ANDREW MARVELL: THE MOST ECLECTIC POET

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CHAPTER ONE--PROSPECT

The poetry of Andrew Marvell reflects all the literary styles and manners that illuminated his seventeenth-century milieu. Refracting rather than mirroring sources and influences, his work projects no single ray. Instead, like the soul in "The Garden," it "Waves in its Plumes the various Light."

Even antithetical philosophies combine as in "A Dialogue between the Resolved Soul and Created Pleasure," where the Platonic, the Aristotelian, the metaphysical, and the classical are diffused. In a poem like "Bermudas," the symbol of Gospel as pearl ("The Gospel's Pearl") evokes Donne's propensity for rendering the physical in terms of the spiritual; the predominantly iambic tetrameter meter copies Jonson's flair for fitting the thought to the line; the diction in

> He hangs in shades the Orange bright,
> Like golden Lamps in a green Night.
> And does in the Pomgranates close,
> Jewels more rich than Ormus show's

recalls the sensuousness of Spenser; and the thought unequally weighted in "Safe from the Storms, and Prelat's rage" anticipates the witty and often absurd juxtapositions of Pope. Any single poem can thus review the Renaissance style against which John Donne and Ben Jonson had rebelled,

reveal their contemporary treatment of these old conventions, and anticipate the mode to come. Hence, Marvell eludes categorization.

Since Marvell consciously or unconsciously utilizes and successfully manipulates widely divergent techniques, this paper attempts to investigate a possible pattern of influence. The second chapter surveys the poetic and intellectual climate under which he wrote, while the third examines the lyrics against the background of the prevailing trends and of their principal exponents. The conclusion summarizes and evaluates Marvell's genius.

Simply because Marvell was swayed by such a variety of poetic fashions, it is tempting to dwell on influences and relationships, to the exclusion of a proper consideration of his own poetry. An early awareness of this failing common to many criticisms may prevent the sacrifice of the poems as entities to the dissection of their parts. Professor Grierson in Metaphysical Lyrics and Poems of the Seventeenth Century: Donne to Butler reminds his readers that "poems are not written by influences or movements or sources, but come from the living hearts of men."[1]

Indeed, poems do come from the hearts of men and Marvell verifies that "Nature wants an Art/ To conquer one resolved Heart." But can a man's heart or mind divorce

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[1]Herbert J.C. Grierson, Metaphysical Lyrics and Poems of the Seventeenth Century: Donne to Butler (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1936), p. xvii.

itself from the remainder of his body? Is it possible to live in a world of transition and upheaval without reflecting some of its change? Like the human infant, the poem is often subject to the scientific dilemma which questions whether environment or heredity plays the dominant role in its growth. Biologically or poetically, the child embodies both influences in indeterminate proportions. Overt indebtedness to one may overshadow the other, but latent within, traces of the other forever flash to the surface. Marvell's inspiration allies itself so closely to externals that separation becomes impossible.

His very real awareness of the age and its problems asserts itself in his poems and satires on political subjects. Oliver Cromwell, prominent in the Puritan coup d'état, assumes an eminence in "An Horatian Ode upon Cromwel's Return from Ireland," "The First Anniversary of the Government under O.C." and "A Poem upon the Death of O.C." which cannot be easily overlooked. Because of their occasional nature, however, these poems, excepting perhaps the "Horatian Ode" and a few isolated phrases, vibrate no sympathetic string within the modern reader. Of far more interest and appeal because of their emotional timbre, what are considered to be Marvell's early lyrics sound the more universal note. It is upon these poems that this paper focuses.

CHAPTER TWO--"FORCED TO LIVE IN STORMS AND WARRS"

Within Marvell's lifetime, England, to paraphrase Professor Bush, developed from a country in which the erudite Englishman's mind was one half medieval into a nation whose educated citizens proved themselves to be more than half modern. He further asserts that the absence of a definite demarcation between medievalism and modernism resulted in the seventeenth century's peculiar character--a character mingling and interacting old forces and new ideas, frequently unharmoniously.[1] The century fostered disgruntled landowners, learned scientists, worried churchmen, and a new-born bourgeoise, all of whose contingent problems precluded peaceful partisan relations. "An age of reaching and grasping, of intellectual strain and fresh discovery," [2] it was an era in which knowledgeable men probed deeply in their search for truth. The worlds of the state, of the church, and of the scholar rocked beneath the blows dealt them by the new science and the new philosophy.

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[1]Douglas Bush, English Literature in the Earlier Seventeenth Century, 1600-1660 (2d ed. rev.; Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1962), pp. 1-2.

[2]Hallet Smith (eds.), The Norton Anthology of English Literature, Vol.I (New York: W.W. Norton, 1962), 334.

Nurtured by this atmosphere of unrest within the confines of both church and state, John Donne and Ben Jonson--the two literary giants of the late Renaissance--span the gap of change that divides the earlier seventeenth century. Andrew Marvell, writing in the wake of their achievement, manages, in turn, to bridge their widely divergent approaches to poetry. Prior to a discussion of their influence on his work, a review should prove helpful.

