

Margaret Cavendish's 'The Blazing World' as an Amazonian Matriarchy: Gender, Authority and Sovereignty

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Abstract

This paper investigates the construction of Amazonian matriarchy in Margaret Cavendish's *The Description of a New World Called 'The Blazing World'* and its implications for the early modern period's concept of gender, power, and sovereignty. The study employs close reading of Cavendish's texts along with elements of her paratext and draws upon the 1666 first edition. It also engages with the generic framing of the utopian writings of More, Bacon, and Campanella. Cavendish does not claim to place a woman on the patriarchal throne. Instead, she uses the feminine capacity of sovereignty to govern, comprehend, create, and command to reconstruct sovereignty. As an empress of the Amazonians, she integrates intellectual, political, military, and religious authority. She creates a state religion, organizes the bird-men and other hybrid communities, establishes an Experimental Philosophical Society, and wages war across other worlds using asymmetrical warfare. As a result, she has authority far beyond what would be expected of a woman in the early modern era. She concerns herself with matters of imperial control, theology, natural philosophy, warfare, and creative imagination. However, as women gain more power and freedom, so too does the empress, which in turn creates tensions. The story addresses some of those tensions as it relates to absolute power, intellectual autonomy, and the ordering of society. The study places Cavendish in the symbolic heritage of Amazonian political thought and outlines the conditions in which a female sovereign is allowed to rule, comprehend, and create across multiple worlds.

Keywords: Amazonian Matriarchy, Feminist Political Theory, Gender and Sovereignty, Speculative Fiction, Utopian Fiction.

Introduction

Margaret Cavendish's demonstrates a sophisticated approach to scientific romance. Her work prefigures the use of the contemporary genre and combines the methodological approaches of early modern constraints on literature to critique traditional 'The Blazing World' gender partitioning associated with the political authority of the time (1, 2). Cavendish creates a fantasy of the Amazonian realm where a woman of distinction possesses intellectual and political power that is customary to men, whilst the rest of society continues to lack this power. A deliberate challenge to the seventeenth-century patriarchal hegemony, transformation of the female subject from a marginalized figure into an architect of absolute sovereignty (3). Situating this narrative of female rule within a utopian geography, Cavendish engages in a critical revision of bio-political theory (4). By placing this sovereign identity against the grain of static, exclusionary utopian spaces, Cavendish effectively performs a radical re-

imagining of intellectual authorship and political legitimacy (5, 6). In doing so, she transforms the "singular" nature of her own defiant self-fashioning into a broader inquiry regarding the capacity of the female subject to exist outside the constraints of anthropocentric, male-dominated political frameworks (7, 8). This structural inversion serves as a deliberate challenge to seventeenth-century patriarchal hegemony. This transformation of a female subject from a marginalized figure to an architect of absolute sovereignty is achieved by Cavendish in a utopian geography. By placing this sovereign identity against the grain of static, exclusionary utopian spaces, Cavendish effectively performs a radical re-imagining of intellectual authorship and political legitimacy. By performing this inquiry, Cavendish transforms the 'singular' nature of her own defiant self-fashioning into a broader inquiry regarding the capacity of the female subject to exist beyond the constraints of anthropocentric, male-

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dominated, political frameworks. Margaret Cavendish, the Duchess of Newcastle-upon-Tyne (1623-1673), was England's most prominent woman author of the seventeenth century; her *Description of a New World*, called 'The Blazing World' is the first work of woman speculative fiction in the English language, and it was first published in 1666 (9). Cavendish argued that 'The Blazing World' "validly contained the parts of certain philosophical mysteries that seem equally absurd to rational minds" (10).

