

The Blazing World



Margaret Cavendish

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The Description of a New World, Called The Blazing-World, better known as The Blazing World, is a 1666 work of prose fiction by English writer Margaret Cavendish, the Duchess of Newcastle.

Here on this Figure Cast a Glance.
But so as if it were by Chance,
Your eyes not fixt, they must not Stay,
Since this like Shadowes to the Day
It only represent's; for Still,
Her Beauty's found beyond the Skill
Of the best Paynter, to Imbrace
These lovely Lines within her face.
View her Soul's Picture, Judgment, witt,
Then read those Lines which Shee hath writt,
By Phancy's Pencill drawne alone
Which Peces but Shee, can justly owne.

To The Duchesse of Newcastle, On Her New Blazing-World.

Our Elder World, with all their Skill and Arts,
Could but divide the World into three Parts:
Columbus, then for Navigation fam'd,
Found a new World, America 'tis nam'd;
Now this new World was found, it was not made,
Onely discovered, lying in Time's shade.
Then what are You, having no Chaos found
To make a World, or any such least ground?
But your Creating Fancy, thought it fit
To make your World of Nothing, but pure Wit.
Your Blazing-World, beyond the Stars mounts higher,
Enlightens all with a Cœlestial Fier.

William Newcastle.

To all Noble and Worthy Ladies.

This present *Description of a New World*, was made as an Appendix to my *Observations upon Experimental Philosophy*; and, having some Sympathy and Coherence with each other, were joyned together as Two several Worlds, at their Two Poles. But, by reason most Ladies take no delight in Philosophical Arguments, I separated some from the mentioned Observations, and caused them to go out by themselves, that I might express my Respects, in presenting to Them such Fancies as my Contemplations did afford. The First Part is Romancical; the Second, Philosophical; and the Third is meerly Fancy; or (as I may call it) Fantastical. And if (Noble Ladies) you should chance to take pleasure in reading these Fancies, I shall account my self a Happy Creatoress: If not, I must be content to live a Melancholly Life in my own World; which I cannot call a Poor World, if Poverty be only want of Gold, and Jewels: for, there is more Gold in it, than all the Chymists ever made; or, (as I verily believe) will ever be able to make. As for the Rocks of Diamonds, I wish, with all my Soul, they might be shared amongst my Noble Female Friends; upon which condition, I would willingly quit my Part: And of the Gold, I should desire only so much as might suffice to repair my Noble Lord and Husband's Losses: for, I am not Covetous, but as Ambitious as ever any of my Sex was, is, or can be; which is the cause, That though I cannot be Henry the Fifth, or Charles the Second; yet, I will endeavour to be, Margaret the First: and, though I have neither Power, Time nor Occasion, to be a great Conqueror, like Alexander, or Cesar; yet, rather than not be Mistress of a World, since Fortune and the Fates would give me none, I have made One of my own. And thus, believing, or, at least, hoping, that no Creature can, or will, Envy me for this World of mine, I remain,

Noble Ladies, Your Humble Servant, M. Newcastle.

The Description of a New World, Called The Blazing-World.

A Merchant travelling into a foreign Country, fell extreemly in Love with a young Lady; but being a stranger in that Nation, and beneath her, both in Birth and Wealth, he could have but little hopes of obtaining his desire; however his Love growing more and more vehement upon him, even to the slighting of all difficulties, he resolved at last to Steal her away; which he had the better opportunity to do, because her Father's house was not far from the Sea, and she often using to gather shells upon the shore accompanied not with above two to three of her servants it encouraged him the more to execute his design. Thus coming one time with a little leight Vessel, not unlike a Packet-boat, mann'd with some few Sea-men, and well victualled, for fear of some accidents, which might perhaps retard their journey, to the place where she used to repair; he forced her away: But when he fancied himself the happiest man of the World, he proved to be the most unfortunate; for Heaven frowning at his Theft, raised such a Tempest, as they knew not what to do, or whither to steer their course; so that the Vessel, both by its own leightness, and the violent motion of the Wind, was carried as swift as an Arrow out of a Bow, towards the North-pole, and in a short time reached the Icy Sea, where the wind forced it amongst huge pieces of Ice; but being little, and leight, it did by the assistance and favour of the gods to this virtuous Lady, so turn and wind through those precipices, as if it had been guided by some experienced Pilot, and skilful Mariner: But alas! Those few men which were in it, not knowing whither they went, nor what was to be done in so strange an Adventure, and not being provided for so cold a Voyage, were all frozen to death; the young Lady onely, by the light of her Beauty, the heat of her Youth, and Protection of the Gods, remaining alive: Neither was it a wonder that the men did freeze to death; for they were not onely driven to the very end or point of the Pole of that World, but even to another Pole of another World, which joined close to it; so that the cold having a double strength at the conjunction of those two Poles, was insupportable: At last, the Boat still passing on, was forced into another World; for it is impossible to round this Worlds Globe from Pole to Pole, so as we do from East to West; because the Poles of the other World, joining to the Poles of this, do not allow any further passage to surround the World that way; but if any one arrives to either of these Poles, he is either forced to return, or to enter into another World: and lest you should scruple at it, and think, if it were thus, those that live at the Poles would either see two Suns at one time, or else they would never want the Sun's light for six months together, as it is commonly believed: You must know, that each of these Worlds having its own Sun to enlighten it, they move each one in their peculiar Circles; which motion is so just and exact, that neither can

