

MARGARET THE FIRST

THE QUEER FANCIES & SCIENTIFIC AMBITIONS OF THE DUCHESS OF NEWCASTLE

“Though I cannot be Henry the Fifth, or Charles the Second, yet I will endeavour to be Margaret the First.”

A Study of Biography,
'Fancy,' and Queer Theory.



THE RIDICULOUS

“Mad, ridiculous, and conceited. Her dress is antick, her neck naked, and she wears black patches to cover pimples.”

Samuel Pepys (1667)

THE INCOMPARABLE

*The thrice noble,
chaste, and virtuous...
original-brain'd, generous
Margaret Newcastle.*

Charles Lamb

The Spectacle: A woman who refused to be invisible, creating a ‘Romance’ of her own life to counter the criticism.



THE LUCAS AMBITION

Family: Rising gentry, acquisitive, and relentlessly ambitious.

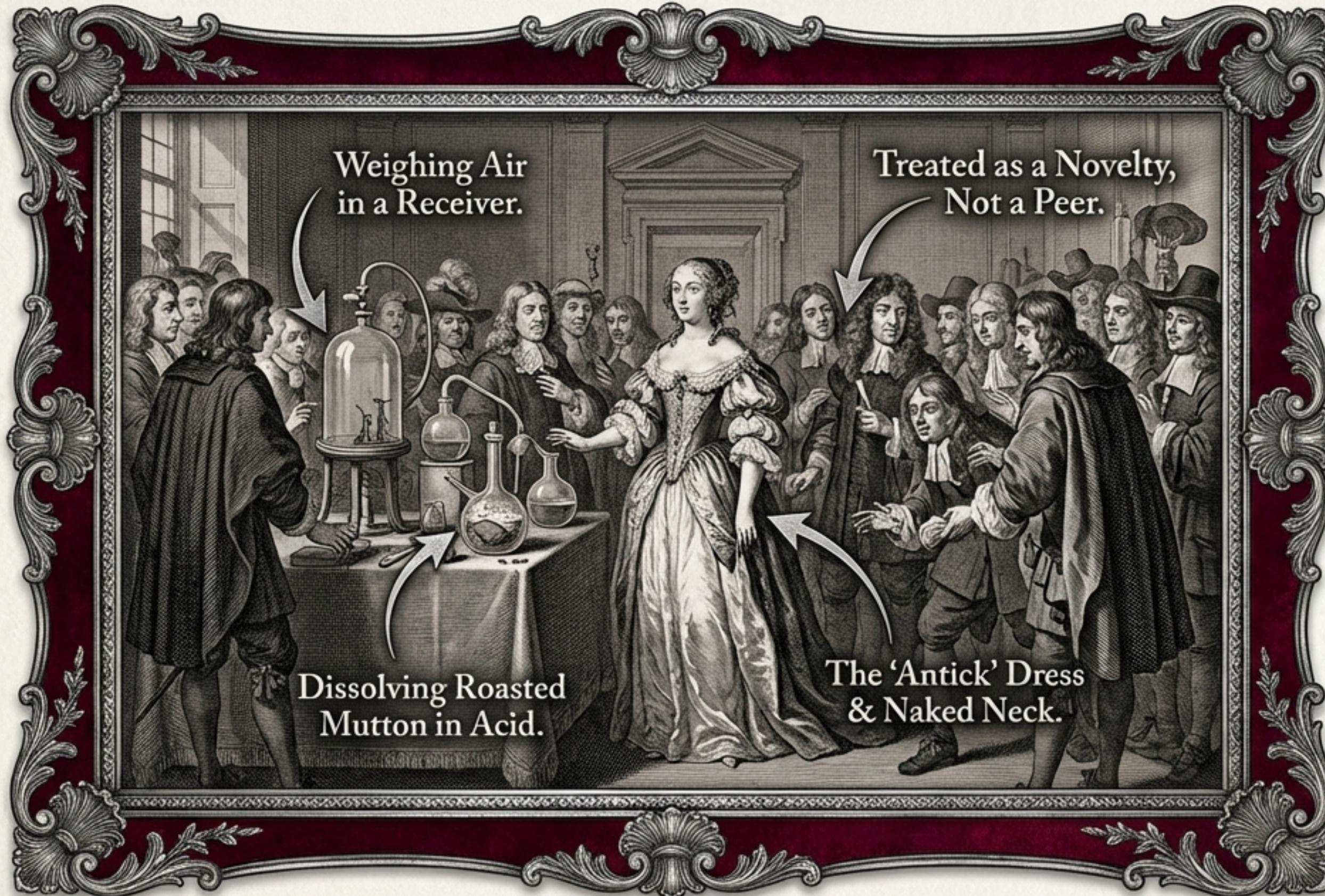
Father: Thomas Lucas, an exile who killed a rival in a duel.

