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# Navigating Past, Potential, and Paradise: The Gendered Epistemologies of Discovery and Creation in Francis Godwin's *Man in the Moone* and Margaret Cavendish's *Blazing World*

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### Article abstract

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# Navigating Past, Potential, and Paradise: The Gendered Epistemologies of Discovery and Creation in Francis Godwin's *Man in the Moone* and Margaret Cavendish's *Blazing World*

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*La pièce Man in the Moone de Francis Godwin et celle de Margaret Cavendish, Blazing World, décrivent des mondes nouveaux qui dérivent de l'idée de paradis et qui expérimentent avec les limites spatiales et temporelles. En combinant la nouveauté et une connaissance actuelle afin de construire un paradis imaginaire et un protagoniste qui obtient l'accès à un espace édénique, Godwin et Cavendish expérimentent différentes façons, spécifiquement masculines et féminines, de construire la connaissance au paradis. Ces explorations épistémologiques, manifestes dans la découverte de Godwin du monde extérieur, ainsi que dans la création de Cavendish d'un soi intérieur, alors qu'ils tentent de réconcilier la connaissance d'avant et d'après la faute originelle, développent des dichotomies relevant du sexe que semblent établir ces textes. En utilisant un cadre géographique humaniste, on compare les épistémologies des deux auteurs en tant que cultures divergentes de la nouveauté, afin de montrer comment Godwin et Cavendish s'orientent dans les géographies qu'ils ont choisies. Les récits qui en résultent explorent dans quelle mesure le passé nuit aux possibilités du paradis, et comment ce conflit entre passé et présent relève du sexe ; ce qui permet de mieux comprendre comment le nouveau et l'ancien fonctionnent et construisent des façons spécifiquement masculines et féminines de connaître et de se situer pour chaque auteur et leurs lecteurs.*

The history of early modern utopia-making reflects in large part the struggle to regain a lost paradise in the potential afforded by the discovery of the New World. In their own whimsical ways, the posthumously published *Man in the Moone* (1638), by Bishop Francis Godwin of Hereford, and *The Description of a New World, Called the Blazing World* (1666), by Margaret Cavendish,

Duchess of Newcastle, reconfigure the utopian space as versions of the Biblical paradise. In what relatively little has been written about Godwin's account of a fictional voyage to the moon, it has been read as an early example of science fiction, a study of language that contributed to the universal-language movement of the seventeenth century, as well as yet another work in a long (masculine) tradition of lunar utopia-making.<sup>1</sup> The more comprehensively explored *Blazing World*, at once a utopian text and an experiment in generic hybridity, has been read as a response to the scientific and philosophical debates in Cavendish's day, a retreat from the horrors of the Civil War into an interior world, and a narrative of female power.<sup>2</sup> By putting these two texts in dialogue, I hope to trouble the gender dichotomies they seem to establish.

Critics have discussed the feminization and sexualization of discovered lands, examining early modern writers who use a gendered rhetoric of discovery that dichotomizes the male discoverer and the female discovered.<sup>3</sup> I want to extend this discussion on gender and world-finding/world-making by looking at the ways in which the epistemologies of knowledge acquisition themselves can be seen as gendered, through a comparison of Godwin's and Cavendish's accounts of finding or creating paradise. Godwin's moon and Cavendish's *Blazing World* are imagined geographical sites in which the old and the new intersect; both are labelled as paradise and are thus saturated with the history of Adam and Eve's Eden while also charged with the utopian uncertainty of the new, the unknown, and the ideal. In their attempts to reconcile history and the new, Godwin and Cavendish speak to the complicated relationship between our human past, tainted by the repercussions of the Biblical Fall, and our hope for a better world. However, a key distinction between the two accounts of a new paradise is *how* such paradises come to be (known). Godwin moves his protagonist outward toward the discovery of the external world; Cavendish's protagonist moves inward toward the creation of an interior world. Both epistemologies, that of discovery and that of creation, can be seen as gendered strategies for acquiring new knowledge of time and place, ways of knowing that maintained or undermined the status quo.

I thus use the terms "discovery" and "creation" to refer to what I think can be seen as divergent processes of acquiring such knowledge, and a discussion of the nuances of these terms will help to situate my study. New knowledge that is discovered is historical in the sense that its origins belong to/in the past; the literal dis-covering/uncovering of a truth presupposes its preexistence. New

knowledge that is created, on the other hand, is knowledge that has been newly constructed and did not previously exist; created knowledge comprises a newness that departs from the preexistent. The distinction I wish to make between discovery and creation is one that goes beyond genre or discipline to consider both the spatial and historical implications of gendered ways of knowing/discovering/creating paradise. In doing so my aim is to respond to geographer Yi-Fu Tuan's call for a kind of humanist geography:

The broad aim of the humanist geographer must be: Given human nature and the direct experience of space and place in the ordinary world, how can man have conceived different worlds, more or less abstract, among which being the maps of utopia and the geographer's own concepts of location?<sup>4</sup>

My work addresses this question by using a humanist geographical framework to explore the relationship of early modern men and women to their time and their place during a period when new worlds and old worlds were at the forefront of human imagination. Humans migrate not only when pushed, but also “under the lure of a pull — that is, when they envisage a place ‘out there’ — say, the New World — that is more attractive. Or they may decide to stay put in the Old World.”<sup>5</sup> In the utopia-as-paradise, a world characterized by the human desire to overcome our post-lapsarian state, Godwin and Cavendish use what Donald R. Maxwell terms the “divergent cultures of discovery and creation,” and what I reconceptualize as divergent cultures of newness, to explore new realities/geographies that, in their very fictiveness, allow for an emphasis on how we know — empirically and intuitively.<sup>6</sup>

To begin, I code Baconian empiricism as a product of a masculine endeavour to learn about the world, using the new scientific methods that were established in the male-dominated fields of science and philosophy in the seventeenth century. By pitting an intuitive way of knowing against this empirical mode as a point of contrast and aligning it with the moves Cavendish makes — aligning it, that is, with her subjective approach to reasoning in opposition to the objective and inductive approach of her Royal Society peers in the new experimentalism — I push the gendering of discovery beyond the discovering/discovered gender binary to read discovering and creating as competing gendered epistemologies. Whereas Godwin perceives locatable precision

and accuracy as providing a power of privileged knowing through space and time, Cavendish promotes a creative and flexible knowledge construction in her *Blazing World* that emphasizes the promise of potentiality beyond temporal and spatial constraints. However, while the methodologies they use to acquire knowledge and to construct newness are largely informed, and perhaps limited, by their gendered relationships to their place and time, these methodologies end up troubling the gendered dichotomy they claim to adhere to. The resulting narratives explore the extent to which the past gets in the way of potential in paradise and how that conflict between past and present is gendered. Tracing the ways in which Godwin and Cavendish navigate through the geographies they have chosen and comparing their epistemologies give us a better understanding of the ways in which the new and the old functioned to construct a gendered way of knowing and locating for each author and for their readers. In doing so, my goal is to bring attention to how Godwin's underexplored whimsical fiction identified and troubled masculine-coded knowing as well as to contribute what I hope will be a new way of considering the efficacy of Cavendish's epistemology for her female ruler in light of the wealth of scholarship that has thus far explored the protofeminist implications of her *Blazing World*.

