One of the seventeenth century's more ambitious and eccentric poems, "Upon Appleton House" touches upon several of the century's concerns with lyric settings, sometimes in oblique and unexpected as well as important ways. Without making too fine a point of it, one can see pieces of Jonson's country house modeling of propriety and taste, Donnean wit, and, in the woodland scene, traces of a Vaughanlike hermeticism. Something akin to Milton's genius of place appears momentarily in the speaker in that same scene and in Maria Fairfax later. Like Milton, Herbert, and Vaughan, Marvell gauges topography by likeness to paradise insofar as it can be imagined, though he is less direct and single-minded in doing so, both here and in other poems. He finds chaos beyond the estate but "decent order tame" within it. He puts lyric apostrophes to several uses from parody to praise, mixing them with narrative, descriptive, and proverbial or epigrammatic segments. Like Bunyan and Vaughan, he explores the nature of signs and the limits of clarity and order among them. The woodland offers a discourse of mosaic leaves and divining birds, though nothing so explicitly allegorical as Bunyan's Interpreter or Vaughan's waterfall. "Upon Appleton House" goes beyond juxtaposition and topographical sequence in fitting one thing to another, its concern being partly with representation and fitness, or with how one thing is represented in another, large in small, for instance. It thus works through metonymy to metaphor and through description to encomium.
In orchestrating all of this, the wandering philosopher who conducts our tour of Appleton takes an unusual and uneven passage among specific scenes and objects, subjecting them to devices of perspective. He superintends our perception of the likenesses he gathers in a spectrum of settings, natural, familial, national. These are not uniformly serious devices, as most readers have acknowledged; in its many-faceted genre mixing, the poem is not hesitant to mix moods. In the woodland nature's expressive mode opens to bardlike perceptions, for instance, but then yields quickly to self-effacement. Although some skepticism about a persona who changes from moment to moment is in order, Marvell does not extend the poem's irreverence to the household itself, at the nominal center of the poem, or to likeness between the estate's topography and paradise. He builds upon the soundness of the family and the promise of its youngest member.

METAPHORIC MAPPING

When Maria walks through the meadows of "Upon Appleton House" at evening, she has a surprising impact upon both objects and the poet's figures. Let us begin with that transmission of an influence and conversion of proximity into likeness. Thanks to the speaker's enthusiasm and outbreak of thematic explicitness, we have no difficulty appreciating the fact that from both her and her emblem, the kingfisher, Appleton's creatures borrow their best qualities; the question is just how. Answers require both metaphysical considerations and attention to the nature of the magic and the charms that genii loci claim. As souls command bodies and as heavenly influences descend to earth, so special agents exercise authority over nature. But we also recognize a good deal of poetic license in Marvell's exaggeration of Maria's impact and realize that it is just such license that signals the generation of lyric enthusiasm from description. To go from a juxtaposition of objects to encomium requires that Maria bring into play both heavenly powers and a chemistry visibly at work on objects, as the thinner substances of water and air, for instance, thicken to hold the kingfisher's "azure dy" and shadow.

In the simplest terms, this is a way for a panegyrist to say merely that everything is struck by her; but even so, the behavior of things is unusual and the description extended. Marvell notices the corporeality of objects and parallels between their wonderment over her and an increasingly viscous verbal medium. Before introducing the thickening of the air, for instance, he comments generally on
nature's power to pull its miscellany into order: "See how loose
Nature in respect / To her, it self doth recollect" (657–58). That
recollection is again almost chemical, as though elements once scat­
tered in chaos begin to bond and find their proper mixtures only
when Maria appears. The word "recollect" links that gathering of
elements with memory's casting back to their origins, in a paradise
that once was. The sun, earth, clouds, and streams all offer tribute
as a phase of the estate's mapping of paradise. Struck by her pres­
ence and by the halcyon ("And each an horror calm and
dumb, / Admiring Nature does benum," 671–72), air and water comp­
act; fire and earth change places and generate new vitality in each
other. If comets and falling stars that have been exhaled "from the
putrid Earth" (687–88) perish quickly, in their place Maria draws
all earth into her train and makes it light or glass.

Praise is based here on a transumptive carrying of large powers
into local ones. Vitrification is not exclusively a lighting process or
an interior inspiration; it is also hardening, in keeping with the
other thickenings of substance. If Maria's flaming implants the
glow of stars in nature, it also compresses what it influences, as the
"Saphire-winged" mist, which charms those who look upon it,
thickens air. Some testing of lower elements by fire has already
taken place in the woodland's "light Mosaic" from which fancy
weaves its prophecies, and something similar is perhaps suggested
in the divinations of bird song, which the speaker links with fire
upon his entry into the woodland (511–12). Water is no longer
merely water but a receptacle for images, earth no longer putrified
substance sending off sparks but a glassy mirror. Everything recol­
lects itself in something other as crude nature advances a degree
toward celestial emerald and gold. The relationship of symbols to
ultimate referents in this topographical mirroring is similar to that
of history to myth, or map to higher reality: it stresses the gap and
the difference but also the workability of the connection. Given
that gap, however, the poet must step back and get a run at lyric.
Description does not automatically work toward it.

As Marvell sets relations between the greater order and Ap­
pleton on sound footing, he allows nothing to fly hauntingly out of
range. No voices from the depths of the forest remind him of a
mortal's inability to follow; he needs no visiting powers or romantic
avatars since Maria is fully before him. Even so, verbal containers
never quite fit their contents, any more than the stream can really
catch the kingfisher or its shadow. Nature's reaction to Maria and
the legendary halcyon suspends the more normal associations of
kind, size, and function—with some strain on metaphoric logic. He emphasizes that yoking of unlike things by paying attention not only to their unusual thickness but to color and arrangement. Textured qualities constitute an expressiveness-in-stillness, as he suggests in "Admiring Nature does benum" and in "stupid Fishes." The speaker does not distort to the point of deformity, to be sure, or he would find no access to paradise even through this extraordinary map; but odd associations continue all the way to the end. Flies associated with fish become all the more oddly flies. It is their customary nature to buzz and be inconsequential; made ornamental in crystal and rendered very quiet, they testify to the power that vitrifies. The portrait of the meadows infolded by the snakelike stream is similar in visual oddity. The stream licks its own muddy back and becomes clear. All told, the poem presents a good deal of such, sometimes ostentatiously: herons dropping young from trees, bloody Thestylis pouncing on wounded rails, cattle that look like fleas, eels that bellow in oxen, boats that sail over bridges, inverted trees, grasshoppers laughing from tall grass like giants overhead, and brambles that pin down and wrap up the speaker.

