding, contemporary brown calf. Spine: 6 raised bands, a slight impression of a title, but no gilt remains; no apparent lettering. Blind stamping on front and back boards. This copy does not include the riveting author frontis (Image 2), nor ownership signatures and bookplates. Acquired by the Newberry Library in January, 1935, from English bookdealer, Arthur Rogers (sale catalogue 46, item 257); invoice dated January, 1935. **Source:** Margaret N. Cusick, Newberry Library, Chicago. For particulars on the binding from **David H. Barry** (Wales UK / [Griffin Bookbinding](#), St Petersburg, FL), see page 7.



(4) Margaret Cavendish's *Blazing-World*
Ontario, Canada: Broadview Editions / Broadview Press, 2016

A modern scholarly edition of this interesting 1666 text. Sara H. Mendelson, Editor. Martin R. Boyne, Series Editor, Broadview Editions. Michael Pharand, Advisory Editor. Cover design, Lisa Brawn. Soft cover, 235 pages, 8 ½" x 5 ½", \$15.95. **Contents:** editor's introduction (pp. 9-49); Cavendish chronology (pp. 51-52); A Note on the Text (p. 53); *The Blazing World* (modernized, 1666 edition; pp [55]-164); Appendices A through D (165-228); footnotes; illustrations (5 images); Works Cited & Select Bibliography (pp. 229-235). One of Cavendish's most popular texts, this "fantastical" novel of 1666 (second edition, 1668) received earlier editions by Kate Lilley (Penguin, 1994) and Susan James (Cambridge UP, 2003). The Mendelson/Broadview *Blazing-World* (2016) will now be the edition of choice. Our congratulations to Sara Mendelson and her associates at Broadview Press. Publisher's ad [here](#).



THE DESCRIPTION OF A NEW WORLD,
CALLED THE BLAZING WORLD

A Merchant travelling into a forreign Country, fell extreemly in Love with a young Lady; but being a stranger in that Nation, and beneath her both in Birth and Wealth, he could have but little hopes of obtaining his desire; however his love growing more and more vehement upon him, even to the slighting of all difficulties, he resolved at last to steal her away, which he had the better opportunity to do, because her Fathers house was not far from the Sea, and she often using to gather shells upon the shore, accompanied not with above two or three of her servants, it encouraged him the more to execute his design.¹ Thus coming one time with a little light Vessel, not unlike a Packet-boat, mann'd with some few Sea-men, and well victualled, for fear of some accidents, which might perhaps retard their journey, to the place where she used to repair, he forced her away: But when he fancied himself the happiest man of the World, he proved to be the most unfortunate; for Heaven frowning at his theft, raised such a Tempest, as they knew not what to do, or whither to steer their course; so that the Vessel, both by its own lightness, and the violent motion of the Wind, was carried as swift as an Arrow out of a Bow, towards the North-pole, and in a short time reached the Icy Sea, where the wind forced it amongst huge pieces of Ice; but being little, and light, it did by assistance and favour of the Gods to this virtuous Lady, so turn and wind through those precipices, as if it had been guided by some Experienced Pilot, and skilful Mariner: But alas! those few men which were in it, not knowing whither they went, nor what was to be done in so strange an adventure, and not being provided for so cold a Voyage, were all frozen to death, the young Lady onely, by the light of her Beauty, the heat of her Youth, and Protection of the Gods, remaining alive. Neither was it a wonder that the men did freeze to death; for they were not onely driven to the very end or point of the Pole of that World, but even to another Pole of another World, which joined close to it; so that the cold having a double strength at the conjunction of those two Poles, was insupportable: At last, the Boat still passing on, was forced into another World; for it is

¹ Later in the narrative it becomes clear that the Lady was born and raised not on Earth but on a third planet, different from both Earth (the Duchess of Newcastle's world) and the Blazing-world (the world where the shipwrecked Lady becomes Empress).

