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From Nancy S. Weitz, President of the Society:

"And after I had travelled some time with the Sciences, I was received into the Chariot of the Muses, where I was received with great Joy, and crowned with a Wreath of Flame. And thus I am travelling with very wise and pleasant Company, but as yet I have no sight of the Palace but howsoever, my Minde is so pleased with the Journey, and so delighted with the Society, and so proud of the Favours and Gifts it receives from them every day, that it despises the Follyes, hates the Falshood of Mankinde, and scorns the proffers of Fortune, not regarding the Vanities of the World.

Would you could bring me into that Society, said the second Lady.

Answered the first, I will do my endeavour.

But after a short time she pleaded so earnestly in her Friends behalf, that she was received into their Company."

("Love's Cure", *Nature's Picture*, 132)

The time draws near for Society members to travel with the Sciences and the Muses and gather ourselves together in Paris for the 3rd International Margaret Cavendish Conference and 2nd MCS General Meeting. You will find the projected conference program within and can see for yourself what excellent papers, speakers, performance videos. and activities are planned. I also hope to see many members attend the meeting, at which we will conduct elections and make major decisions regarding Society governance. Please add your voice and vote.

The collection of membership dues for 1998-99 is well underway, and I'd like to take this opportunity to thank everyone who has sent in his or her yearly dues, extra contributions, and especially those who have set up lifetime memberships. If you would like to continue to receive the newsletter and be listed in the members' directory, please be sure to submit your membership form and dues soon.

See you in Paris!

Margaret Cavendish Society Discussion List, Archive, and Website:

The MCS continues to sponsor an active discussion list via email. The list links scholars working on projects related to MC and early modern women's writing. It is a vehicle for collaboration, conversation, queries, and calls for participation in upcoming publications and conferences. To subscribe, send an email message (with blank subject field) to: MARCAV-L-Request@lists.nau.edu. Type only this message: SUBSCRIBE MARCAV-L. There is an archive of the list's discussion: <http://mailgate.nau.edu/archives>. click on "MARCAV-L".

Reviews

James Fitzmaurice, review editor

Feminist Readings of Early Modern Culture Emerging Subjects. Eds. Valerie Traub, M. Lindsay Kaplan and Dymphna Callaghan. Cambridge: CUP, 1996.

The editors of this exciting collection challenge the assumption that modern subjectivity-self-aware, self-deluding, self-fashioning "was 'invented' in the early modern period" (1). Rather, they suggest, subjects become legible in different ways at particular historical moments. Subjects are therefore always "emergent," in a process of becoming rather than in a state of being. The interpretations gathered here are "feminist readings of early modern culture" because they address the ways in which early modern culture makes gender visible; many of the essays also consider the intersections between gender, sexual desire, racial difference, imperialism and class.

Rosemary Kegl's essay, "'TheWorld I have made': Margaret Cavendish, feminism and *The Blazing World*" (119-41) will be of particular interest to Cavendish scholars. Borrowing Cavendish's image of "two worlds [joined] at the ends of their Poles," Kegl argues first that this metaphor provides a "feminist narrative of intellectual process" (123): the two conjoined worlds resemble Cavendish's own *Observations* and *Blazing World*, published in the same volume. The two works are not intended to contrast each other, writes Kegl, but to make the point that both "fancy" and "contemplation" are vital to learning (127); by forming orderly, "musing" habits, and cultivating "fancy," women can become the intellectual and scholarly equals of men. Second, Kegl interprets Cavendish's worlds strung pole-to-pole as a model for the transportation of capital (limited in the *Blazing World* because of its fantastic geography), freed female desire (although commodities are restricted, women's souls are mobile), and imperialism (arguing that Cavendish constructs the *Blazing World* both in tension with and in collaboration with the Ottoman empire). *BW*'s inconsistencies in the portrayal of female desire, Kegl argues, like Cavendish's inconsistent definition of racial difference in *Observations* and *BW*; are part of an "imperialist fantasy" of multi-national conquest.

Kegl's essay is thought-provoking -- her analysis of racial difference in *BW* and *Observations* is brilliant -- but the essay itself recalls its controlling metaphor: its two parts, one on narrative process, the other on imperialism, resemble Cavendish's worlds joined pole-to-pole, somewhat arbitrarily. Fortunately Kegl's arguments are clear enough to guide the reader from one pole to the next.

Dr. Sujata Iyengar, University of Georgia, Athens, GA

Women's Writing 4.3 (1997). Special issue: Margaret Cavendish, Duchess of Newcastle, 1623-1673. Edited by Emma L.E. Rees.