Some of these explorations of the near-grotesque may be intended to appeal in an Alice-in-Wonderland style to a young Maria herself. But the assault on decorum begins long before she appears in the poem. In the opening stanzas, the speaker violates the moral and aesthetic discriminations he claims to value and raises the problem of scale and proportion. That initial assault indicates the poem's distrust of media and prepares for Maria's correction of lumpish and deformed things. In finding mysteries in nature's meadow and woodland forms and complications in their interpretation, Marvell proceeds to a second phase of "unproportion'd dwellings" and gives containment and fenestration epistemological implications, at the same time preparing for the clearer descent of the divine to Maria, Appleton's best window onto paradise. When she is not in the vicinity he notices the babble of things and calls of one thing to another in a variety of voices. All efforts at coding and decoding are subject to disruption. Birds with their heavenly dialects and grasshoppers with their squeaks sound strange to human ears:

And now to the Abyss I pass
Of that unfathomable Grass,
Where Men like Grashoppers appear,
But Grashoppers are Gyants there:
They, in their squeking Laugh, contemn
Us as we walk more low then them:
And, from the Precipices tall
Of the green spir's, to us do call.

Whether one understands what these creatures say or not, or what the sentinel bee means when it asks "the word," the likeness of their sounds to language is unmistakable, as again with the nightingale that makes "tryals of her voice" and reminds us of figures for the lyricist staking claims and lamenting. The poet takes the call of doves more especially for his own and as an "easie philosopher" claims success in deciphering and imitating other birds as well, though he never tells us what they say.

In any case gestures toward lyric are not sustained more than a moment until later. They become stronger in the woodland's light mosaic and its infiltrating sense of the divine:

Already I begin to call
In their most learned Original:
And where I Language want, my Signs
The Bird upon the Bough divines;
And more attentive there doth sit
Then if She were with Lime-twigs knit.
No Leaf does tremble in the Wind
Which I returning cannot find.

But even here a persona who has imagined himself a bird and an inverted tree undermines seriousness to some extent. From reading in nature's book, he quickly passes to chance's better wit, embroidery in oak leaves, a languishing on moss while the wind winnows his thoughts, and from there to his strangest entanglement in nature in the poem (stanza 77).

Actually, the visual oddities of "Upon Appleton House" and the speaker's ranging from near vagabond to orphic bard are of a piece with the spirit of holiday outing and truancy, beginning with Lord Fairfax's retreat from involvement in national affairs to make garden forts and proceeding to fishermen whose heads are shod with their canoes. That truancy is not necessarily subject to correction in the speaker. Paradoxically, here as in "The Garden," byplay is serious, and imagination thrives on oddities and the indirect way. Where Herrick works with harvest, Maying, epithalamia, praise of country life, and public ceremonies that formalize and sanctify revels, Marvell avoids these or overturns them. "Upon Appleton House" is not his only excursion into festivity, but he is usually more critical of it. The Resolved Soul is bent upon removing all created pleasures between it and its celestial destiny, and in a com-
parable pastoral translation of truancy, Damon answers Clorinda’s invitation to love in a moralistic tone toward enticing “baits.” The Mower chastizes the meadows for pursuing their “gawdy May-games” and vows that “Flowrs, and Grass, and I and all, / Will in one common Ruine fall.” In “The Coronet” the gathering of flowers for shepherd queens has already been abandoned in favor of the rich chaplet the poet weaves for his savior, and even that is spoiled by the “serpent old” twined within. In “Upon Appleton House,” the subtle nuns' temptation of the Virgin Twates with “brighter Robes and Crowns of Gold” is similarly perverted. With balms and other “baits for curious tastes,” they stress too much the ornaments of altars and shrines and make the life of retreat an extended epithalamion.

One recurrent factor in these images of ruined and dangerous festivity is superfluity and the poet’s awareness that both festivity and excessive art distort the natural order and obscure its already difficult messages. This does not prevent Marvell from celebrating a retreat from social obligations and moral concerns in “The Garden” and the woodland section of “Upon Appleton House,” but even there the surplus of things runs counter to simplicity. Thus in “The Garden,” harvest fecundity is for bodily appetites; the mind searches for nature’s kinds repeated in a finer tone, and it is happier still to escape to worlds and seas of its own invention.

Marvell appears distrustful both of art and of natural bounty in these instances. More strikingly, in “Upon Appleton House” he has the speaker approach briars and brambles as though in a holiday letting go turned upside down:

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Bind me ye Woodbines in your twines,
Curle me about ye gadding Vines,
And Oh so close your Circles lace,
That I may never leave this Place:
But, lest your Fetters prove too weak,
Ere I your Silken Bondage break,
Do you, O Brambles, chain me too,
And Courteous Briars nail me through.
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People frequently wear garlands and wrap up in Mayday greenery, but here the abundance and strength of the wrappings put the speaker on the way toward complete vegetable metamorphosis. Marvell is again aware of the density and interference of bodies, whose materiality stands between the mind’s desire to be at one with paradise and any actual fulfillment of that desire. A moment spent imagining such fulfillment is not enough; only permanent habitation and the complete removal of distance will do.
Such absorption into things in defiance of bodily forms carries
the truant away from both sociability and logic. The forest from the
moment he enters it is a refuge from beauty’s arrows and implicitly
from the shepherd lovers and other masks of courtship, although
ceremonies are still evident in the decorum of address and the
emphasis on silken touch and courtesy. Here the rhymed couplets
and rearranged syntax suggest an almost chanted speech. A similar
playfulness is evident in the speaker’s putting aside of human intel-
ligence earlier:

The Oak-Leaves me embroyder all,
Between which Caterpillars crawl:
And Ivy, with familiar rails,
Me licks, and clasps, and curies, and hales.