Unlike so many of our modern authors who feel themselves isolated from the non-literary world, the seventeenth-century man of letters participated actively in the daily experiences of the ordinary citizen. Donne and Jonson in particular attempted to achieve a reconciliation with all aspects of their society. The former endeavored to adapt himself to the dichotomy by fusing the duality of his own nature, while the latter concentrated all the strength of his literary pursuits to impose an exterior orderliness upon his lyrics. Introspectively, the clergyman Donne fought the worldly barriers. Jonson, however, maintained close contact with cultivated people and the community.[3]

Questioning ingrained beliefs, Donne struggled desperately to establish a foothold upon the shaky ground work of doubt beneath him. The early poems treat love themes,

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[3]Geoffrey Walton, Metaphysical to Augustan(London: Bowles and Bowles, 1955), pp. 27-28.

but the later ones despair of his sins against God and of his imminent death. The seemingly unreconcilable perplexities of the world increasingly involved and intangled him in mental contortions whose rigor of mind inspired his poetry. Abstract with concrete, spiritual with physical, philosophical with theological combine in the strong, muscular lines that construct a poetical massiveness comparable to the architectural vastness and purpose of the Gothic Cathedral.

To continue the analogy, Jonson evokes the clarity, unity, symmetry, and proportion of line and expression characteristic of the Parthenon. His aim is "beauty through constructive excellence"[4]-the beauty of strength to be elicited from the eternal truths when presented in the simple, self-contained, impersonal manner of the ancient Greek and Roman classics. Whereas Donne invites the reader to share his inner agonies, Jonson normally exposes only a composed exterior. Like an iceberg, his detached surface attitude disguises his actual dimensions lurking beneath the depths. Although the exposed thought and feeling is deceptive, from his reserve,"he writes with his whole thinking mind and with proud assertion of the dignity of thought."[5]

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[4]Matthew W. Black (ed.), Elizabethan and Seventeenth-Century Lyrics (Philadelphia: J.B. Lippincott Company, 1938), p. 381.

[5]Tucker Brooke, A Literary History of England, ed. Albert C. Baugh (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, 1948), p. 628.

Thought, then, held the key to the poetic successes and failures of Donne and Jonson as well as those poets, including Marvell, who were to follow their lead. Both authors fought to initiate a mode that would modernize the poetical style. Renaissance romanticism and idealism of feeling, diction, and rhythm could no longer satisfy either their spirit or their intellect. They strove for realistic thought and communication.[6] through the English vernacular. Donne's wit had "a free-ranging and elaborating effect" while the intellectual force of Jonson demanded and cultivated discipline and clarity.[7]

Together these two men employed roughly five poetical trends--the cavalier, the pastoral, the political, the devotional, and the meditative. For the sake of convenience this poetry can be grouped under two broad categories--the cavalier and the metaphysical. Neither delineation being mutually exclusive, they nevertheless erect easily sighted signs of direction.

The courtly tradition fathered by Ben Jonson achieved its greatest expression in the cavalier lyrics and the pastorals written by Robert Herrick, Sir John Suckling, Richard Lovelace, and Thomas Carew. Abandoning Jonson's moral values, these poets, with seeming effortlessness,

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[6]Robert Lathrop Sharp, From Donne to Dryden (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1940), p.6.

[7]Walton, p. 27.

tossed off gay, melodious defiances of the world. The economical form and the technical skill remained intact, but the powerful presence of mind had been sacrificed to their epicurean philosophies.

The intellectual involvement which is innate to Donne's method could be reduced to the ludicrously trivial in the hands of a lesser poet like John Cleveland. Despite their undoubted excellence, Abraham Cowley, Richard Crashaw, George Herbert, Henry Vaughan, Andrew Marvell, and even Suckling and Carew often crash noisily into the pitfall of catachresis within each of the five genres. The following poem "On our Crucified Lord Naked, and Bloody" by Crashaw violates our sensibility and illustrates the grotesquery to which a serious topic could be reduced.

> Th' have left thee naked Lord! O that they had!
> This Garment too I would they had deny'd.
> Thee with thy selfe they have too richly clad,
> Opening the purple wardrobe of thy side.
> O never could bee found garment too good
> For thee to weare, but these, of thine owne Blood.

When it was cultivated for its effect, not its insight, conceit became mere flagrant ingenuity. Clevelandizing, as the mode was soon designated, "consisted in the invention of a series of witty hyperbolical conceits, sometimes interspersed with images, and containing a certain amount of roughage in the form of conventional erotic statements."[8]

Along with Crashaw and Cowley, Marvell had contributed Greek and Latin verses to <u>Musa Cantabrigiensis</u> in commemoration

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[8] James Vincent Cunningham, <u>Tradition and Poetic Structure: Essays in Literary History and Criticism</u> (Denver, Colorado: Alan Swallow, 1960), p. 46.

of the birth of the Princess Anne (March 17, 1637),[9] and he must, therefore, assuredly have been acquainted with their verses. Since his impressionable formative years were spent in the atmosphere of Trinity College, Cambridge, a stronghold of Royalist loyalty, he was presumably sympathetic to the courtly tradition employed by the followers of Charles. From Marvell's commendatory verses affixed to Richard Lovelace's Lucasta (1649), we know that the courtier and Marvell had been friends---an acquaintanceship which probably strengthened Marvell's cavalier leanings. Crashaw then, along with Lovelace, provided Marvell early accessibility to the extremes of the two literary movements---excesses so frequently bordering on the gross that Miss Bradbrook and Miss Lloyd Thomas discover few literary gold mines during the time when Marvell must have begun to write. Of the century's triumvirate of geniuses, only John Milton remained alive. Although a prodigious writer, he, in this period, confined his literary production to political tracts and pamphlets.[10] While the simple, strong originality of Donne and Jonson had already degenerated into unsupported ingenuity.