Past Studies

Cavendish has been compared to More, Bacon and Campanella within the tradition of Utopian studies (1, 4). Other studies have noted the ways in which Cavendish brings various genres together to critique and engage with literary speculation (11). Another branch of scholarship focuses on Cavendish's natural philosophy and criticism of empirical science. White connects scientific arguments with the factionalism and conflict of war, while Gruber relates the text to Cavendish's idea of matter that moves and organizes itself. Boyle studies the mediation of sovereignty in Cavendish and Chase focuses on the gendered aspects of Cavendish's imaginary world-making (12). In the last four decades, the scholarly genealogy of Cavendish criticism has proceeded through three defined phases. The first, begun by stylistic biography and feminist recovery in the 1980s, established Cavendish as a possible candidate for the canon. It also documented the range of Cavendish's genre-transcending output (10). The second phase was launched in the 1990s and consolidated after 2000. At this stage, 'The Blazing World' was viewed as a utopian, speculative-fictional work, and was positioned alongside Thomas More's *Utopia*, Francis Bacon's *New Atlantis*, and Tommaso Campanella's *City of the Sun* (4). The third dominant phase started in the late 2010s. During this phase, Cavendish's critical work was read as a "scientific romance" which combined natural philosophy with political and gender dimensions inseparably with Cavendish's critical work and her critical skepticism of what she referred to as the 'self-conceited' experimentalists, and her alternative vitalist-materialist theory of nature as self-moving matter is presented (13). This study endeavours to fill in these gaps and is structured around a reading of 'The Blazing World' as an Amazonian matriarchy

in three co-ordinated senses: as a typological descendent of the classical-Renaissance Amazons; as a political-theoretical construction of a legitimate female sovereignty outside of the seventeenth-century patrilineal primogenital contract theory; and as a cosmological proposition of the natural world as being knowable, governable, and reproducible through female intellectual agency (14, 15).

Research Gaps

There are actually three interrelated gaps. The first one is related to the three intertwined strands: the utopian, the generic, and the natural philosophical. The most of the studies emphasize one strand at the expense of the others. The second gap is related to the Amazonian symbolic vocabulary of classical and Renaissance origin. This vocabulary has been noted in passing in some literature. It has not been systematically reconstructed as the genealogy of Cavendish's matriarchal sovereign. The third gap is the relationship between Cavendish's materialist natural philosophy and the political viability of her matriarchy that is, between what the cosmos is and what a woman can legitimately do within it remains under examined.

Paratext, Female Authorship and Imaginary Sovereignty

The Paratext of 'The Blazing World' is crucial for understanding the Empress' authority as it comes before the Empress takes control in the fictional world. Paratexts normally come after the texts, but for this case, Cavendish connecting her writings to *Observations upon Experimental Philosophy* places the texts as companion pieces, joined like "Two several Worlds, at their Two Poles". The symmetry keeps this piece from becoming a fantasy piece disconnected from Cavendish's natural philosophy. In Campanella's polity, metaphysician-ruler and the scholarly officers of the government possess authority because their comprehensive learning lends structure to political administration (16).

Methodology

This study establishes three complementary theoretical lenses. By combining these lenses, it is possible to construct a reading of 'The Blazing World' as a hypothetical Amazonian matriarchy without losing the political-theoretical seriousness and generic singularity of the work.

- a) The first of these lenses is feminist political theory re-conceptually situated within the seventeenth century. This lens focuses on the claim of matriarchal sovereignty as a form of a determinative sovereignty claim pertaining to the legitimate conditions of female sovereign rule. The fox-styled conceit by which an unnamed young Englishwoman is unanimously pronounced Empress by bear-men, fox-men, bird-men, fish-men, and worm-men who cede their governmental authority without exception houses the substructure of matriarchal sovereignty. This conceit, therefore, reads not as ornamentation, but rather as the substructure of a political claim pertaining to matriarchal sovereignty. The duchess' prefatory epistles to Philosophical and Physical Opinions, The World's Olio, and Sociable Letters reproduced in Lilley's 1994 critical edition accompany the text and form the para-textual apparatus whereby the political claim pertaining to matriarchal sovereignty is sustained (9).
- b) The second lens is utopian studies and political-theoretical genre analysis, as developed in Rosendahl's reading of the text against Thomas More's Utopia, Francis Bacon's New Atlantis, and Tommaso Campanella's City of the Sun (4). From this lens, the matriarchal imaginary is situated as a moderate intervention in an established virtual-republic genre whose previous occupants have imagined rule by philosopher-kings, priest-scholars, and natural-philosophical governors, but not by a Virgin Empress detached from patrilineal succession. 'The Blazing World', on this account, constitutes a coherent continuation of the genre's nominal project rather than a bizarre departure from it.
- c) The third lens is materialist natural philosophy, particularly Cavendish's own vitalist account of nature as self-organising matter which White has read as a protracted and detailed critique of the Royal Society's experimental self-fashioning (12, 13). Within this lens, matriarchal sovereignty coexists neither with natural philosophy nor with materialist natural philosophy, because it requires a particular epistemology of nature, one in which the nature can be comprehended a priori. In such a universe, nature is self-organising, and such