587–90

If streams capture halcyon shadows, why should plants not reach
out to capture men? It is almost logical to think they can embroi-
der, and pleasurable to the speaker to think they might. In any
case, he suspends his tribute to the Fairfaxes momentarily and
follows his own inclinations without, however, exercising orphic
power over nature’s wildness.

FROM LOCAL MAP TO CHRONICLE AND ODE

The retreat from empire-making in “Upon Appleton House”
leaves Marvell without some of the traditional grounds for pan-
egyric and encourages a view of the estate, in compensation, as
itself the possessor of inflamed or vitrified assets beyond any envi­sioned in “To Penshurst.” Elsewhere, Marvell is less inclined to
exclude the nation in looking for maps of paradise. For a moment I
want to take a roundabout way to other sections of “Upon Ap­
pleton House” in order to situate Marvell among texts considered
earlier and to suggest his view of the private and public aspects of
lyric address. He tempts us to such recapitulation by the odd angles
he takes on the ideas and conventions of his predecessors. For him
as for others, an earthly or celestial paradise provides the best
opportunities for the poet’s crossing, but he is less sober than
Vaughan or Milton in proposing that. As “The Garden” suggests,
one can rise by natural inclination of mind and soul to proleptic
glimpses of “far other worlds and seas” partly on the initial
promptings of curious peaches and fair trees; but while the speaker
says such things he also counters the exaggerations of amorous
tree-carvers. The name of the tree on the tree makes literal the
common association of topos (or emblem) with place, or the collabor-
orations of words and things in producing an enclosed poetic para-
dise, but of course it does so humorously and ironically. Hence, though Marvell is "metaphysical" in removing courtship as the purpose for enumerating the bird consorts and decorative streams of the garden and in seeing the trees themselves as both the delights of solitude and the representations of an ultimate "Fair Quiet" and "Innocence," he is less inclined than Milton, Vaughan, or Herbert to look for an actual divine presence in the garden topography. Even where providence is clearly in evidence as it is in the island paradise of "Bermudas," the address of the pilgrim-singers is happy rather than intense, and the poet himself reports on their thanksgiving song as from a distance. In contrast, Vaughan's quest through the several scenes of "Regeneration" is to submerge the self in the right topic-place, the dwelling of the spirit; Milton finds Christ himself "publishing" his father's image in the desert in *Paradise Regained*.

The idea of paradise in Marvell serves in part to scale down whatever lesser felicities an earlier, more sociable lyric stationed there for the amorous users of gardens pursuing their Daphnes. It not only challenges the hyperboles of lovesick shepherds and sonneteers but mocks the joining of lyric and heroic in the encomium of great men. At the same time, Marvell is also aware that nature is at best an oblique representation of paradise. On one hand Clorinda and Damon take pastures, caves, and fountains to be Pan's voices and thus sublimate passion in artistic motives; their duet swells the slender oat of conventional pastoral. On the other hand, Thrysis and Dorinda dwell on the discrepancies between Elizium and the meadow periphrase of it. The analogy between these only whets their appetite and tempts them with an opium-softened flight from the lesser world. Likewise, for the soul in "On a Drop of Dew," dissolving and running to the glories of its native realm requires its divorce from the body. Even though his periphrastic "coy" figures are expressions of heaven, the poet who projects that flight must also escape metaphoric imprisonment in emblemized topos; certainly paradise is not *adequately* mapped by its tropes and figures.

Where the poet's reading of the Appleton estate as paradise's best available map is assisted by Maria's remaking of gardens, streams, and meadows, Marvell has a more difficult task with Cromwell as go-between and the entire nation as his panorama. From "The First Anniversary" we know how assiduously he labored to make Cromwell too a vicegerent "Learning a Musique in the Region Clear, / To tune this lower to that higher sphere." Indeed, much of "The First Anniversary" suggests a return to
marque applications of classical and Christian symbols to encomium. In the Horatian Ode, that surrogate authority receives its severest test in the displacement of the old order and parallels the reluctant emergence of the poet himself into public affairs. Since the course he takes in some respects is a return to the laureate figure of courtly encomium, it is crucial for Marvell to juxtapose the claims of the king and this new delegate.

I am less concerned with the scope of the poem's historical vision and other thematic matters, however, than with the lyric means by which Marvell imposes odic form on chronicle materials and enables the speaker to cross from his more usual metaphors for paradise to civil struggle. Where topographical description generates its paradisal likeness on more or less traditional and logical grounds, he works here with a paradoxical narrative arriving at a troubled climax. The attention he gives to Charles's beheading is a sign of his having come to a kind of interpretive clearing and odic intensity, but that reading perhaps requires explanation and defense. It gains some credence I think, at least indirectly, from Marvell's identification of the craft of politics with artful performance and the purging of the feeling for Charles that comes from his stoic resignation.² The conversion of civil violence into theatrical art parallels the passage of narrative into ode: both are keyed to the precise moment when one age gives way to another with maximum violence. That violence, though not pretty, is a spectacle of tragic dimensions and a sacrificial cleansing:

And Hampton shows what part
He had of wiser Art.
Where, twining subtle fears with hope,
He wove a Net of such a scope,
That Charles himself might chase
To Caresbrooks narrow case.
That thence the Royal Actor born
The Tragick Scaffold might adorn,
While round the armed Bands
Did clap their bloody hands.
He nothing common did or mean,
Upon the memorable Scene:
But with his keener Eye
The Axes edge did try:
Nor call'd the Gods with vulgar spight
To vindicate his helpless Right,
But bow'd his comely Head
Down as upon a Bed.