Mother: Elizabeth, a woman of “*majestic grandeur*” and shrewd business sense.

Margaret’s Conflict: Inherited “*extreme ambition*” but afflicted with crippling “*bashfulness*”.

She possessed the drive of a public statesman but was confined to the domestic sphere.

THE SPECTACLE AT ARUNDEL HOUSE (1667)

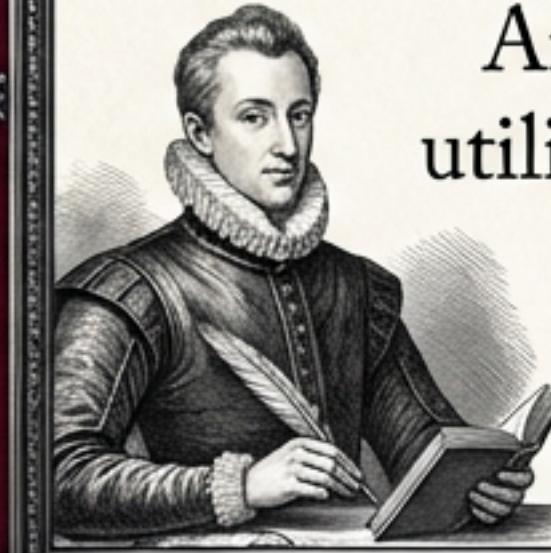


PEPYS CHECK:
*"I did not like
her at all. Her
dress was antick,
and her words
were not
worth hearing."*

DEFINING FANCY

SIR PHILIP SIDNEY

The Defense of Poesy.



Art must have utility. It teaches virtue and morality.

MARGARET CAVENDISH

The Blazing World.

Fancy needs no justification.

It is for “pleasure and delight.”

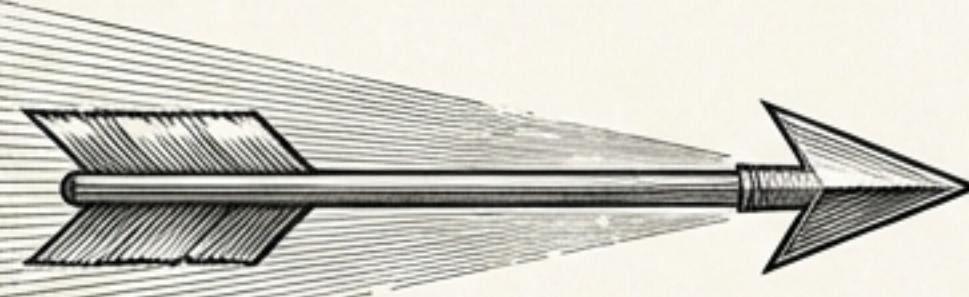
It is a world of one’s own.



“Fancy creates of its own accord whatsoever it pleases, and delights in its own work.”

FANCY VS. QUEER FUTURITY

QUEER FUTURITY (Muñoz)



Hope for future political change.
A structuring mode of desiring.

CAVENDISH'S FANCY

*A potentiality accessed
in the PRESENT.*

*Escape from the
'quagmire' of reality.
An internal survival
mechanism.*

Ref: José Esteban Muñoz, *Cruising Utopia*.