Within the five genres, mental dexterity fused the old with the new. By the seventeenth century, Neo-Platonism "had dwindled to treatises on love and to the idle and

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[9] The Poems and Letters of Andrew Marvell, Vol. I: Poems, ed. H.M. Margoliouth (2d ed.; Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1963), p. 215.

[10] M.C. Bradbrook and M.G. Lloyd Thomas, Andrew Marvell (Cambridge: University Press, 1961), p. 28.

more or less paradoxical questions discussed in them for the uses of polite conversation,"[11] and the corrupt Platonic cult challenged Puritan morality.[12] However, Christian Humanism, the century's basic philosophy, managed to unify "Christian faith and pagan reason into a stable framework of religious, ethical, political, economic and cultural thought"[13] whose doctrine of the transcendent powers of poetry was consistent with Puritan mysticism.[14] Since humanism now placed tremendous emphasis on man's indivuality and reasonableness, the popularity of the ancient scholastic disputations à la Aristotle revived in the débat or dialogues which intellectually discussed secular love and spiritual motivation.

In summary, the vogue attempted every possible method to achieve Sir Herbert Read's "emotional apprehension of thought."[15] To analyze and examine all experiences from all points of view, it endeavored to perceive similarities where one would ordinarily discover none. The ambiguous nature of device, emblem, epigram, conceit, pun, oxymoron, paradox, word play, antithesis, and irony were considered

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[11] Mario Praz, Studies in Seventeenth-Century Imagery, Vol. I (London: Warburg Institute, 1939), p. 50.

[12] Dennis Davison (ed.), Andrew Marvell: Selected Poetry and Prose (London: Harrap, 1952), p. 34.

[13] Bush, p. 35.

[14] E.M.W. Tillyard, The Elizabethan World Picture (London: Chatto and Windus, 1950), pp. 19-20.

[15] William Flint Thrall and Addison Hibbard, A Handbook to Literature (New York: Odyssey Press, 1962), p. 22.

most indicative of man's dubious nature and thus fit to be employed in the exploration of man's state. Andrew Marvell tried them all.

CHAPTER THREE--"TRANSPORTED BY THE MODE"

Andrew Marvell, within the context of his poetry, proves himself to be heir to the while historical development of thought and method amassed since the Middle Ages. His wielding of the classical and the metaphysical, the continental and the English, plus the Puritan and the *carpe diem* required a complete working knowledge of their respective subleties.[1] The ideas or methods imbodied in his work seem to form not so much a continuum of belief as a group of études in the five genres popular at the time. Perhaps in an effort to satisfy some individual need, Marvell experimented with the prevalent modes. Or maybe his poems were just mental exercises. Since the lyrics avoid the deeply personal, one might be tempted, for the purpose of establishing an analytical guide to his work, to speculate upon an evolution in theme and treatment---the earlier poems being inspired by Ben Jonson, the middle ones by John Donne, and the last ones, a synthesis. Marvell, strictly adhering to the style of neither, must, nevertheless, be considered a descendant of both traditions. He

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[1]Douglas Bush, *English Literature in the Earlier Seventeenth Century, 1600-1660* (2d ed.; Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1962), p. 168.

> combines a fresh, muscular, agile, subtle, and ironic metaphysical wit and the disciplined rationality, clarity, impersonality, economy, and structural and stylistic sense of a classical artist, the cultured easy grace of a cavalier and the religious and moral earnestness of a Puritan Platonist, a feeling for nature both spontaneous and philosophic and a high tragic intensity in poems of love; and to all themes and moods he brings a sensible but flexibly expressive suppleness of rhythm, in the short couplet and in other forms.[2]

Because the dates of most of the poems are unknown, any attempt to establish a chronological sequence must be labeled supposition.

Musa Cantabrigiensis, published on the birth of the Princess Anne in March, 1637, contains an early set of Greek and Latin verses by Marvell. Retaining an interest in his schoolboy exercises, Marvell perpetuated the Greek and Latin tradition in "Hortus," an early rendering of "The Garden," and "Ros," a prior version of "On a Drop of Dew."

> He was a great master of the Latin tongue; an excellent poet in Latin or English: for Latin verses there was no man could come into competition with him.[3]

Additional commemorative verse in English by Marvell can be found in Lachrymae Musarum (1649) published on the death of Henry Hastings and in Richard Lovelace's Lucasta (1649).

This later occasional poetry carries the imprint of

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[2] Bush, pp. 167-168.

[3] Oliver Lawson Dick (ed.), Aubrey's Brief Lives (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1957), p. 196.

a moderate royalist[4] - a tendency which is not surprising in view of the allegiance of the university to the court. The light-hearted, devil-may-care effrontery of the Cavaliers had probably captured with considerable ease the imaginative fancy of the young Marvell, and their classical outlook posed no problems to him. He shared their graceful gaiety, their melodious urbanity and decorum, and their love and war themes - but with a difference.