### Origins, history, and identity

A curious feature of the title page of the first edition of *The Man in the Moone* (1638) is its misleading by-line, which claims that the ensuing account of "The Man in the Moone: or A Discourse of a Voyage thither" is by one Domingo Gonsales, "The speedy Messenger." As we learn, the narrative is written as a first-person travel account by a Domingo Gonsales who will give us the story of his origins. We now know that Domingo Gonsales is the name of the fictional protagonist of the story, and that Francis Godwin, bishop of Llandaff and of Hereford, is the author of the work. Figure 1 shows us this emendation written into the title-page of the 1638 copy at Harvard:

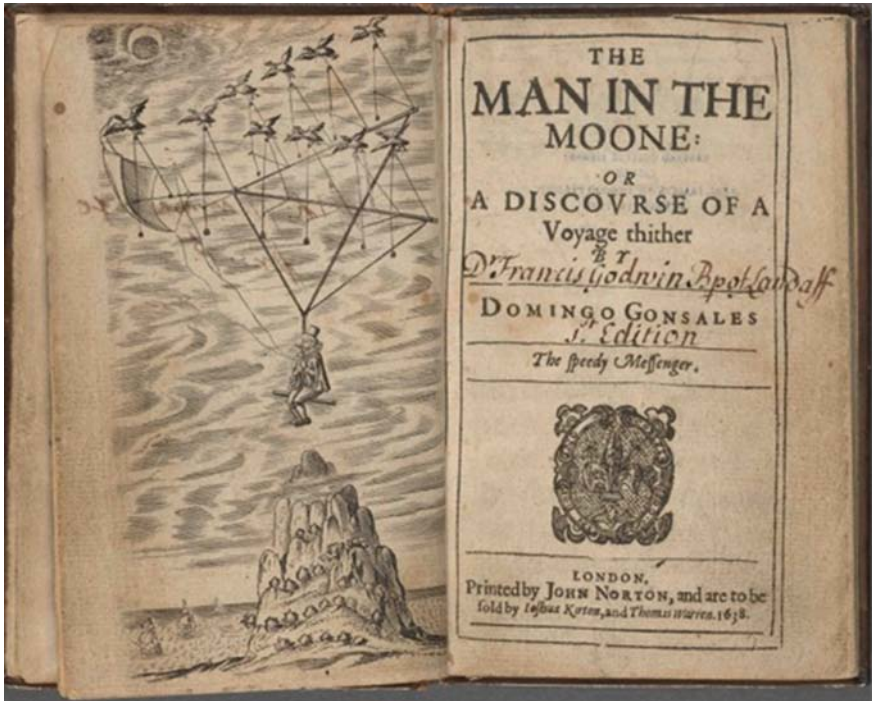


Figure 1. Above “Domingo Gonsales” (printed) is written in “Dr Francis Godwin Bp of Landalff,” possibly by a near-contemporary reader, in the first edition of *The Man in the Moone*. STC 11943.5, Houghton Library, Harvard University.

It is unclear whether this meant that Godwin’s authorship was common knowledge during the time of publication. However, the inscription of his name into the title page certainly indicates the urge to attribute real or actual authorship to the work. This may have led to the change in the title page in the second edition of the work, published in 1657, in which the printed by-line reads “By F. G. B. of H.,” which presumably stands for “Francis Godwin Bishop of Hereford” in full.

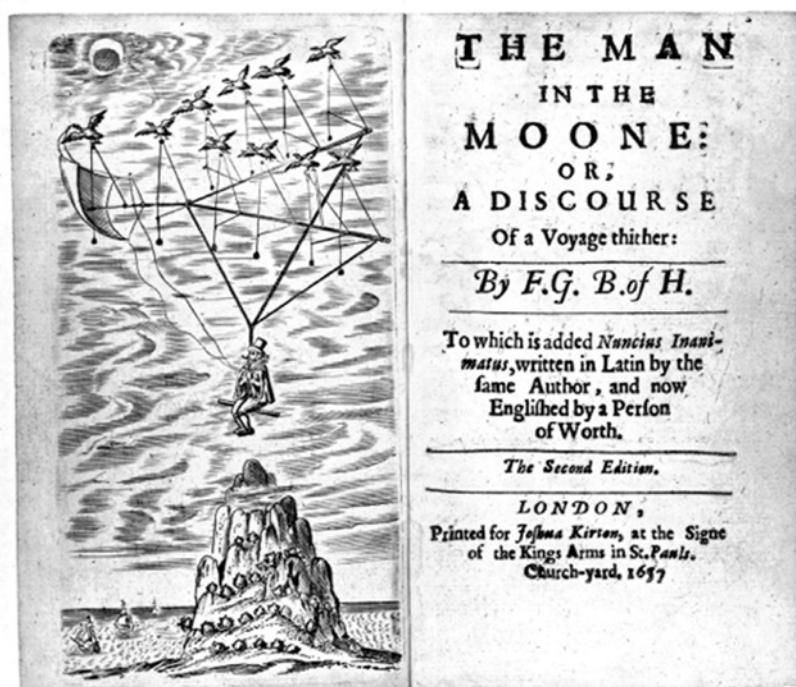


Figure 2. Title page and frontispiece of the second edition. The by-line no longer reads “Domingo Gonsales”; rather, we are given Francis Godwin’s initials. Image courtesy of the Huntington Library, San Marino, California.

The re-attribution of authorship from the fictional Domingo Gonsales to the actual Godwin is at once a correction and an obfuscation; a fictitiously “known” persona has been replaced by the rather enigmatic initials of a real figure, one who is identified by his geographical ties and his status in the church. Again, whether this is a correction of the misleading by-line of the first edition or a clarification of the author as a separate persona from the fictional narrator is unknown.