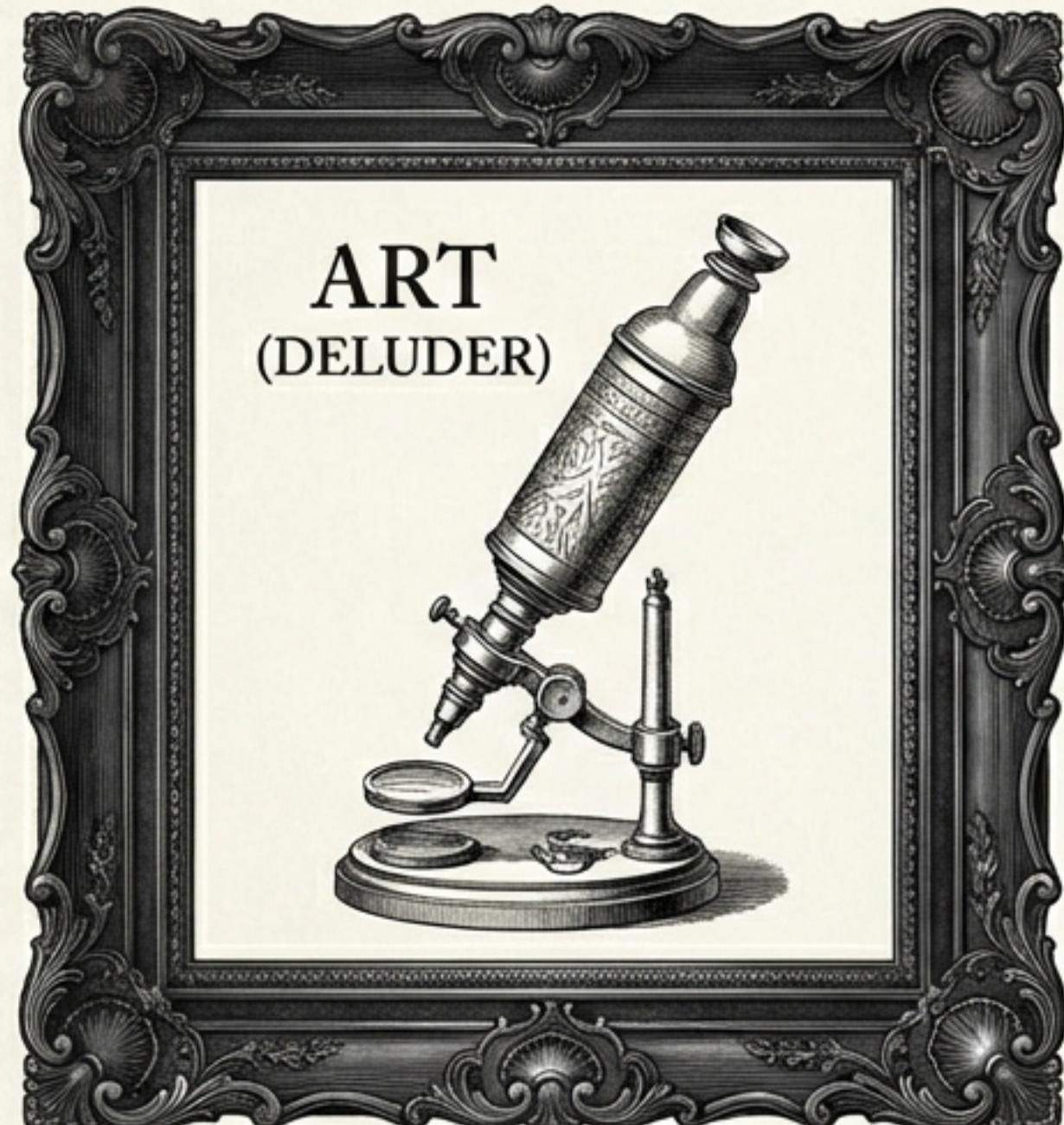


CASE STUDY 1: THE BLAZING WORLD

Scientific Utopia & Intellectual Ambition.

- Premise: A Lady kidnapped for assault becomes an Empress.
- *The Reversal*: She is worshipped, not subjugated. She is granted ‘*Absolute Power*’.
- *The Fancy*: A homosocial space where the Empress and the Duchess become ‘platonic lovers’ and philosophize without men.

NATURE IS FEMALE



ART
(DELUDER)



NATURE

Cavendish critiqued
the Royal Society's
reliance on technology.

She argued humans
are PART of Nature,
not masters of it.