Having concentrated on Cromwell's austerity and valor in preceding passages, Marvell attributes subtlety to him here as a first step in softening the portrait and institutionalizing his raw force.
The word *wiser* has a peculiar ring even so. The insights that have come to Cromwell in private must be converted into public policy, but the latter stresses stagecraft rather than wisdom. Marvell drops Cromwell from view momentarily in concentrating on the spectacle of regicide itself. In conceding that Charles was born to royalty, he recalls the ancient rights of the preceding passage, but Charles’s keener eye presumably finds in Cromwell’s wiser art something deeper than trickery, and his performance both gains stature from and is embittered by that discovery. The stage is after all a scaffold and the audience composed of bloody-handed enemies. But executions and tragic falls are not meant to be delicate. This abruptly wrong event, like the unexpected and unnatural matters of “Upon Appleton House,” is precisely what reveals; in great disorder one finds the access road to a higher order.

Marvell follows the course of events that deliver this harrowing realization with a tonal transition from the semi-comic image of Charles fleeing ghosts through the complicated grammar of the statement on clapping hands (which brushes aside the make-believe of the stage metaphor momentarily), to the calm of Charles’s resignation. His alternation of tetrameter and trimeter couplets works changes of pace, scale, and tone formal enough to call further attention to the relations between art and raw event. The second or shorter couplet performs sometimes a retrenchment or shrinkage, sometimes an epigrammatic summary. The last two sets of shorter lines in the beheading passage work in opposite directions: “But with his keener Eye / The Axes edge did try,” and “But bow’d his comely Head / Down as upon a Bed.” As Charles veers away from meanness and cowardice and reclaims himself from the momentary confusion that led him to prison, all commonness leaves him. The trial winds up to a pitch at precisely the point at which eye meets cutting edge. Since the ax will sever not merely muscle and bone but one age from another, this cannot be a time of easy transition; nor can its poetry be a poetry of logical explanation and ordinary rhetorical persuasion. The “keener eye” presumably sees that nothing could be more arbitrary to a neck than a falling ax and matches wiser art with a wariness of its own.

But the gods, Charles realizes, are not to be called upon even by one so painfully enlightened. If he represents right in their eyes, it is obviously now an abandoned right. Since the lucid reality of the ax forestalls illusions and rules out vulgar revenge, his only course is to lie down and confirm the script. The last of the trimeter couplets manages to suggest this not only by the softening image of
Charles going calmly but also by falling rhythm, an enjambment that emphasizes “down,” and a reinstatement of make-believe that carries forward the artful conversion of the crude event into theatrical terms. What Charles accomplishes is the dominance by performance and vision of revolutionary change, which requires a shift of settings, loyalties, and (as we are seeing demonstrated) poetic forms and vocabularies. The new script enables a performer who is not going to get up and play the role again to assist in the birth of a harsh new reality and in the defusing of its impact. So the king comes down, and Cromwell and a new republic rise up.

The poet who converts chronicle to Horatian lyric is an implicit party to this final softening of regicide. He serves both as a rhetorician guiding the sympathies of his audience and as a kind of elegiac therapist who brings feelings into conformity with necessity. From “And Hampton” to “Foresaw its happy Fate” he pursues the displacement of the old order through a subtle and varied movement that reaches a crescendo in eighteen lines and then ebbs away. After a pause he picks up a new phase of narrative and interprets its key moment with an assurance that reflects his identification with it and celebration of it. Praise now springs forth directly from the events themselves and joins lyric to epic statesmanship:

This was that memorable Hour
Which first assur'd the forced Pow'r.
So when they did design
The Capitol's first Line,
A bleeding Head where they begun,
Did fright the Architects to run;
And yet in that the State
Foresaw it's happy Fate.

That expansiveness carries through six additional lines that draw out the parallel with Roman empire and deliver a sort of reprise, as the speaker gets further elevation and lets the tragic scene recede.

Nowhere does Marvell intrude noticeably as a dramatic presence in this crucial passage, which renders the conviction not of a personality (as a Miltonic passage might have) but of an observer responding ambivalently to events and gaining sympathy with the king’s poise through a sense of history’s inevitability. His salutation of the new power marries lyric to advice-giving as well as to chronicle and binds all these up in its affirmation. The nation’s crossing to its ordained new form is thus matched by the speaker’s negotiated course from private gardens and ambivalent reservations to an open odic platform.
STANZAIC PLACEMENT

I have emphasized a selection of technical aspects in the Horatian ode partly because Marvell so inextricably entangles art and statement. The poet's deciphering of chronicle requires a conversion of events into tangible signs of progress. It is as agents of providence that Charles becomes eligible for elegiac commemoration and Cromwell warrants praise. As the courtly world dies and is replaced by parliamentary rule, Cromwell must remain armed, but like a disciplined falcon he must also submit to rule. Interpreting both of them is akin to the speaker's translation of objects in "Upon Appleton House" into representations of heaven's design. Marvell is confident that in Maria, for instance, as in Cromwell, the most effective instrument of providence is tuned in heaven before working transformations on a lower plane. The sense of finality that hovers about both her and Cromwell is crucial to the lyric crossing. They are makers and therefore models for his own fashioning of metaphors from the palpable materials of estate and nation. His architectonic skill also draws upon their mastery of arrangement. Descending to minutia, it draws our attention to matters of diction and phonic system, which is part of the atmosphere of play and festivity that we detect even in Charles's execution. His structural skill in "Upon Appleton House" is evident not merely in well-devised stanzas and divisions of the poem, however, but in a roughness or purposeful awkwardness that acknowledges the distance between raw materials and the order buried within, or between media and their meanings.

Critics have paid less attention to the smaller units of that mixture of finesse and verbal disturbance than to the large-scale problem of hiatuses between segments of the poem; but the poem is nearly as noteworthy for its couplet wit, epigrammatic statement, and calculated sharp turns as it is for its overall construction and its play with optical devices and unusual imagery. The lyric place, finally, is not the settings of Appleton but the couplets of Marvell's photograph album, and the topics are after all worded and imaged things. The stanza moves forward by measured, finely divided steps that usually coincide with enclosing sentences; but far from being seamless and easily unified, both the stanzas and larger segments of the poem display their divisioning as a measure of what it takes to control the diversity of the country estate and the potential chaos of the outside world. Where everything runs to disorder and surprising transformation, all the more credit must go to the re-
storers of harmony—to Maria foremost but secondarily to the poem’s arranger and commentator. His disarming irony and his criticism of deformities fit neatly into those small packages, especially their antitheses.