"The Match," "Mourning," "Daphnis and Chloe," "The Gallery," and "The Unfortunate Lover" are all poems of this fashionable world. Because each abounds with the Petrarchan compliment and the ingenious, over-elaborated conceits characteristic of cavalier verse, Marvell in these poems, is most modishly metaphysical.[5] Consider this example of cavalier flattery from "Mourning."

> And, while vain Pomp does her restrain
> Within her solitary Bowr,
> She courts her self in am'rous Rain;
> Herself both Danae and the Showr.

The pomp of grief confines the girl and she cries

> AS IF [my capitals] she, with those precious Tears,
> Would strow the ground where Strephon lay.

Paradoxically, however, the tears that should mourn her dead sweetheart instead soften her heart for another love.

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[4] Dennis Davison (ed.), Andrew Marvell: Selected Poetry and Prose (London: Harrap, 1952), p. 21.

[5] M.C. Bradbrook and M.G. Lloyd Thomas, Andrew Marvell (Cambridge: University Press, 1961), p. 29.

In the last stanza the poet feigns reservation of appraisal,

> I yet my silent Judgement keep,
> Disputing not what they believe:

Yet with the flash of a double-edged sword he asserts:

> But sure as oft as Women weep,
> It is to be suppos'd they grieve.

Marvell employs all the current themes and styles of Suckling and Carew - classical allusions, Petrarchan conceits, the new science, metaphysical conceit, irony, the pastoral tradition - but with a critical apprehension that detaches him from their excesses and allies him to Jonson. Furthermore, in these "frankly ironic" pastorals, nature "supplies the positive standards by which the courtly lovers are criticized."[6]

Just as "The Gallery," a poem similar to "Mourning," stresses "the underlying need for love, divorced from the mannered responses and distorted sensibility"[7] encouraged by the Platonic cult, so "To His Coy Mistress" poses "an essentially healthy plea for the fulfillment of love as opposed to the 'crime' of fashionable coyness."[8] The very essence of youthful vitality inherent within the cavalier doctrine of <u>carpe diem</u> and the far-fetched hypothesis common to John Donne combine extravagances to

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[6] Bradbrook and Lloyd Thomas, p. 30.

[7] Davison, p. 40.

[8] <u>Ibid.</u>, p. 42.

reach the heights of "To His Coy Mistress" - the peak of Marvell's poetic achievement.[9] Playing with the idea of immortality, Marvell imagines ways to while away eternity. Abstractions coupled with concrete Petrarchan compliments to the mistress

> Thou by the Indian Ganges side
> Should'st Rubies find: I by the Tide
> of Humber would complain.

flee with the beat of wings that heralds the approach of the chariot which waits for no man:

> But at my back I alwaies hear
> Times winged Charriot hurrying near.

Once illusion has been destroyed, he realizes that immortality "yonder all before us [lyes]" in what was to him the Christian "Desarts of vast Eternity." With unmitigated reality worthy of Donne, he taunts the girl:

> then Worms shall try
> That long preserv'd Virginity:
> And your quaint Honour turn to dust;
> And into ashes all my Lust.

Since Hellenic suspension of time forever remains an impossibility, he exhorts her to defy life's transience by enjoying the eternal pursuit while they are still alive.

> Thus, though we cannot make our Sun
> Stand still, yet we will make him run.

Miss Sackville-West analyzes the poem as supremely

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[9]Victoria Sackville-West, Andrew Marvell (London: Faber and Faber, 1929), p. 17.

metaphysical,[10] and C. S. Lewis in _Seventeenth Century Studies Presented to Sir Herbert Grierson_ asserts that "almost every element of Donne except metrical roughness appears here."[11] Nevertheless, it conforms to M. Legouis' delineation of "deux manières" in Marvell.

> Il se laisse aller à sa fantaisie, suit l'inspiration jusqu' à ce qu'elle s'arrête; ou bien il concentre, ramasse, ordonne en vue d'un effet unique. Gracieux babillard à ses moments de détente, il sait être quand il veut un logicien en vers, mais un logicien passionné. C'est alors qu'on peut le proclamer classique au sens le plus élevé du mot, si l'on ne se laisse pas rebuter par les bizarreries de son style.[12]

This poem, undoubtedly his _tour de force_, by virtue of the successful handling of its light, serious ambivalence pivots us to a consideration of the more thoughtful or personal studiousness of some of the other lyrics.

Perhaps in an effort to accept the courtly pretension that life should not be taken seriously, Marvell resorted to the pastoral tradition. Surrounded by political turbulence, however, he, a man who "would not play the good-fellow in any man's company in whose hands he would not trust his life,"[13] undoubtedly found carefree indifference to social concerns incompatible with his inner

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[10] Sackville-West, p. 51.

[11] _Seventeenth-Century Studies Presented to Sir Herbert Grierson_ (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1938), p. 83.

[12] Pierre Legouis, _André Marvell: poète, puritain, patriote, 1621-1678_ (London: Oxford University Press, 1928), pp. 128-129.