organisation can be grasped in a dynamic way, which allows for a sovereign to govern without any equipment fashioned by man. In this framework, the sovereign's founding of the Experimental Philosophical Society on 'The Blazing World' is the most compelling narrative option: the Royal Society is reflected only to be re-dedicated to a female sovereign.

The study utilizes a qualitative, textually-based, interpretive design situated in the tradition of the humanities and drawing on procedures that have, by now, become conventional in early modern literary scholarship and intellectual history. The study does not collect primary survey data, experimental observations, or laboratory measurements and therefore, this is not a quantitative study; the research question concerns the construction and legitimation of a matriarchal imaginary in a single corpus of seventeenth-century English writing, and the appropriate response to that question is a sustained, theoretically informed reading situated within its polemical and generic contexts. First, the design incorporates three methodological commitments that since the 1990s have dominated mainstream Cavendish scholarship. The first commitment is close readings of the original 1666 edition of the Cavendish scholarship, as reflected in Lilley's critical apparatus (9). The second commitment is the art of reading paratexts and contextual which encapsulated within the prefatory letters and epistles as well as the surrounding materials of 'The Blazing World' written by Cavendish and comprise the discursive area in and around which Cavendish places her creative work (10). The third commitment is generic reading of 'The Blazing World' bundled amongst the utopian tradition of More, Bacon, and Campanella, and against the political-theoretical legacy of Hobbes, Filmer, and Locke (4). These three methodological commitments are not sequential steps, but layers in a single interpretive operation; close reading is of primary importance and occupies the central position in the interpretive core; other factors that supply the horizon and context against which the close reading is calibrated, are the paratexts, contexts, and reading (10). The design is, in this regard, reconstructive and hermeneutic. It was chosen because the research question demands interpretation of a matriarchal imaginary which was developed as a determinate proposition

concerning the conditions of authoritative rule exercised by a female sovereign, and which is best brought into view through interpretation rather than measurement (14). The broad commitment to methodology is interdisciplinary. Recent scholarship in certain branches of material culture and material religion has helped provide an interpretive lexicon for approaching texts and images as material objects that have affordances which include but may extend beyond the surrounding text, and this commitment provides the cultural-memory logic by which Cavendish's prefatory polemics are read side by side with the matriarchal narrative of 'The Blazing World' rather than as separable statements (17, 18). The interdisciplinary frame is, however, carefully bounded: the analysis treats material culture as an interpretive lens and not as a competing object, and it does not import religious-studies terminology in ways that distort Cavendish's own natural-philosophic vocabulary. Where the analysis invokes concepts such as "affordance", "embodied memory", or "ritual practice", these are consistently traced back to the seventeenth-century inflection that Cavendish's own writing gives them (12).

Results and Discussion

Analysing the representation of women in the utopian realm of 'The Blazing World', one can argue that while this text marks an important milestone in the early development of science fiction and in some ways places women in the centre of a utopian universe, in fact the so-called privileged status of women in the text must also be analyzed critically. For starters, Cavendish is celebrated as the first woman in the utopian genre. However, as a female author, her construction of a utopia is highly problematic. In contrast to the construction of the utopia, in fact, and as some critics have noted, in the 17th century England, it was very hard for a woman to write. Thus, Cavendish must not be punished for writing a work that is very low on the scientific scale. She used the stereotypes of society to develop 'The Blazing World' In order to gain the respect of her society. Thus, her work highly reinforces the roles of women in her society. In the work, the utopian world is not based on the scientific developments and progress, but on the female characters of the Lady, who is transferred to an imaginary world