hinder or obstruct the other; for they do not exceed their Tropicks: and although they should meet, yet we in this World cannot so well perceive them, by reason of the brightness of our Sun, which being nearer to us, obstructs the splendor of the Sun of the other World, they being too far off to be discerned by our optick perception, except we use very good Telescopes; by which, skilful Astronomers have often observed two or three Suns at once. But to return to the wandering Boat, and the distressed Lady; she seeing all the Men dead, found small comfort in life; their Bodies which were preserved all that while from putrefaction and stench, by the extremity of cold, began now to thaw, and corrupt; whereupon she having not strength enough to fling them over-board, was forced to remove out of her small Cabine, upon the deck, to avoid the nauseous smell; and finding the Boat swim between two plains of Ice, as a stream that runs betwixt two shores, at last perceived land, but covered all with Snow: from which came, walking upon the Ice, strange Creatures, in shape like Bears, only they went upright as men; those Creatures coming near the Boat, catched hold of it with their Paws, that served them instead of hands; some two or three of them entred first; and when they came out, the rest went in one after another; at last having viewed and observed all that was in the Boat, they spake to each other in a language which the Lady did not understand; and having carried her out of the Boat, sunk it, together with the dead men.

The Lady now finding her self in so strange a place, and amongst such wonderful kind of Creatures, was extreemly stricken with fear, and could entertain no other Thoughts, but that every moment her life was to be a sacrifice to their cruelty; but those Bear-like Creatures, how terrible soever they appear'd to her sight, yet were they so far from exercising any cruelty upon her, that rather they shewed her all civility and kindness imaginable; for she being not able to go upon the Ice, by reason of its slipperiness, they took her up in their rough arms, and carried her into their City, where instead of Houses, they had Caves under ground; and as soon as they enter'd the City, both Males and Females, young and old, flockt together to see this Lady, holding up their Paws in admiration; at last having brought her into a certain large and spacious Cave, which they intended for her reception, they left her to the custody of the Females, who entertained her with all kindness and respect, and gave her such victuals as they used to eat; but seeing her Constitution neither agreed with the temper of that Climate, nor their Diet, they were resolved to carry her into another Island of a warmer temper; in which were men like Foxes, onely walking in an upright shape, who received their neighbours the Bear-men with great civility and Courtship, very much admiring this beauteous Lady; and having discoursed some while together, agreed at last to make her a Present to the Emperor of their World; to which end, after she had made some short stay in the same place, they brought her cross that Island to a

large River, whose stream run smooth and clear, like Chrystal; in which were numerous Boats, much like our Fox-traps; in one whereof she was carried, some of the Bear- and Fox-men waiting on her; and as soon as they had crossed the River, they came into an Island where there were Men which had heads, beaks and feathers, like wild-Geese, onely they went in an upright shape, like the Bear-men and Fox-men: their rumps they carried between their legs, their wings were of the same length with their Bodies, and their tails of an indifferent size, trailing after them like a Ladie's Garment; and after the Bear- and Fox-men had declared their intention and design to their Neighbours, the Geese- or Bird-men, some of them joined to the rest, and attended the Lady through that Island, till they came to another great and large River, where there was a preparation made of many Boats, much like Birds nests, onely of a bigger size; and having crost that River, they arrived into another Island, which was of a pleasant and mild temper, full of Woods and the Inhabitants thereof were Satyrs, who received both the Bear- Fox- and Bird men, with all respect and civility; and after some conferences (for they all understood each others language) some chief of the Satyrs joining to them, accompanied the Lady out of that Island to another River, wherein were many handsome and commodious Barges; and having crost that River, they entered into a large and spacious Kingdom, the men whereof were of a Grass-Green Complexion, who entertained them very kindly, and provided all conveniences for their further voyage: hitherto they had onely crost Rivers, but now they could not avoid the open Seas any longer; wherefore they made their Ships and tacklings ready to sail over into the Island, where the Emperor of the Blazing- world (for so it was call'd) kept his residence. Very good Navigators they were; and though they had no knowledg of the Load-stone, or Needle or pendulous Watches, yet (which was as serviceable to them) they had subtile observations, and great practice; in so much that they could not onely tell the depth of the Sea in every place, but where there were shelves of Sand, Rocks, and other obstructions to be avoided by skilful and experienced Sea-men: Besides, they were excellent Augurers, which skill they counted more necessary and beneficial then the use of Compasses, Cards, Watches, and the like; but, above the rest, they had an extraordinary Art, much to be taken notice of by Experimental Philosophers, and that was a certain Engin, which would draw in a great quantity of Air, and shoot forth Wind with a great force; this Engine in a calm, they placed behind their Ships, and in a storm, before; for it served against the raging waves, like Cannons against an hostile Army, or besieged Town; it would batter and beat the waves in pieces, were they as high as Steeples; and as soon as a breach was made, they forced their passage through, in spight even of the most furious wind, using two of those Engins at every Ship, one before, to beat off the waves, and another behind to drive it on; so that the artificial wind had