“[Their] dress so antick”: Cross-Dressing, Mobility, and Gender Identity in the Work of Margaret Cavendish

“[Their] dress so antick” takes “crossing” as a basis for bringing Margaret Cavendish’s proto-science fiction novel, A Description of a New World, Called the Blazing World (1666 & 1668), into conversation with three of her less canonical works—Assaulted and Pursued Chastity (1665), Loves Adventures (1662), and The Convent of Pleasure (1668)—all three of which employ cross-dressing as a major plot device. While cross-dressing is absent from Blazing World, the work does hinge on physical crossings between worlds and, significantly, between bodies. Like cross-dressing, these crossings disrupt binaries, ultimately rejecting fixity in favor of fluid and mobile forms of gender and space.

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