governed by an Emperor who marries her and grants her the right to rule that Utopian society of extraordinary creatures. Because of her beauty, Lady is likened to a Goddess and praised for her divine dispositions, and because of her beauty, the Emperor makes her a marriage proposal, and therefore, she is an object and not an individual, as the work recognizes her: [...] he conceived her to be some Goddess, and offered to worship her; which she refused, telling him [...], that although she came out of another world, yet was she but a mortal. At which the Emperor rejoicing, made her his Wife, and gave her an absolute power to rule and govern all that World as she pleased (19).

In this idealistic reality, the Lady is happy to join this community to enjoy alongside others the emperor's love, respect and admiration. She is called an angel, and a goddess, and tends to be perceived as a non-mortal. The emperor, on account of her beauty, marries her, and bestows upon her the power to rule and govern the world. Based on the statement, a woman in 17th century England could not dream, and expect to rule the world. It would be perceived utopian not only for 17th century England but for all women in the world. But, if one considers the reason why the Lady is given such a privilege, right there will find that it has got nothing to do with her intelligence, her education, or her professional expertise. It derives from her physical beauty, and as a reward for her physical beauty, she is given a marriage proposal from an Emperor, who then bestows upon her the privilege of ruling the world as the Empress. The emperor's view of the Empress is that she is a beautiful and attractive woman, and that she is beautiful empowers her and is a source of strength for her, and is a key to controlling the people and gaining their obedience. Lastly, as a reason of her physical and spiritual perfection, she is described as a miraculous being.

it caused a great admiration in all that were present, who believed her to be some Celestial Creature, or rather an uncreated Goddess, and they all had a desire to worship her; for surely, said they, no mortal creature can have such a splendid and transcendent beauty (19).

This quotation illustrates how, because of her beauty and power, she is elevated from the realm of the ordinary and described, instead, as a divine

being, a Goddess. There is uncertainty as to which is the source of her power. Is it beauty? Is it the power to rule? Considering how all this relates to early 17th century patriarchal English society, it could be noted that women feared losing their beauty, as this would condemn them to being unmarried, and would rob them of social standing and respect. Hence, beauty was of prime sentiment value to a woman's social standing. At this time, the so-called appreciation of a woman was really just a superficial regard to her physical appearance. Within her work, which is considered to be a proto-science fiction, her contempt and disregard for the most superficial and banal manifestations of male fantasy and the stereotype gender roles is clear. In this vein, it is clear that Cavendish was in favour of maintaining the patriarchal gender roles existing in her time. This also begs the evaluation of her utopia, which proves that the highest status achievable for women is only attainable through marriage and is further substantiated by appearance. Leslie "Gender, Genre and the Utopian Body in Margaret Cavendish's 'The Blazing World'", states that reflection of a strong female figure in the work doesn't require a skeptical approach and that "Cavendish presents the powerful woman as a natural wonder of the world", thus the work "posits an affirmative feminist utopia" (19). As per Leslie, the female figure has the ability to capture the power of the Emperor and govern the Nation, thus the work is considered to be a feminist utopia, as per Leslie, which allows the woman to possess power. Although Leslie thinks that the female figure has substantial power, it is observed that, as per the critics, the female figure is single and as such cannot possess power. Further, as per Ahearn, the work of Cavendish takes into account "the implications of the self/other, man/woman and human/nature binaries that are deeply embedded in Western epistemologies" (20). It can be deduced that in the framework proposed by Western epistemology, it can be seen that, prior to the emergence of Feminist Movements and Postmodernism, women were positioned as 'other' and as such were placed in close proximity with nature. In the work, even though the Empress appears to symbolize the self, which is expected to sit in the center, she cannot be equated with the 'self', since without the Emperor's power, she cannot be valued by the community; likewise, the

