

NATURAL DETAILS IN THE POETRY OF  
ANDREW MARVELL

by

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### SYNOPSIS

This thesis sets out to examine the natural details that occur in Marvell's poetry, and to discuss the literary questions - both historical and critical - which such an examination brings to light. It is divided into four parts. The first part is introductory: chapter one suggests that an important change took place in the choice and function of natural details in poetry during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries; chapter two provides a historical survey of Marvell scholarship and criticism, and traces the emergence of various attitudes to the poet's use of natural details, showing how these reflect changing attitudes to poetry and nature. Part II isolates the details from their contexts: chapter three discusses the sources from which they were drawn, bringing together and adding to the information that has been discovered concerning Marvell's familiarity with the natural histories, and his indebtedness to other poets; chapter four deals with the sensuous and intellectual qualities of individual details. Part III considers the relevance to the poetry of contemporary views about nature: in chapter five as a philosophical or theological concept; in chapter six as the physical environment. The final part attempts to describe the natural details in context: the three chapters, seven to nine, deal with various aspects of

the relationship between details from nature and the meaning they convey, and include accounts of formal imagery, emblems, conceits, description, and "nature poetry".

The bibliographies at the end list the books referred to in the course of the thesis.

**NOTE:** All the quotations from Marvell's poetry in the text are taken from The Poems and Letters of Andrew Marvell, ed. H.M. Margoliouth, 2nd., ed., 2 vols. (Oxford, 1952).

## PART I

### INTRODUCTORY

## Chapter I

### INTRODUCTION

In 1882, Oskar Dolch published a short treatise on The Love of Nature in Early English Poetry (Dresden). His introductory remarks include the following statement:

There lies an endless treasure of meaning hid in Nature, but just as much or as little, as the soul of every one can see in her. (p.3)

He should have added that there can be more than one kind of "meaning", and that the meaning any given poet can see in nature will depend on a good deal more than the quality of his individual soul. The meaning found in nature will be conditioned largely by what the poet is looking for, and this in turn will be conditioned by the preoccupations - theological, philosophical, scientific, aesthetic - of his age's culture. Even the experience of seeing will differ, not only from individual to individual<sup>1</sup>, but also from era to era. Compare three ways of looking at a flower, in poems taken from widely separated periods of English poetry. First, Chaucer's praise of the daisy in the Prologue to "The Legend of Good Women":

<sup>1</sup> See the discussion of the idiosyncrasies of visual perception in Keats, Wordsworth and others: Robert Graves, "How Poets See", The Crowning Privilege (Penguin Books, 1959), pp.314-327.

. . . of al the floures in the mede,  
 Thanne love I most thise floures white and rede,  
 Swiche as men callen daysyes in our toun.  
 To hem have I so gret affeccioun,  
 As I seyde erst, whanne comen is the May,  
 That in my bed ther daweth me no day  
 That I nam up and walkyng in the mede  
 To seen this flour ayein the sonne sprede,  
 Whan it upryseth erly by the morwe.  
 That blisful sighte softneth al my sorwe,  
 So glad am I, whan that I have presence  
 Of it, to doon it alle reverence,  
 As she that is of alle floures flour,  
 Fulfilled of al vertu and honour,  
 And evere ilyke faire, and fressh of hewe;  
 And I love it, and ever ylike newe,  
 And evere shal, til that myn herte dye.  
 Al swere I nat, of this I wol nat lye;  
 There loved no wight hotter in his lyve.  
 And whan that hit ys eve, I renne blyve,  
 As sone as evere the sonne gynneth weste,  
 To seen this flour, how it wol go to reste,  
 For fere of nyght, so hateth she darknesse.  
 Hire chere is pleynty sprad in the brightnesse  
 Of the sonne, for ther yt wol uncloze.  
 Allas, that I ne had Englyssh, ryme or prose,  
 Suffisant this flour to preyse aryght!  
 But helpeth, ye that han konnyng and myght,  
 Ye lovers that kan make of sentement;  
 In this cas oghte ye be diligent  
 To forthren me somewhat in my labour,  
 Whethir ye ben with the leef or with the flour.  
 (Text F, ll.41-72, The Works of Geoffrey Chaucer,  
 ed. F.N.Robinson, 2nd. ed. (London, 1957), pp.  
 483-484.)

Chaucer's devotion to the daisy is charming, almost child-like in its naivety, and his delight in contemplating the flower comes through in the freshness of the verse. But in fact, this passage is not so original as its air of spontaneity might suggest. F.N.Robinson provides some of the background in his introduction to the poem:

. . . there is evidence, in both French and English

poetry, of the existence of a cult of the marguerite . . . his celebration of this queen of flowers contains many lines and phrases paralleled in Deschamps, Machaut, and Froissart, and some perhaps from Boccaccio. (p.480)

The reference in the last line of the quoted passage also indicates that Chaucer was appealing to an established fashion. Robinson notes:

The relative merits of the flower and the leaf were a subject of poetic debate in Chaucer's time, as they were in the next century, when the poem entitled the Flower and the Leaf was composed. (p.480)

Chaucer does not, in his poetry, see the daisy at all precisely. It is "ayein the sonne sprede"; it is "white and rede"; at night "it wol go to reste"; in the sunshine "it wol unclothe"; but apart from these slight descriptive touches, we are given only abstract or generalized references to the flower's freshness or the poet's own delight. Chaucer sees what his age saw in nature. J.A.W. Bennett sums up the situation:

It was the all-inclusive pattern, the sense of glorious richness in diversity produced by the juxtaposing of each genus and species, that fascinated Chaucer (and many a medieval philosopher) more than the 'inscape', the anatomy, of the separate animal, tree, or flower. Thus, for all Chaucer's delight in the daisy, we could hardly tell from his references alone what sort of flower it was; it is the contrasting white and red that he loves; just as he is content to say that the flowers Emily gathers are 'party white and red', or that a meadow is 'with floures swote enbrouded al'.

(The Parlement of Foules (Oxford, 1957), p.148)

The flower's "meaning" is conditioned by the preoccupations of the fourteenth century: it suggests the flower and leaf controversy; it finds expression in the terms of Courtly Love;

and there is even a hint of the devotion paid to the Virgin Mary in the wording of the lines:

As she that is of alle floures flour,  
Fulfilled of al vertu and honour,  
And evere ilyke faire, and fressh of hewe.

Second, Robert Herrick's "To Daffadills":

1. Faire Daffadills, we weep to see  
You haste away so soone:  
As yet the early-rising Sun  
Has not attain'd his Noone.

Stay, stay,  
Untill the hasting day  
Has run  
But to the Even-song;  
And, having pray'd together, we  
Will goe with you along.

2. We have short time to stay, as you,  
We have as short a Spring;  
As quick a growth to meet Decay,  
As you, or anything.

We die,  
As your hours doe, and drie  
Away,  
Like to the Summer's raine;  
Or as the pearles of Morning's dew  
Ne'r to be found againe.

(The Poetical Works of Robert Herrick, ed.  
F.W. Moorman (Oxford, 1915), p.125)

Herrick, writing in the seventeenth century, shows the influence of Jonson and the classics in his elegant treatment of the theme of earthly transience, and of the emblem tradition in his use of details from nature. He looks straight past the objects - described only as "faire" - to the human significance that can be drawn from them.

Third, some lines from John Clare's "The Primrose Bank":



The dew is on the thorn,  
     And the primrose underneath  
     Just agen the mossy root  
 Is smiling to the morn,

With its little brimming eye  
     And its yellow rims so pale  
     And its crimp and curdled leaf -  
 Who can pass its beauties by

Without a look of love  
     When we tread the little path  
     That skirts the woodland ride?  
 Who can pass, nor look above

To Him who blesses earth  
     With these messengers of spring  
     And decorates the fields  
 For our happiness and mirth?  
 (Selected Poems of John Clare, ed. Geoffrey Grigson,  
 The Muses' Library (London, 1950), p.167)

Clare, like Herrick, also turns from the object to what it tells him, from the primrose to its Creator. But he has a much keener eye for the thing itself. We gather from his poem a clear idea of the physical features of the flower - its eye, its pale yellow rims, its leaf; and of its situation - "agen the mossy root" of the dewy thorn, which stands by "the little path/That skirts the woodland ride". He sees the flower first, in detail, before he is led to ponder its meaning.

Ignoring the complexities of the different cultural settings in which these three pieces of verse were written, one can still pick out a major point of difference between the first two and the third. In Chaucer's and Herrick's poems, the natural details are general; in Clare's, they are specific. Chaucer talks about "thise floures", "this flour", "the mede" - no

particular daisy, in one place, on a specified occasion, is referred to. Herrick uses terms like "the Summer's raine", and "the pearles of Morning's dew", generically. Clare's primrose is a particular one in a particular place at a particular time. The difference between the poems of the earlier poets, and the poem by Clare, is a difference in the way of looking at things, and, although exceptions obviously occur, it is a difference that is typical of the ages in which they lived. I.K.Wimsatt discusses this historical development in a chapter on "The Concrete Universal":

Mill speaks of the word and its denotation and connotation. The denotation is the IT, the individual thing or the aggregate of things to which the term may refer; the connotation is the WHAT, the quality or classification inferred from the IT, or implicitly predicated by the application of the term or the giving of the name. One main difference between all modern positivistic, nominalistic, and semantic systems and the scholastic and classical systems is that the older ones stress the similarity of the individuals denoted by the common term and hence the real universality of meaning, while the modern systems stress the differences in the individuals, the constant flux even of each individual in time and space and its kinetic structure, and hence infer only an approximate or nominal universality of meaning and a convenience rather than a truth in the use of general terms. A further difference lies in the view of how the individual is related to the various connotations of terms which may be applied to it. That is, to the question: What is it? the older writers seem to hold there is but one (essentially right) answer, while the moderns accept as many answers as there are classes to which the individual may be assigned (an indefinite number).

(The Verbal Icon (Third Noonday Press paperback Edition, 1962), p.70)

The change from a basically general way of looking at things to a basically specific perceptiveness took place

some time between Herrick and Clare. It probably began with the Renaissance and the New Learning, with its insistence on observation and experiment, and by the eighteenth century it was being fought out in the literary arena. Dr. Johnson, a classicist by inclination and practice, believed that poetry should concern itself with the general aspects of nature. He lets Imlac put his case, in The History of Rasselas, chapter X:

The business of the poet, said Imlac, is to examine, not the individual, but the species; to remark general properties and large appearances: he does not number the streaks of the tulip, or describe the different shades in the verdure of the forest. He is to exhibit in his portraits of nature such prominent and striking features, as recal the original to every mind; and must neglect the minuter discriminations, which one may have remarked, and another have neglected, for those characteristics which are alike obvious to vigilance and carelessness.

(Johnson: Prose and Poetry, selected by Mona Wilson, The Reynard Library (London, 1957), p.410)

Thomas Gray voiced a dissenting opinion that was to be taken up by the generation of Romantic poets:

Circumstance ever was, and ever will be, the life and the essence both of nature and of poetry.

(quoted by A.Clutton-Brock, "Description in Poetry", Essays and Studies, II (1911), 95-96)

William Blake endorsed such a view rather more forcefully:

To Generalize is to be an Idiot. To Particularize is the Alone Distinction of Merit.

("Annotations to Sir Joshua Reynolds's Discourses", The Complete Writings of William Blake, ed. Geoffrey Keynes (London, 1966), p.451)

When did this new way of looking at nature begin to make itself felt in English poetry? It must have been some time

before Johnson and Gray for the conflict between the two approaches to have become a conscious problem to them. The key period seems to have been the second half of the seventeenth century.

Josephine Miles has conducted a statistical survey of the frequency of certain words in English poetry from Wyatt to the Romantics, ("From Good to Bright", ELIA, LX, No.3 (1945), 766-774), and discovered that there is a changeover from the predominance of terms like "good" and "false", to the predominance of terms like "bright" and "dark". In Wyatt's poetry:

Not only the predominance of good over bright but also the contexts of both types show how peripheral was the notion of sensory modification to Wyatt and how central, in both sorts of contexts, was the poetic function of verifying and evaluating human relationships.  
(Miles, p.767)

Spenser uses a larger proportion of physically descriptive words than Wyatt, but with him too, the moral terms are by far the more important.

The early seventeenth-century poets - Donne, Herbert, Herrick etc. - are more specific in their awareness of objects, but still the sensuous qualities of things are not valued for themselves:

All [i.e. their "bright" objects] in their brightness are representative of other virtues. Never do they poetize brightness as a special poetic quality for perception. (Miles, p.769)

In Milton the turning-point is reached, and brightness becomes significant in its own right:

His was, then, a strong new kind of poetic material, in many respects which show through the contexts of a few central words. For Milton's poetry was epical from the beginning, in its outward stresses; more outward even than the talk of Chaucer's pilgrims or of Shakespeare's actors; outward, that is, in its scenic properties and visual processions and descriptive architectures . . . In Milton, then, descriptive detail, sensuous scenic detail became a chief material of poetry. (Miles, pp.769-770)

Pope continues the trend, "from the poetry of human relation to the poetry of physical array" (Miles, p.770); a little later, when Collins was writing his odes, the sensuously descriptive terms had taken over from the morally evaluative, and Gray, Keats, Shelley, and Poe followed in his wake. The sensuous words not only came to predominate in their legitimate function as descriptive counters; they also took over some of the functions of the moral words:

With the increased quantity of bright and its aesthetic kind came increased interest in scene and quality, increased pictorializing of heaven, earth, and the mind, increased carrying by figure of outward material inward instead of the reverse process of the Elizabethans, increased sensory specification and even sensory statement of ethical judgment. (Miles, p.774)

Two developments were thus taking place in the second half of the seventeenth century - the period when Milton's influence was beginning to make itself felt: a kind of poetry was developing in which the emphases were shifted from human relationships, and universal moral questions, to the physical environment, and often to the delights of solitude; and poets were looking at nature with new eyes, taking note of the individual sensuous features of things, instead of making do

with general characteristics and traditional clichés of observation.