In the first stanza, for instance, Marvell approaches praise for Fairfax by circling around the central object, the house, with a combination of praise and satiric dispatch:

Within this sober Frame expect
Work of no Foreign Architect;
That unto Caves the Quarries drew,
And Forests did to Pastures hew;
Who of his great Design in pain
Did for a Model vault his Brain,
Whose Columns should so high be rais'd
To arch the Brows that on them gaz'd.

The first two lines forestall an expectation that Marvell supposes in the reader: the poem will concern not grandeur, which can be achieved only by self-indulgence and laughable waste, but disciplined modesty. In praising *Paradise Lost*, Marvell will later realize the difference between Milton and himself in this regard. Milton’s project is grand, and the music must accord with it. Meanwhile, Marvell gets along in rhyme:

Well mightst thou scorn thy Readers to allure
With tinkling Rhyme, of thy own Sense secure;
While the Town-Bays writes all the while and spells,
And like a Pack-Horse tires without his Bells.
Their Fancies like our bushy Points appear,
The Poets tag them; we for fashion wear.
I too transported by the Mode offend,
And while I meant to Praise thee, must Commend.
Thy verse created like thy Theme sublime,
In Number, Weight, and Measure, needs not Rhyme.

“On Mr. Milton’s *Paradise Lost*”

Setting forth to read *Paradise Lost* for the first time, he has been apprehensive about its “vast design” and its “Messiah Crown’d, / Gods Reconcil’d Decree, / Rebelling Angels, the Forbidden Tree, Heav’n, Hell, Earth, Chaos, All.” Milton’s skill in blank verse is partly what reassures him. However, for himself, rhyme will have to suffice. In “Upon Appleton House,” its playfulness helps expose the absurdity of a greatness that has far less substance than Milton’s. To conceive some grand projects to begin with requires a huge emptiness of brain remindful of caves that architectural ambition has carved out, and in the hollow palaces that result the bardic winds that should winnow one’s thoughts get totally lost. That each of the couplets illustrates the excesses they criticize un-
derscores the rarity of tasteful performances. Although they are hooked together loosely, the syntax and diction are taut in individual sentences, and each illustration stands as a building block under its overarching thesis. As an epigram each sets a standard of compression before proceeding to expanded terms of praise.

In the second stanza, Marvell encloses similar epigrammatic illustrations with two general statements of principle, the first exacting its judgment by asking a leading question, whose tortured syntax again breaks the rules the sentence promotes:

Why should of all things Man unrul'd
Such unproportion'd dwellings build?
The Beasts are by their Denns exprest:
And Birds contrive an equal Nest;
The low roof'd Tortoises do dwell
In cases fit of Tortoise-shell:
No Creature loves an empty space;
Their Bodies measure out their Place.

The odd emphasis of the rearranged sentence suggest a jerry-built construction whose pieces fall together at odd angles. The third line prepares a general category for the specific examples with a similarly turned-around syntax, and the examples, although straightforward in arrangement, release several small surprises in imagery and diction. “Contrive” gives to birds a slightly labored craft in nest-building, and “low-roof’d” is a childlike way to see a tortoise shell and a peculiar image to apply to a great lord’s house. The snugness of a place reduced to the exact size of its dweller’s skin exaggerates more than a little the kind of modest dwelling that “To Penshurst” praises. Despite this Marvell manages to counter human unnaturalness with well-expressed beasts. The final couplet expands to the governing rule of all creation. The second stanza advances over the first in positing an appropriate site and a set of common laws that chastize ambitious man as an anomaly among creatures. All the more praiseworthy, then, someone who keeps to proportion and observes the principles of good housekeeping. The very awkwardness of the couplets lets us see the labor of fitting Fairfax among dwarfish confines and narrow loops, in small miracles of shapely dwelling. Judgment in the long run serves praise, as description does also. Both emphasize the exactness of ownership when ambition is properly curbed and things are by their dens expressed.

Not until this groundwork has been well laid and several such sequences have been set in place with their mortar visibly spilling
over does Marvell allow outright praise for Fairfax, and even then the speaker is limited to the dimensions of the house—not its de­corations, design, beauty, social implications, or such elements of courtly praise as survive in previous country estate poems. Con­straint and satiric observation prepare for another sort of home­coming, which Marvell glimpses early and develops later with greater intensity:

But all things are composed here
Like Nature, orderly and near:
In which we the Dimensions find
Of that more sober Age and Mind,
When larger sized Men did stoop
To enter at a narrow loop;
As practising, in doors so strait,
To strain themselves through Heavens Gate.

25-32

After the unflattering “stoop” and “loop” and after the spatial limitations of the house and embodiment generally, the expansion of “Heavens Gate” comes as a mild surprise and makes a first gesture toward the perspective that comes with lyric intensification later. But Marvell keeps solid contact with tangible bodies and their sizes even here, as in the pun on “strain” and the reduction of paradise to its entrance, which heads off any overly hasty progress to the estate as heaven’s map. The perspective is visually concrete and humorous, the tone even and judicious, at least through the first half of the stanza. The interplay of wit and potential crescendos of praise are reminiscent of Donne’s combinations of lyric and irony, but more coy, less cerebral, and harder to decipher.

Nothing in this opening section quite prepares for translation to the plane that the word “holy” occupies in its unusual conjunction with “mathematicks.” Through these openings, Marvell reveals another side of epigram when it is assembled in an unfolding them­atic and descriptive order—its usefulness to a metaphysical structure with philosophic backgrounds and its capacity to open onto range upon range of implications. For both Marvell and the reader, texts like the Timaeus, in which Pythagorean numbers are given holy tasks and share in the rule of creation, have presumably made some of the necessary connections between the human realm and the governing order. Although Lord Fairfax’s small model is not allowed to take great advantage of that tradition, confirmations of its compatibility with the greater scheme of things come forward when the poem reaches out to constellations, the sun, and all that Greece and Rome have said. Actually, the poem expands and con-
tracts simultaneously in its small-large comparisons and shifting perspectives: each stanza is a small site of praise that looks minutely into details; yet windows open upon increasingly large prospects until the culminating stanza on heaven’s map.