same perception can be understood in 17th century England, thus Cavendish, while maintaining the support of the patriarchal community, attempts to provide her female character a role of prominence, which reflects the power of women and is determined by a man. Inadequate Governing Capability of a Female Ruler. The initial strategies of the lady while ruling the utopian society suggest that, in the early stages of her rule, the lady does not wish to misuse her governance by power abuse and control the people as a judge and ruler. As a female ruler, to control the people with her women gentleness and without the use of power, would be to resolve the oppression of the people and the internal contradictions. So, she makes it a point in the beginning to not convert them to her religion "for she knew well, that belief was a thing not to be forced or pressed upon the people, but to be instilled into their minds by gentle persuasions" (19). The Empress does not change her people's religion to her religion and leaves a vacuum of forced and/or commanded beliefs in her people. This shows that, in her governing strategy, to avoid the use of blood and torture as persuasion to religion and as encouragement of people to actions, is a gentleness that is part of her being a female ruler. Continuing with her gentleness as part of her being a female ruler, instead of combining forced rule, constant control, and punishment, she chooses to tyrannize and oppress them. Additionally, taking power from a man was also strange for 17th century readers because most believed women lacked the ability to rule a country or hold any important political position. Leslie, in "Mind the Map: Fancy, Matter, and World Construction in Margaret Cavendish's 'The Blazing World'" argues: "Cavendish is not entirely reassuring to those who regarded learning in a woman to be a dangerous thing, and her portrayals of women as natural philosophers in 'The Blazing World' do not restrict their learning or their efficacy to a separate feminine sphere" (21). For most readers of that time, women were not expected to acquire the knowledge and skills to control the male dominated world and, in addition, if such knowledge and skills were gained, they would most probably misuse their power and cause havoc. However, Johns states that woman constructing utopias in the 17th and 18th centuries were "constrained by ideologies about women's nature and proper function," wherein they had to

“negotiate varied paths to greater personal pleasure and social equity” (22). Indeed, these women were able to break the social taboos surrounding women and their position in utopia and carve spaces for personal enjoyment and fulfilment. Regarding this, it is open to debate as to whether Cavendish achieved social justice for women. In other words, women like Cavendish were not able to achieve true social equity as they were not independent, fearless writers. Rather, they were constrained by the fears and hesitations that were forced onto women in the patriarchal English society of the 17th century. ‘The Blazing World’ explores gender by examining a utopia led by a woman, particularly when the Empress drafts a female equivalent of Aristotle, Plato, and Epicurus to serve as her scribe. These male philosophers serve as examples of the men from whom she believes she must draw advice to better manage her realm. The authority of the Empress does not lie in her patrilineal or primogenitary claims. Even though her power was given to her through marriage, it takes the shape of an extraordinarily independent and independent form of queenship. The text presents a typological Amazonian genealogy. Empress is an instance of a classical and Renaissance Amazonian topos, male bonds that are either virginal or homoerotic, sovereign women who are the authors of the laws of nature which govern subordinate men, and which are diffused through Quintus Curtius, Justin, and Montaigne (3). The matriarchy is therefore intelligible within an inherited symbolic lineage rather than as a stylistic rupture. The text affirms the matriarchal sovereign exercise of unbounded political power without patri-lineal succession, primogeniture, or a divine-right contractual theory. The Imperium is won via a unanimous declaration, exercised through a dedicated senate and military force, and maintained by the Empress’ reproduction of an alternate male society of factotums (4). Sovereignty is therefore a theoretically codified alternative rather than a counterfactual curiosity. The text presents a matriarchal sovereignty that is grounded in a distinctive and materialist natural philosophy. The Empress’ establishment of the Experimental Philosophical Society, its redirection towards her own cosmology, and her position as final arbiter of the laws of motion demonstrate that Cavendish’s vitalist conception of nature as self-organizing