But regardless, these fictional layers of identity play with the authenticity and authentication of the account and its origins.<sup>7</sup> In the first edition, we are led to believe that the author and protagonist are one and the same. Our introductory image of Domingo Gonsales in the accompanying frontispiece places him in our imagination as already in transition, in between spaces — somewhere



outside of, going to, or coming from the moon. The image is a quirky engraving of a little man being carried up by a flock of birds, holding him by a strange contraption, above a small hill or mountain. He is the “little eye-witnesse, our great discoverer,” Domingo Gonsales of Spain: little in terms of stature — and this will become one of his defining characteristics — and great in terms of his potential contribution to human knowledge.<sup>8</sup> We have begun to discover who Gonsales is, from the frontispiece and the title page, but we learn from our first introduction to Gonsales as narrator that the first thing he wants us to know is that he is someone who is already known in his home region: “It is well enough and sufficiently known to all the countries of Andalusia that I Domingo Gonsales was born of Noble parentage, and that in the renowned City of Sivill, to wit in the year 1552.”<sup>9</sup> Our protagonist is thus immediately introduced to us by a name, a location, and a history. Not only is he situated spatially and historically, but we are given his full name as well as the details of his origins, his noble background, and his genealogy, allowing us to locate him on the spectrum of his family’s individual history:

my Fathers name being Therrando Gonsales (that was near kinsman by the mothers side until Don Pedro Sanchez that worthy Count of Almenara), and as for my Mother, she was the daughter of the Reverend and famous Lawyer, Otho Perez de Sallaveda, Governour of Barcellona, and Corrigidor of Biscaia.<sup>10</sup>

Gonsales’s acts of naming connect him not only regionally but genealogically to an extended network of relatives of public note: famed lawyers, governors, and so on. Naming becomes a matter of memory, looking backward in time to key figures, specific famous — “known” — individuals with whom to identify in an attempt to historically authenticate one’s past and, subsequently, to affix one’s present identity. In confirming his present via the past, Gonsales shows us that his claim to fame derives from his origins and his history.

Godwin’s desire to provide us with such detail about Gonsales’s history suggests that his idea of knowing is one verified by history and measured by completeness. The distinction I want to make here is that this state of completion specifically refers to the verifiable completion of external knowledge. Godwin presents knowing through Gonsales as the ability externally to locate and pinpoint, to name and to identify, by virtue of the specificity with which



Gonsales can be located and mapped onto a timeline and into a national context, discovered unto us as a kind of historical figure of note. In his note to the reader, Godwin describes the ensuing account as “a new *discovery of a new World* [emphasis mine]” and compares it to Columbus’s actual “espyall of America,” a discovery that proved the existence of a new world which had until then been unknown.<sup>11</sup> Through this comparison, Godwin attempts to situate his narrative in the realm of the possible and the real, authenticating his authority by situating himself alongside the historically famous figure of Columbus. Columbus’s discovery of the Americas and Gonsales’s comparable discovery of the lunar paradise are a testament to how “the then unknown” can be brought into knowledge “as all other of the known World” by discovery, in the way that other scientific and geographical discoveries have extended what we know about our world.<sup>12</sup> Through the same external verification of facts, geographical and historical, we get a sense of Gonsales’s origins and can place him as a product of those origins.

That Godwin attaches such significance to historical data as a means of authenticating his investment in the possibilities afforded by discovery likely draws from his own historical training. Mary Baine Campbell suggests that Godwin may have first drafted *The Man in the Moone* while a student at Oxford after hearing Giordano Bruno give a lecture on the plurality of worlds.<sup>13</sup> A bishop and a historian, Godwin would later imbue his most well-known works with his extensively informed historical background. Of these historical works, for which he is principally remembered, the most significant was his *Catalogue of the bishops of England* (1601), a named listing of English bishops complete with “a briefe history of their lives and memorable actions, so neere as can be gathered out of antiquity.”<sup>14</sup> Godwin’s other works were of the same design, for example his unpublished catalogue of bishops of Bath and Wells, dated 1594, containing an even more detailed account of the bishops’ lives. In these works, Godwin’s primary purpose was to record history through the naming of male religious figures and by identifying the events, dates, and places of their histories.

What we can identify as Godwin’s historicism and antiquarianism thus likely contributed to the historical dependency of his protagonist Gonsales. Godwin refers to historical events that place his protagonist’s life at a specific point in the sixteenth century. Grant McColley, noting that Godwin’s narration

“is built upon and within a structure of actual historical events,” has traced the trajectory of the fictional Domingo Gonsales’s life:

This union [between narration and actual historical events] begins with the opening of the tale, where Domingo in 1568–69 abandons his studies at the University of Salamanca to participate in the conflict then raging intermittently in the Low Countries. Historical contact is continued by the return of Gonsales in 1573 with the Duke of Alva, by reference to the battle off the Isle of Pines in 1596, by the inclusion of an unidentified and perhaps fictitious minor engagement between other ships of Spain and England, by the request of Pylonas in 1601 that the returning Gonsales give his felicitations to Queen Elizabeth, and, in conclusion, by Domingo’s meeting and fraternizing, ‘many months’ later, with the Jesuit Father who had entered Peking on January 24, 1601.<sup>15</sup>

By making specific reference to actual historical events and figures in the timeline of Gonsales’s life, Godwin constructs a credible history for Gonsales, grounding his protagonist’s narrative in a kind of historical realism. Gonsales is discovered unto us by means of male-coded markers of identity that were historical, genealogical, and patriarchal. The specific names we are given locate his family through the patriarchal lines and regions from whence they hail, suggesting that the value in complete, precise knowing can be coded as male-oriented, and that location determines male identity.

In contrast to Godwin’s named, known, and situated protagonist, Cavendish’s protagonist, the Lady, is unnamed and unsituated — that is, according to the precise terms of Godwin’s idea of knowing. The Lady either lacks the verifiable origins that Gonsales has, or such origins remain undiscovered to us. The very lack of a name seems deliberate, suggesting Cavendish’s interest in the limitlessness of this “unknown” identity. The Lady’s namelessness and her unspecified origins allow for her to be any female protagonist of a romance. She is first introduced to us through a man’s eyes, a merchant who “travelling into a foreign Country, fell extreemly in Love” with the Lady.<sup>16</sup> Reference to her status is made only in relation to his: the merchant is a “stranger in that Nation, and beneath [the lady] both in Birth and Wealth.”<sup>17</sup> The male merchant discovers the Lady, which at first troublingly parallels the gendered dichotomy of the masculine discoverer and his feminized/ravished lands. In this case,

however, the Lady, though discovered, is not ravished; rather, significantly, she preserves her virtue. We eventually lose the merchant, and we learn that it is the Lady who occupies a privileged status in Cavendish's narrative; the men who have abducted her die off, "the young Lady only, by the light of her beauty, the heat of her youth, and protection of the gods, remaining alive."<sup>18</sup> Her virtuous qualities preserve her and suggest her potential for further development. The Lady's geographical or genealogical origins are not essential to her identity in the way Gonsales's origins are; rather, that her origins remain unknown allows for the Lady's identity to be constructed by her present moment, unburdened by the details of her history.