One effect of Marvell’s building couplets into stanzas is a hesitation in the movement toward lyric when it does come forward, which until Maria permits greater access to paradise is usually at pausal or preparatory moments. Much on the poet’s mind as a standard throughout, paradise is largely what generates that movement. But because the way is obstructed by both natural and man-made deformities, lyric pauses must come partly as escapes of time and place or as recollective and plangent moments—two versions of paradise being the lost Eden and the ruined England:

Oh Thou, that dear and happy Isle
The Garden of the World ere while,
Thou Paradise of four Seas,
Which Heaven planted us to please,
But, to exclude the World, did guard
With watry if not flaming Sword;
What luckless Apple did we tast,
To make us Mortal, and The Wast?

The development of this stanza contrasts with the epigrammatic style of the opening section as Marvell submerges its subdivisions in the affective curve of an apostrophe sustained through eight lines. The loss of England’s privilege is not dated, but civil war is evidence of it. The question the stanza comes to is not meant to be answered; it points up a contrast and makes more remarkable the preserved order of the estate as sanctuary.

Marvell performs a similar fusing of units in narrative and descriptive passages, although analytic epigrams can be seated among these as well. Couplets are useful not only for metaphoric wit but for defining, identifying, assessing, and relating, and all these activities can be inserted into loco-descriptive movements toward lyric. Because he is more interested in seeing concretely than in celebrating through much of the poem, he gives couplets several kinds of descriptive tasks, sometimes as juxtaposed snapshots, at other times as tests of shifting perspective. The account of grazing cattle, for instance, takes up several striking points of view side by side, to no apparent end except to play with perspective and therefore with the instruments of seeing:

They seem within the polisht Grass
A Landskip drawn in Looking-Glass.
And shrunk in the huge Pasture show
As Spots, so shap'd, on Faces do.
Such Fleas, ere they approach the Eye,
In Multiplying Glasses ly.
They feed so wide, so slowly move,
As Constellations do above.

Where couplets elsewhere tend to compress judgment or praise, here they slice up and organize description and play one perspective against another. The likeness of pastures to the heavens is a lowly, tentative version of the same synecdoche that brings paradise down in Maria's governance. But the narrator, absorbed in microscopes and telescopes, holds back any awareness of general laws of resemblance and juxtaposition. Each shift works a small triumph of wit, until the viewer becomes not a neutral or even necessarily an accurate observer but the owner of an eye, marveling less at the thing itself than at its appearances. Once he has set out to multiply those appearances, the speaker stops only at the boundary of the stanza itself, which makes up his picture frame and a containment for lyric's small affective sweep.

Other descriptive stanzas are more like animate emblems, paradoxically both mechanical in their make up and fluid in changing shapes and perspectives, as in the description of the nightingale:

The Nightingale does here make choice
To sing the Tryals of her Voice.
Low Shrubs she sits in, and adorns
With Musick high the squatted Thorns.
But highest Oakes stoop down to hear,
And listning Elders prick the Ear.
The Thorn, lest it should hurt her, draws
Within the Skin its shrunken claws.

Marvell's exaggerations in this case are in the interests of praise for the hushed atmosphere of the woodland, which he has compared earlier to that of a temple. The main device in both that comparison and the nightingale description is again paradoxical overstatement: the bird is very low on its squat thorn but its voice reaches very high; the elder trees and oaks are very high and stately but bend very low. Thorns that retract their needles suggest the roses of paradise or of folk ballads in which the pierced breasts of birds are emblematic of tragic love. The end-stoppage and the wit keep the stanza sufficiently bemused in tone to disarm the exaggeration.

In his manipulations of metaphor, stanza, and couplet, Marvell urges the reader to see double—to see the site of the vagrant
wanderer in all its levels and its topographical range from the local to the cosmological, and at the same time to see the words, meters, and other tangible materials out of which a poem is constructed. The place of lyric is neither strictly those verbal materials and the attitudes housed in them nor any set of particulars and universals dressed to advantage in loco description; it is rather a dynamic combination of poetic devices and emblems extending from the local setting outward to England and upward toward paradise. Its impulse for celebration is checked by the awkwardness of the presentation and the deficiencies of media, but praiseworthy ideals nonetheless emerge from the world's deformities and the materials of language. The poem finds and commemorates a principle of householding and poetic image-making that conforms in spite of everything to universal rule. In the final analysis (if there can be such a thing), "Upon Appleton House" is about approaches to a perfect form that, although beyond doubt itself, is so difficult to achieve that it puts all poetry's devices and all perspectives under strain and brings the speaker forward as the poem's first character. A given setting may contain clues to that perfection and a Fairfax may endorse it and build upon it, but the poet appears more impressed at times with the defects of expressive forms and the limits of all ways of seeing. The mind knows what will suffice, but words and images seldom pass through sudden rightness—unless fish really are so like flies in crystal, or distant cows so like fleas, or leather-boated heads like antipodes in shoes, that we experience no comic stumbling in crossing from one to the other. The poetic fit is rough and yet strangely apt at the same time; its incongruities direct our attention to substances not quite malleable enough for ordinary craft to shape them as classical propriety requires but nonetheless subject to tactful coercion and a verbal maneuvering that establishes metaphoric logic in odd juxtapositions. The passage into lyric hangs upon attractions to such things as ambered flies; when the medium clears, what the eye sees is a small, marvelous image of another world compressed into something one would not have expected to be so revealing.

CONCLUSIONS AND SPECULATIONS

Marvell's sense of place and tactics in moving from description to lyric address while making landscapes into expressive forms are the most sensitive and variable among poets of mid century with the exception of Milton, and certainly the most unpredictable. The Mower (in "The Mower against Gardens") prefers an unspoiled
naturalness and is upset by love's intrusion. But in a voice more his own, Marvell also praises Lord Fairfax for regimenting his garden and responds enthusiastically to Maria Fairfax. Woman threatens the outdoor sanctuary of "The Garden," and the speaker of "Upon Appleton House" professes to be hiding from beauty's arrows, yet Marvell rejoices in Maria's improving of gardens and woods and in "To his Coy Mistress" makes courtship the point of the hypothetical stroll from the Ganges to the Humber. "A dialogue between the Resolved Soul, and Created Pleasure" expresses distrust of nature, which also harbors the serpent of "The Coronet," and both poems are inclined to treat all things temporal as traps for the unwary. Yet both "The Garden" and "Bermudas" present landscapes presided over by providence. The pilgrims in "Bermudas" make rocks and shores a sounding board for joyous notes that reach toward heaven and rebound across the new world.