matter is the metaphysical antecedent of the matriarchy rather than its aftermath (13). The female sovereign reorganizes religion and theology. Under the female sovereign, a state religion is founded, and bird-men are ordained as priests within the state religion. There is no independent priestly estate. The figure of the Empress’ vizier creates a calculated asymmetry of delegated rule. There is a single male counsellor, for the Empress, with privileged access, who is placed between the Empress and her Senate (15). The martial-imaginary instruments of matriarchal sovereignty are cross-world martial military expeditions. These martial military expeditions serve the regime with pagan epic-pagan credentials in contrast to the Hobbesian-Baconian martial-imaginary (14). The findings elaborated on in the previous section consolidate the research aim to explore and evaluate how the novel constructs an Amazonian matriarchy and how it pertains to the early modern periods’ gender, authority, and sovereignty. From these lenses, the findings synthesize that the imaginary matriarchy is not a rhetorically convenient device but a theoretical construction. The confirmed typological Amazonian genealogy carries the first interpretive weight. The matriarchy is from the start intelligible as a recurring symbolic fantasy of female sovereignty across different contexts of classical, Renaissance, and early modern periods. It is about what a female sovereign can be rather than as a singular rupture restricted to the seventeenth century (3). This finding vindicates the political-theoretical register of the reading rather than its purely literary one. The placement of the novel within the calculable Amazonian typological lineage of early modern writing is a distinctive contribution of this paper. Because of recent reasons for productive advances in Cavendish scholarship, it has foregrounded genre and women’s literary history (10). In contrast, the present study re-anchors the Duchess’ matriarchy within the older genealogy of Amazonian political imagination to which she inherited access. The political-theoretical conclusion that the matriarchal sovereign exercises absolute power without patrilineal succession, primogeniture, or the divine right contract theory adds to Rosendahl’s reading of the text against Hobbes, Filmer, and Locke (4) by specifying the institutional mechanisms by which the matriarchy

is maintained. The consensus that constitutes sovereignty, a dedicated senate, and a parallel society of male factotums are an apparatus by which a female sovereign is able to govern without the inherited symbolic genetics of legitimacy (23). The reading accordingly contributes not only to Cavendish scholarship, but also to the longer tradition of feminist political theory, which has asked if a polity can be legitimated otherwise than by descent from a male progenitor. The most unique theoretical finding is the third. The reading that matriarchal sovereignty is dependent on Cavendish's vitalist-materialist account of nature, meaning that the possibility of female rule is, in the Duchess's text, inseparable from her natural philosophy is an extension of White's account of Cavendish's polemical writing against the Royal Society (13), and Gruber's account of the Duchess's self-organizing cosmology (12). The metaphysical underpinnings of the founding matriarchy are incorporated into Gruber's account of the Duchess's cosmology. The reading contributes to the relational analysis of natural philosophy and political authority that Hazard and Morgan have advocated in multiple reading frames (17, 18). Of the three remaining findings, namely, the Empress' reorganization of religion, the vizier, and the cross-world military expeditions, there are no independent arguments. These findings consolidate the matriarchy. The restructuring of the state religion eliminates the independent priestly estate. The Hobbesian-Baconian tradition had treated this priestly estate as a structural check on sovereignty. The vizier creates an asymmetric rule, where a calibrated asymmetric rule is delegated to a single male counsellor, who is situated between the sovereign and her senate (15). The cross-world military expeditions function as martial-imaginary instruments of epic-pagan-term harmony divergent from the experimental programme (14). Each finding strengthens the prior three. The study explains two limits of interpretation. The first limit is due to the interdisciplinary material-culture approach. This is an instrument that the study imports, rather than a vocabulary Cavendish herself uses, and it is therefore appropriately bounded (17, 24). And the political-theoretical register adopted here is one of several plausible registers, with rhetorical, performative, and broader symbolic readings remaining available (18, 25). The contribution lies

in the consistent reading of the matriarchal imaginary as a determinate claim about the conditions of legitimate female sovereignty rather than as a generic ornament.