This selection of papers presented at the 1996 Cavendish Conference at the University of East Anglia is a tremendously useful contribution to the increasingly prolific critical output in Cavendish studies. Given the recent growth of the MCS, it now seems incredible that this journal is, as editor Emma Rees remarks in her introduction, "the very first collection of critical essays on Margaret Cavendish" (321). The volume sets a very high standard indeed, providing a carefully balanced selection of articles emphasizing the diversity both of Cavendish's own writings and of the critical approaches employed by modern scholars in re-examining and re-evaluating her work.

The issue can be broken into three sections: the first consists of a pair of articles focussing primarily on *Poems, and Fancies* of 1653. In the opening essay, Hero Chalmers tackles one of the central images of Cavendish studies (the figure of 'Mad Madge') head-on, positing that the duchess's authorial stance is deliberately configured to coincide with both the Interregnum fashion for *femmes fortes* and the need for Royalist women to speak in public on behalf of their exiled husbands. Chalmers's placing of Cavendish in her contemporary context informs a compelling political and cultural analysis of her work. Elaine Walker, in the subsequent essay, explores *Poems, and Fancies* as a site wherein Cavendish's contradictory self-positions as woman, author, aristocrat, advocate of rational thought, and subject who desired fame get played out. Though it is somewhat frustrating that Walker sees no possible reconciliation between Cavendish's multiple identities, her suggestion that part of the author's torment is due to "the inability of the rest of the world to rise to her vision" (349) puts a new spin on traditional perceptions of Margaret Cavendish's modesty topoi.

The next two essays in this collection also explore matters of authorship and political self-positioning, with reference to *Natures Pictures* (1656, 1671). Jim Fitzmaurice examines the physical representation of Cavendish in the frontispiece of *Natures Pictures* and the variants between the two editions (among them the inclusion and subsequent removal of her autobiography) to show how Cavendish exercised control over the production and appearance of her texts to suit her changing ends. Emma Rees then looks at the ways in which Cavendish appropriated Platonic ideals of genre and literary form to elucidate her own Royalist values in the face of political uncertainty. Both of these readings add fascinating dimensions to the portrait of the duchess as a specifically aristocratic author, attempting to demonstrate the extent and legitimacy of her power in the chaotic context of the Civil War and its aftermath.

The journal's final section comprises three discussions of more diverse selections from Cavendish's work. Claire Jowitt examines the ways in which both William and Margaret Cavendish participated in ongoing Royalist evocations of Elizabeth I in their works. In discussing the poem "World in an Eare-Ring," Jowitt demonstrates the similarities between the poem's representations of the world and the Ditchley portrait of Elizabeth, and her reading of *The Blazing World* contends that the text employs Elizabeth as "an appropriate role model to express an enabling fantasy" of female autonomy and political expansionism (394). Andrew Hiscock turns his attention to the related issues of female authorship and disorderly women as raised specifically in Cavendish's drama: while her plays have so often been criticized for their lack of coherence and unity, Hiscock argues that this very discontinuity allows the duchess "to probe the contradictions, rather than the unity, of female cultural subjectivity" (401). Though his reading of several of the plays is of necessity curtailed and occasionally (as in the case of *Bell in Campo*) seems incomplete, he succeeds in making the important point that Cavendish's drama opened avenues towards re-evaluating the nature and cultural implications of gendered subjectivity. Finally, Sarah Hutton discusses the complex relationship between Cavendish's specifically philosophical works and the thoughts of Thomas Hobbes. Though the duchess criticized Hobbes's works, Hutton persuasively demonstrates that her own approaches to and conclusions from natural philosophy concurred with those of her contemporary at key points. In situating Cavendish within her specific intellectual, cultural, and

political milieu, Hutton's essay provides a solid basis on which further analyses of the duchess's thought can be built: a strong concept with which to end the selection of essays.

The journal concludes with a number of reviews of recent works and anthologies devoted to women writers of the early modern period, thereby giving a brief glimpse into the wider academic field into which Cavendish studies fits. This collection, as the first of its kind, does an admirable job of both demonstrating the diversity of current criticism of Cavendish and setting the stage for future work. One can only hope that future such issues from MCS conferences will be forthcoming and as impressive.

Alexandra Bennett, McGill University, Montreal

Margaret Lucas Cavendish, *Grounds of Natural Philosophy*. Ed. Colette V. Michael. Women in the Sciences 2. West Cornwall, CT: Locust Hill Press, 1996. 538.00 311+xx pp. ISBN 0-933951-66-3

Scholars who have had to study Cavendish's work under the often uncomfortable conditions afforded by major research libraries, taking their pencil notes on legal pads, have reason to welcome this publication. A photographic reprint of the 1668 edition, not only is it lightweight and legible but also opens flat and has ample margins for note-taking.