In her "Epistle to the Reader," Cavendish characterizes her narrative as "a description of a new world, not such as Lucian's, or the French-man's world in the moon; but a world of my own creating, which I call the Blazing World."<sup>19</sup> Contrary to Godwin who wishes to align his aims with those of Columbus, Cavendish's goal is to distinguish her project from those that have come before hers in the male-dominated utopian tradition. Her emphasis on creation suggests that she sees the act of creating as a means of departure — a gendered departure for Cavendish, who claims she is "not covetous," but "is ambitious as ever any of my sex was, is, or can be."<sup>20</sup> Her ambition, as she makes explicit, is to be "Margaret the First" — to be known and to begin her own line, of which she is the original. Her creation of a new world allows her to evade the problems of origin and history as well as of her present moment, all of which have served to exile her. In constructing a new narrative as "Margaret the First," Cavendish offers the act of creation as an act of empowerment, for herself and for her readers: rather than "not to be mistress of [a world] since Fortune and the Fates would give me none, I have made a world of my own: for which no body, I hope, will blame me, since it is in every one's power to do the like."<sup>21</sup>

When her *Blazing World* was published as an addendum to her *Observations Upon Experimental Philosophy*, Cavendish deliberately entered into male-dominated philosophical and scientific circles with what scholars have argued may have been a type of proto-feminist agenda. Deborah Boyle rejects the possibility that Cavendish's views contributed to a "feminine mode of knowing," but I see Cavendish as arguing for an internal processing that made sense for her status as a woman.<sup>22</sup> At the same time, she was concerned with rationalizing her and her husband's place in history; Cavendish's interest in the popular atomism and her later belief in a kind of organic vitalist

materialism both came out of her desire for an explanation of the “political and psychological conflict that surrounded her.”<sup>23</sup> Cavendish’s materialism, in which matter “remains eternal and infinite,” combines in complicated ways with her Royalism to produce her outlook on history. Royalism, according to J. C. Davis, was seen as “utopian during the Interregnum, ideological any other time.”<sup>24</sup> Her resulting epistemology is a creative knowledge construction that allows her to exercise the liberty of departing from the current state of things. Cavendish’s creativity does not depend on an external standard of verifiability; rather, her internal creations are “an issue of man’s Fancy, framed in his own Mind, according as he pleases, without regard, whether the thing, he fancies, be really existent without his mind or not.”<sup>25</sup> While this detached, internal creativity has the flavour of escapism, we find that there is a virtue in following Cavendish’s line, not simply in forgetting a past (or present), but in constructing a past anew, amassing unrealized memories, building an alternative past from or in place of a former one. Cavendish consciously and intentionally creates a new paradise narrative that replaces the old one.

### Paradise and the limitations of the past

And the LORD God planted a garden eastward in Eden; and there he put  
the man whom he had formed.

—Genesis 2:8, *King James Bible*

“If geometrical space is a relatively late and sophisticated cultural construct,” Tuan asks, “what is the nature of man’s original pact with his world, his original space?”<sup>26</sup> His answer as a humanist geographer is that “original space possesses structure and orientation by virtue of the presence of the human body. Body implicates space; space coexists with the sentient body.”<sup>27</sup> Tuan’s sketch of the relationship between the human body and the space it inhabits is useful for thinking about paradise as humanity’s original space. In Genesis, the Garden of Eden is thought to be paradise, the first and original place given to our human ancestors. According to Alessandro Scafi, “in the Hebrew version of Genesis, the Garden of Eden is described as being placed *miqedem*, a term that refers to both time and space: the garden is both ‘at the beginning’ and ‘in the east.’”<sup>28</sup> Thus, paradise, positioned “at the beginning” according to its original definition, is a

place of origin. In contrast, paradise in Godwin's and Cavendish's texts serves as a place not of origin but rather of destination.

As Gonsales ventures from his place of origin, he encounters on one of his first destinations an earthly version of paradise: the Isle of St. Helena, "the only paradise, I think," remarks Gonsales, "that the Earth yieldeth."<sup>29</sup> As an island, it seems "a miracle of Nature, that out of so huge and tempestuous an Ocean, such a little piece of ground should arise and discover it self."<sup>30</sup> Gonsales's first encounter with a paradise matches the travel narrative of the age of discovery during which the earthly paradise was sought with the hope that it could be mapped. According to Scafi, the cartography of paradise and the mapping of its location changed the reality of the world by "incorporat[ing] Eden" into that reality.<sup>31</sup> Soon it was no longer sufficient merely to "evoke Earthly Paradise"; rather, by incorporating the idea of a locatable paradise into our human reality, discoverers wanted to know "on which longitude and latitude it was to be found, and to determine the characteristics of the planet on that spot."<sup>32</sup> It became a manifestation of the human desire to discover as a form of conquest: "The explorers of the Renaissance were not content simply to believe, they wanted to verify, explain, prove."<sup>33</sup>

But for all their obsession with the physical/geographical discovery of paradise to the external eye, cartographers and mapmakers never portrayed the "internal geographical space" of paradise. Between the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, the Garden of Eden began to disappear from world maps with the discovery of "new worlds" on earth. Increasing numbers of reports from travellers returning from the East "failed to confirm the material existence of an Earthly Paradise in eastern Asia," leaving Europeans frustrated with the finite nature of the world and the "failure" of discovery to uncover paradise on Earth.<sup>34</sup> Boundaries needed to be extended. For Godwin's Gonsales, whose Isle of St. Helena was merely an earthly paradise, those boundaries extended to space: to the moon and the discovery of a paradise there.

But as an imperfect guide who is implicated in human history and fallenness, Gonsales is burdened by a past that limits his liberty and restricts his actions both in and on the way to the lunar paradise. In particular, and perhaps most significantly, these restrictions take the form of language barriers. In transit, Gonsales is intercepted by wicked spirits who appear to him as "Illusions of the Devils" and come "speaking divers kindes of Languages which I understood not."<sup>35</sup> The devils appear to experiment with different tongues in an attempt to

communicate with Gonsales and to tempt him into following their orders; it is not until Gonsales hears “them that spake very good Spanish, some Dutch, and other some Italian, for all these languages I understood,” that he manages to interact with them. The confusing cacophony of languages spoken by the devils and the temptation of Gonsales integrate the confusion of Babel with their temptation of Adam and Eve by the Devil. Gonsales thus seems either to be travelling back in time on his journey toward a pre-lapsarian past-space or bringing the burdens of the post-lapsarian past with him. His interactions with the wicked spirits, rather than preparing him for his entrance into the lunar paradise, serve instead to illustrate exactly the kinds of difficulties Gonsales will undergo there.