The purpose of this study is to see how Andrew Marvell fits into this context; to see where the natural details in his poetry derived from; to see what he thought and felt about nature, as a philosophical/theological force, and as a physical reality; to see how he used the natural details in the poems. In short, to discover what kind of meaning he extracted from the "endless treasure of meaning hid in Nature", and how a man of his period and sensibility looked at the natural world.

## Chapter II

### A SURVEY OF CRITICAL ATTITUDES TO MARVELL'S USE OF NATURAL DETAILS

Interest in those poems of Marvell's which make most use of details from nature has passed through three stages. For more than a hundred years after his death, such poems as "The Garden" and "Upon Appleton House" were almost completely ignored; during the nineteenth century, and the early part of the twentieth century, they established him as a forerunner of the Romantic "nature poets"; and in the last forty years, they have been dissected and scrutinised by modern critics and scholars who seek to determine their philosophical constituents and their poetic genealogy. The eighteenth century concentrated on Marvell's connections with Cromwell and Milton, Charles II and Danby, Samuel Parker and Prince Rupert; the nineteenth felt him most strongly as a relative of Wordsworth and Shelley and Keats; the twentieth traces his intimacy with Donne, Benlowes, and Fane, Plato and Plotinus, St. Augustine, Hugh of St. Victor, and Hermes Trismegistus.

Of the eighteenth century there is little to record. Between the publication of Marvell's poems in 1681, and some remarks by an editor of Pope in 1806, there is only one discovered comment relevant to this study: this is in a letter from the Rev. Robert Banks, Vicar of Hull, sent to Ralph Thoresby on

April 14th. 1708:

Mr. Andrew Marvell, the poet and botanist, and some-time burgess in Parliament for this town.

(Attention was first brought to this letter by John E. Bailey, Notes and Queries, 5th. series, VII (1877), p.467).

This is the only occasion on which Marvell's interest in the world of nature is considered worth mentioning before the nineteenth century. And even here the "poet" and the "botanist" are not necessarily seen as vitally connected. Pierre Legouis is sceptical:

Sans doute Banks rapporte-t-il ici une tradition locale indépendante des témoignages fournis par la poésie de Marvell, donc intéressante. On s'est mépris (Grosart, I. 471, et surtout les critiques qui l'ont suivi) sur la valeur de cette contiguité toute spatiale: "poet and botanist" ne désignent pas forcément un précurseur d'Erasmus Darwin; les deux aspects de l'homme peuvent avoir été presque aussi distincts l'un de l'autre que de sa qualité de député qui leur succède dans la lettre.

(André Marvell: Poète, Puritain, Patriote (Paris, 1928), p.107, n.(118))

All the other references to Marvell in this period, in William Mason's "Ode: To Independency", in Robert Shiels's The Lives of the Poets of Great Britain and Ireland (vol. IV, 1753), in the Biographia Britannica (London, 1760), in Wordsworth's sonnet, "Great men have been among us", dwell on his qualities as a patriot, a politician of integrity, and a satirist. The lyrical poems were not unknown, since the century saw three editions: Thomas Cooke's in 1726 and 1772, and Captain Edward Thompson's in 1776. Thompson's edition



does have one reference to a natural detail. Talking of some lines in "The Loyal Scott", he remarks:

The simile of the powdered bees, by the way of obtaining a useful and general reconciliation, is happily introduced, and musically versed.  
(Vol.III, p.469)

But the emphasis is entirely on the literary aptness, not at all on the detail as such.

In spite of the lack of comment, the pastoral poems must have been fairly popular, as they were singled out for Tonson's Miscellany of 1727: it includes "The Nymph Complaining for the Death of her Faun", "Young Love", "Daphnis and Chloe", "Damon the Mower", "Ametas and Thestylis", "Musick's Empire", "The Garden" (only stanzas IV and VI), "On Paradise Lost", and "Climb at Court for me that will". Johnson, however, ignored Marvell almost completely, failing to include him in his Lives of the English Poets, although there is evidence that he knew of Marvell's lyric verse. Pierre Legouis points out in a footnote to page 231 of his English edition of Andrew Marvell (Oxford, 1965) that Mrs. E.E.Duncan-Jones has drawn his attention to several quotations from Marvell's poetry in Johnson's Dictionary, one of which is from the pastoral "Ametas and Thestylis" (under NOR). But in spite of the availability of the poems in Tonson and the three editions, the century of Pope, Thomson, Collins, and Gray passed by Marvell's garden poems and the descriptions of "Upon Appleton House" without remark.

It was left to the Rev. William Lisle Bowles to inaugurate the Romantic appreciation of Marvell. In 1806 he published a ten-volume edition of the Works of Alexander Pope. Tracing the English antecedents of "Windsor-Forest" back to Denham's "Cooper's Hill" and Waller's "The Park", he adds:

Marvell has also written a poem on local scenery 'Upon the Hill and Grove at Billbowow' and another 'Upon Appleton-House' . . . Marvell abounds with conceits and false thoughts but some of the descriptive touches are picturesque and beautiful. His description of a gently rising eminence is more picturesque, although not so elegantly or justly expressed, as the same subject in Denham. I transcribe the following, as the poem is but little read. [He quotes stanzas III-IV and part of stanza V of the first poem.] Sometimes Marvell observes little circumstances of rural nature with the eye and feeling of a true poet. [He quotes the first four lines of stanza LXVII of the second poem: the lines about the thrush's eye.] The last circumstance is new, highly poetical, and could only have been described by a real lover of nature, and a witness of her beauties in her most solitary retirements. It is the observation of such circumstances, which can alone form an accurate descriptive rural poet.

(Vol. I, p.122)

Pierre Legouis, in the original French edition of his work André Marvell, has this to say about Bowles's choice of the example of the "hatching Thrush's shining Eye":

L'exemple est bien choisi, trop bien choisi pour être caractéristique.

(p.436, n.(53))

The thrush's eye was still being cited as typical of Marvell's powers of observation over a century later, in the Tercentenary Tributes.

In 1807 John Aikin produced his General Biography; or, lives. Perhaps following the lead of Bowles, perhaps affected

by the new emphases of the Romantic age, he considers the non-political side of Marvell's genius worth mentioning:

His early poems express a fondness for the charms of rural nature, and much delicacy of sentiment; they are ingenious and full of fancy, after the manner of Cowley and contemporaries. (Vol.VI, p.609)

Among the great Romantic poets themselves, only Wordsworth seems to have known of Marvell as a lyric poet. He only refers to him once, in the sonnet mentioned above (p.13), but the influence of stanza LXVI of "Upon Appleton House" has been traced in his preference of stock-dove's song to nightingale's. More significant is the inclusion of one of Marvell's poems in a personal anthology which Wordsworth compiled in 1819, as a Christmas gift for Lady Mary Lowther. Later this MS book passed into the hands of J.Rogers Rees, who had it printed in facsimile: Poems and Extracts Chosen by William Wordsworth for an album presented to Lady Mary Lowther, Christmas, 1819 (London, 1905). In his preface, he remarks:

The contents are of interest as indicating Wordsworth's preferences among poems having direct dealing with natural objects and the charms of solitude. (p.vi)

On pages 66-68 of this anthology are found all but the last four lines of Marvell's "On a Drop of Dew". The description of the dew-drop, whether it is seen as itself or as a metaphor for the soul, contains some of Marvell's most delicately accurate details, which is clearly why it appealed to Wordsworth.

A younger Romantic poet, John Clare, knew of Marvell - he even tried to pass off one of his own compositions as a piece by dead <sup>the</sup> poet - but only as "a great advocate for liberty" (quoted from a letter to Henry Francis Carey of 7th. January, 1829, which Pierre Legouis mentions in his English edition of Andrew Marvell, p.235, n.1).

Hazlitt, too, had some acquaintance with Marvell's work, but in his lectures on Dryden and Pope, and on Cowley, in Lectures on the English Poets (1818) and Lectures on the English Comic Writers (1819) respectively, he considers him only as a satirist and metaphysical. In the anthology Select British poets or new elegant extracts from Chaucer to the present time (London, 1824), however, he includes "Bermudas", "To his Coy Mistress", "The Nymph Complaining for the death of her Faun", "The drop of dew", "The Garden", "The Gallery", "Upon the hill and grove at Bill-borow", and "An Horation Ode".

But it was Charles Lamb, in the two series of "Essays of Elia" (1823 and 1833), who became the first major writer to express a taste for Marvell's specifically rural poems. The longer reference occurs in "The Old Benchers of the Inner Temple", in the first series of essays:

It was a pretty device of the gardener, recorded by Marvell, who, in the days of artificial gardening, made a dial out of herbs and flowers. I must quote his verses a little higher up, for they are full, as all his serious poetry was, of a witty delicacy. They

will not come in awkwardly, I hope, in a talk of fountains and sun-dials. He is speaking of sweet garden scenes. [Here he quotes stanzas V, VI, VII, and IX, significantly omitting stanza VIII, the most paradoxical and least descriptive, of "The Garden".] (The Essays of Elia, ed. Alfred Ainger (London, 1896), pp. 272-3)

In "Blakesmoor in H-shire", in the second series, he quotes Marvell in passing:

I could have exclaimed with the garden-loving poet:  
[Here he prints stanza LXXVI of "Upon Appleton House", the passage in which the poet beseeches the woodbines to bind him.] (p. 386)

A two-part account of Marvell appeared in The Retrospective Review, in Vol. X, Part II (1824), pp. 328-343, and in Vol. XI, Part I (1825), pp. 174-195. The first essay dealt with his life, but omitted all mention of the Nunappleton period, and selected "The Nymph Complaining for the Death of her Faun" as his best poem. The second essay discussed parts of "Upon Appleton House", "Eyes and Tears", "Hortus", "The Garden", "The Dialogue between the Body and the Soul", and "The Character of Holland". The anonymous author speaks approvingly of the poems which contain "successful descriptions of nature and pastoral scenes". He illustrates his remarks by long quotations from "Upon Appleton House", choosing the passage about the wood and the nightingale, and stanza LXXI to the end - that is, the most descriptive and romantically "nature" poetry in the poem.

1832 saw the appearance of the first volume devoted entirely to Marvell's biography: John Dove's The Life of Andrew Marvell.

Dove, like Marvell a Yorkshireman, follows the developing taste for the lyrical side of the poet's work so closely that his sentiments echo with remarkable fidelity those of John Aikin 25 years earlier:

His early poems express a fondness for the charms of rural and pastoral scenes, with much delicacy of sentiment; and are full of fancy, after the manner of Cowley and his contemporaries. (p.85)

His short selection of poems at the end of the Life includes "Bermudas", "The Coronet", "On a Drop of Dew", "The Mower's Song", "The Mower to Glo-worms", but not "The Garden", "Upon Appleton House", or the other pastorals. His favourite, like the anonymous Retrospective Reviewer's, is "The Nymph Complaining for the Death of her Faun".

The same year a life of Marvell formed part of Hartley Coleridge's Biographia Borealis, or the lives of distinguished Northerns (Leeds, 1832), pp.3-64. Coleridge treats him as a politician and patriot, in the old vein, but admits admiration for the poetry, with reservations:

We confine our praise to the poems which he wrote for himself. As for those he made to order, for Fairfax or Cromwell, they are as dull as every true son of the muse would wish these things to be. (p.63)

The Romantic bias is evident in the distaste for poems "made to order", but there is no knowing whether the sweeping reference to Fairfax and Cromwell implies a damnation of "Upon Appleton House", and perhaps even "The Garden", as well as the more obviously political poems.

George L. Craik, in his Sketches of the History of Literature and Learning in England (London, 1845), is concerned mainly with the satires. But he glances at "Bermudas" - "familiar to every lover of poetry" (Vol. IV, Book VI, p. 119) - and thinks it worthwhile to quote the "less known" (p. 121) "Little T.C."

The volume of Essays of Henry Rogers (1850), contains an article reprinted from the Edinburgh Review of January 1844, in which he declares the poems over-rated, although he too singles out "Bermudas", together with the two dialogues and "The Coronet", for "much elegance and sweetness".

Mary Russell Mitford, in her Recollections of a literary life (London, 1852), complains that Marvell's poems are not easily available, and quotes with enthusiasm "Bermudas", "The Garden", "The Nymph Complaining for the Death of her Faun", and parts of the "Horatian Ode". She is struck by a detail in the last stanza of "The Garden", and asks:

What does the new dial mean? Is there really nothing new under the sun? And had they in the middle of the seventeenth century discovered the horologe of Flora?  
(2nd. ed. (London, 1852), Vol. II, p. 327)

The first American edition of The Poetical works of Andrew Marvell, edited anonymously, was printed in Boston in 1857, and reprinted in London in 1870. It ignores the lyrical poems in its introduction, but this is not surprising as the material is lifted from Henry Rogers's essay.

Miss Mitford's complaint was answered by the appearance of Palgrave's Golden Treasury in 1861. This anthology, which aimed at providing a selection of the best English lyric poetry, found room for three poems by Marvell: "The Garden", "An Horatian Ode" and "Bermudas". The 1883 edition added an extract from "The Nymph Complaining for the Death of her Faun"; and the 1891 edition brought in "Little T.C." The choice not only established Marvell's reputation, but also shows clearly how Victorian taste was drawn to the "nature" poems, at the expense of the once pre-eminent satires. The "metaphysical" pieces, though "To his Coy Mistress" numbered Tennyson among its admirers, had to wait for the twentieth century for their special qualities to be appreciated generally.

Palgrave, in a note, follows Lamb in praise of "The Garden". He makes one of the earliest direct comparisons of Marvell with a Romantic poet:

. . . these truly wonderful verses, which, like "Lycidas", may be regarded as a test of any reader's insight into the most poetical aspects of Poetry. The general differences between them are vast; but in imaginative intensity Marvell and Shelley are closely related.