Some of these variations in the reading of landscapes can be explained by the dramatic speakers who voice them, but others appear to stem from moral and philosophic changeability over a period of years. Certainly Marvell is one of the more imaginative and experimental poets of the times. "Clorinda and Damon" and "To his Coy Mistress" are particularly important to any assessment of that variability because they go impressively against Marvell's frequent preferences for solitude. In the latter, if the lovers are to prevail over deserts of vast eternity (the spirit's final legacy), they must compress passionate experience into the few moments they have. Such compression is perhaps a synecdoche or an epitome, but rather than reducing a world to love as Donne does in placing it in his chambers, Marvell's speaker has no desire to reconstitute a broader setting, merely to control his own. Clorinda and Damon work through several aspects of place on their way to an encompassing view of Pan's realm. Although lyrics could conceivably emerge from Clorinda's interpretation of shepherdom as well as from Damon's, they would be only tinkling accompaniment to embowered love; so they devise their greater hymn according to his view of Pan.

Experimenting with such differences in the placement of lovers, new-world pilgrims, mowers, and the poet himself, Marvell takes excursions abroad that predict the exile of the romantic poets if not their states of mind or their preoccupations. When we think of these and other typical Marvellian situations, we are struck by the prominence of uprootings and relocations in them, not merely in the changing of sites but in the mind's restless shifting of positions
among Neoplatonist, Christian, Stoic, and pagan alternatives, which Marvell often entertains in debate. He is concerned enough with the loss of hospitable locality and common value to return to it frequently. The Mower, displaced from his formerly easy relationship with the meadows, seeks revenge on “Unthankful Medows” for carrying on as though Juliana had not wrecked havoc. Like Juliana’s torture of the Mower, Clora’s distraction of the speaker of “The Gallery” complicates the settings of the soul. In his tour of its impressions of Clora, the speaker has each picture present her in a different posture. None is final, but one—a conventional Arcadian pose of the innocent shepherdess—he finds preferable, perhaps because it is diffused into the attractions of hillside, flowers, and sun. Despite these variations in topography, Marvell’s lyric addresses tend to come forth at points at which something suggests a paradise, glimpses of which are more likely to occur in solitude than in the busy companies of men.

Although it is not my chief purpose to periodize such lyric locations beyond the basic contrast I have pursued between courtly poetics and radical seventeenth-century departures from it, some of the avenues one might take from Milton and the metaphysicals to later modes warrant further speculation. The ideological and historical distance from these poets to later lyricists is obviously considerable, but one imagines seeing in the underbrush at least the remnants of a path. Without doubt seventeenth-century lyric loci set new conditions for loosened connections between poetic vocation and social setting. This is less true for the cavaliers of course. With the courtly center under question, such poets as Suckling, Lovelace, Cotton, Carew, and Herrick salvage fragments of a system of codes and remnants of attitudes and tones. They accept relatively narrower limits than the metaphysicals and Milton and do not explore comparable displacements or the adventures of wandering. Nor do they claim to be guardians of place who can establish conduits from above to them, as Milton’s Genius of the Wood does. As a group seventeenth-century lyricists discard a good deal of earlier concerns with secular power and claim other kinds of authority for their personas. No important seventeenth-century poet seems to have felt that he sacrificed anything of value by doing so. The private places of Donne, Herbert, Vaughan, Milton, and Marvell turn out to be not provincial in their views but universal and central.

Dryden, Waller, Cowley, and even Marvell at times may seem exceptions to this abandoning of public provinces, or to the lack of
regret over it, and to a degree they are. Marvell praises Fairfax and Cromwell in ways that keep Old Testament figures and the founding of governments in sight. But Fairfax is commendable primarily after he has left public service; and although as a type of military hero and statesman Cromwell maintains Roman connections in "An Horatian Ode," in "The First Anniversary" Marvell praises him for bringing latter days nearer and moving beyond more empire toward final kingdom. Dryden links biblical types to empire in "Astrea Redux," *Absalom and Achitophel,* and "Threnodia Augusta" and returns to a revised courtly panegyric reminiscent of Daniel and Jonson. However, his interweaving of biblical and current events in Absalom is more analytic, judicial, and moral than lyric.

One of the questions that shift in genre raises is how to transfer the panegyric of earlier progresses and triumphs to restoration subjects. Some of the symbolism of masques and mythological narratives still shows in Dryden's association of song and ode with end things in "A Song for St. Cecilia's Day" and the ode to Anne Killigrew:

However, the facility of this and its narrow escape from comedy in the "rattling bones" flying from the four corners of the sky suggest strain. The translation from the funereal place of elegy to the visionary place of sacred verse lacks the conviction of Vaughan's
and Herbert's doomsdays or even of Marvell's postponed Latter Day in "The First Anniversary."

More convincing is the relationship of the sacred and the mundane in "Mac Flecknoe," where the poet's lute is to be handed to Shadwell rather than to heaven's probationer and Dryden can exploit a sense of exploded lyric for satiric purposes. This is a familiar idea but is perhaps worth reiterating here. The cosmic setting is useful primarily to gauge folly's growing pretensions. Shadwell will abuse the poet's calling shamefully by warbling the glories of stupidity in which, according to Flecknoe, he already outdoes very illustrious predecessors:

Heywood and Shirley were but types of thee
Thou last great prophet of tautology.
Even I, a duncé of more renown than they,
Was sent before but to prepare thy way.