As a man, Gonsales’s power is tied to his history, his region, and his origins; on the moon, however, his historical and regional identities do not serve to provide him with any advantage and instead impede his navigational progress. Learning (or perhaps re-learning) the language of paradise becomes a marker of time and the key to accessing the spaces and places of paradise, but for Gonsales, language is an obstacle to navigating this geography. Gonsales first begins to learn the lunar language when he learns the name of the prince of the region, the “Adam” figure who resides in the lunar world. This act of naming, or more accurately learning the name of, Pylonas gives us our first description of the lunar language: he is called Pylonas, “as neere as I can by Letters declare it, for their sounds are not perfectly expressed by our characters.” The name Pylonas “signifieth in their Language, First, if perhaps it be not rather a denotation of his dignity and authority, as being the prime Man in all those parts.”<sup>36</sup> As “First” and “prime Man,” Pylonas’s role in the moon echoes Adam’s role in Eden, and his natural tongue is the lunar, or “paradise,” language. The lunar language as a paradisiacal language is reminiscent of the original pre-lapsarian language of Adam and Eve. All the inhabitants of the moon use the language and can understand each other. Gonsales, representative of our fallen human state, can recognize its universality although he himself cannot attain full access to it. Although Gonsales is inferior to the lunars because he is human, Pylonas does grant him enough privilege to be allowed to learn some of the lunar culture, including, as much as he can, the language. Gonsales’s acquisition of the language, however, is impeded not only by his inferior status but also by his natural human abilities. The very newness of the language is an obstacle for Gonsales, who must depend on languages he already knows as a

point of reference: “The Difficulty of that language is not to be conceived,” he explains, “and the reasons thereof are especially... because it hath no affinitie with any other that I ever heard.”<sup>37</sup> The reliance on his own repository of past knowledge already renders him incapable of acquiring the language with ease, and his struggle is compounded by the utter inadequacy of human means to express the language at all. The language “consisteth not so much of words and Letters, as of tunes and uncouth sounds, that no letters can express.”<sup>38</sup>

Gonsales’s struggles with the lunar language are echoed in broader seventeenth-century concerns with the fallibility of human language. If human knowledge is transmitted through language, and language transmitted and understood via the written word, here Gonsales faces knowledge that extends beyond the boundaries of the written word, and he struggles to acquire that new knowledge, to describe it, and to master it. A primary tension in Gonsales’s experience of the lunar paradise is the indescribability of things, the inability of language to support the knowledge of certain lunar things, confounded by his desire for precision in description. This is perhaps best exemplified in what Campbell describes as “the most wonderful and pleasurable moment in [Gonsales’s] representation of the Moon”<sup>39</sup> — his description of the lunar colour:

neither blacke nor white, yellow nor redd, greene nor blue, nor any colour composed of these... it was a colour never seen in our earthly world, and therefore neither to be described unto us by any, nor to be conceived of one that never saw it.<sup>40</sup>

Godwin’s earthly language fails him at this moment as he searches for the names of colours he knows, only to dismiss them; the only way to describe the lunar colour is to describe what it is not. Likewise, the lunar language has no earthly alternative and thus cannot be described or located by earthly means. Instead, Gonsales still must point to external markers, like using musical notation, to attempt to describe the language as much as he can to his human readership, to “locate” the language using whatever coordinates in human knowledge might apply.<sup>41</sup>

Like Gonsales, Cavendish’s Lady, too, goes through a trial period during which she endeavours to learn the new language of the Blazing World, but unlike Gonsales, the Lady eventually manages to attain a kind of fluency in the language of the Blazing World. The process of learning the language at first



belies a human limitation for her; the new language is not something she picks up intuitively, but something she must learn with time. But unlike Gonsales, she picks up the language fairly quickly in the process of approaching Paradise, which as she will learn is the central city toward which she is being led. The stages of learning the language toward fluency parallel the geographical navigation toward the centre of Paradise, during which the Lady “endeavour[s] to learn their language; which after she had obtained so far, that partly by some words and signs she was able to apprehend their meaning,” quickly learning to speak and understand as she draws closer to her destination.<sup>42</sup>

By the time the Lady reaches the city of Paradise, the seat of the Emperor, she has acquired sufficient proficiency in the language to allow her access into the interior spaces of the Blazing World, where she acquires a new identity and a privileged status as part of her new role in this new world:

No sooner was the Lady brought before the Emperor, but he conceived her to be some goddess, and offered to worship her; which she refused, telling him, (for by that time she had pretty well learned their language) that although she came out of another world, yet she was 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. But her subjects, who could hardly be persuaded to believe her mortal, tendered her all the veneration and worship due to a deity. ... she was made Empress.<sup>43</sup>

Cavendish gives us indications of the Lady’s linguistic progress: where once she “partly by some words and signs... was able to apprehend their meaning,” now the Lady “by that time... had pretty well learned their language.” At the moment of what may be an advanced proficiency of the language, the Lady uses her linguistic abilities to communicate that she is only mortal. The Emperor, however, rather than register her mortality as an indicator of inferior status, rejoices at this and instead bestows upon her divine status and her new identity as Empress.

Now as Empress, she has presumably reached the final stage of fluency, as she is free to exercise her subjectivity and to put it in dialogue with others. Once she attains this implicit fluency, the Empress’s interactions with the inhabitants of the Blazing World are unhampered by the limitations of unfamiliar or translated language. Any reference to the language itself, much less to the

Lady's prior difficulties in acquiring it, is completely gone. The language has no specifics; we can assume that because the Empress is in the Blazing World she is using the language in these conversations, but there is no further reference to the language itself. The language has instead been stripped down/relegated to its most pure and unadulterated form — its function as a tool, singular and absolute, used to (successfully) explore epistemological questions.<sup>44</sup>

In both Godwin's and Cavendish's narratives, the protagonists must learn a new, universal language — one that recalls the original language — in order to access, and participate in, the spaces of paradise.<sup>45</sup> Each author's approach to language speaks to gendered differences in what constitutes knowing. For Gonsales, naming is knowing: proof of knowing is demonstrated externally by the ability to name. For Cavendish's Empress, knowledge seems to constitute, and to require, something else. Naming appears rather to get in the way of gaining knowledge; instead, doing away with language consequently allows her to pursue lines of inquiry without the problems of untranslatability. Cavendish's response is thus to bypass the curse of Babel altogether; by eliminating the problem of language, Cavendish is able to use the Empress's subjectivity to explore the limits of her knowledge of the world around her, to promote a way of knowing that may be gained dialectically, but which percolates in the solitude of the mind. In this way, Cavendish seems primarily interested in a knowledge construction independent of external labelling and instead directed internally while simultaneously doing away with boundaries; for Cavendish, the boundaries within which to locate paradise extend infinitely *inward* to newly created places of the mind. As a result, she assesses the spaces in paradise and the possibilities for knowing and being known therein.