The text itself is accompanied by no notes or other apparatus beyond Colette Michael's fifteen-page introduction, which is primarily biographical and thus not likely to provide new information to most readers who will turn to this text. Michael relies primarily on Cavendish's own autobiography and on Kathleen Jones's *A Glorious Fame* and presents Cavendish as an educationally disadvantaged but well-read, independent, and courageous woman.

Turning to the actual text of *Grounds of Natural Philosophy* only in the closing pages of her essay, she notes that the book is a revision of *Philosophical and Physical Opinions* (the first edition of this volume in 1655 and the second of 1663 differ only insignificantly) but does not analyze the extraordinary differences between the two works which occasioned Cavendish's new title or allude to her visit to the Royal Society, which intervened between the two publications and may have had some influence on Cavendish's very extensive recasting of her earlier work.

Thus Michael writes that Cavendish "boldly dedicated" *Grounds of Natural Philosophy* "To all the Universities in Europe" (xv) but does not note that this brief dedication dramatically reduces the prefatory extravagances of her earlier work, nor does she mention that Cavendish's revisions include the addition of a table of contents, the elimination of passages in verse, a general and careful scaling back of fanciful explanations and flights of metaphor, and a corresponding increase in direct observation. It is somewhat misleading, therefore, to congratulate "Margaret" for "a candor and naivete that retains its freshness and a point of view not corrupted by the 'official' teachings of the time" (xvi), and it shortchanges both the diversity of scientific inquiry in this period and the seriousness of Cavendish's own involvement with her subject.

The Grounds of Natural Philosophy is not one of the foundational texts of Western science, but it is neither a negligible nor a primarily personal and expressive text. In terms of Cavendish's writing as a whole, it represents her not as the too familiar half-crazed eccentric but as mature and thoughtful. Its new availability is overdue and welcome.

Judith Moore, University of Alaska Anchorage

New and Noteworthy Work

Alexandra Bennett has accepted a tenure-track position at the University of Northern Illinois.

James Fitzmaurice. "The Cavendishes, the Evelyns and Teasing in Verse and Prose." *JMMRA: Journal of the Rocky Mountain Medieval and Renaissance Association* 16-17 (1995-96): 161-86. This essay contains full transcriptions of two hitherto unpublished poems, one by William Cavendish on the marriage of John Evelyn, the other a reply by Evelyn. Fitzmaurice offers to send offprints to MCS members while the supply lasts.

Erna Kelly is currently working on an annotated bibliography of secondary sources on MC with the assistance of her student, Kim Newport. Kelly has written the MarCav list inviting input from MCS members. Email: ekelly@uwec.edu

Marina Leslie. Her book, *Renaissance Utopias and the Problem of History* (Cornell UP, 1998), contains a chapter on Cavendish: "Revisiting Utopia in Margaret Cavendish's *Blazing World*." Another essay, "Evading Rape and Embracing Empire in Margaret Cavendish's *Assaulted and Pursued Chastity*," appears in the new collection, *Menacing Virgins: Representing Virginity in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance* (U of Delaware P, 1999), edited by Leslie and Kathleen Coyne Kelly.

Jennifer Low. "Surface and Interiority: Self-Creation in Margaret Cavendish's *The Clasp*." *Philological Quarterly* 77.2 (forthcoming). Low delivered an early version of this paper at the MCS Oxford conference.

Nancy Weitz (Miller). Her essay, "Metaphor and the Mystification of Chastity in Vives's *Instruction of a Christen Woman*," appears in *Menacing Virgins*, edited by Marina Leslie (see above). Weitz is in residence at Clare Hall, Cambridge as a Visiting Fellow (spring-summer 1999).

Paul Salzman will be a senior visiting research fellow at Merton College, Oxford in the fall.

Anne Shaver. *The Convent of Pleasure and Other Plays*. Forthcoming from Johns Hopkins UP. Shaver hopes to have the book with her at the conference!

Elizabeth Strauss. *Die Arithmetik der Leidenschaften: Margaret Cavendish's Naturphilosophie*. (Stuttgart: Metzler-Verlag. Forthcoming, Autumn 1999). The book places MC and her natural philosophy in relation to Hobbes, More, and the empiricists of the Royal Society.

Fran Teague wrote to let us know that her students have founded a MC webpage: <http://www.arches.uga.edu/~hollybry/mageay.htm>

Astrid Wilkens is associated with the Institute of Early Modern Research in Frankfurt and is working on a PhD thesis on Mary Astell and the significance of Cartesianism for the rise of feminism.