(1862 edition, p.309)

In 1869, The Cornhill Magazine (Vol.20, 21-40) printed an anonymous article on Marvell. After discussing the poems

<sup>1</sup> Pierre Legouis, in the Bibliography of André Marvell (p.478, entry(155)), reveals that the author was John Ormsby(1829-95).



by Addison which had got into Captain Thompson's edition of 1776, and giving an account of Marvell's life, the author makes an interesting revision in the chronological placing of Marvell as a poet:

As a poet he is generally classed among the poets of Charles the Second's reign; but in reality he belongs to an earlier age, and has nothing whatever in common with Waller, Sedley, Dorset, or Rochester. He is, in fact, no more one of the Restoration poets than Milton. His true place is with the men of the preceding period, - with Herrick, Habington, Suckling, Lovelace, and Wither, to each of whom occasional resemblances may be traced in his poetry. But the poet that influenced him most, probably, was Donne. (p.35)

There are several points of interest in this: Marvell the poet is judged by his lyrical, earlier, poems, not by the Restoration satires; Donne is seen as a major influence; and resemblances to other poets are noticed. The tracing of these resemblances has been one of the chief activities of modern Marvell scholars and critics.

Even more interesting are the remarks a little later, on Marvell and nature. They deserve to be quoted at length:

He had, what was very rare among his contemporaries, a genuine love and reverence for nature. Most of the poets of his day seem to treat nature in a somewhat patronizing spirit, as a good sort of institution, deserving of support, especially from poets, as being useful for supplying illustrations, comparisons, and descriptions available for poetic purposes. They, we suspect, regarded it very much as the cook does the shrubbery, from which he gets the holly and laurel leaves to garnish his dishes. Marvell is one of the few men of that time who appear to have delighted in nature for its own sake, and not merely for its capabilities in the way of furnishing ideas. He enjoyed it thoroughly and thankfully, and in the poems written during his residence with Lord Fairfax at Nun-Appleton, he shows a keen sense of pleasure in natural beauty and scenery,

and, what was even rarer in those days, close observation and study of nature. (pp.38-39)

The remarks on the seventeenth-century treatment of nature in poetry are useful, and the identification of Marvell as "one of the few men of that time who appear to have delighted in nature for its own sake", looks forward to the recent examinations of the theme of rural retirement in such poets as Cowley, Fane, Benlowes, Cotton, and the French libertins. Ormsby also takes up the view of Bowles, that Marvell was a keen and accurate observer of nature.

Goldwin Smith wrote a notice on Marvell for the second volume of the English Poets series edited by Thomas Humphry Ward in 1880. He follows Ormsby in noting similarities to other poets of the seventeenth century:

He touches at different points Herbert, Cowley, Waller, Dryden, and the group of Lovelace and Suckling. (p.380)

More interestingly, he suggests a possible connection with the poems of Marvell's employer:

"The Hill and Grove at Billborow" and "Appleton House" are memorials of the sojourn in the shades of Nun Appleton, and they bear no small resemblance to the compositions of Lord Fairfax. (p.381)

"The Garden" is singled out for comment, although he only half-heartedly endorses Palgrave's comparison with Shelley:

In it Marvell has been said to approach Shelley: assuredly he shows a depth of poetic feeling wonderful in a political gladiator. The thoughts that dwell in "a green shade" have never been more charmingly expressed. (p.382)

The pastorals are condemned as being "in the false classical

style", but Smith has a good word to say for "Clorinda and Damon", and is particularly pleased with the couplet describing the fountain's tinkling.

Edmund Gosse takes the "Romantic" view of Marvell to extremes in his book, From Shakespeare to Pope (Cambridge, 1885). He stresses the Wordsworthian element in the poems. In "Upon Appleton House" and "The Garden":

We find a personal sympathy with nature, and particularly with vegetation, which was quite a novel thing, and which found no second exponent until Wordsworth came forward with his still wider and more philosophical commerce with the inanimate world. For flowers, trees, and grasses, Marvell expresses a sort of personal passion. They stand between him and humanity, they are to him "forms more real than living man". He calls upon the woodlands of Nunappleton to save him from the noisy world. (p.219)

Marvell has become the Romantic poet, seeking refuge from civil and political strife in the "security of natural solitude", like Wordsworth.

Marvell the observer is again prominent in Gosse's account, and the details that support this conception include not only the inevitable thrush's eye, but also the wood-moths and the heron:

He declares a profound passion for a possible Juliana, but it is really the wood-moths gleaming on the bark, the vigilant heron in its nest at the top of the ash-tree, the garish eye of the new-hatched throistle staring through the hazels, that hold his poetical affections. (p.221)

Gosse is among the first critics to single out the Mower poems for their "charming and unique poetry". (p.220) But he is so carried away by his enthusiasm at finding a poet to his

taste among the metaphysicals and satirists of the seventeenth century, that he makes exaggerated claims for him:

He is the last of the English Romantic poets for several generations, and no one of them all, early or late, has regarded nature with a quicker or more loving attention than he. He is an alien indeed among the men of periwigs and ruffles. (p.221)

The Victorian Marvell is securely enthroned. But Gosse is so determined to make of him an orthodox Romantic that he is blind to what Marvell was actually doing with his natural details. He cannot see how they can be matter for serious intellectual conceits. The military imagery that subsumes the details from nature in "Upon Appleton House" appears merely as an aberration:

This is pretty and harmless, but perhaps just because it errs so gently against the canons of style, we ask ourselves how so seriously-minded a man as Marvell could run on in such a childish way. (p.219)

One partial view of Marvell has been replaced by another.

A dissenting voice is raised by Mark Fattison, though only by way of an aside, in his essay on "Pope and his Editors" (in Collected Essays (1889), Vol.II): Going back to the beginnings of the Romantic view of Marvell, he remarks:

Familiarity with the 'hatching throistle's shining eye', only proves that Bowles and Marvell had both been schoolboys, and addicted to birds-nesting. (p.374)

Aitken's Muses' Library edition of the Poems and Satires of Andrew Marvell in 1892 occasioned a review by E.K.Chambers in the 17th, September number of The Academy the same year (Vol.

42, 230-231). Much the same line is followed as that elaborated by Gosse:

His real passion - a most uncommon one in the seventeenth century - is for nature, exactly as we moderns mean nature, the great spiritual influence which deepens and widens life for us. (p.230)

Chambers cites particularly the final couplet of stanza V of "The Garden", and stanza VI of "Damon the Mower". Following Gosse again, he admires the neglected lower poems:

These mower-~~idylls~~, never found in the anthologies, are among the most characteristic of Marvell's shorter poems. (p.230)

He goes one better than those who had linked Marvell with the first-generation Romantic poets, and sees him as anticipating George Meredith:

For the one, as for the other, complete absorption in nature, the unreserved abandonment of self to the skyey influences, is the really true and sanative wisdom. (p.230)

Like Gosse again, Chambers objects to the imagery of warfare in the descriptive parts of "Upon Appleton House", though he allows that conceits are not bad in themselves - only if they are bad conceits i.e. conceits that are "merely fantastical" (p.230). As an example of a thoroughly bad conceit, he points to "On a Drop of Dew"; and as an example of a conceit well used, he instances - the first time it had been noticed in print - the image of the wet roses in "Daphnis and Chloe". (See p.231)

The following year, C.H.Firth, in the account of Marvell

in the Dictionary of National Biography (1893), suggests the connection between "Bermudas" and the poet's residence with John Oxenbridge, who had been a minister in the Bermudas.

Having dismissed the early love poems as fanciful, he adds:

Afterwards he learnt, as he himself expresses it, to 'read in Nature's mystic book', and his poems on country life show a keen love of natural beauty.

(DNB (Oxford, 1937-8 reprint), Vol.XII, p.1215)

An essay entitled "The Lyrical Poems of Andrew Marvell", by H.C.Beeching in The National Review of July 1901 (Vol. XXXVII, 747-59), follows the lines laid down by Ormsby and Gosse, but makes some original additions. Among these is his praise of Marvell's "terseness" as a descriptive poet in "Upon Appleton House":

As a part of the same skill it is remarkable in how few strokes he can paint a picture. In this same poem, describing a copse, he says:

"Dark all without it knits; within

It opens passable and thin",

which gives exactly the difference of impression from without and upon entering. A second notable quality in Marvell's verse is its sensuousness, its wide and deep enjoyment of the world of sense. 'The Garden', which everybody knows, may stand as the best example of this quality -

"Stumbling on Melons, as I pass,

Insnar'd with Flow'rs, I fall on Grass".

Marvell is the laureate of grass, and of greenery.

(pp.752-3)

Beeching devotes some space to the "poems upon nature", giving much the same picture as Gosse, with the interesting additional note that Marvell's nature is not the wild Romantic

## nature of later poets:

Here we have Marvell at his best, because here he lets his passion inspire him. Except in Shakespeare, who includes "all thoughts, all passions, all desires", we have but little passion for nature between Chaucer and Marvell; but in Marvell the love for natural beauty is not short of passion. Of course his love is not for wild nature - a feeling which only dates from Gray and Wordsworth - but for the ordinary country scenes:

" . . . . fragrant Gardens, shady Woods,  
Deep Meadows, and transparent Floods";

and for these he brings the eye of a genuine lover and, what is more, of a patient observer. The lines upon 'Appleton House' are full of observation. He speaks of the "shining eye" of the "hatching throistle", and has a fine imaginative description of the woodpecker.

(pp.756-7)

"The Garden" and "Bermudas" are cited, and the similarity of their uses of descriptive details is perceived:

The poem ["Bermudas"] is built upon the same plan as "The Garden"; first, the sensuous delights are described as no one but Marvell could describe them: [he quotes from "Bermudas"]. And then he passes on, though in this case it must be allowed with much less effect, to the spiritual advantages of the place. (p.758)

Beeching has noticed that the "sensuous delights" are not an end in themselves, but a means to something "spiritual", an aspect of Marvell's treatment of nature that later critics have elaborated at great length. He also discovers possible sources for some of Marvell's details in Crashaw's "The Weeper" and Milton's "Nativity Ode" and "Il Penseroso". The "various light" of "The Garden", "is certainly an echo" of Milton's:

Waves at his wings in aery stream.

1903 saw the publication of W.J.Courthope's History of

English Poetry, which, though briefly, attempts to give a more balanced picture of Marvell's qualities than the established image. In the rural poems, with:

. . . much charm and variety, he combines the "metaphysical" spirit of Donne, with Vaughan's love of Nature and Herrick's feeling for objects of art.  
(Vol.III, p.308)

In a useful comparison with Vaughan, Courthope develops Beeching's idea that Marvell's nature is essentially cultivated, and recognizes a function of the natural details as expressive of abstractions. His discussion springs from stanza VI of "The Garden":

These remotely abstract conceits he associates with beautiful imagery drawn from country life, going on, for example, after the above stanza in the following lines, which are quite in Vaughan's manner: [here he quotes stanza VII]. There is, however, more of minute painting in his descriptions of Nature than is common in Vaughan, whose imagination delighted in the wild uncultivated scenery of streams and hills; whereas Marvell loved the artificial ornaments of the garden, though he dramatically makes his mowers complain against them thus: [here he quotes the last ten lines of "The Mower against Gardens"]. (p.309)

He sees the Mower poems as a development of Classical Pastoral, quoting the first two stanzas of "Damon the Mower":

Classical Pastoralism was never carried to a higher perfection of refinement than by Marvell: witness the opening lines of "Damon the Mower", in which the heat and haze of a summer day seem to dance. (p.310)

A much more realistic conception of Marvell's nature poems is emerging than in the fantasies of Gosse.

Augustine Birrell produced his account of Andrew Marvell,



in 1905 (English Men of Letters series, London). In it, the Victorian Marvell is firmly entrenched. We are told of his birth at Winstead - a fit place for the origins of a "garden-poet" (the throstle couplet is quoted); of his schooldays at Hull, where the grammar school had a great garden, full of fruit and flowers, so that, "our" garden-poet, that was to be, was not deprived of inspiration"; of the gardens at Nunappleton, where, after this auspicious beginning in life, Marvell then had the luck to spend some time: "In this garden the muse of Andrew Marvell blossomed like a cherry-tree" (p.31).

Birrell is aware of Marvell's emergence from an older tradition of lyrical verse, but his emphases are on the hints of later developments:

As the author of poetry of exquisite quality, where for the last time may be heard the priceless note of the Elizabethan lyricist, whilst at the same moment utterance is being given to thoughts and feelings which reach forward to Wordsworth and Shelley, Marvell can never be forgotten in his native England. (p.1)

He follows Ormsby and Beeching in his awareness of similarities between Marvell and other poets, citing Donne, Cowley, Waller, Denham, Butler, Cleveland, Walker, Cotton, Rochester, and Dorset, but not offering to be explicit. But he denies a possible inference:

In the whole compass of our poetry there is nothing quite like Marvell's love of gardens and woods, of meads and rivers and birds. It is a love not learnt from books, not borrowed from brother-poets. It is not indulged in to prove anything. It is all sheer enjoyment. (p.227)

Later researches have revealed that a great deal of Marvell's knowledge of nature was "learnt from books", and not a few of his details were "borrowed from brother-poets". And recent interpretations suggest something more contrived and deliberate than "sheer enjoyment" in his amassing of natural details.

One other remark by Birrell has been endorsed by subsequent critics, but probably not in the sense he intended: "No poet is happier than Marvell in creating the impression that he made his verses out of doors" (p.228). The emphasis would now be laid on the artistry with which an "impression" of out-of-door freshness is created out of largely bookish materials.