(5) Margaret Cavendish, in Print
London, 1668; Ontario, Canada, 2016

Image left: In full dress! Behold the graceful opening page of Margaret Cavendish's *Blazing-World* (1666; second ed., 1668), with decorative headpiece and decorative initial "A". Page size: 11" x 7". Newberry Library copy (1668); see also Image 3, above. (In the book's first edition, 1666, this page shows minor variants in the headpiece and initial "A" which is framed in the 1668 second edition, above.) **Image right:** The same page in the novel's 2016 modern edition from Broadview Press. Page size: 8½" x 5¼". While Duchess Margaret would have been pleased with reprintings of her work in recent times, we imagine she would not have welcomed their modernized representation in the new editions. "Margaret Cavendish" on the page was evidently as critical to Cavendish as her self-presentation at the Stuart court, or the London Royal Society, or the playhouse. She went to great lengths in the visual display of her literary 'self'; hence, the elaborate frontises and book arts in her publications. She also revised her writing, more so than initially thought, and many of her important works were reprinted at her direction. While modern editions facilitate the reading of early texts for 21st-century readers, they represent the original text without the original book arts, typography, and page design. The loss of such 'content' from the surface of the original page makes the inclusion of images (i.e., selected page views) from the original text a *serious editorial imperative* in the new modern editions of early-modern writers. Images from the original text respect and honor the original text and the physical book; they also educate readers. Without attention to the physical book, the value of Book History is diminished.



(i)



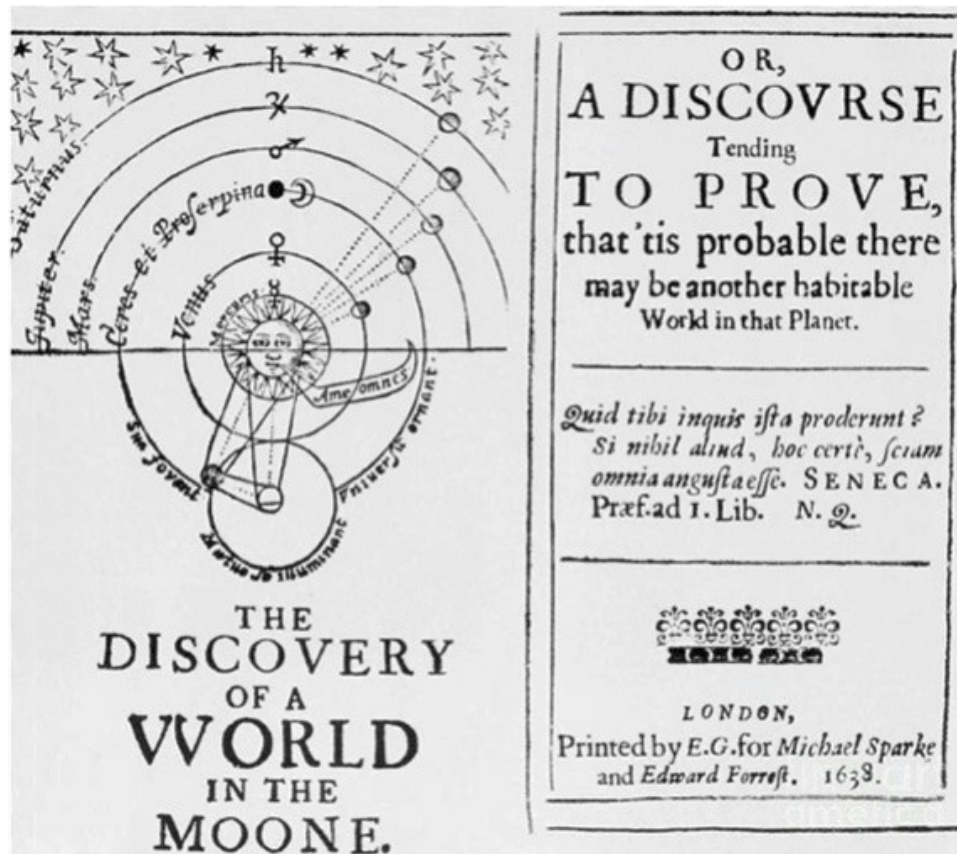
(ii)



(iii)