### Forgetting (history)

Godwin's paradises, including the lunar paradise, are always simulacra. We realize this when we recognize that Godwin names and locates everything, except *the* paradise. Paradise is a point of reference rather than the original human space, and Godwin's pseudo-paradises correspondingly adhere to the temporal regulations of "reality." The culture of discovery seems not to allow for new truths to be constructed outside of the boundaries of what we know about time and space, and we see Gonsales come up against these limitations. His frequent

mention of the memory of his wife and children back home and his promises to tell his account of his journey upon his return show that he remains attached to a “home” he has left behind in the real world, his place of origin where his identity grants him a certain amount of power and privilege. He teases his readers that they will learn “most rare and incredible secrets of Nature” upon his return:

You shall then see men to flie from place to place in the ayre; you shall be able, (without moving or travelling of any creature,) to send messages in an instant many Miles off, and receive answer again immediately; you shall be able to declare your minde presently unto your friend, being in some private and remote place of a populous Citie, with a number of such like things: but that which far surpasseth all the rest, you shall have notice of a new World, of many most rare and incredible secrets of Nature, that all the Philosophers of former ages could never so much as dream of.<sup>46</sup>

But Gonsales himself never actually returns home and thus never fulfills the promises he makes in his account. While Gonsales’s discoveries are hopeful in their Baconian promise to expand human potential, *The Man in the Moone* ends with Gonsales’s arrival in China, where he is ultimately held captive in a post-lapsarian world that is perhaps irredeemable; in a sense, he falls from the paradise of the moon. As a result, we never gain the promised knowledge that would enable that human progress he imagines, those things he alludes to but fails to disclose. His own teleological understanding of time leads to his pre-mapped narrative which, paradoxically, is ultimately left unfinished. Gonsales’s knowledge, grounded in history and a privileged status dependent on that history, is ultimately one that isn’t given a future.

In contrast, the overlapping of the Empress’s present location and the site of the actual paradise of Adam and Eve complicates time and space in Cavendish’s *Blazing World*. The Empress finds out the history of her present paradise inadvertently, in the process of her epistemological exploration of the Blazing World. Upon asking the spirits of the Blazing World “where the Paradise was, whether it was in the midst of the world as a centre of pleasure? or whether it was the whole world, or a peculiar world by itself...?” she learns that paradise “was not in the world she came from, but in that world she lived in at present; and that it was the very same place where she kept her court, and where her palace stood, in the midst of the imperial city.”<sup>47</sup> She then inquires

about the first couple, “whither Adam fled when he was driven out of the Paradise?” — to which the spirits inform her, “Out of this world... you are now Empress of, into the world you came from.”<sup>48</sup> In this surprising reversal of the pre- and post-lapsarian worlds, Cavendish privileges her Empress over Adam and Eve; paradise is now defined by the presence of the Empress.

Cavendish thus replaces the paradise narrative of Adam and Eve with a new re-interpretation of her own. Her desire to assert her own interpretation on divine truths appears in the form of the Empress’s desire to “make a Cabbala” — specifically, “The Jews’ Cabbala.”<sup>49</sup> At this extraordinary turning point in the narrative, the point at which the Empress’s curiosity about the world around her culminates in her desire to write her own Cabbala, Margaret Cavendish as the Duchess of Newcastle “appears in the text as a character”<sup>50</sup> to serve as a scribe for the Empress who is herself, as we have gathered, an imagined persona/extension of Cavendish. The word Cabbala, or alternatively Kabbalah, is applied to “the pretended tradition of the mystical interpretation of the Old Testament,” originally defined as the name “given in post-biblical Hebrew to the oral tradition handed down from Moses to the Rabbis of the Mishnah and the Talmud.”<sup>51</sup> Jonathan Gil Harris sees evidence of Cavendish’s “desire to form slantwise partnerships across space, culture, and time” in the connection between the “new world” of the *Blazing World* — Cavendish’s “self-conscious rewriting of old worlds” — and her “Jewish Cabbala”:

Cavendish’s Jewish Cabbala implies a different temporality — conjunction with an antique yet living Jewishness that, rather than serving as western tradition’s obsolete past or exploding it from within, nests inside and reanimates it.<sup>52</sup>

Cavendish’s desire to make a Cabbala comes from a desire for a different kind of temporality, but one that I see as emphasizing a blatant rewriting that prioritizes the new, and thus a replacement of the old rather than an integration of the old with the new. The Duchess informs the Empress that she would have to look elsewhere to be “instruct[ed] in that mystery [of the Jews’ Cabbala]” if that was indeed what the Empress wanted to write. Alternately, after rejecting the Empress’s inquiries about writing a “philosophical Cabbala,” a “moral Cabbala,” and a “political Cabbala,” for those all “required no further Cabbala,” the Duchess’s suggestion is that “if your Majesty were resolved to make a Cabbala,

I would advise you, rather to make a poetical or romancical Cabbala, wherein you can use metaphors, allegories, similitudes, etc. and *interpret them as you please* [emphasis mine].”<sup>53</sup> The solution, it seems, is the freedom to interpret through the creation of a Cabbala of an escapist rather than realist genre, but which as a result allows for new interpretations in place of existing ones. Thus the Empress finds a solution for her ambitions.

The Duchess, however, then voices her own ambitions: to be Empress of a world herself. Here, too, the freedom of a creative/created newness provides a solution. The spirits inform the Duchess and the Empress that “you can create your self a celestial world if you please,” or any other world, and it is thus that both the Empress and the Duchess learn of the creative power to make, rather than discover, new worlds:

What, said the Empress, can any mortal be a creator? Yes, answered the spirits; for every human creature can create an immaterial world fully inhabited by immaterial creatures, and populous of immaterial subjects, such as we are, and all this within the compass of the head or scull.<sup>54</sup>

This solution is pleasing to the Duchess, who herself is an advocate of an individual’s right to interpret freely, given her/Cavendish’s actual fraught relationship with her past and present situation in history. “I’ll take your advice,” the Duchess decides, “reject and despise all the worlds without me, and create a world of my own.”<sup>55</sup>

How does one replace the old narrative of a place with a new one? Cavendish’s suggestion of an infinite interior allows for an almost unbounded “space” within which to explore human capacity for knowledge, one that does not or need not conform to the constraints of time or the preconceptions of external reality. Her creative version of knowledge construction disregards the subdivisions of time so as to eliminate the telos of the past dictating what is and what is to come. Cavendish wants history to be free from repeating itself, and her interior creativity allows for a temporality other than what we know. In a conversation the Empress has with the spirits of the Blazing World, she explores just these temporal (im)possibilities:

can spirits forget? Yes, said the spirits; for what is past, is only kept in memory, if it be not recorded. I did believe, said the Empress, that spirits

had no need of memory, or remembrance, and could not be subject to forgetfulness. How can we, answered they, give an account of things present, if we had no memory, but especially of things past, unrecorded, if we had no remembrance? Said the Empress, by present knowledge and understanding. The spirits answered, that present knowledge and understanding was of actions or things present, not of past. But, said the Empress, you know what is to come, without memory or remembrance, and therefore you may know what is past without memory and remembrance. They answered, that their foreknowledge was only a prudent and subtle observation made by a comparison of things or actions past, with those that are present, and that remembrance was nothing else but a repetition of things or actions past.<sup>56</sup>

The spirits are qualified to be the most knowledgeable beings in the account, having the power to cross temporal and spatial boundaries — yet even they are prone to lapses in memory. Their knowledge, as defined by memory, is not perfect. In prescribing the fallibility of memory to even the most perfect beings in her utopia, Cavendish seems to be revising notions of temporality in knowledge construction and meaning-making to navigate a timeless and interpretively open space, where forgetting is not intentional, but does not exist, or cannot occur, because past knowledge is not required for present knowledge.