A.T.Quiller-Couch introduced the Select English Classics volume on Andrew Marvell (Oxford, 1908). He excuses the concocted use made of natural details in a tone of patronising indulgence:

If, playing about these simple things, his fancy twisted them at times into quaint conceits, it was but as the gardeners of the seventeenth century planted their flower-beds into elaborate knots and devices. The thought beneath the extravagances is usually sincere. (p.4)

J.B.Leishman (in a note on p.294 of The Art of Marvell's Poetry (London, 1966)) quotes from an article on "The Poems of Thomas Fairfax", Transactions of the Connecticut Academy of Arts and Sciences, XIV, (July, 1909), 237-90, by Edward Bliss Reed, which first linked Marvell's poetry with that of the French poet Saint-Amant:

That these poems were inspired not only by the beauty

of Nunappleton, but by its owner's love and appreciation of poetry, there can be little doubt. We may go even further, and see in Marvell's nature-poems some hints from Saint-Amant. Marvell's verse is richer and deeper; where Saint-Amant is vague in his descriptions or conventional in his thought, Marvell is concrete and original; for it is the Englishman, and not the Frenchman, who uses le mot précis, and yet Saint-Amant's theme - to lose oneself in Nature - is the theme of The Garden and of the finest lines in Appleton House.

It was not until the 1940s, with the work of M.C. Bradbrook, that the question of Marvell's relationship with the French poets of the Libertin school was properly investigated.

In the spring of 1912, Emile Legouis gave a course of three lectures in the Sorbonne, dealing with the life and works of Andrew Marvell (a résumé by René Pruvost was printed in the Revue des cours et conférences (Paris, 1912)). Legouis sees the poet mainly as a pre-Romantic, the forerunner of the sensuous Keats and the philosophic Wordsworth. He notes the Wordsworthian preference of stock-dove to nightingale; remarks on the precision and keenness of descriptive details, quoting from "Upon Appleton House" the throstle passage, the heron, and the woodpecker (stanzas LXVII-LXX); and regards the "green thought in a green shade" as closer even to symbolism than to Romanticism. But he does not ignore the period flavour of the poems. On the woodbine passage in "Upon Appleton House" (stanza LXXVII) he comments:

C'est déjà l'amour romantique exalté de la nature, mais avec ce grain de bizarrerie qui ne quitte jamais tout à fait les gens de la Renaissance. (p.82)

An important new step in Marvell scholarship was taken when H.M. Margoliouth published some of his discoveries about Marvell's indebtedness to other poets for phrases and images, in two notes called "Marvell & Cowley" and "Marvell and Other Contemporaries" in the June and July copies of The Saturday Review in 1919 (Vol. <sup>X</sup>CXVII, 550-1, and Vol. CXXVIII, 55-6). He shows similarities between Marvell's poems and works by Milton, Cowley, Lovelace, Crashaw, Vaughan, Carew; and points out that the sensuous details in "Bermudas" were probably suggested by Waller's "Battle of the Summer Islands". Margoliouth substantiates the vague generalisations of Goldwin Smith and Birrell about connections between Marvell's poetry and that of his immediate predecessors and his contemporaries, and, in discussing "To his Coy Mistress", anticipates the judgment of J.B. Leishman. He speaks of, "the suggestions which Marvell drew from Cowley's "Mistress" and built up into great poetry".

In More Essays on Books (1921), A. Clutton-Brock compares Marvell to Shelley, St. Augustine, and Vaughan, and gives an account of "The Garden" which recognizes the poem's success as the result of a skilful handling of sensuous details from nature: "The very theme of this poem is that passing of sense into spirit which its art actually accomplishes". (p.139)

The anniversary of the poet's birth saw the publication of the Tercentenary Tributes (Oxford, 1922), which gathered

together essays and articles which had appeared in various magazines over the previous year or two. T.S.Eliot's essay, "Andrew Marvell" (pp.63-78), concentrates on the metaphysical elements in the poetry, on the wit and "tough reasonableness" that a new generation of poets valued in their own endeavours. The other contributors, lacking the insight of actual practitioners, fell back on the clichés of more than half a century. Cyril Falls, in "Andrew Marvell" (pp.79-98), picks out the "thrastle's shining eye" as particularly modern; remarks that Marvell's nature is cultivated; congratulates the poet on his "pure" love of the countryside, which he "looked upon" with a "naked eye, not through any spectacles, classic or romantic" (p.88); hails him as the first real nature poet:

Here and there in the latter part [of "Upon Appleton House"] are instances of that keen observation of nature and of that passionate nature-worship in which Marvell is not only unique in his day but which he is the earliest English poet to evince. (p.91)

J.C.Squire, in "An Incorruptible Man in a Corrupt Age" (pp.113-121), considers lines like the thrush couplet as "rare in our Caroline poetry", but "common in Marvell" (p.116). Unfortunately he gives no more examples.

Edward Wright, in "The Poet of the Garden and the Sword" (pp.122-131), sounds the theme of "Marvell was first" again:

Marvell seems to be the first modern poet in Europe to express the mood in which he could, while 'casting the body's vest aside', animate a tree, or sing in its boughs like a bird. (p.126)

He subscribes to the view that the poet was a close observer of the natural scene: "In exquisite detail of nature study Marvell is excelled scarcely by Shakespeare" (p.127). He considers that close description was not released for poetic use until Gilbert White had written (p.127), and cites Marvell's thrush, woodpecker, and kingfisher as early exceptions.

H.J. Massingham, in "Andrew Marvell" (pp.106-112), says much the same as the other contributors on the subject of Marvell's use of nature, with one useful addition:

Marvell is often very near the eighteenth century, and his pastorals (not to mention his polished later satires) walk on the edge of that chasm of personification which swallowed poetry up for nearly a hundred years. (p.111)

A French History of English Literature, by Emile Legouis and Louis Cazamian, appeared in Paris in 1924, and subsequently in a two-volume English translation (London, 1926). The first volume by Legouis, translated by Helen Douglas Irvine, incorporates some of the material of the Sorbonne lectures (pp.356-359). But it has some new ideas to offer. Among the most interesting is the historical placing of the poet:

He is inspired by the country, but not, like earlier poets, by the country seen in accordance with the pastoral convention. The desire for a more precise, for a more local poetry, was already making itself felt, and one of the first poems which fulfilled it was John Denham's 'Copper's Hill'. But while a landscape was to Denham no more than a starting-point for historical and moral reflections, Marvell indulged far more fully in the happy contemplation of natural scenery. Before him only Wither had expressed, amid much rubbish, the intimate enjoyment he drew from

fields and woods. Marvell spontaneously returned to this theme which was to be so dear to the Lake Poets.  
(p.357)

Legouis sees Marvell basically in Romantic terms, but admits also "a hint of strangeness and of Elizabethan pedantry" (p.358).

F.L.Lucas, in Authors Living and Dead (1926), reprints a New Statesman article (pp.76-81) in which he sees Marvell as an intermediate figure between Donne and Dryden, and relates Marvell and Keats in terms of "negative capability". But he feels uneasy about the traditional stress on the Romantic aspect of the earlier poet:

Once more, lover of unspoilt nature as he is and herald in his degree of the Romantics (so that his soul with a quite modern sympathy of imagination 'into the boughs does glide', and sits there birdlike, just as Keats felt himself becoming one with the sparrow before his window), there remains a curious artificiality even in his passion. (p.79)

The next two years saw two of the most important events in the history of Marvell studies: in 1927 the full fruits of H.M.Margoliouth's researches were made public in his two-volume edition of The Poems and Letters of Andrew Marvell (Oxford) - a work which still holds its place as the standard edition; and in 1928 appeared André Marvell: poète, puritain, patriote (Paris and London) by Pierre Legouis. This book is, as its title suggests, an account of the man in all his aspects. It is the first work to look at Marvell's attitude to nature

objectively, and it provides a survey which brings to light much that previous critics had missed or ignored. Legouis looks at Marvell in his own time, and finds him exceptional in his reaction to nature. The followers of Donne were mostly town or Court poets:

When they compose their verse in the country, as Herbert and Vaughan largely do, their engrossing preoccupation with the Creator prevents them from dwelling on description of the Creation. Apart from the neo-Classic school, which it heralds in this respect, no English literary movement ever breathed so little in the open air. Marvell is an exception: less exclusive and more versatile, he does not, save in an occasional mood, think it necessary to shut his eyes to the outside world in order to develop his inner life. (pp.42-43)<sup>1</sup>

He has some interesting comments on the "Romantic" image of the poet. It is partly due to a semantic mis-reading of epithets like "waste" and "wild", which to a post-Romantic have connotations of virgin forests and Alpine ridges and Wordsworthian Westmorland peaks. In the seventeenth century, anything "not made of hewn stone or carved marble" is Nature, and therefore wild. Legouis continues:

On closer inspection Marvell's daring then is more apparent than real. And even so it alternates with recantations: he makes amends before the altar of

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All quotations are from the English translation of 1965, unless this differs substantially from the 1928 version, in which case the original French will be given.



the goddess Rule; thus 'loose Nature', shamed by Mary Fairfax's precocious wisdom, 'it self does recollect'.  
(p.47)

In fact, Legouis demonstrates, Marvell's nature is very limited. Much of it is from books, much of what he must have seen finds no place in the poetry. To judge from the poems, the great variety of scenery he passed through during his wide travels in Europe, and even many natural aspects of his own country that he must have been familiar with, made no impression on his imagination. He confines himself to the general English landscape of gently rolling meadows, and rounded hills like Bilbrough. The conclusion drawn from this discussion is that Marvell was not, in his rural poetry, "a harbinger of the Romantics"(p.48).

Although Marvell has moments of mystic communion, in which he receives from "Nature's mystick Book", "a direct revelation from the God of Nature"(p.53), Legouis warns against Romantic inferences from such passages:

The appeal of such transports to the post-Romantic reader's mind can easily be understood but we should resist the temptation to superimpose a pantheistic philosophy of which Marvell never thought: we must not see him through Wordsworth. The passage just analysed and another one, in 'The Garden', somewhat more explicit and too well known for quotation, if they prove that Marvell knew mystic raptures, would not justify our making these the chief source of inspiration in his poems devoted to Nature. (pp.53-54)

Legouis attacks another nineteenth-century fallacy about Marvell's "minute observation of animals and vegetables".

The throistle couplet, "fully deserves its fame, but one would be hard put to it to find others of the same sort"(p.54). An inventory of Marvell's flowers, fruit and fauna would not be long. Observation is secondary - many of the natural details are conventional, and those that seem fresh from nature are presented not for their own worth, but for a moral or significance that can be drawn from them. The incidence of "ingenious ratiocination" is higher than that of "observation"(p.55).

Not only does the poet draw his details from tradition, from ancient lore concerning the medicinal powers of plants or their use as civic rewards, and from the natural histories, as well as from observation; he even avoids direct presentation of details altogether:

Lastly, it often happens that the poet abstains from any attempt to introduce those concrete touches that since the Romantic age have been considered the salt of poetry . . . Even the neo-Classical periphrasis, which aims not at depicting but at disguising the object, is not quite unknown to him. He speaks of birds as 'winged Quires', of their love songs as 'their tuned Fires'. And it must be acknowledged that the charm of his descriptive poetry does not reside essentially in its precision, since those passages where he does not particularize are not the least delightful. (p.55)

With all these reservations, Legouis grants that Marvell has an extraordinary gift for giving life to a scene. Passages like those describing the heat in "Damon the Mower" and the dusk in "Upon Appleton House" have this in common:

. . . that sympathy with universal life already noted

in Marvell's ecstasies in wood or garden. He shares now the joys and now the sufferings of creatures - animals, plants, and even those beings that our limited science calls inanimate. (p.56)

Legouis goes on to give a searching analysis of Marvell's methods of description, laying the emphasis on the "ingenious ratiocination"

Whatever the shares of observation and feeling in Marvell's descriptions those two elements yield in importance to a third, namely wit. Nature in his poetry is a metaphysical Nature sprung from the brain rather than the senses. To speak more precisely, as soon as the senses have made their harvest, now plentiful now scanty, the brain begins its task: out of its object it abstracts the essential quality, which it substitutes for the object and on which it works, making it live and shine anew by dint of unexpected metaphors and of comparisons that suddenly bring to light unsuspected analogies. (p.58)

This process of abstraction can be seen in Marvell's predilection for green. Critics who note this, "should add that this feeling regards the colour itself, independently of the thing described at the time"(p.61).

Many more aspects of Marvell's natural details are considered - their use as symbol, simile, and metaphor; the influence of traditional mythology; the pathetic fallacy. But in spite of all that his study has revealed, Legouis is left with the conviction that the nineteenth-century view of Marvell has an element of truth in it; it may be only part of the truth, but it is an important part:

He remains and will remain the metaphysical poet of the open air, and this aspect of his work alone could

secure his fame. But he sometimes rose above the fashion of his time; and then he gave poetic expression to some aspects of Nature so happily or intensely that for most readers, whatever the critic may say of this generalization, he will remain the forerunner of Wordsworth, Shelley, and Keats, the poet who noted 'the hatching Thrastles shining Eye', perceived the perfume of flowers as music, lay, on a mossy bank in the shade of old trees, fainted with a sensuous ecstasy in which neither God nor woman played a part. And if a man is defined by his supreme gift and achievement, this image of Marvell, however simplified, may well be the most faithful. (p.90)

The year after Legouis' book came out, Victoria Sackville-West issued a small volume entitled Andrew Marvell (London, 1929). She accepts the "metaphysical" element in the nature poems, but minimizes its importance, and denies it any place in the real impact of the poetry:

Conceits, when they occurred, were an ornament - or shall I say a disfigurement? - rather than an integral part; his real mood, in these nature poems, was the mood of seeing, and feeling; the mysticism which arose as their accompaniment was no conceit, but an inevitable consequence, familiar to everyone who has ever entered into a moment of communion with nature; and, as such, expressed by him in a manner readily distinguishable from the cerebral exertions of his colleagues. (pp.33-34).

This perpetuates the view that Marvell was an essentially different poet from the others of his time, who occasionally succumbed to their fashions.