[13] Dick, p. 196.

nature. These cavalier poems, untrue to the lyrical spirit, often subordinated real feeling or emotion to a conventional mode or turn of mind. Thus Marvell altered his execution of the mode.

Discarding the apparent effortlessness and personal detachment common to Lovelace and Suckling, Marvell turns inward for a time. He denies physical love in order to concentrate upon the spiritual nature. A modification of the usual Court pastoral can be observed in "Clorinda and Damon" where, for all its apparent triviality and persuasion to enjoy, a seriousness of tone prevails. The "unfrequented Cave" that Clorinda romanticizes into "Loves Shrine" is rejected by Damon as "Virtue's Grave." Instead of running off at the end of the poem to "kiss within the Hay," these two rustics join in a song to the god Pan who has here attained a higher significance than the usual mythological concept.

> By this distinctive moral implication Marvell is differentiated, not only from the Cavalier poets, but also from Donne, who transcended rather than criticized, and who advanced to a faith in love by the way of scepticism rather than by the recognition of new standards of values that Puritanism was to offer.[14]

The principals of another pastoral "A Dialogue between Thyrsis and Dorinda" proceed a step farther by rejecting the oat-pipe music of the earth in favor of the Elysian "Musick of the Spheres." Having denied the Platonic love

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[14]Davison, p. 40.

cult, "Thyrsis and Dorinda" and other similar eclogues adopt a system of metaphysics akin to Platonism, if not Christian Humanism:

> Oh sweet! oh sweet! How I my future state
> By silent thinking, Antidate:
> I prethee let us spend out time to come
> In talking of <u>Elizium</u>.

From this longing to the true meditative state requires only a short step.

Although the two eclogues follow the same mode of expression, the strain of thought in "Thyrsis and Dorinda" diametrically opposes the Cavalier exhortation "Now let us sport us while we may" ("To His Coy Mistress") implicit within "Ametas and Thestylis." "A Dialogue between the Soul and Body" and "A Dialogue between the Resolved Soul and Created Pleasure" extend and reduce the theme of renunciation to its ultimate essence, the débat between the body and the soul. The latter poem represents the polarity in terms of a battle:

> Courage my Soul, now learn to wield
> The weight of thine immortal Shield.
> Close on Thy Head Thy Helmet bright.
> Ballance thy Sword against the Fight.

wherin the soul fortifies itself against the insidious weapons of Pleasure---food, idleness, perfume, vanity, music, woman, wealth, power, and knowledge---with these epigrammatic replies that "fense/ The Batteries of alluring Sense."

A Soul that knowes not to presume
Is Heaven's and its own perfume

or

None thither mounts by the degree
Of Knowledge, but Humility.

"A Dialogue between the Soul and Body," however, presents a duality which cannot so easily be reconciled. The image of the soul being imprisoned within the body is a conventional one;

<u>Soul</u>

O Who shall, from this Dungeon, raise
A Soul inslav'd so many Wayes?
With bolts of Bones, that fetter'd stands
In Feet; and manacled in Hands.
Here blinded with an Eye; and there
Deaf with the drumming of an Ear.
A Soul hung up, as 'twere in Chains
Of Nerves, and Arteries, and Veins.
Tortur'd, besides each other part,
In a vain Head, and double Heart.

Yet this poem also incarcerates the body within the soul to enforce the full impact of the human paradox.

<u>Body</u>

O who shall me deliver whole,
From bonds of this Tyrannic Soul?
Which, stretcht upright, impales me so,
That mine own Precipice I go;
And warms and moves this needless Frame:
(A fever could but do the same.)
And, wanting where its spight to try,
Has made me love to let me dye.
A Body that could never rest,
Since this ill Spirit it possest.

Thus it would seem to assert that the spiritual and physical elements are at once separate and intertwined.

This perception more realistically depicts the nature of man than does "A Dialogue between the Resolved Soul and Created Pleasure," which allowed the complete triumph of the soul. Humanity by virtue of its very nature disallows perfection. It is a goal to be sought, but one which can never be attained on earth. Note, for example, "On a Drop of Dew." Here the soul

> Remembering still its former height,
> Shuns the sweat leaves and blossoms green;
> And, recollecting its own Light,
> Does, in its pure and circling thoughts, express
> The greater Heaven in an Heaven less.

The "circling thoughts," symbols of the perfect and eternal, suggest the soul's potential which remains unfulfilled so long as it remains "in a Heaven less." Miss Wallerstein says of the poem that

> In its conception of the cosmos or its theology and in its imagery the poem is an expression of Renaissance neo-Platonism, in contrast to his Dialogue Between the Resolved Soul and Created Pleasure, the elements of whose Platonism had been long since woven into the texture of Christianity. The poem is a formal statement of the soul's place in the universe in the extreme neo-Platonic view. The soul of man, a ray of the clear fountain of Eternal Day, or in other words an emanation of the Divine Mind, enters reluctantly into the bodily life. To enter is a corruption, for to do so the soul leaves the World of pure intelligence and the contemplation of the One (or the Good), in whom are absolute Truth and Beauty, to become entangled in matter, which is nothingness. And it can have its

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[15] J.E. Saveson, "Marvell's 'On a Drop of Dew'," Notes and Queries, V, (1958), 298.