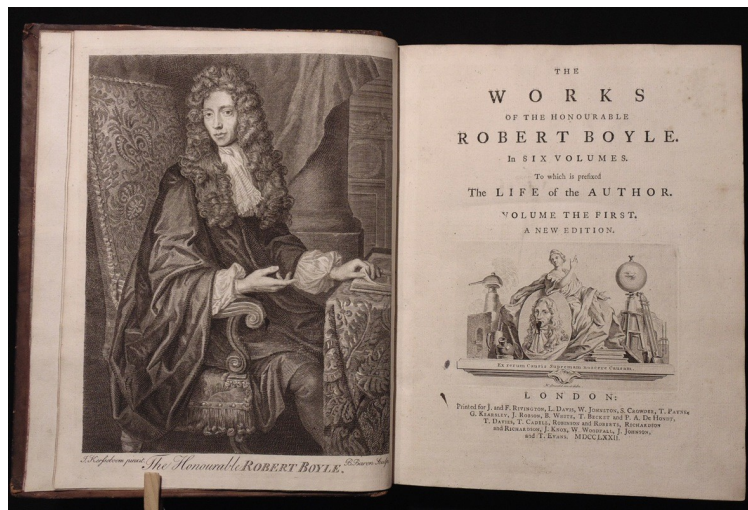
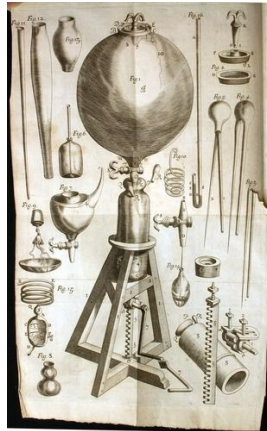
**(7) Maria Cunitz (Poland, c1604-1664), *Urania Propitia* (1650)
(Was this respected astronomer unknown to the Cavendishes?)**

Considered ‘the second Hypatia’ by her European contemporaries, Cunitz’s principal contribution [i] was her work on the theories and calculations of Kepler, her *Urania Propitia* (1650); self-published, printer Johann Seiffert. In its preface, Cunitz’s learned husband asserts his wife’s authorship, disclaiming his own. Memorial public sculpture of Cunitz [ii], Świdnica, Poland. See essay on Cunitz by R.K. Smeltzer, co-curator, *Extraordinary Women in Science & Medicine*, Grolier Club (NY, 2013; catalogue, 182 pp., illus.); catalogue cover art [iii], *La Chymie Charitable et Facile, en Faveur des Dames* by Marie Meurdrac (Paris, 1687), Othmer Library of Chemical History, Chemical Heritage Foundation, Philadelphia. With permission.



- (8) **A Popular Precedent of Cavendish's *Blazing-World* (London, 1666, 1668)**
The Discovery Of A World In The Moone (London, 1638) by John Wilkins,
 Co-Founder and Secretary, London Royal Society. "Tis probable," wrote Wilkins,
 "there may be another habitable World in that Planet."

Wilkins's *World In The Moone* was a precedent for Margaret Cavendish's ideas on the fantasy voyage and extra-terrestrial life. This 1638 book is an example of inventive 17thC English book design; in this case, the title is presented on facing pages (Image, EEBO). Other precedents for Cavendish's novel were Bishop Francis Godwin's moon-voyage, *The Man In The Moone, or A Discussion of a Voyage Thither* (composed c1620; published, 1638); likewise, Johannes Kepler's *Somnium* (1634) and Cyrano de Bergerac's *Historiae comique* (1657). The 17thC imaginary voyage narrative harkens back to one of the earliest science fiction texts: Lucian's *Vera historia* (second century CE). This background would have been known to the Cavendishes and their 'Welbeck circle' of innovative scientific thinkers and writers, suggesting that Margaret Cavendish's fantasy fiction was far from unique, though her creative repurposing of the genre along feminist and utopian lines prominently distinguished her intergalactic writings. For attention to Wilkins in Mendelson's *Blazing-World* (2016), see page 63, illustration 3.