Cavendish distinguishes between 1) giving an account of the present by means of the memory of things past, and 2) giving an account of the present based on present knowledge and understanding. This distinction is one that is crucial to our capacity to understand human progress in knowledge. The Empress posits what seems at first to be a tautology: just as the spirits know the future without memory or remembrance, they can know the past without memory, which the *Oxford English Dictionary* defines as “the faculty by which things are remembered; the capacity for retaining, perpetuating, or reviving the thought of things past.”<sup>57</sup> However the Empress’s knowledge of the very history of paradise is founded on this idea, that one can know the past without direct memory or remembrance, in the same way that the Empress, and we, can know the history of Adam and Eve without having experienced that past first-hand — thus without having any memory/remembrance of it. One still remembers, not through first-hand memory, but through narrative and being a person inescapably layered with that past.

The question is how knowledge is acquired or made if not through memory and forgetting, and whatever knowledge Cavendish is attempting to construct aspires to that vacancy. The spirits' final answer involves a teleological understanding of time, in which the past can be compared to the present to construct a projected future. Cavendish, on the other hand, subscribes to a perception of time as overlapping onto itself, as constantly referring back and forth, without regard for a linear progression or narrative. This is exemplified even in the topics the Empress chooses to discuss or inquire about, which have no logical progression. Rather, the lack of structure allows for an unbounded exploration of issues, free of temporal and spatial restrictions and comfortably outside the elements and measurements of actuality.

The virtue to be had in Cavendish's idea of temporality and her subsequent way of knowing is that it offers a freedom from history that allows her to explore the potential of a space or place — specifically, the creative potential of her paradise — by virtue of a new human interaction that imagines anew a redemptive narrative. From her entrance into paradise, the Empress has already been constructing a new paradise narrative, not because she has forgotten about the history of paradise, in which she is implicated, but because that history never came into consideration. Her ignorance about the history of the space she currently inhabits makes the epistemological problems of paradise irrelevant to her narrative and to her new place. Her "return" to paradise places her status above that of the first couple, who fell and lost their privileges of occupying and ruling their original place, making her new paradise a utopic and uchronic space where her curiosity and desire for knowledge are allowed and satisfied.

"The sense of place," Tuan asserts, "is perhaps never more acute than when one is homesick, and one can only be homesick when one is no longer at home."<sup>58</sup> Marina Leslie argues that as Cavendish's heroines, the Empress and the Duchess, keep trying to return home, "each struggles to calculate the distance between what they know, what they imagine, and where they are."<sup>59</sup> While I agree in the main with Leslie's articulation of the tensions between identity and place, I think that Cavendish manages also to experiment with reimagining "home," leaving us with drastically differing images between Godwin's and Cavendish's narratives of their protagonists' relationship to and interaction with the new Paradise space and their native countries.



Godwin's Gonsales is constantly in a state of coming and going; he arrives at his paradises, then leaves. We are ultimately left with Gonsales in China, back to earth from the moon but far from his home in his native Spain and in the process of attempting to figure out how to return. His homesickness prevents him from establishing a home anywhere else. In a sense, we end with Gonsales once again in transition, much in the way we were introduced to him in the frontispiece: in transition between earth and sky, origin and destination. As we leave him, he is perpetually stuck in travel, which Tuan defines as "to lose place, to be placeless and have, instead, merely scenes and images."<sup>60</sup> Because Gonsales never actually returns home in his account, he is left making grand promises, gesturing to the potential of some point in humanity's future, the sincerity of which is compromised by the unpromising circumstances of his situation in China, where we leave him.

Cavendish's final place, on the other hand, is her created place; through creation her home becomes paradise, and paradise becomes her home. The Empress's native place, her place of origin, is discarded in favour of paradise, and the place of her belonging is transferred to a reconfiguration of the original human space: paradise itself is redefined because of her presence. Rather than her history and her place of origin defining home, the Empress's presence and present narrative transform her new place into her home. As a woman, and as an exile, Cavendish sees the potential in the utopic and uchronic sensibility of creativity to provide a space for women to be involved in and own the process of original knowledge construction, and she finds this space to be an internal, virtual space free from the limitations of the historical(ly authenticated). It must be through the manipulation of time and space, selective forgetting and erasing to create anew, that Cavendish opens up an unknowability within which to begin, and belong, again.

### Notes

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grateful. I am especially grateful to Megan who has seen this essay from its beginnings and for her generous engagement with and input on the numerous workings and reworkings of the project.

1. Much of the scholarship that exists on Godwin's *Man in the Moone* has been done by William Poole (see his "Kepler's *Somnium* and Francis Godwin's *The Man in the Moone*: Births of Science-Fiction 1593–1638," in *New Worlds Reflected: Travel and Utopia in the Early Modern Period*, edited by Chloë Houston [Burlington: Ashgate, 2010], pp. 57–69; "Nuncius inanimatus: Seventeenth-Century Telegraphy: The Schemes of Francis Godwin and Henry Reynolds," *Seventeenth Century* 21.1 [2006], pp. 45–72; "The Origins of Francis Godwin's *The Man in the Moone* (1638)," *Philological Quarterly* 84.2 [2005], pp. 189–210) and Grant McColley (see his "The Date of Godwin's 'Domingo Gonsales,'" *Modern Philology* 35.1 [1937], pp. 47–60; "The Pseudonyms of Bishop Godwin," *Philological Quarterly* XVI [1937], pp. 78–80).
2. John Rogers, Marina Leslie, Anna Battigelli, and Lisa Sarasohn have done extensive work on Cavendish and her *Blazing World*. See John Rogers, *The Matter of Revolution: Science, Poetry, and Politics in the Age of Milton* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1996); Marina Leslie, *Renaissance Utopias and the Problem of History* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1998); Anna Battigelli, *Margaret Cavendish and the Exiles of the Mind* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1998); Lisa Sarasohn, *The Natural Philosophy of Margaret Cavendish* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2010). See also Marina Leslie's article on the generic hybridity of *The Blazing World* and its engagement with discipline and knowledge construction in the seventeenth century, "Mind the Map: Fancy, Matter, and World Construction," also in this special issue of *Renaissance and Reformation*.
3. For more on the gendering of discovery, see Marina Leslie's study on the gendering of the antipodes, "Antipodal Anxieties: Joseph Hall, Richard Brome, Margaret Cavendish and the Cartographies of Gender," *Genre* 30.1 (1997), pp. 51–78.
4. Yi-Fu Tuan, "Space and Place: Humanistic Perspective," in *Philosophy in Geography*, ed. S. Gale and G. Olsson (Dordrecht and Boston: D. Reidel Pub. Co., 1979), p. 422.
5. Yi-Fu Tuan, "On Human Geography," *Daedalus* 132.2 (2003), pp. 134–37.
6. Donald R. Maxwell discusses the "divergent cultures of discovery and creation" in the context of the disciplines of science and literature, in which science describes "a 'Truth' that pre-exists its narration, a reality that always existed" and literature