> highest life, even in bodily form, only when it turns away from sense and appetite and back to thought and through thought to God.[16]

The need for thought, then, the key to the century, unlocks the door to Marvell's frequent meditations. Ideally, the complete man could manage to secure a balance between his sense and his spirit. To do so requires concentrated pensiveness. Often, however, his attempts at reconciliation lead him even deeper into the dilemma.

"The Coronet" illustrates man's overwhelming inadequacy in any confrontation with the conflict. Whenever the poet seeks to redress the wrongs inflicted upon Christ, he finds his offerings of poetry to be inadequate--"my fruits are only flow'rs." Instead of the mature fruit of service that would be an acceptable offering, he can only produce the transitory symbol of its potential ripeness. To worship Christ in the same manner that he would woo a shepherdess will not suffice.

> Alas I find the Serpent old
> That, twining in his speckled breast,
> About the flow'rs disguis'd does fold,
> With wreaths of Fame and Interest,
> Ah, foolish Man, That would debase with them
> And mortal Glory, Heaven's Diadem!

Since his efforts prove unfit to accomplish their original intent, the poet can only hope

> That they, while Thou on both their Spoils dost tread,
> May crown thy Feet, that could not crown Thy Head.

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[16]Ruth Wallerstein, Studies in Seventeenth-Century Poetic (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1961), p. 162.

Such realization of human pride and unworthiness when faced with divine humility calls to mind the poetry of George Herbert. M. Legouis asserts that "une préoccupation mystique, la recherche de l'unité absolue par l'élèmination de tout ce que est adventice ou accessoire."[17] But whereas Herbert would attempt to eliminate all worldly considerations, Marvell uses nature as a step in his transcendence. Nevertheless, the method, too, reflects Herbert. These religious poems share Herbert's meditative and sober piety, his love of symbol and imagery,[18] and his balance and unity of thought.[19] The change from the Aristotelian débat of the Dialogues to the monologue to self and to Christ was a subtle one. In "The Coronet," in particular, he holds a conversation with himself more than with Christ. Professor Martz has observed that "the central meditative action consists of an interior drama, in which a man projects a self upon a mental stage, and there comes to understand that self in the light of a divine presence."[20] Certainly "The Coronet" complies with this definition.

To project himself upon a mental stage easily suited Marvell's metaphysical turn of mind. The highly intellectual tactileness of the emblem offered him a more tangible means of grasping the spiritual. But whereas Herbert's mystical

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[17] Legouis, p. 122.

[18] J. Howard Masterman, The Age of Milton (London: G. Bell, 1924), p. 108.

[19] Tucker Brooke, A Literary History of England (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, 1948), p. 643.

[20] Louis Martz, The Meditative Poem (New York: New York University Press, 1963), p. xxxi.

pursuit recognizes that Jesus must provide the redemption, Marvell presumes to crown Him. Herbert, more intensely involved in his attempt to realize the presence of God, expurgates all irrelevant material from his images. Marvell seems to take more delight in the technique. His religious interest, more practical and rational than Herbert's, addresses itself to the problems arising from man's participation in society. Mr. Davison suggests that his early cavalier affinities had probably prevented a Puritan revulsion at culture,[21] but Puritanical Milton had proposed a similar Christian Humanist approach in his tractate "Of Education."

Thus for Marvell the emblematic form could work equally well in a non-religious poem. The enigmatic "The Unfortunate Lover" transports the mode to its extreme. So outrageous is its conceit that Miss Bradbrook and Miss Lloyd Thomas assert that it contains "the only purely artificial scene in all of Marvell's poetry":

> While Nature to his Birth presents
> This masque of quarrelling Elements;
> A num'rous fleet of Corm'rants black,
> That sail'd insulting o're the Wrack,
> Receiv'd into their cruel Care,
> Th' unfortunate and abject Heir:
> Guardians most fit to entertain
> The Orphan of the Hurricane.

The whole poem they label "pure Clevelandism."[22] M. Legouis observes that "l'hyperbole est poussée si haut qu'un homme d'aujourd'hui est tenté d'y voir une intention du parodie."[23]

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[21]Davison, p. 36.

[22]Bradbrook and Lloyd Thomas, p. 29.

[23]Legouis, p. 73.

Not all attempts, however, reach its level of absurdity. Like Crashaw, Marvell is capable of compounding image upon image, sensuously perceived, in order to rhapsodize the grief through which he hopes to achieve insight into God's nature. "Eyes and Tears" illustrates this reliance upon image:

> Thus let your Streams o'reflow your Springs,
> Till Eyes and Tears be the same things:
> And each the other's difference bears;
> These weeping Eyes, those seeing Tears.

These "Tears of Light" in Crashaw are conceived in terms of the Petrarchan convention of flattery; Marvell, however, chooses to interpret his tears through a comparison with natural phenomenon--a tendency that prevailed throughout his verse.

Miss Bradbrook and Miss Lloyd Thomas find a definite change in Marvell's poetry after he transferred his allegiance from Charles to Cromwell and after he became tutor to Lord Fairfax's daughter. Because it contains some of the old emblematic, conceited style,[24] they designate "Upon Appleton House" as the transitional piece. In the peacefulness that Nun Appleton's natural surroundings afforded him, Marvell could consider the problems of the age away from the false values of the court and of society. It was an escape, not in the attitude of cavalier dismissal from the mind, but through a kinship with spiritual goo d that he discovered there.[25] "Upon the Hill and Grove at

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[24]Bradbrook and Lloyd Thomas, p. 33.