Two aspects of his "closeness to nature" are isolated: his "actual gift of observation", and his "mysticism"(p.34). She perceives that Marvell was "highly sensitive to colour" (p.35), and examines in particular his fondness for green. Then

the question of what kind of nature he cared for is pondered:

Marvell had some appreciation of uncultivated nature, which was not at all proper to the seventeenth century. True, his usual taste was for the mild and orderly aspects of garden-craft, and rugged nature was a thing unknown to him; nevertheless, he gives some indication of an appetite for something a little less sleek, a little less demure. [She cites "The Mower against Gardens".] )pp.42-43)

Miss Sackville-West here exhibits a failing common to many critics of older poetry. She assumes that all poets must be like a Keats or a Shelley, living out their poetry in their lives, and pouring every aspect of their lives into poetry. Because there is no "rugged nature" in the poems, she concludes that it was "a thing unknown to him". She forgets the kind of tradition of amateur making of verses to which Marvell belongs, and ignores the fact that he was a great traveller, who had presumably crossed the Alps more than once, and who had been to both Sweden and Russia. He had looked on many kinds of scenery. That it does not get into the poetry should indicate something about the nature of his poetry, and its relation to observation. Except by Legouis, the inferences have generally been avoided.

1935 was ominous for Marvell studies. It saw the first detailed "interpretation" of "The Garden" - by William Empson, in Some Versions of Pastoral (London), Chapter IV, pp.119-145. Verbal puns and syntactic ambiguities are seized upon with delight, and recondite meanings are found for the "green

thought" and the "zodiac" of flowers. Freud broods over stanza V, "It is the triumph of the attempt to impose a sexual interest on nature"(p.132). The "melons" are philologically demonstrated to be "apples" in disguise, and the "fall on grass" is a re-enactment of the Fall in Genesis. But this is a fall "on grass", and grass is a prime symbol in Marvell's poetry:

Grass indeed comes to be taken for granted as the symbol of pastoral humility . . . It is a humility of Nature from which she is still higher than man, so that the grasshoppers preach to him from their pinnacles . . . It seems also to be an obscure merit of grass that it produces 'hay', which was the name of a country dance, so that humility is gaiety. (p.130)

We are far from the critical innocence of Beeching's "laureate of grass, and of greenery".

The influence of the revival of the metaphysical poets begun by H.J.C.Grierson's Metaphysical Lyrics & Poems of the Seventeenth Century (Oxford, 1921) and T.S.Eliot's pronouncements in the essay "The Metaphysical Poets" (1921, now in Selected Essays, 3rd. ed., 1951, pp.281-291), and of the critical investigations of Empson, had clearly been at work by the time the next book on Marvell appeared in 1940. The joint authors of Andrew Marvell (Cambridge, quotations from 1961 reprint), M.C.Bradbrook and M.G.Lloyd Thomas, attempt a more balanced and modern account of Marvell than Miss Sackville-West's work of a decade before. We are made aware of the "evanescent shades of meaning" to be found in the poems, and of the background of New Science and emblem

literature. Puns and conceits are felt to be as much a part of the poem's effect as the "sensuous exuberance" and observed details. The military imagery of "Upon Appleton House", which had disturbed Gosse as being "childish", is now seen as a necessary element in a finely organized poetic harmony:

The gardens merge into the meadow, and here, though the wit remains, Nature is now felt as a whole; the great dominant metaphor - that of a battle-field - in which it is worked out shows that this is still an emblematic Nature, but Marvell's fresh and exact observation transforms it. The detail is curious and finely wrought, but the power of Nature felt as a whole is stronger than the detail, and for the first time Marvell's writing has become more than the sum of its parts. (p.35)

The soldierly ranks of flowers are no longer regarded as a regrettable eccentricity, but as a fine piece of symbolism, "This is not merely a compliment to the General; it stands for the civilized aspect of the landscape or of life" (p.35).

An attempt is made to analyse the way in which the poetry works. The "garden of the world" passage in "Upon Appleton House" (stanza XLV) marks:

. . . the beginning of a new flexibility, a power to co-ordinate through metaphor and simile, which is the strength of Marvell's best poetry. It makes the power of such poems as "The Garden" and "Bermudas". The metaphors no longer organize and limit the material as in "The Unfortunate Lover", nor provide momentary illumination, as in the roses of "Daphnis and Chloe" and the pearls of "Mourning": they are generative, and from them comes the greater life of the poem. (p.36)

The wit is not an extraneous ornament - certainly not a disfigurement - but is seen as part of the poem's vital growth, "the wit is now led by the subject, it is no longer playing

upon it; the writing is no longer so neatly explicit"(pp.36-7).

Miss Bradbrook and Miss Lloyd Thomas open up a new way of approaching the nature poems, which many critics have since taken: they see that the natural descriptions are only a surface which conceals untold riches for the interpretative excavator. They discover, "the exhilarated sense that an illustration for everything, a mirror-reflection of everything, can be found in Nunappleton" (p.38).

The Mower poems are examined, with the conclusion that:

It is the scene itself which supplies most of the positive feeling in these poems, as here where we are obscurely reminded that all Flesh is grass, and as at the end of 'Damon the Mower', where we see 'By his own Sythe, the Mower mown' - the Clown as Death. (p.42)

A remark about the fawn provides an interesting example of the shift in critical approach:

The whiteness of the fawn is insisted on throughout the poem: as well as being stressed in 'The Song of Solomon' it is of course symbolic of the Agnus Dei. (p.49)

The concern is with the meaning of the natural detail, and its source - not with its accuracy as a piece of observed nature.

Whereas the Victorians had stressed the realistic accuracy of Marvell's nature, and his Romantic preoccupation with "identification", the critics of 1940 stress the contemporary (seventeenth-century) attitudes to nature. Marvell has affinities with the Spenserians as well as with



Donne, "It was the Spenserians who were the chief custodians of the old symbolic view of Nature as the Divine Hieroglyph" (p.54). He is seen as a victim of the changing ideas of the time, "During the later seventeenth century natural science removed the supports from this older conception of Nature; and Marvell ceased to write poetry" (p.55).

The authors completely scotch the theory that Marvell was an early Romantic:

The Nature which Marvell knew was plainly different from that which Wordsworth, for example, knew. The stars still rained influences, the earth still gave out humours: there was no such thing as inanimate nature and no possibility of a pathetic fallacy. (p.55)

This book is sketchy and inadequate in comparison with Pierre Legouis' thorough and sensitive treatment of the poet, but it is the first book in English to approach the poet and his work in a scholarly and objectively critical way.

An article on "Marvell and the Poetry of Rural Solitude" by M.C. Bradbrook in The Review of English Studies, XVII (1941), 37-46, develops hints dropped in the book. Miss Bradbrook shows that in the seventeenth century, "a new attitude towards solitude appears in literature" (p.37). She explains how:

It is advocated as a virtuous state, leading to self-examination and a healthy conscience; it is celebrated as improving to the intellectual faculties. Moreover it is enjoyed, not as a relief from society but as a positive pleasure in itself, as a taste to be cultivated. Solitude went with the new feeling for country landscape which could only have been born of temporary exile in the town. The growth of cities revealed the countryside to the writer. (p.37)

This complex of new feelings about solitude developed earlier in France than in England. Even before the start of the seventeenth century, Montaigne's essay De la Solitude, "foreshadows much of what was later to be thought" (p.37). For him, solitude was a stoical virtue, the antithesis of ambition. In French poetry, solitude was taken as a theme by the group of poets known as the Libertins - Racan (1589-1670), Théophile (1591-1626), and Saint-Amant (1594-1661). Edward Bliss Reed in 1909 (see pp.31-32 above) had first suggested a connection between Marvell and the last of these poets. Miss Bradbrook provides a more detailed comparison between "Bermudas", "The Garden", and "Upon Appleton House", and Saint-Amant's "La Jouyssance", and "La Solitude" - the latter having been translated into English by both Lord Fairfax and the Matchless Orinda, and the former by Thomas Stanley. She sees stanza LXXVII of "Upon Appleton House" as a deliberate parody of a passage in "La Jouyssance", probably of Stanley's version:

Instead of the plants providing metaphors for the love-making they are directly substituted for the mistress, and the passage certainly gains in point if it is seen as a parody of a tradition. (p.39)

The article goes on to trace the continuation of the tradition in England up to "The Retirement" of Charles Cotton, and notes similarities between the work of Marvell and that of Mildmay Fane and Cowley.

"Marvell and Nature" is the subject of an article in the Durham University Journal of 1944 (Vol. XXXVII, 22-27). In it, M.F.E. Rainbow disparages the view that Marvell is a "Romantic" in his love of the solitudes of nature, but he takes as his evidence the poems themselves, rather than the background of ideas and trends. The poet's dominant characteristic is his intellect. Insofar as he does love solitude, it is, "the curious solitude of the scientist" (p.22). His enthusiasm (Gosse called it "a sort of personal passion") for nature, is felt to be not emotional, but intellectual, "a delighted accepting of nature as a storehouse of fascinating possibilities" (p.23). His interest in nature is in "her potentialities for queerness" (p.23); hence his frequent play with distortions - the inversion of sizes, the tricks of reflection, the confusion between human and vegetable. A much more complicated Marvell is emerging from the simple Romantic manqué of the Victorian tradition:

His devotion to Nature is the result of a profound sophistication. He brings the complicated mind of the metaphysician to avow his delight in simplicity.  
(p.23)

Douglas Bush's section on Marvell (pp.158-164) in his English Literature in the Early Seventeenth Century (Oxford, 1945) confirms the newer conception of the poet, in whom the enjoyment of nature is, "at once fresh and subtle and sophisticated" (p.161); in whom the:

. . . capacity for sensuous self-identification with natural things has a touch of the old symbolic and religious concept of nature as the art of God which appears in so many philosophic writers from Plato to Sir Thomas Browne. (p.160)

"The Garden" is becoming a poem of mysterious hidden depths; it can no longer be read as, "the mere idyllic ecstasy of a romantic primitivist or escapist" (p.161).

In 1950 another line of Marvell studies got under way with Milton Klonsky's "Guide through 'The Garden'", in The Sewanee Review, LVIII, 16-35, and Ruth Wallerstein's book, Seventeenth Century Poetic. Both these writers claim to elucidate the poems by setting them in a context of philosophical tradition. Klonsky is mainly concerned with the significance for "The Garden" of an understanding of the "Enneads" of Plotinus. The essence of his argument is contained in the following quotation:

The figure of 'The Garden' is a conceit elaborated from a single essential metaphor: . . . A Garden in time is the neo-Platonic Realm of First Forms . . . Through a conflation of the Realm of First Forms with the Garden of Eden, its Biblical counterpart, this Idea-Metaphor is drawn even further by Marvell. The complete figure (and here is the paradox) is taken literally, the identification of both terms is complete. (p.16)

Miss Wallerstein gives a thorough survey of current philosophy available to Marvell, ranging from Plato to St. Augustine and Hugh of St. Victor. She insists, too, on the importance of genre in shaping the character of Marvell's poems.

The feeling that Marvell and Wordsworth share a common experience is given the authority of the jargon of psychology:

A man who has been like Marvell or Vaughan through wearisome sciolism and through a civil conflict which has destroyed or seemed to destroy the institutions to which his deepest loyalties are attached and who has through great effort transcended those barriers of disintegration and self-consciousness in a reintegration of feeling and thought, often experiences the objects of nature with a new and special sensitiveness and in a singularly intimate relationship to the energy of his own mind. (p.254)

This is one way of approaching Marvell's use of natural details. Another is through tradition. Miss Wallerstein assures us that:

The character of his images in general and many of the particular images themselves identify for us the world of discourse implicit in his poems, and that it is a world related to that tradition of symbolic thought and contemplation in which St. Bonaventura is a leading figure and in which in some form or other almost all later neo-Platonism is involved. (p.181)

Frank Kermode seeks to solve the problem of "The Argument of Marvell's 'Garden'" (Essays in Criticism, II (1952), 225-241) by following Miss Wallerstein's lead and relating the poem to its place in a genre tradition. "The Garden" emerges not so much as a genre poem, but as an anti-genre poem:

'The Garden' is a poem of the anti-genre of the naturalist paradise. Marvell therefore rejects the naturalist account of love, and with it that Platonism which was associated with the delights of the senses.

(Quoted from the reprint of the article in Seventeenth Century English Poetry, ed. William R. Keast, Galaxy Books (New York, 1962), p.293)

The importance of the Libertin poetry of France for the understanding of Marvell is affirmed.

A critical fondness for the ultimatum seems to have developed. Miss Wallerstein says we, "should not fail" to remember a passage from St. Augustine when reading "The Garden"; Mr. Kermode that, "As poetry the work can only be studied in relation to its genre, though that genre may be related to ethical debates" (p.296).

Joseph Summers returns to the theme of "Marvell's Nature" in ELH, XX, No.2, (1953), 121-135. In his reading of the poems, nature is "an image of classical order", and this in turn is "a most effective source of hyperbolical compliment" (p.123). He sees Marvell as a nature-poet pre-occupied with "lost perfection". In "The Garden", he tries to "recapture what has been lost" (p.125). The Mower, in cutting down the grass that nature has produced, "symbolizes man's alienation from nature" (p.126). Nature, as part of the divine plan, is good, "but its goodness is neither available nor quite comprehensible to man" (p.128).

Summers is concerned with the philosophy behind the poems, and with the way in which it is expressed through natural details. He analyses the themes of Time and Eternity in "Little T.C.", and comments on the poetical method of "On a Drop of Dew", "We are chiefly compelled by the ingenuity



with which the natural is made to reflect the conceptual" (p. 124).

