

The Society for the Study of Women in the Renaissance  
presents:



## Su Fang Ng

### "Margaret Cavendish and East Indies Knowledges"

Aside from shared interests in natural philosophy with members of the Royal Society, Margaret Cavendish's prose romances also reflect on how the Royal Society's scientific inquiries were deeply imbricated with trade interests, colonial expansion, and religious proselytization. Her female protagonists are traveler-discoverers mirroring Royal Society scientists who depend on travel reports for knowledge of the East Indies. In this talk, **Su Fang Ng** discusses how Cavendish's allusions to East Indies material objects are racial projects that construct personhoods. Cavendish's vitalism means that matter is already instinct with life. However, while spices represent nature's abundance and heterogeneity, porcelain becomes associated with the white female, especially when used in imagery of contrasting black and white colors. **Ng** argues that the divergent representations of spices and porcelain suggests that Cavendish offers an apparent diversity, as in the multi-colored or the hybrid species peopling her fictional worlds, only to imagine power in binary terms, as in the double monarchy of the *Blazing World*.

**Su Fang Ng** is Professor of English and Clifford A. Cutchins III Professor at Virginia Tech. She is the author of two monographs: *Literature and the Politics of Family in Seventeenth-Century England* and *Alexander the Great from Britain to Southeast Asia: Peripheral Empires in the Global Renaissance*, which won the Renaissance Society of America's 2020 Phyllis Goodhart Gordan Prize for best book in Renaissance Studies. She has just published a co-edited essay collection, *England's Asian Renaissance*, and an essay on "Making Race in the Early Modern East Indies" will soon appear from *New Literary History*.

**THURSDAY, MARCH 17, 2022**

**6:00-7:30 PM EDT**

**For more information and to RSVP for Zoom details:**

**<https://bit.ly/SSWR2022SuFangNg>**



This event is co-sponsored with The Center for the Study of Women and Society and the CUNY Academy for Humanities and Sciences.