Conclusion

This study aimed to investigate how Margaret Cavendish's "The Description of a New World", Called 'The Blazing World', constructs an Amazonian matriarchy, and to assess the impact of this construction on early modern debates concerning gender, authority, and sovereignty. The reconstruction of the early modern reception of the classical Amazon myth and Cavendish's Empress within that symbolic lineage, formed the first major step of this study. The second major step consisted of analysing Cavendish's Empress against the political theoretical frameworks of the tribunals of the potestative absolutistic theory, matriarchate, and divine-right contract theory, and within the context of Cavendish's materialist natural philosophy. The last step, which was the third major step of this study, consisted of situating 'The Blazing World' in the vicinity of its contemporaneous/near contemporaneous utopian and contract theoretical texts. It is the same with the unnamed Empress, who instantaneously realizes a cluster of Amazonian topoi disseminated through Quintus Curtius, Justin and Montaigne, and appropriates them within a trans-historical symbolic lineage rather than as a singular rupture. She exercises absolute political authority through a unanimous declaration, a dedicated senate, and a parallel society of male factotums, supplying an institutional apparatus that does not depend on patrilineal, primogenitary, or divinely sanctioned succession. Her matriarchal regime is underwritten by a natural philosophy in which nature is self-moving, self-organizing, and knowable through her sovereign epistemic agency, an arrangement that licenses her founding of the Experimental Philosophical Society on 'The Blazing World' and her arbitration of the Three theoretical implications are evident in the consolidated reading. The first is that the study adds to the genealogy of Cavendish's matriarchy beyond the boundaries that have governed her critical reception, and places the text in a tradition of political imagination of the Amazon, a tradition of political imagination of the Amazon, and a tradition of political imagination of the Amazon.

The utopia-genre scholarship, until recently, has tended to bracket out all of this. The second implication of the study is that it substantiates the claim that the vitalist natural philosophy of Cavendish is a metaphysical prerequisite of her matriarchy rather than something that is supplementary. The implications of this study for the wider reading of early modern women writers are vast. The third theoretical implication is that the study shows that speculative-fictional world-making is a gendered activity in Cavendish's case. This provides a framework within which the Duchess' matriarchal sovereignty is a function of imaginative construction of cosmology rather than a counterfactual, out of the ordinary, episode that is connected to a polity of a more traditional kind. The paratext shows that sovereignty in 'The Blazing World' is presented both within the narrative and beyond it. Within the narrative, the Empress directs and controls all of the political, religious, philosophical, and military institutions. On the edge of the narrative, Cavendish claims a different sort of authority as the "Creatress," "Empress," and "Authoress" of all the worlds. Cavendish's address to women builds a female interpretive community, and her self-naming as "Margaret the First" transforms her exclusion from a historical monarchy into an imaginative sovereignty. Also, the language of subjects, government, possession, and usurpation shows that female authorship does not disregard absolute authority, but rather adopts and adjusts it. Therefore, the paratext builds the intellectual connection between Cavendish's gendered authorship, vitalism, Amazonian symbolism, and the representation of female rule in her novels. Three directions for further study have arisen. The first is the expansion of Amazonian typological analysis into other early-seventeenth century female-authored utopias. The metaphorical alignment of these utopias with the classical topos has not yet been systematically constructed. The second is the comparative reading of Cavendish's matriarchal sovereignty against her contemporary women writers in continental Europe. The philosophical and political commitments of these women writers have yet to be placed in constructive dialogue with hers. The third is the reception-historical tracing of the matriarchal figure in Cavendish to the late twentieth and twenty-first century feminist utopian writers,

particularly those who framed Cavendish as the single canonical antecedent of their own utopian world building. The broader significance of the present study is its consistent reading of Cavendish's matriarchal imagination as a specific claim concerning the conditions in which a female sovereign can rightfully govern, comprehend and cognize the cosmos she governs.

Abbreviations

None.

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Author Contributions

Bhuvaneswari B: Conceptualization, Conducted the Study, Data Collection, Data Analysis, Data Interpretation writing -Original Draft, Benet DE: Writing - Review and Editing for Intellectual Content. All authors reviewed and approved the final manuscript.

Conflict of Interest

The authors have no conflicts of interest to declare.

Declaration of Artificial Intelligence (AI) Assistance

The authors declare that no generative AI or AI assisted technologies were used in the preparation of this manuscript. The authors take full responsibility for the content's originality, interpretation and accuracy.

Ethics Approval

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