An extensive quotation from his review of such passages as "The Garden", stanza V, and "Upon Appleton House", stanzas LXXIV-V, will serve to show how the critical climate had changed since the early decades of this century:

It is in this vein that Marvell occasionally gives a sensuous particularity to his descriptions of natural objects which may remind us of Vaughan's "those faint beams in which this hill is drest/After the Sun's remove", and which has led some readers to consider him a romantic born too early. And yet the "gelid Strawberries" and "The hatching Thrastle's shining Eye" of 'Upon Appleton House' contribute to a complicated vision of nature which is finally unlike the nineteenth-century's; the "Hewel's wonders" (the activities of the woodpecker) teach the "easie Philosopher" who "Hath read in Nature's mystick Book" the just relationships between sin and death. (pp.124-125)

Also to 1953 belongs Harold Wendell Smith's essay in Scrutiny: "Cowley, Marvell and the Second Temple" (XIX, 184-205). He continues the investigations of M.C. Bradbrook into the social/poetical conditions of Marvell's period, and sees in Cowley a representative of the urge to retire from the uncertainty of "inner light" and the flux of current events to the security of the country. Although Marvell's enjoyment of nature is much more sensuous than Cowley's, it performs the same function for him - "that of being a stable comforter in a world upset by movement" (p.189).

Mr. Wendell Smith's horrific reading of "The Garden", stanza V, is worth quoting as an example of what can happen

to Empson's method of free, subjective interpretation:

. . . the compelling quality of the bizarre - the realized nightmarish hyperbole of Nature as a sort of giant fleshy orchid, deliciously hostile and unbridled by any rational end or discipline, which closes around man and devours him. (p.190)

The major work on Marvell's place in a living context of ideas and poetic developments has been done by Professor Maren-Sofie R stvig, in her book The Happy Man (Oxford and Oslo, 1954), and in several articles. She denies any important influence from Saint-Amant and the libertin poets, and sees Marvell as the culmination of a new Horatian tradition, effectively begun by the assimilation of Hermetic ideas in the Odes of the Polish Jesuit, Casimire Sarbiewski. She finds evidence that Edward Benlowes and Mildmay Fane had read Casimire, if only in the translation by G.Hils (London, 1646), and traces strong connections between Marvell and these poets. The descriptive technique in "Upon the Hill and Grove at Bil-borow" - "an exploitation of the landscape for moral purposes" (from "Benlowes, Marvell, and the Divine Casimire", Huntington Library Quarterly, XVIII, No.1 (Nov. 1954), 13-35) - had been used in 1642 by Denham in "Cooper's Hill". But some years before that, the method had been employed by Casimire in the loco-descriptive first epode on the estate of the Duke of Bracciano. Casimire seems:

. . . to have stimulated the creation of a new kind of nature lyric in England, in which the descriptive element carried part of the meaning. (ibid. p.35)



Vaughan, Benlowes, Hare, and Marvell followed his lead, and:

Common to them all is the mystic or semi-mystic interpretation of Horace's rural philosophy, and the presentation of this philosophy in the very terms with which the landscape is described. (p.35)

Professor Røstvig regards as basic to seventeenth-century retirement poetry, "the belief that it is actually possible, through a retired country life, to achieve a sort of pre-lapsarian state of grace". (The Happy Man, p.16)

Many of the details in Benlowes's "Theophila" (1652) and Marvell's retirement poems correspond. Professor Røstvig concludes, "Much of the praise which is generally given to Marvell as a poet of nature, ought to be passed on to Benlowes" (ibid. p.233).

F.W.Bradbrook, in his chapter, "The Poetry of Andrew Marvell", in The Pelican Guide to English Literature (1956, reprinted with revisions 1960, 3pp.193-204), feels strongly the sensuous force of the poet's natural details, especially in stanza V of "The Garden", where, "he succeeds in conveying the tactile sense of the fleshy ripeness of the apples and the sound of their falling" (p.200). But he is aware that the details are being used for more than their appeal to the sense. Speaking of the "complex symbol" of the garden, he comments on Marvell's place in poetic development:

This use of a symbol with layers of allegorical interpretation ends in poetry with Marvell. It was a literary tradition and habit of mind that connected

the Metaphysical poets with the Elizabethan dramatists and with medieval usage. (p.199)

L.W.Hyman provided a new piece for the interpretative critic to fit into the puzzle of "The Garden"'s meaning in an article of 1958. In "Marvell's 'Garden'" (ELH, XXV, 13-22), he recognizes in the poem a reference to the myth that Adam before the Fall was androgynous, and cites Plato, Plotinus, and Genesis.

John Press makes a plea for a more spontaneous response to the poems in his British Council pamphlet of the same year - Andrew Marvell, Writers and their Work: No.98 (London, 1958):

The world of Nature held for Marvell a profound moral and spiritual import. Unlike Randolph and the French libertine poets, who used the garden as a symbol to inculcate a naturalist glorification of sensual indulgence, Marvell depicts it as the hortus conclusus, the enclosed garden of The Song of Songs, where the withdrawn and solitary intellect may pass beyond the senses and contemplate the Divine. We need not pause to investigate the precise debt (if any) that Marvell owed to Bonaventura, Hugh of St. Victor, Richard of St. Victor, Plotinus, Lipsius or the Divine Casimire. Such refinements of scholarship may serve to strengthen our understanding of 'The Garden' and 'Upon Appleton House'; but our first task must be to respond, by an exercise of imaginative sympathy, to the images and symbols which he employs in these poems of contemplative ecstasy. (p.24)

But 1959 saw a further advance on the interpretative front. Professor Røstvig took up and endorsed Hyman's suggestion about an androgynous Adam, in an article called "'The Garden': a Hermetic Poem" (English Studies, XL (1959), 65-76).

She finds a more convincing basis for it, however, in the Hermetic version of the Creation. Stanza V is seen as a parallel to the Hermetic idea that physical nature wooed and enwrapped spiritual man.

The same year, Jim Corder, in "Marvell and Nature" (Notes and Queries (1959), 58-61), rephrases one of the oldest clichés about Marvell's nature - that it is essentially tame and cultivated. Marvell reveals, he claims, "a special geometrical nature. His verse, that is, in many ways reveals the special universe of a formal garden" (p.59). Courthope had said as much half a century before. The purpose of the note seems to be to modify Summers's views of 1953:

Remembering the awareness of formalized nature continually revealed in Marvell's work, however, it seems safe to say that his gardens are not momentary attempts to recapture lost innocence, but constant metaphors for order involving more than innocence. (p.61)

An article in the Boston University Studies in English of 1960 (IV, No.3, 152-161), relates Marvell and Wordsworth. John D. Rosenberg's "Marvell and the Christian Idiom" argues that in his pastoral poems, Marvell is reconciling the Classical and Christian values of his time. He rejected the licence of "the Caroline Seraglio" without accepting its antithesis, "Puritan "plainness" and "purity"". Rosenberg considers that Marvell, like Wordsworth later, confided "the progress of the spirit" to nature, with its "gifts of

innocence and en<sup>2</sup>ergy".

Also in 1960, in the second volume of the first part of Les Poètes Métaphysiques Anglais (Paris), came Robert Ellrodt's chapter on Marvell. Ellrodt's sensitive study of Marvell's poetic method, which concentrates on the poems as poetry, is refreshing after the deluge of discoveries and analyses of the preceding decades. He discerns as one of the peculiar qualities of the poetry a quasi-dramatic presentation of details which marks Marvell off from other poets of his time:

Mais les fruits, l'ombre, la source, le cadran solaire n'ont pas seulement la valeur typique ou générique que les objets naturels ont dans les pastorales de l'époque (ou dans L'Allegro de Milton): ce sont ces fruits, cette ombre, cette source, ce cadran, que le poète cueille ou contemple à un moment précis. Ce n'est pas un sentiment universel mais une expérience unique qui nous est communiquée. (p.115)

Another characteristic of Marvell's descriptive method is his preference for close-ups:

Tout comme Donne, Herbert et Crashaw, Marvell présente les objets en premier plan, sans distance, ni perspective. Il est au pied de l'arbre, au bord même de la fontaine qu'il décrit, et toujours les fruits sont à portée de sa main, les melons à ses pieds. L'absence d'horizon, de lointain, est le secret d'une incomparable netteté dans l'évocation. Il excelle à circonscrire. Tantôt il détache l'objet unique sur un fond uniforme, sans retrait, ni profondeur: "He hangs in shades the Orange bright,/Like golden Lamps in a green Night". Tantôt il se plaît à enclore un univers dans une goutte de rosée. (p.120)

Ellrodt sees as fundamental in Marvell a dichotomy

between body and spirit: in the poetry he is after an isolation of the one or the other, "de libérer l'âme du corps et le corps de l'âme; de proposer à l'une la pensée pure, à l'autre la sensation pure" (p.143). This has an effect on his use of natural details:

La poésie de Donne est une poésie à la fois abstraite et concrète où le "conceit" est le trait d'union entre l'abstrait et le concret. Dans la poésie de Marvell déjà s'opère insensiblement la dissociation de l'abstrait et du concret dont souffrira la poésie classique.  
(p.149)

As a result of this dissociation, Marvell often takes the sense impression itself as the subject of his poetry:

Non seulement Marvell écrit des poèmes descriptifs, mais, si soucieux qu'il soit de montrer de l'esprit, il prend souvent la perception même pour objet poétique. (p.149)

Ellrodt compares the method of Herbert, who never forgets that his flower, in "Vertue", is an emblem for something else, and Marvell, who often expresses sensation "sans la transposer en sentiment ou en idée" (p.149). (He cites the Oranges, the cowslip-water of "Damon the Mower", the grapes of "The Garden", the velvet moss etc.)

No one before Keats, he goes on, had expressed so sensuously the joys that nature offers to the senses. Even when he writes in the extravagant, artificial manner of the metaphysicals, "cela n'empêche point que la sensation soit l'objet de son art et la source de plaisir poétique. Et que la sensation souvent s'intellectualise en conceit ne change rien

à l'affaire" (p.150).

Allrodt has an inviting, alternative to offer to the elaborate interpretations of "Upon Appleton House" that have appeared in recent years. He sees the rôle of the diverse allusions and images in the poem not as part of some obscure total allegory, whether political, religious, or mystical, but as a means of widening the imaginative scope of the estate poem:

L'évocation des paysages et des travaux rustiques y gagne, au contraire, une valeur humaine, une résonance historique et religieuse: le "conceit" introduit la pensée sérieuse au coeur même de la futilité pastorale. (p.163)

Next, come two distinct overall interpretations of "Upon Appleton House", by D.C.Allen, in 1960, and by Maren-Sofie Røstvig in 1964. Allen, in chapter VII of his Image and Meaning: Metaphoric Traditions in Renaissance Poetry, (Baltimore, pp.115-153), reads the poem as a veiled appeal to Lord Fairfax not to leave the field of public affairs. He brings to light many examples of traditions or images similar to those found in Marvell's poem: examples of house-descriptions going back to Statius and Homer; allegorical gardens dating back to Roman times; images of civil war as flood, traced in Lucan and Horace. The descriptive section of the poem, seen in the full light of these and many more metaphoric traditions, is, "an allegorical masque of the recent civil disorders"(p.

119). The rail is Charles I, the quick rail is Scotland, "bloody Thestylis" is the classical "sanguinea Bellona". The images of piled hay as pyramids and Roman mounds are significant - the tombs of the dead after the civil strife. After the public events, Marvell turns to his own predicament, again presenting his ideas through natural details. He is instructed by nature in domestic matters - hence the sequence of 1) lovelorn nightingale, 2) married doves, 3) the thrush begetting a family, 4) the heron sending mature offspring into the world. The woodpecker instructs him politically. The rotten oak of Charles, tainted by the worm (Strafford or Laud), is got rid of by natural processes. The Hewel is a symbol of justice, war, and religion.

Professor Rostvig, in her article entitled "'Upon Appleton House' and the Universal History of Man" (English Studies, XLII, 337-351), finds in the poem "various levels of meaning", and at the deepest level, a re-enactment of the universal history of man. The similarity between Marvell's poetry and Benlowes's is again examined, with the conclusion:

[The] exploitation of the symbolic meanings inherent in the landscape of retirement is particularly important. Like Marvell, Benlowes finds pointers to the universal history of man in the landscape itself.  
(p.340)

The natural scene is but one element in a manifold unity, "The individual, the church, the body politic, and nature must

undergo the same process of purgation" (p.341).

After a presentation of crucial events in the Old Testament - Eden, the Fall, the Flood, the crossing of the Red Sea - Marvell re-enacts the central event of history - the Passion - in stanzas LXXVII-VIII. After this, the Floods recede, leaving no serpent - sin has been vanquished by the Cross. The earth is like "green silks newly washed" - a new creation. The crystal river, symbol of the purified mind of man, "reflects things truly" (p.349). As a result of the process of universal history, "The image of God is reflected in the mind of man without distortion" (p.350).

The rural voluptuary of Ormsby in 1896 has been replaced by the profound political and religious philosopher of 1960. And "childish" conceits that Goosse rejected as aberrations have been transformed into the vital tools of a skilled and complex poetic craftsman.

A section in H.R.Swardson's Poetry and the Fountain of Light (London, 1962) deals with Marvell in terms similar to those used by Rosenberg and Ellrodt. Where Ellrodt talks of the Soul and the Body, and Rosenberg of Christian and Classical, Swardson sees the conflicting forces in Marvell's poetry as the religious tradition and the classical-erotic tradition. Marvell's method is to use "the very form and outer machinery of the erotic pastoral" (p.99) as a weapon against "the erotic tradition" (p.99):1



It is not a moralizing or otherworldly comment he makes, but a comment from within the natural, sensual world itself, asserting the claim of a proper delight. (p.99)

Marvell opts for neither side, however. He finds a compromise position:

From this 'pastoral' perspective he is able to regard both the erotic and the ascetic tradition as departures from a natural, 'primitive', and healthy human norm. (p.102)

The quest for conflict in Marvell's poems is one of the chief features of modern criticism. Barbara Everett, in an article called "Marvell's 'The Mower's Song'" (Critical Quarterly, IV, No.3 (1962), 219-224), decides that the Mower is Marvell's invention for expressing, "A clear sense of warring, but therefore reconcilable, oppositions between Mind and Body, Man and Nature, Experience and Innocence" (p.220). He is "much more of an Adam than a confused peasant" (p.220). The landscapes in which he exists are more a means than an end. Through the Mower and his meadows Marvell explores man's place in the natural world. The fall is man's discovery of experience, and that discovery leads to a "state of war" within the mind, and with the natural world:

It is the Mower's mind that teaches him to perceive or remember an idyllic innocence in nature, but that also teaches him to use and destroy the nature he dominates - the domination is the destruction. (p.223)

This is a development from Summers's Mower, who "cuts down for human ends what Nature has produced" (op.cit. above p.51).