**(9) What the Duchess of Newcastle beheld at the Royal Society, 1667
Robert Boyle's new "air pump", among other marvels.**

Anglo-Irish chemist and inventor, Robert Boyle (1627-1691), was co-founder, London Royal Society, and a proponent of Freemasonry and Rosicrucianism. The scientific circle organized at Welbeck Abbey, Nottinghamshire, by Margaret Cavendish's talented husband (members: Descartes, Hobbes, Gassendi, Payne, *et al.*) was conversant with Boyle's work in chemistry, physics, and corpuscular theory. While Margaret rejected empirical scientists, like Boyle and Robert Hooke, exposure to her husband's interests and associates would have inspired some of her scientific notions, especially as women were not welcomed by the Gresham College circle in London ('the Greshamites'). During her visit to the Royal Society (1667), the Duchess saw a demonstration of Boyle's famous "pump" (Pepys was disappointed by her silence). **Images** (above): Boyle's "pneumatical engine" (air pump), Christie's, London, Beltrame Library of Scientific Books, Sale 12140, Lot 302, 30 November 2016; and Boyle's *Works*, Addison and Sarova Auctioneers, Macon, GA., Sale 1014, 5 November 2016 (USD\$850). With permission.



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

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

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

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

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

With permission, Michael Addison

Scholars have been investigating the Cavendish-Galileo connection. The Cavendishes owned many of the new scientific instruments (telescopes, lenses, microscopes); and Margaret's writings showed serious interest in cosmography, now accessible with the new scientific tools. Imagine her fascination with the book illustration, above. At Welbeck Abbey, the Cavendishes formed a library of scientific books, and William maintained a private laboratory. See Elizabeth A. Spiller, "Reading through Galileo's Telescope: Margaret Cavendish & the Experience of Reading," *Renaissance Quarterly* (22 March 2000).



(11) Emblem, *The Chemical Wedding of Hermes and Aphrodite*.
 By Matthäus Merian, the Elder, for *Scrutinium chymicum* (Frankfurt, 1687)

For ‘invading’ the male preserve of authorship, some of the early women writers (e.g., Lady Mary Wroth) incurred public ridicule and slurs as hermaphrodites (monsters, deviants, well beyond ‘eccentrics’). Cavendish, and later Aphra Behn, flaunted her ‘masculine’ qualities; she saw herself as a cultural hermaphrodite, a valuable hybrid of male reason and female ‘fancy’. The hermaphrodite was a serious subject in learned circles, and discussed in alchemical discourse and literature associated with the Rosicrucians. See A.G. Bennett, “‘Yes, and’: Margaret Cavendish, the Passions and Hermaphrodite Agency,” in *Early Modern Englishwomen Testing Ideas*, eds Jo Wallwork and Paul Salzman, 75–88 (Ashgate, 2011); also Mendelson, *Blazing-World* (2016), 21–22. **Image, above:** Book illustration, *The Art of Alchemy*, Getty Research Institute exhibition; curator, David Brafman; November 2016–February 2017; see illustrated [feature article](#), *Atlas Obscura*, 21st November 2016. For emblem-books, see Mulvihill, [Appositions \(2015\)](#), 5 images.



(12) *Rubenshuis*, Antwerp (a view)

Residence and Studio, Peter Paul Rubens (1577-1640).

As royalist refugees, Margaret Cavendish and her husband resided here, c1648 to 1660, as renters, before returning to England for the restoration jubilee of the Stuart monarchy. As of 1946, Rubens House is a public museum and national treasure. Photograph, James Fitzmaurice, with permission.

Margaret and **W**illiam **C**avendish often walked in the courtyard and Baroque garden of the Rubens estate in Antwerp for reasons of health and general well being. Margaret's *Sociable Letters*, Letter 124, discusses the benefits of exercise and "taking the air"; see James Fitzmaurice, "Margaret Cavendish On Walking and Gardens," blog post 6, 19 September 2015. While in Holland, the Cavendishes made important connections with the designers and engravers of the elaborate frontispieces of Margaret's many books, principally, Abraham van Diepenbeeck and Peter Ludwig van Schuppen. Also at this time, Margaret would have heard about the protofeminist writings of the gifted Anna Maria Van Schurman (1607-1678), a respected Dutch intellectual who corresponded with Bathsua Makin, Pierre Gassendi, Christiaan Huygens, *et al.* Some of these were also correspondents of the Cavendishes; indeed, William Cavendish was a patron of Gassendi. Below, the Cavendish arms (full presentation); this image would have been displayed on the Cavendish carriages, stationery & wax seal, linens, china & stemware, selected jewelry, home furnishings, etc.