Tanya Wood is writing a dissertation with two MC chapters: "Brave New Worlds? Sexual Politics and Imaginary Realms in the Seventeenth Century." Wood reports that the first Cavendish chapter "looks at Cavendish's contradictory and fractured model of subjectivity." The second chapter (currently in progress) "looks at Cavendish's imaginary realms, including *The Blazing World*, *Assaulted and Pursued Chastity*, *The Presence*, *Lady Contemplation*, *Convent of Pleasure*, and a number of poems, to see if her sexual politics change (they do and they don't)." The dissertation also includes sections on Aphra Behn, Amelia Lanyer, Rachel Speght, Anne Bradstreet, Mary Astell, and may include several male authors.

Susanne Woods. *Lanyer: A Renaissance Woman Poet* (NY: Oxford UP, 1999). This study discusses Lanyer in relation to Spenser, Shakespeare, Jonson, Donne, Herbert and several other writers of the early 17th century. Woods writes, "I'm not sure it will have material of direct interest to Marcavers, but the book does focus on how a woman writer borrows, negotiates, and challenges materials and approaches we have learned to associate with the male writers."

The Convent of Pleasure in Production

Gweno Williams was responsible for what is believed to have been the premier production of Margaret Cavendish's play. The production occurred at the University College of Ripon and York St. John in March 1995. Images from that production of *The Convent of Pleasure* will be highlighted in **Sylvia Bowerbank and Sara Mendelson**, eds. *Paper Bodies: A Margaret Cavendish Reader*. (Broadview Press, f/c 1999) and on a teaching video *Women Dramatists 1550-1670* (f/c 1999). The production is discussed in Allison Findlay, Williams, and Stephanie Hodgson-Wright, "'The Play is ready to be Acted': Women and Dramatic Production 1570-1670." *Women's Writing (Triangle Journals)*, f/c 1999). Williams is also the author of "'Why may not a Lady write a good Play?': plays by early modern women reassessed as performance texts." *Readings in Renaissance Women's Drama*, Eds. **S. P. Cerasano** and **Marion Wynne-Davies** (Routledge, 1998): 95-107. A video of this very successful production will be shown at the Paris conference in June. Don't miss it!

A second production of the play was mounted this spring by **Kelly Wooten** at UNC-Chapel Hill. Wooten hopes to make video tapes of her production available for purchase. For more information, you may email Wooten: ratgrrl@email.unc.edu

The Society for Early Modern Women has established a fund in memory of **Josephine A. Roberts**, who died in an automobile accident in August 1996. The money will be used to subsidize the substantial costs of publishing Roberts' edition of the second volume of Mary Wroth's *Urania*. Suzanne Gossett and Janel Mueller have finished the edition for the Renaissance English Text Society. Contributions may be sent to Anne Cruz, Treasurer EMW, Dept. of Spanish, M/C 315, U of Illinois at Chicago, 601 Morgan Street, Chicago IL 60607-7117. (Please mark checks for the Josephine Roberts publication fund.)

The Brown University Women Writers Project Textbase (including Renaissance Women Online [RWO]) is scheduled for publication in August 1999. Until that time, the textbase is freely available online in a beta-test version. RWO includes a number of Margaret Cavendish's works. All texts in the system are richly encoded in SGML; the textbase allows users to perform several different types of searches. The primary materials are accompanied by topic essays and biographical information for each author.

Contextual materials for the textbase's MC resources have been provided by the following scholars, most of them members of the MCS:

Paul Salzman: "The Life of . . . William Cavendish"

Emma Rees: "Natures Pictures"

Nancy Weitz (Miller): "A True Relation"

Sylvia Bowerbank: "Observations upon Experimental Philosophy"

Jeffrey Masten: on the prefatory matter to the play collections

Linda R. Payne: "Youth's Glory and Death's Banquet"

Irene Burgess: "The Lady Contemplation"
Line Cottagnies: "Wits Cabal"
Alexandra Bennett: "The Unnatural Tragedie," "A Comedy of the Apocryphal Ladies"
Erika Mae Olbricht: "The Matrimonial Trouble"
Claire Gheeaert-Graffeuille: "Natures Three Daughters"
Cecile Jagodzinski: "The Religious"
Sarah Moreman: "The Comical Hash"
Erin Lang Bonin: "Bell in Campo"
Lisa Gim: "The Female Academy"
Andrew Hiscock: "The Sociable Companions"
James Fitzmaurice: "The Bridals"
Anne Shaver: "The Convent of Pleasure"
Susannah Quinsee: "A Piece of a Play"
Anna Battigelli: "The World's Olio"

*Forthcoming From Broadview Press: Paper Bodies: A Margaret
Cavendish Reader*
Sara Mendelson and Sylvia Bowerbank, eds.

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