[25]Robin Skelton, "Rowland Watkins and Andrew Marvell," Notes and Queries, V (1958), 532.

Bill-borow" had found the trees to contain truth

> Writ already in their Heart.
> For they ('tis credible) have sense,
> As we, of Love and Reverence.

And at Nun Appleton Marvell felt himself above the earth.

> Thus I, easie Philosopher,
> Among the Birds and Trees confer....
> Thrice happy he who, not mistook,
> Hath read in Natures mystick Book....
> How safe, methinks, and strong, behind
> These Trees have I incomp'd my Mind;
> Where beauty, aiming at the Heart,
> Bends in some Tree its useless Dart;
> And where the World no certain Shot
> Can make, or me it toucheth not.
> But I on it securely play,
> And gaul its Horsemen all the Day.

Since the spirit of the times had called into doubt all doctrinal beliefs, personal religion had to suffice. He expresses a genuine delight in meditation and contemplation of the natural good that can serve as a medium to a glimpse of the spiritual good. Nature for Marvell assumes a religious quality.

> The arching Boughs unite between
> The Columnes of the Temple green;
> And underneath the winged Quires
> Echo about their tuned Fires.

Only here is it possible to emulate the lost paradise of Eden and of England.

Original sin, though not explicit, is nevertheless a recurrent theme. In "Clorinda and Damon," for instance, Clorinda,like Eve, tries to lead Damon astray--a noted departure from the cavalier ethos. Although the idealized courtesan Juliana of the "Mower" poems remains, these later girls for the most part are depicted in their youthful

innocence, a state which precludes corruptibility. "The Unfortunate Lover" observes "Alas, how pleasant are their dayes/With whom the Infant Love yet playes!" M. Legouis notes that Marvell "marque...la distination entre le désir et l'amour, lust et love."[26] Thus the "fair Blossoms" of the girl in "Young Love" "are too green/ Yet for Lust, but not for Love." "The Picture of little T.C. in a Prospect of Flowers" depicts her taming nature and evoking the love which "Is the Conjunction of the Mind." Marvell, however, sees a possibility that as an adult, though virtuous, she might still become the "Enemy of Man"; and he longs to witness her present state perpetuated throughout her life.

> O then let me in time compound,
> And parly with those conquering Eyes;
> Ere they have try'd their force to wound,
> Ere, with their glancing wheels, they drive
> In triumph over Hearts that Strive,
> And then that yield but more despise.
> Let me be laid,
> Where I may see thy Glories from some Shade.

She bears inherent within so much potentiality that the poet looks forward to being able to look back upon its fulfillment from the grave. Thus he invokes her prudence:

> But O young beauty of the Woods,
> Whom Nature courts with fruits and flow'rs,
> Gather the Flow'rs, but Spare the Buds;
> Lest Flora angry at Thy crime,
> To Kill her Infants in their prime,
> Do quickly make th' Example Yours;
> And, ere we see,
> Nip in the blossome all our hopes and Thee.

Nature, unlike that in the cavalier pastorals, no longer provides merely a backdrop for the transferred

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[26]Legouis, p. 71.

Court. Its rustics do not symbolize an ideal projection of the poet. Instead, "Damon the Mower" toils and sweats to harvest man's foodstuffs and to provide a "Nature, orderly and neat" for meditation. He is close to the earth and the earth claims him as its own.

> I am the Mower Damon, Known
> Through all the Meadows I have mown.
> On me the Morn her dew distills
> Before her darling Daffadils.
> And, if at Noon my toil me heat,
> The Sun himself licks off my Sweat.
> While, going home, the Ev'ning sweet
> In Cowslip-water bathes my feet.

Having the character of one just evicted from Paradise, "The Mower Against Gardens" scorns the formal gardens of civilized man.

> Luxurious Man, to bring his Vice in use,
> Did after him the World seduce:
> And from the fields the Flow'rs and Plants alluse,
> Where Nature was most plain and pure.
> He first enclos'd within the Gardens square
> A dead and standing pool of Air....
> 'Tis all enforc'd; the Fountain and the Grot;
> While the sweet Fields do lye forgot:
> Where willing Nature does to all dispense
> A wild and fragrant Innocence:
> And _Fauns_ and _Faryes_ do the Meadow till,
> More by their presence than their skill.
> Their Statues polish'd by some ancient hand,
> May to adorn the Gardens stand:
> But howso'ere the Figures do excel,
> The _Gods_ themselves with us do dwell.

Yet the tamer of the meadows serves as the instrument whereby nature's will becomes subjugated to that of man. And he likewise exhibits all human foibles. The

> mind, which once reflected the harmonious unity of nature, has been divided and disturbed by love, and his quest of artificial luxury has corrupted nature's wild and fragrant Innocence! The Mower with his scythe, who replaces the pastoral shepherd, is himself a destroyer, and a symbol of time and death.[27]

[27]Bush, p. 171.

Emblematically and overtly Marvell states the comparison: "For Death thou art a Mower too."