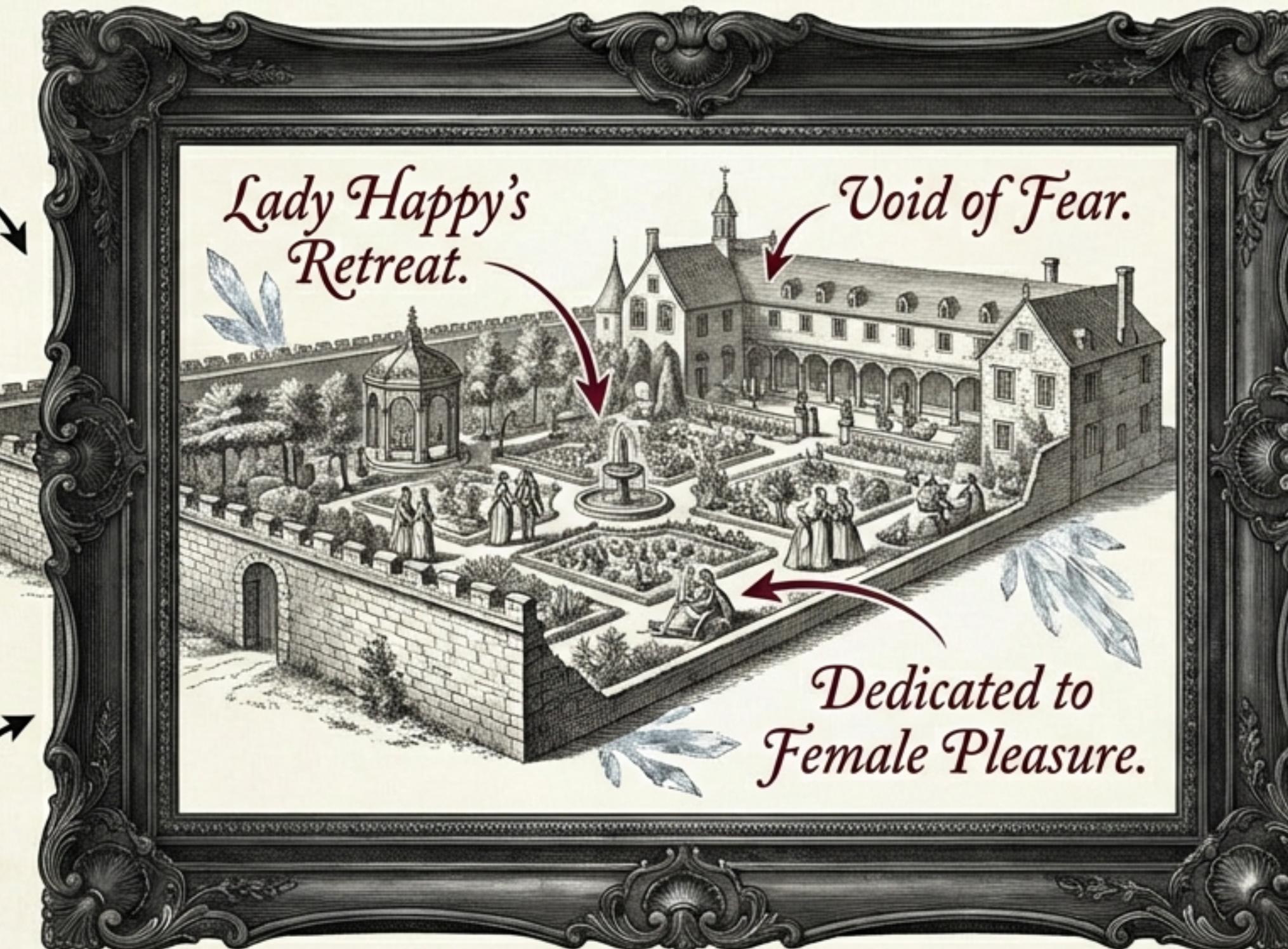
Reality Check:
While she ruled
the Blazing World,
in London she
was barred from
participating in
the Royal Society.

*"Nature has made your sense and reason
more regular than art has your glasses."*

CASE STUDY II: THE CONVENT OF PLEASURE

Social & Romantic Utopia.

The Curse of Marriage
Mr. Negligent
Pain of Childbirth
Drunken Husbands.



❖
The Goal:
To create a space
rejecting virtues that
only serve men.

QUEER DESIRE & PERFORMANCE



The Romance: Lady Happy falls in love with the ‘Princess’ (a Prince in disguise).

The Logic: “Nature is Nature.” If the love is pleasurable, it must be natural.

The Transformation: Unlike Shakespeare’s *Twelfth Night*, the audience does not see the actor. The gender fluidity is real within the Fancy.

THE LIMITS OF FANCY

The Crash: The Convent is dissolved. Lady Happy marries the Prince.

The Silence: In the final scene, Lady Happy—previously so vocal—has only four lines.

Fancy is a temporary reprieve. It cannot change structural oppression or reintegrate the queer individual into the real world.

A LEGACY OF “BEING”

“I matter not the censures of this age,
but am rather proud of them...
it is better to be envied than pitied.”

Her Fancies were a method of existing in a world that had no place for her.

REFERENCES & FURTHER READING

1. Young, Donald. “Cavendish’s Queer Fancies, Scientific and Romantic, in *The Blazing World* and *The Convent of Pleasure*.” QuaesitUM, Vol. 9, 2022.
2. Grant, Douglas. “Margaret the First: A Biography of Margaret Cavendish, Duchess of Newcastle, 1623-1673.” University of Toronto Press, 1957.
3. Image Credits: Engravings by Abraham van Diepenbeke and Sir Peter Lely.