The essay on Marvell which Joan Bennett added to her book on the Metaphysical poets when she re-issued it as Five Metaphysical Poets (Cambridge, 1964) adds nothing new to the discussion of Marvell's use of natural details.

Dennis Davison's volume, The Poetry of Andrew Marvell (London, 1964), in the Studies in English Literature series, aims, like John Press's pamphlet, to get back to the actual poems. Dismissing the by now exploded Romantic fallacy, he reiterates the views of Raimbrow that Marvell's interest in nature is that of intellectual "curiosity" and his method of presentation that of "grave fantasy". He is sceptical about the recent inflations of the Mower into "a towering, mythological figure" (p.42), seeing "Mamon the Mower" as "a variation upon the hot-cold paradoxes of the conventional love-poem" (p.40). And he insists on the un-Romantic character of the nature poems, "What precise details he does notice prompt him to deduce a moral or see a witty comment on humanity" (p.57).

Also to 1964 belongs Nature and Art in Renaissance Literature (New York, 1964) by Edward William Tayler, one chapter of which is devoted to "Marvell's Garden of the Mind". Tayler reads the nature poems in the light of the Renaissance pastoral debate about Art and Nature. He considers that:

Three main traditions are necessary for an understanding of Marvell's poetry: the literary tradition

of pastoral; the philosophical tradition of Nature and Art that has always been associated with pastoral; and the Christian tradition, which gives a particular shape and meaning to the other two. (p.162)

He traces a development in Marvell's handling of the pastoral conventions:

. . . from the highly derivative and naturalistic pastorals of the fashionable world, to a criticism, especially in "Clorinda and Damon", of libertin ethics, and finally to the use of the pastoral form as a vehicle for the expression of his more mature concerns. (p.161)

Taylor rejects any attempt to allegorize "The Nymph and the Faun", seeing in it, "a technique of allusion almost random in nature", which lends it intensity, but which also suggests the need for an overall interpretation which the poem cannot yield. In other words, the function of the scriptural allusions is ambiguous. In "The Mower's Song", the pastoral and the scriptural combine:

With the exception of one key word - "fall" - he does not even use terms ambiguously suggestive of scriptural events. Instead, he has made the plot or action of the poem significant in itself; the organization of the action and the relationship of the Mower to Nature are in themselves expressive of the Fall of Man. (p.158)

Marvell's preoccupation in the Mower poems generally, and in "The Garden" and "Upon Appleton House", is seen to be the problem of the man-nature relationship, the possibility of harmony, alienation, and recovery of lost harmony.

L.W.Hyman's book-length study of the poet, Andrew Marvell

(New York, 1964), takes up the theme of conflict, analysing the poems in terms of a struggle between sense and spirit, and the impulse to action and the impulse to withdrawal - a modishly phrased version of the Wordsworth analogy. "The Garden" is praised as "embodying the concepts in natural images to a greater extent than in any other poem"(p.63). Since, Biblically, all Flesh is Grass, when the poet stumbles on the Empsonian Melon/Apple and falls on grass, "he is falling into carnal sin" (p.68). The impulse behind the Mower poems is sexuality. "The Mower to Glo-worms" is a profound statement about "desire, frustration, and sin" (p.16); the "blade of grass" in "The Mower's Song" is a "phallic symbol".

Hyman discusses Marvell's use of natural details in terms of the prevalent "conception of nature", which was "on the verge of being superceded during the poet's lifetime" (p.16). In this conception there was an integration between objective fact and subjective feeling. This makes valid Hyman's interpretation of poetry in which:

. . . the natural images have more than a representative function; in their literal concreteness they appeal to our senses and stir up associations in us that go beyond any explication. This function of poetry does not, however, interfere with an explication in terms of definite correspondences to human feelings and values. In Renaissance poetry, in particular, there is no sharp distinction between the sensuous quality of the image and what one scholar has termed its "significancy". (p.15)

In 1965, another full-length study appeared: Harold E.

Toliver's Marvell's Ironic Vision (New Haven and London).

Rather like Hyman he sees the poetry as a "pattern of withdrawal and emergence" (p.11). Also like Hyman, he relates Marvell's nature poems to the changing view of the universe and the nature of fact which was altering European modes of thought and feeling in the seventeenth century:

The subject-object dichotomy of later nature poetry began to replace the old system of "integrative" or "consistent" analogues. It is Marvell, part lyricist and part satirist, who perhaps more than any other poet of the mid-century reveals the difficulty of making the transition from one to the other. In the lyric he looks two ways, backward toward Herbert and forward toward Keats and Wordsworth. By and large, however, his pre-Wordsworthian and pre-Keatsian nature poetry is not an attempt to absorb the self into nature or even nature into the self; rather, it maintains clear distinctions between the human and the natural in order to preserve the ground of personality in a personal God. (p.6)

The Mower poems in particular deal with the difficulties in which this dichotomy leaves the poet:

In addition, the artist's difficulty in transforming landscape to symbol may be involved. If the link with nature is broken, hopes of achieving order and meaning fail, or, in the special jargon of the pastoral, the "greenness of the Grass" is destroyed. (p.90)

Sometimes - most notably in "Bermudas" - Marvell achieves a harmony between the two approaches to nature, and shows that, "A classical concern with nature-as-such and the Christian book of emblems are not entirely incompatible" (p.101).

"Upon Appleton House" is interpreted according to the

central withdrawal-emergence motif, and the various natural details are fitted into the story where their significance can be ascertained. But although, "the caterpillars, strawberries, serpent, crocodile, woodpecker, and so on are presented as though their importance extended beyond their physical presence in the woodland", it is often difficult "to obtain a clear index to the meaning of many of the creatures" (p.122). Of the central nature experience in the poem - the solitary communion in the wood - Tolliver remarks:

This passionate apostrophe, like the rest of the woodland experience, is projected in a semi-humorous mood, as though reading in this increasingly out-moded book of nature required taking refuge behind a shield of irony. The commitment to the "mystick Book" seems vital enough, however. (p.123)

This is a particularly useful comment, because critics have had little to say about the humour in the nature poems. Either it is regarded as "childish" by the older school, or it is ignored in the solemn approach of the interpreters. Also valuable in Tolliver's study as a whole is the attempt to see the poet's attitude to nature in the light of the changing concept of the universe in the seventeenth century.

Kitty Scoular's Natural Magic (Oxford, 1965) examines some aspects of these changing attitudes to nature, and relates them to Marvell's art in "Upon Appleton House":

The landscape of "Upon Appleton House" was intended to satisfy the taste of an age for which the doctrine of *ut pictura poesis* meant that both poetry and

painting were emblematic, bodying forth important qualities and significances in attractive forms which both hid and expressed the truth. The strict description of nature and the power to distort in fidelity to the poetic vision had not split apart. The order of Marvell's landscape is hardly prosaic: it is an order in confusion which imitates the structure of the universe. (p.190)

1966 saw the publication of The Art of Marvell's Poetry (London), which was unfortunately left in unfinished form by the death of J.B. Leishman. This book sets Marvell in his literary context, doing in great detail what Kermode's essay and Allen's chapters had attempted. It reveals the "fascinating combinations of 'traditionality' and 'originality'" (p.283), to be found in Marvell's poems; defines the essential difference between Donne and Marvell:

Donne, one might say, devised entirely new ways of saying entirely new things, Marvell assimilated, re-combined and perfected from his contemporaries various new ways of saying old ones (p.70);

and shows with brilliant scholarship how rooted Marvell is in tradition:

His poetry, although in the highest degree original, would have been impossible without the numerous literary sources from which he derived inspiration, stimulation and suggestion. (p.77)

One more sentence from Leishman's book is worth quoting here, since it puts in proper perspective the many references that have been made, especially by early critics, to the paramount value for the poet of a keen perceptive ability:

Although our pleasure in much of Marvell's poetry

arises from the new visual experiences he gives us, this pleasure is probably inseparable from our simultaneous pleasure in the new linguistic experiences with which it is combined. (pp.91-92)

The most recent major contribution to Marvell studies has been The Enclosed Garden (Madison, Milwaukee, and London, 1966) by Stanley Stewart. Stewart examines the entire tradition of the Hortus Conclusus from the Song of Songs itself, to its manifestations in the graphic arts, architecture, and gardening. Having amassed a great deal of evidence as to the significance of such items as apple-trees, fountains and sundials, he turns, in a concluding chapter, to Marvell's "The Garden". His allegorical interpretation of the poem depends on an appeal to the accumulated evidence, and on a series of contrasts between those who actively strive for fulfilment, and the "I", who, as the Soul, the Bride of Christ, passively submits to the advances of the Garden, or the Bridegroom.

Stewart's book is a useful piece of scholarship, bringing together a great deal of interesting information. But his attempt to impose it all on "The Garden", and produce a definitive reading of the poem, makes one realise that there is still a lot to be said for the simple delight in the surface details of the poetry which was the experience of many of the earlier critics of Marvell.



## **PART II**

### **NATURAL DETAILS IN MARVELL'S POETRY**

## Chapter III

### PROVENANCE

Part I has introduced the question of natural details in poetry, and shown how changing attitudes to nature and art have been reflected in the preoccupations of those who have written about Marvell's work over the centuries. We can now turn to the natural details themselves, and investigate the kind of detail used by Marvell.

The world of nature is the source of a great deal of the material of poetry: it provides simile, metaphor, allusion, background, exemplum, symbol, and so on. But it is inadequate to state that "Nature" is the common source of results so different as:

- (a) Quarles's:  
The fruit that's yellow,  
Is found not always mellow.  
(Bk.I, Emblem III, Emblems, Divine and Moral (1635))
- (b) Vaughan's:  
Twist not my Cypresse with your Bays,  
Or Roses with my Yewgh.  
("Idle Verse", Silex Scintillans (1650))
- (c) Hookes's:  
That love Camellion-like can live by aire  
Of womens breath, without some better fare.  
("Against Platonick Court-Love", Amanda: a Sacrifice to an Unknown Goddess (1653))
- (d) Waller's:  
When to the beeches I report my flame,  
They bow their heads, as if they felt the same.  
("At Penshurst" ("While in the park I sing"),

(1645), The Poems of Edmund Waller, ed. G. Thorn  
Drury, The Muses' Library, (London, 1893), I., 64)

- (e) Milton's:  
Or ushered with a shower still,  
When the gust hath blown his fill,  
Ending on the rustling leaves,  
With minute-drops from off the eaves.  
("Il Penseroso", ll.127-130)

Of these, (a) sounds like a piece of proverbial wisdom; (b) draws on long-established associations of certain plants with aspects of human experience; (c) comes from accepted natural history; (d) is a consciously artificial attribution of human sensibility to plant-life; (e) is pure description.

In fact, the details from nature which occur in poetry can enter the poet's repertoire in a number of ways. Many - the vast majority in early poetry - are part of a cultural heritage, the result of generations of contact with a natural environment. Surprisingly few seem to owe their place in a particular poem to the poet's direct observation of the detail "live" in nature. Hookes had probably never seen a chameleon; Vaughan need not have known what a cypress or a bay-tree looks like.

The rest of this chapter will be devoted to an examination of the natural details in Marvell's poetry, in order to discover where they come from. Several areas of provenance can be isolated:

- 1) Creatures, plants, and phenomena which have a traditional

significance inherent in the mere naming of them.

2) Specifically descriptive details attached to creatures and plants, which had long been clichés of observation.

3) Details deriving from natural histories and traditional lore, often of a fabulous kind.

4) Details which seem to come from more recent direct contact with nature, often traceable to poems written in the century preceding Marvell.

#### 1) DETAILS WITH TRADITIONAL SIGNIFICANCE

A number of Marvell's natural details belong to this category. His list of dangerous animals in "A Dialogue between Thyrsis and Dorinda":

Oh, there's, neither hope nor fear  
There's no Wolf, no Fox, nor Bear,

can be paralleled in Christopher Harvey's "School of the Heart" (1647), no.XXXI:

The world's a wilderness, wherein I find  
Wild beasts of every kind,  
Foxes, and wolves, and dogs, and boars, and bears.

More animals appear in "Young Love":

Love as much the snowy Lamb  
Or the wanton Kid does prize,  
As the Lusty Bull or Ram,  
For his morning Sacrifice.

The kid, bull, and ram are given their traditional significance as "wanton" and "lusty". The whiteness of the lamb is also

standard symbolism, as is more clear in its coupling with the ermin in "The Nymph and the Faun":

In fair Elizium to endure,  
With milk-white Lambs, and Ermins pure.

The cock, as in Chaucer's "Nun's Priest's Tale", is a type of lechery in "Last Instructions to a Painter", ll. 883-884:

At night, than Canticleer more brisk and hot;  
the lion of boldness, in "A Dialogue between Two Horses":

Truth's as Bold as a Lyon, I am not afraid;

The Kite of greed, in "Upon Appleton House", stanza LI:

Greedy as Kites has trussed them up;

the vulture of greed, in "The Gallery":

And (when inform'd) them throw'st away,  
To be the greedy Vultur's prey;

the cormorant of gluttony, in "The Unfortunate Lover":

And as one Corm'rant fed him, still  
Another on his heart did bill;

the hog of ill-manners, in the "Character of Holland":

Themselves the Hogs, as all their Subjects Bores;

the bee of industry, in "The Garden":

th'industrious Bee;

the owl and raven of gloom and disaster, in "The First Anniversary of the Government of O.C." ll. 333-334:

And Owls and Ravens with their screeching Noyse,  
Did make the Fun'erals sadder with their Joyes.