Since he is so concerned about civilization's encroachment and decline, Marvell longs for a return to the aboriginal paradise that England had once been. It is interesting to note that his concern for human potential in "The Picture of Little T.C." "Who can foretel for what high cause/ This Darling of the Gods was born!" parallels his regard for England in "The Character of Holland"

> For now of nothing may our State despair,
> Darling of Heaven, and of Men the Care;
> Provided that they be what they have been,
> Watchful abroad, and honest still within.

But there clearly did exist reason for despair.

> This royal throne of Kings, this scept'red isle,
> This earth of majesty, this seat of Mars,
> This other Eden, demiparadise,...
> This blessed plot, this earth, this realm, this England...
> (Richard II, Act II, Scene i)

had disappeared before Marvell's eyes. England had been plunged into a Civil War whose cause, "whether it be a war of religion or of liberty," Marvell considered "too good to have been fought for. Men," he says, "ought to have trusted God--they ought to have trusted the King with the whole matter."[28] Aware that the country had fallen "from its paradise into the realities of the modern world,"[29] he laments the loss in "Upon Appleton House":

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[28]Hugh MacDonald, The Poems of Andrew Marvell (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1963), p. xxxix.

[29]Matthew W. Black (ed.), Elizabethan and Seventeenth-Century Lyrics (Philadelphia: J.B. Lippincott Company, 1938), p. 321.

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?

Only within England's great men did Marvell foresee any salvation. Thomas Lord Fairfax, Commander of the Parliamentary forces, by means of personal worthiness and public service, attracted Marvell's admiration.

And yet there walks one on the Sod
Who, had it pleased him and God,
Might once have made our Gardens spring,
Fresh as his own and flourishing.

But conscience dictated that he abandon the struggle; therefore, Fairfax retired to the solitude and peace of Nun Appleton. In "The Garden" Marvell attempts to emulate his employer's retreat to nature.

Fair quiet, have I found thee here,
And Innocence thy sister dear!
Mistaken long, I sought you then
In busie Companies of Men.
Your sacred plants, if here below,
Only among the Plants will grow.
Society is all but rude,
To this delicious Solitude.

Philosophical contemplation answered his need to examine man's condition and future direction. Using every faculty at his command, he immersed himself in meditation in order to apprehend the presence and meaning of God.[30] In the garden it was possible for the hope in the greenness of the grass to be instilled within a "green thought in a green Shade." Thus the soul, freed from the body, "into the boughs

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[30]Martz, p. xviii.

does glide" like the Bird of Paradise. But, as in the original Eden,

> 'twas beyond a Mortal's share
> To wander solitary there:
> Two Paradises 'twere in one
> To live in Paradise alone.

The sun dial image returns Marvell to the temporal and he realizes the ineffectuality of his retreat. Ultimately, he joins Oliver Cromwell, "the perfect vehicle of the aspirations of the age,"[31]

> Who, from his private Gardens, where
> He liv'd reserved and austere...
> /Had/ by industrious Valour /climbed/
> To ruine the great Work of Time,
> And cast the Kingdome old
> Into another Mold.
> ("An Horatian Ode Upon Cromwel's Return from Ireland")

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[31]Fred Marnau (ed.), Andrew Marvell (London: Grey Walls Press, 1948), p. 13.

CHAPTER FOUR--RETROSPECT

By his own admission in "On Mr. Milton's Paradise Lost," Marvell was "transported by the Mode," a follower of poetic fashions. Since his poems were only published posthumously in 1681, it is a reasonable assumption that they were a private poetry; or at the very most, intended only for close friends. Miss Wallerstein views them as "a series of lyric commentaries upon life, not a philosophical poem. In his early verse," she says, "he assayed, like others of his time, what could be said, not very seriously, from a number of points or view."[1] Marvell borrowed inveterately; but this "most eclectic of poets,"[2] transformed each acquisition into something uniquely his own. He could execute the cavalier, the pastoral, the political, the religious, and the meditative poem with equal skill and ease. Since Donne and Jonson mingled inseparably in

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[1]Ruth Wallerstein, Studies in Seventeenth-Century Poetic (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1961), p. 336.

[2]Louis Martz, The Meditative Poem (New York: New York University Press, 1963), p. xxxix.

his themes and style, Mr. Kenner contends that he summarized the two modes[3]---the metaphysical and the classical cavalier.

Marvell was possessed by a compulsion to write: "For something guides my hand that I must write" ("To his Worthy Friend Doctor Witty upon his Translation of The Popular Errors"). Perhaps the body of his lyrics was nothing more than a group of exercises in different themes and styles whose source of inspiration was nature---a nature in which man was inextricably involved. Miss Sackville-West, however, asserts that

> he was a man with a genuine but shallow vein of inspiration, out of which he had extracted the maximum yield of riches before he turned to the more mundane activities which satisfied the other side of his temperament. Here is no wastage to deplore. Marvell had done his best before he set aside the muse of poetry and devoted his talents to the service of his country.[4]

And at his best, he is very great indeed.

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[3]Hugh Kenner, (ed.), Seventeenth Century Poetry (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1964), p. xxxii.

[4]Victoria Sackville-West, Andrew Marvell (London: Faber and Faber, 1929), p. 10.

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