- “creates’ something that would never exist, or might never have existed” (p. 83). These genres don’t mesh as neatly as Maxwell suggests, and rather than translate them, I think it more productive to complicate these tidy categories by applying them to the gendered construction of new knowledge. See Donald R. Maxwell, *Science or Literature?: The Divergent Cultures of Discovery and Creation* (New York: Peter Lang Publishing, Inc., 2000).
7. The question of identity is further vexed by the equally enigmatic initials “E. M.” which appear at the end of the introductory “Epistle to the Reader.” E. M., Grant McColley identifies, are the initials of an Edward Mahon, argued to be a pseudonym for Francis Godwin himself. McColley, “Pseudonyms,” pp. 78–80.
  8. Francis Godwin, “To the Ingenious Reader,” *The Man in the Moone* (London: Printed by John Norton, 1638).
  9. Godwin, p. 1.
  10. Godwin, p. 1.
  11. Godwin, “To the Ingenious Reader,” n.p.
  12. Godwin, “To the Ingenious Reader,” n.p.
  13. Mary Baine Campbell, *Wonder and Science: Imagining Worlds in Early Modern Europe* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1999), p. 156.
  14. D. R. Woolf, “Godwin, Francis (1562–1633),” *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004).
  15. McColley, “Date of ‘Gonsales,’” p. 49.
  16. Margaret Cavendish, Duchess of Newcastle, *The Blazing World and Other Writings*, ed. Kate Lilley (London: Penguin Books, 2004), p. 125.
  17. Cavendish, p. 125.
  18. Cavendish, pp. 125–26.
  19. Cavendish, p. 124.
  20. Cavendish, p. 124.
  21. Cavendish, p. 124.
  22. See Deborah Boyle, “Margaret Cavendish’s Nonfeminist Natural Philosophy,” *Configurations* 12.2 (2004), p. 211.
  23. Battigelli, p. 48.
  24. J. C. Davis, *Utopia and the Ideal Society: A Study of English Utopian Writing 1516–1700* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), p. 14.
  25. Cavendish, p. 124. This calls to mind her partiality towards individual subjectivity over scientific objectivity in determining certain truths. See Battigelli.
  26. Tuan, “Space and Place,” p. 389.

27. Tuan, "Space and Place," p. 389.
28. Alessandro Scafì, "The African Paradise of Cardinal Carvajal: New Light on the 'Kunstmänn II Map,' 1502–1506," *Renaissance and Reformation/Renaissance et Réforme* 31.2 (2008), p. 9.
29. Godwin, p. 14.
30. Godwin, p. 16.
31. Alessandro Scafì, "Mapping Eden: Cartographies of the Earthly Paradise," in *Mappings*, ed. Denis Cosgrove (London: Reaktion Books, 1999), p. 53.
32. Jorge Magasich-Airola and Jean-Marc de Beer, *America Magica: When Renaissance Europe Thought It Had Conquered Paradise*, trans. Monica Sandor (London: Anthem Press, 2006), p. 11.
33. Magasich-Airola and de Beer, p. 11.
34. Scafì, pp. 55–56.
35. Godwin, p. 35.
36. Godwin, p. 54.
37. Godwin, p. 67.
38. Godwin, p. 67–68.
39. Campbell, p. 160.
40. Godwin, p. 104.
41. For more on the musical notation of Godwin's lunar language, see James R. Knowlson, "A Note on Bishop Godwin's 'Man in the Moone': The East Indies Trade Route and a 'Language' of Musical Notes," *Modern Philology* 65.4 (1968), pp. 357–61.
42. Cavendish, p. 130.
43. Cavendish, p. 132.
44. Skepticism of language would culminate in the fervour prominent in seventeenth-century philosophical discourse to create a universal language system as a means of addressing and offering a solution to the epistemological and social problems afforded by the century's "linguistic crisis." The intellectual impetus behind the making of a universal language system is grounded in the budding skepticism of language of the period, evidenced by philosophies and theories of language that emphasize the shortcomings of language in human communication, what Francis Bacon, in his *New Organon* (1620), calls his "idols of the market place." Bacon was the first in England to argue that a universal language could bring rationality back to language. Such a universal language, free of ambiguity, would allow its speakers to return from the chaos of Babel to the knowledge of Eden.

45. The commonly held idea in the seventeenth century, and one that the natural philosophers interested in language philosophy subscribed to, was that the first language was created at the same time as Adam and Eve. Natural philosophers of the seventeenth century, like John Wilkins, analyzed languages in the hopes of recovering the first language from which they originated. The tensions between the hope and impossibility of recovering the original language led to the idea that a new language must be invented in order to overcome the confusion caused by the contemporary proliferation of languages. See John Wilkins's *Essay Toward a Real Character, and a Philosophical Language* (1668).
46. Godwin, p. 11.
47. Cavendish, p. 170. This is also an interesting passage to read in light of Leslie's compelling account of the "Heaven" and "Elysium" chambers of the Cavendishes' "Little Castle" at Bolsover, which may have influenced the Paradise of Cavendish's *Blazing World*, "Mind the Map," pp. 94 ff.
48. Cavendish, p. 171.
49. Cavendish, p. 179.
50. Jonathan Goldberg, "Margaret Cavendish, Scribe," *GLQ* 10.3 (2004), p. 433.
51. *Oxford English Dictionary Online*, s.v. "Cabbala | Kabbalah, n.," accessed June 2011, <http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/25725>.
52. Jonathan Gil Harris, *Untimely Matter in the Time of Shakespeare* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2009), pp. 22, 163–64.
53. Cavendish, p. 183.
54. Cavendish, p. 185.
55. Cavendish, p. 186.
56. Cavendish, pp. 166–67.
57. *Oxford English Dictionary Online*, s.v. "memory, n.," accessed November 2010, <http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/116363>.
58. Tuan, "Space and Place," p. 419.
59. Leslie, "Mind the Map," p. 88.
60. Tuan, "Space and Place," p. 411.