(13) Mulvihill Collection of Rare & Special Books (11 selections)
Conservator: David H. Barry, [Griffin Bookbinding](#), St Petersburg, FL

Displayed Aphra Behn; “Ephelia” (pseud., Mary Villiers Stuart, Duchess of Richmond); Ann, Lady Fanshawe; Lucy Hutchinson; Mary Shackleton Leadbeater; Katherine Philips; Hester Lynch Thrale Piozzi; Mary Tighe; Anna Maria Van Schurman; and two handcrafted books from Malachi McCormick’s Stone Street Press (Staten Island, NY): *Herself*, *Long Ago* and *Lament for Art O’Leary* (Irish-English facing pages). [Profile of collector](#), *Fine Books & Collections* (2016).



Acknowledgments Bruce McKinney, Tom McKinney, and especially Mike Stillman, Rare Book Hub, San Francisco. Margaret N. Cusick, John Powell, Tyne Howe, Newberry Library, Chicago. David H. Barry, Griffin Bookbinding, St Petersburg, FL. Robert Tyrwhitt and Lucinda Riding, Christie’s, London (Beltrame Library of Scientific Books, Part II, Sale 12140, 30 November 2016). Michael Addison, Addison and Sarova Auctioneers, Sale 1014, Macon, Georgia. James Barry Fitzmaurice, emeritus, Northern Arizona University, University of Sheffield UK. Natalie Patel, Welbeck Abbey, Nottinghamshire. Hillary S. Kativa, Othmer Library, Heritage Foundation, Philadelphia. Brandie Siegfried, Brigham Young University, Provo, Utah. Imogen Pasley-Tyler, Bridgeman Images, London. Holly Taylor, Edward Whitley, Bridgeman Images, NY. For continuing technical assistance, Mike Stillman (Rare Book Hub) and, with special thanks, Daniel Harris, Brooklyn, NY / Sarasota, FL. This essay’s graphic motif (a cropped woodcut of a celestial sphere, or armillary) is from Apianus, *Cosmographia* (Paris, 1551), sale catalogue, Beltrame Library of Scientific Books, Christie’s (as cited, above); with permission.

A Note On The Writer

Maureen E. Mulvihill, an elected member of The Princeton Research Forum, Princeton, NJ, and formerly Associate Fellow, Institute for Research in History, NYC, is an established literary specialist and rare book collector. She studied at Wisconsin (PhD, 1982), with post-doctoral work at Columbia University Rare Book School, the Yale Center for British Art, and (as NEH Fellow) Johns Hopkins University. She is [profiled](#) in the autumn 2016 issue of *Fine Books & Collections* magazine. **Book credits:** An edition of Mary Shackleton Leadbeater (Alexandria Street Press, Va.; Irish Women Poets series); two scholarly editions of ‘Ephelia’ (with digital companion, ‘[Thumbprints of ‘Ephelia’](#)’); and Advisory Editor, *Ireland And The Americas*, 3 vols (ABC-Clio). **Essays:** On such figures and subjects as Jane Austen, Brett-Smith Library auction, Frances Burney, Margaret Cavendish, Lady Anne Bacon Drury, Emblem Books, ‘Ephelia’, the Flight of the Earls (Donegal, 1607), Anne Killigrew, multimedia research, Paula Peyraud Collection auction, Lady Hester Pulter, Rubens, 17thC book arts, [Jonathan Swift](#), Mary Tighe, Van Dyck, Margrieta Van Varick (Dutch New York), Veronese, Oscar Wilde, Virginia Woolf, ‘Bloody Sunday’ (Derry, 1972), etc.; most essays, illustrated; some, with music. **Contributor to reference works:** *Oxford DNB*, *Dictionary of Irish Biography*, *The Orlando Project*, *Dictionary of Literary Biography*, and (in 2017) *The Literary Encyclopedia*. In 2012-2015, she was Vice President, [Florida Bibliophile Society](#). Dr Mulvihill will be a guest speaker, Selby Library, Sarasota, Florida, April, 2017. She is at work on Irishwomen’s political writings, c1603-1801.



This essay is dedicated to the memory of

Sylvia Bowerbank (1947 ~ 2005),
an inspiration to all scholars of Margaret Cavendish

and

Philip Milito (1953 ~ 2016),
poet and friend / Berg Collection, New York Public Library