Flecknoe—John-the-Baptist thus recognizes a son whose divinity he proclaims as his own last great calling, making known talents that have heretofore languished in the desert. Dryden returns to the courtly setting in establishing biblical parallels to coronation and acknowledging satire's urban throng. He thus gives Dulness the worst of the ancient and modern worlds: its tautology reduces to mindless copying what should be inspiriting divine images in historical incarnations; its coronation parodies earlier triumphs. Thus Shadwell perpetuates Roman empire, but only as a deformed or defective son perpetuates family features:

The hoary prince in majesty appear'd,
High on a throne of his own labours rear'd.
At his right hand our young Ascanius sate,
Rome's other hope, and pillar of the state.
His brows thick fogs, instead of glories, grace,
And lambent dullness plaid around his face.

The potential lyricism of the couplets and the flashes of glory that Flecknoe suggests are quickly turned around. Thick fogs and lambent dullness would obviously not have the impact they do were it not for the enthusiasm they play upon and the grandeur that might attend authentic panegyric.

The London audience for stupidity's triumph stands no less condemned than its leaders:

Th'admiring throng loud acclamations make
And omens of his future empire take.
The sire then shook the honors of his head,
And from his brows damps of oblivion shed.
Full on the filial dullness: long he stood,
Repelling from his breast the raging god;
At length burst out in this prophetic mood.

132-38

The mock-epic echoes of *Paradise Lost* that serve Pope so well in "The Rape of the Lock" and *The Dunciad* help expose dullness' service to chaos here. Among other things it is the logos that perishes—the same that filters into earlier lyric and epic settings to bring intelligible connection and governing purpose. For Dryden as for his immediate predecessors, lyric is often generated by a perception of analogues among created objects or by the sense of the total harmony they express; but these perceptions, to be reused, must be liberated from pretenders. The result is a quite different satire-lyric balance than Donne's or Marvell's. In *Songs and Sonnets*, critics and meddlers are held at arm's length by a wit that predicts and disarms them but does not get in the way of love's approved hymns; here misguided lyric commemoration sets up an overturning of fools and knaves caught in the act of spreading their verbal inflation. Enthusiasm of all sorts has grown so suspect for Dryden that rather than come when it calls Shadwell would be well-advised to write acrostics and anagrams, where (in debasement of Herbert's wit) Flecknoe suggests,

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thou may'st wings display and altars raise,
And torture one poor word ten thousand ways.
Or, if thou would'st thy different talents suit,
Set thy own songs, and sing them to thy lute.
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207-10

Dryden is able to draw in "Mac Flecknoe" upon the same universal values and epochal thought that Spenser once believed to be disseminated through Troyovant by its queen and her poets. But his point is that contemporary scribblers in all the forms they have debased—comedy, tragedy, lyric, epic—have violated the Roman heritage and broken the continuity of genres in their passage to the provinces. If the logos is to reign anew, it must have more than nature's remote corners for its resident symbols; it must have a new Augustus and a reborn classical poetics. It is less clear from "Mac Flecknoe" and *Absalom and Achitophel* than from the ode to Anne Killigrew that Dryden might wish to add to classical standards the hallowed places of his immediate predecessors and their privileged authority.

Whatever its resituations after Milton, Marvell, Cowley, Dryden, and others at mid century, lyric could not easily be coaxed back from the margins to public affairs as Spenser, Sidney, Jonson, and
LYRIC PROVINCES IN THE ENGLISH RENAISSANCE

It has since become the instrument of primarily individual experience that Hegel assumed it was inherently, but without the potential unity of ideas or crossings of the subject to a central authority that romanticism often wished, thinking nostalgically of Milton. Instead, lyric in its postromantic forms typically places before us relatively discrete environments at some distance from both a center and an audience. In A. R. Ammons’s words:

I look and reflect, but the air’s glass
jail seals each thing in its entity:

no use to make any philosophies here:
I see no
god in the holly, hear no song from
the snowbroken weeds: Hegel is not the winter
yellow in the pines: the sunlight has never
heard of trees: surrendered self among
unwelcoming forms: stranger,
hoist your burdens, get on down the road.³

Somewhere down such roads the poet assumes that another such pause will be in order, during which another setting will beckon with sufficient urgency to extract an address. Certainly his vocation depends primarily upon that calling rather than upon the sorts of duties or moral injunctions Sidney would have the poet obey, or for that matter, upon the seeing of wholes in parts.

To stop with that I know is more to fizzle than to conclude, but I resist the temptation either to seek out a better landing place in the territories opened and mapped for us this century by Stevens, Frost, Eliot, Roethke, Williams, and others, or to return once again to Milton for a kind of retrospective summary. It would take an Olympic record in hop, skip, and jump—taking off from Marvell, skipping to the romantics, and landing somewhere in the vicinity of Yeats—to get where it would be most interesting to go, and would open more questions than could be settled in reasonable space. I have already made enough short-landings to know better than risk it, or as Spenser surely would have put it (in a better figure), even wherry craft does make us wheeze and feel the muscle’s weery waite.

It is also true that I have followed throughout, silently for the most part, the premise that individual poets of any stature require whole chapters and a searching out of critical, representative poems. What count most, even in our gauging of the interplay of genre and influence, are individual, transforming minds. Authorial practice over a career tells us more about a given perfor-
mance—and about literary history, too—than any other single source. If that authorial presence proves to be as illusory as the circle or the paradise that hangs in the offing for the group I have selected, it nonetheless gives us the most interesting accompanying illusions of stylistic variation and nuance and the wherewithal to make up individualized lexicons of symbol, image, and diction if we want them. The chief value of history, genre, and theory, all important in their own right, then, is their use to us in catching the distinctive voice of a Herbert or Milton, or what we each think is that voice. To consider any further poets that extensively at this point, though it might incidentally help to define the renaissance turn I have posited, would require more than anyone would want and would do very little to get a better sense of those distinctively mapped places we have explored. Accordingly, I dodge the matter of concluding and plan instead to take up separately the most intricate of the inner workings of that turn, in Milton's Shakespeare, or Shakespeare's Milton, and the relations of poetry to drama—relations of lyric placement to social dialogue. That path from Bottom's woods to Comus's is too long and twisty for anything but its own map.