(Quarles, in Book IV, Emblem XV, of Emblems, Divine and Moral (1635), has a similar passage:

The raven's dismal croaks, the midnight howls,  
Of empty wolves, mix'd with the screech of owls.)

A standard significance is assigned to the caterpillar in the lines "To Lovelace":

I see the envious Caterpillar sit  
On the faire blossome of each growing wit.

Several of the references to plants in Marvell's poetry belong in this category. Laurel is a common example, and is interesting in that the poet uses it in varying degrees of abstraction, though always with its significance as the hero's or poet's honour uppermost. In "Tom May's Death", its physical existence as a tree is maintained:

'Twas Ben that in the dusky Laurel shade  
Amongst the Chorus of old Poets laid.

But in "Blake's Victory", the tree has been reduced to a synonym for honour:

Their rich Fleet sunk, and ours with Lawrel fraught.

Other plants had similar symbolic meanings which had their origin in Greek or Roman customs, and were accepted as familiar symbols in life and poetry throughout Europe. In "The Garden", Marvell plays with the discrepancy referred to above between the actual tree and the derived significance:

How vainly men themselves amaze  
To win the Palm, the Oke, or Bayes; . .  
. . . While all Flow'rs and all Trees do close  
To weave the Garlands of repose.

These plants claim their significance from ritual and custom; others have some inherent quality which, over a long period, has gained for them the power of traditional symbolism. The lily, because of its whiteness, has become an emblem of chastity and innocence, as in Cranmer's words in "Henry VIII", Act V, sc.iv:

Yet a virgin,  
A most unspotted Lily shall she pass  
To the ground.

Marvell draws on this symbolism in "The Nymph and the Faun":

And its pure virgin Limbs to fold  
In whitest sheets of Lillies cold.

Woodbines and vines, because of their physical characteristics, came to be regarded as symbolic, as in "Upon Appleton House", stanza LXXVII:

Bind me ye Woodbines in your 'twines,  
Curle me about ye gadding Vines.

Maren-Sofie Røstvig comments:

The woodbines and the vines are traditional symbols of love; the twining vine often symbolises the mystic wedding of the soul to Christ.

("Appleton House" and the Universal History of Man", English Studies, XLII (1961), 337-351)

The force of the thistles in "Damon the Mower", coming ultimately from "Genesis", Chapter III, v.18, is summed up in the Rev. Henry N.Ellacombe's remarks in his book, The Plant-Lore & Garden-Craft of Shakespeare (Exeter, 1878):

It is the recognised symbol of untidiness and carelessness, being found not so much in barren ground

as in good ground not properly cared for. (p.229)

The Marvell lines read:

How happy might I still have mow'd,  
Had not Love here his Thistles sow'd.

Violets, because of their short life, represent the passing of earthly things before their prime. They are naturally invoked as the fear of infant death enters the later stanzas of "Little T.C.":

But most procure  
That Violets may a longer Age endure.

Grass and flowers also exemplify the decay of living things. "Clorinda and Damon" puts it succinctly:

Grass withers; and the Flow'rs too fade.

Reinforcing the inherent quality of grass, withering or being cut down, is the Biblical "All flesh is grass". L.W. Hyman suggests that this symbolism is deliberately developed in the Mower poems, but his interpretation is unnecessarily extravagant:

As will be seen even more clearly in the other mower poems, the grass represents the flesh. The cutting down of the grass, therefore, refers to man's fall into sin.

(Andrew Marvell (1964), p.16)

There are a few inanimate phenomena in Marvell's poetry which can be put in this section. Snow, like the ermin and the lamb, is symbolic of spotlessness in "To Doctor Witty":

. . . purer than dissolved snow.



Thunder, because of classical and Biblical mythology, but ultimately because of its inherent qualities, is a mark of divine wrath and power. Marvell draws on these established associations in "An Horatian Ode":

'Tis Madness to resist or blame  
The force of angry Heavens flame.

Perhaps to this section belongs the inherent and Biblically derived significance of the garden, as a symbol of repose and innocence. Marvell's real garden turns his thoughts to the first Garden of the Creation. This symbolic shift is very common in the seventeenth-century poets. We can find it in Hookes's "To Amanda Walking in a Garden" (in Amanda, a Sacrifice to an Unknown Goddess (1653), p.42), and most clearly expressed in Joseph Beaumont's "The Gardin" (in The Minor Poems of Joseph Beaumont, D.D., 1616-1699, ed. Eloise Robinson (London, 1914), p.450):

The Gardins quit with me: as yesterday  
I walked in it, to day that walks in me;  
Through all my memorie  
It sweetly wanders . . .  
. . . For now I'm hanted with the thought of that  
Heavn-planted Gardin, where felicitie  
Flourished on every Tree.  
Lost, lost it is . . .

Besides "The Garden" itself, stanza XLI of "Upon Appleton House" is in the same tradition, where England is seen as a Garden of Innocence corrupted by Civil War:

What luckless Apple did we tast,  
To make us Mortal, and The Wast.

## 2) CLICHÉS OF NATURAL DESCRIPTION

Many natural details occur in poetry with a descriptive formula attached to them. This is used so often that it more or less ceases to have any imaginative force. As they occur in seventeenth-century and later poetry, these details are mere clichés, and certainly not evidence of the poet's own observation, although originally they came direct from nature. Marvell's bats, for example, in "Last Instructions to a Painter", have leathern wings, a stock descriptive feature:

And flies like Batts with leathern Wings by Night.

Examples can be found in Spenser's Faerie Queene, II, xii, 36:

The leather-winged Batt, dayes enemy;

and in Ben Jonson's The Sad Shepherd, II, 2:

The giddy flitter-mice with leather wings.

The bat still "flits by on leathern wing" in Collins's "Ode to Evening" nearly a century after Marvell.

The fleeces of sheep are conventionally cited as examples of curliness or softness, as in the "Second Song at the Marriage of Lord Fauconberg":

Not our Lambs own Fleeces are  
Curl'd so lovely as her Hair;

and in "Thyrsis and Dorinda":

Then I'll go on: There, sheep are full  
Of sweetest grass, and softest wooll.

Certain birds are renowned for their ability to imitate human speech. Two are mentioned in "A Dialogue between Two

Horses":

When Magpyes and Parratts cry 'walke Knave walk',  
It is clear prooffe that birds may talke.

(Compare this with Chaucer's reference to the "janglynge pye").

Grass, as in "Little T.C.", is green:

In the green Grass she loves to lie;  
and streams are clear, like crystal, as in "Last Instructions  
to a Painter", l.525:

Survey'd their Crystal streams, and Banks so green.

The usual descriptive attributes of fountains and shadows  
are found in "The Unfortunate Lover":

By Fountains cool, and Shadows green.

Vaughan's "Corruption" contains a similar line:

In some green shade or fountain.

Several stock descriptive items are brought together  
in this couplet from stanza X of "Upon Appleton House":

In fragrant Gardens, shaddy Woods,  
Deep Meadows, and transparent Floods.

The clouds, in the "First Song at the Marriage of Lord  
Fauconberg", are given the orthodox comparison with sheep:

As we our Flocks, so you command  
The fleecy Clouds with silver wand.

The "blapping" ivy turns up, though as an unusually  
powerful presence, in stanza LXXIV of "Upon Appleton House":

And Ivy, with familiar trails,  
Me licks, and clasps, and curles, and hales.

### 3) DETAILS FROM NATURAL HISTORIES

Mediaeval and Renaissance Natural History was a hotch-potch of perceived detail and unverified traditional information, compounded of accurate observation, mistake, and fable. The authority of the past and of the written word was unassailable, and the errors of Pliny's Natural History and the mediaeval Books of Beasts were accepted as fact. With the Renaissance and the new scientific approach of men like John Parkinson and Sir Francis Bacon, the old beliefs were questioned, and put to the test of observation and experiment. A number of erroneous details, and some of the more accurate ones, in the accepted lore of the time find their way into Marvell's poetry, together with some of the ancient beliefs which the New Learning had already exploded. Some survive as "poetic" truths, alongside the experimental refutations. An interesting apology for retaining the old myths in imaginative literature occurs in Henri Estienne's The Art of Making Devices (French ed. 1645, translated by Thomas Blount, 1646):

Here we must also observe, that it is lawfull to use the propriety of a naturall subject, be it animal, plant, fruit, or other thing, according to the generall approbation or received opinion of ancient Authors, though the Modernes have lately discovered it to be false, because the comparison which is grounded upon a quality, reputed true by the generality, though indeed it be false, shall be more universally received, and better understood, then if it were grounded upon a true property, which neverthelesse were held false, and which were altogether unknowne to the greater part of the learned. (p.46)

Authority for many of the odder details in Marvell's poems exists in the standard works on Natural History that were current in the mid-seventeenth century.

The strange remark in line 112 of "The Lovall Scot":

Where Foxes Dung their earths the Badgers yield,  
is explained by the following passage from Gesner's Historie of Four-Footed Beastes, translated by Edward Topsell in 1607:

The wily Foxe never maketh a Denne for himselfe, but finding a badgers cave, in her absence, layeth his excrement at the hole of the denne, the which when the Gray returneth, if she smell (as the savour is strong) she forbearerh to enter as noisome, and so leaveth her elaborate house to the Fox. (p.34)

Spenser alludes to the same piece of lore, in "The Ruines of Time", ll.216-217:

He now is gone, the whiles the Foxe is crept  
Into the hole, the which the Badger swept.

The meaning of a couplet from "The Character of Holland" is illuminated by a note on Beetles in Pliny's Natural History:

Or then those Hills which sordid Beetles roul,  
Transfusing into them their Dunghil Soul. (ll.15-16)

The note, in Holland's translation (1601), reads:

Over and besides, there is another sort, which tumbling upon their backe in the dung, do roll it into great round balls with their feet; and therein doe make nests for to bestow the little grubs (which are their young) against the cold of winter. (p.326)

A common belief about the crane turns up in the same poem:

For as with Pygmies who best kills the Crane, . . .  
 . . . So rule among the drowned he that draines. (l.39  
 &l.42)

This also occurs in Pliny:

The nation of pretie Pigmies enjoy a truce and cessation from armes, every yeare (as we have said before) when the Cranes, who use to wage warre with them, be once departed and come into our countries. (p.281)

Pliny may have been the source of Marvell's simile in lines 266-273 of "The Loyall Scot", in which he describes the husbandman quelling a disturbance among his bees. Pliny's remedy (Chapter XVII, p.320 of Holland's translation) is certainly very similar:

But still this great fray is soone parted and dispatched, either by casting up some dust among them, or by making a little smoke and perfume under them. And reconciled soon they be againe, with setting before them a messe of milke, or honied-water.

Margoliouth sets line 88 of "Tom May's Death" beside a couplet from Sylvester's translation of Du Bartas:

As th'Eagles Plumes from other birds divide.

And so the princely eagles ravening plumes  
 The feathers of all other fowls consumes.

Pliny provides an earlier authority for this unusual belief:

The quills or feathers of Aegles laid among those of other foules, will devour and consume them. (p.273)

Lines 79-80 of "The Death of O.C." contain two traditionally accepted fallacies:

Who now shall tell us more of mournful Swans,  
 Of HALEYONS kind, or bleeding Pelicans.

The beliefs that Swans sang as they approached death and that the Pelican fed its young on blood tapped from its own ~~Breast~~, are both included among the vulgar errors that Sir Thomas Browne derided in his Pseudodoxia Epidemica (1646). The pelican was common in emblem books, like Geoffrey Whitney's A Choise of Emblema and Other Devices (1586). On page 87, he has an illustration, with a verse beneath which declares:

The Pellican, for to revive her younge,  
Doth peirce her brest, and give them of her blood.

J.E.Harting, in his Birds of Shakespeare (London, 1871), finding no source for this belief in classical literature, considers that it may derive from the writings of the Fathers and some confusion of the pelican with the vulture or the flamingo (pp.288-294). Marvell himself has another allusion to it in "Fleckno":

And so the Pelican at his door hung  
Picks out the tender bosome of its young.

The other idea referred to above is current as a "poetic" fact as late as Tennyson's "The Dying Swan".

The Halcyon, mentioned along with the Swan and Pelican, is a favourite of Marvell's. Holland's translation of Pliny, provides the information necessary for understanding two of his references:

They lay and sit about mid-winter when daies be shortest: and the time whiles they are broodie, is called the Halcyon daies: for during that season, the sea is calme and navigable, especially in the coast of Sicilie

. . . Now about seven daies before mid-winter, that is to say, in the beginning of December, they build; and within as many after they have hatched. (p.287)

The allusions to this notion are in "The Gallery":

The Halcyons, calming all that's nigh,  
Betwixt the Air and Water fly;

and in "The Character of Holland", ll.129-130:

As the obsequious Air and waters rest,  
Till the dear Halcyon hatch out all its nest.

Another reference to the bird under its other name is found in "Clarindon's House-Warming":

Like the King-fisher chuseth to build in the Broom.  
Margoliouth clarifies this by reference to Browne's Pseudo-doxia Epidemica, III, x:

About the brumal Solstice . . . the Sea is calm, and the winds cease.

J.B.Leishman, in The Art of Marvell's Poetry (1966), has noted the reminiscence of an ancient belief recorded by Pliny which appears in "The Mower to Glo-worms". Holland's translation runs:

Ye shall have the young Nightingales studie and meditate how to sing, by themselves: yee shall have them listen attentively to the old birds when they sing, and to take out lessons as it were from them, whom they would seem to imitate staffe by staffe.  
(p.286)

The corresponding stanza in Marvell's poem is:

The Nightingale does sit so late,  
And studying all the Summer-night,  
Her matchless Songs does meditate.



His other reference to the nightingale, in stanza LXV of "Upon Appleton House", contains suggestions of this and another piece of traditional lore:

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.

It was thought that the bird leant its breast against a sharp thorn as it sang. J.E.Harting (Birds of Shakespeare) quotes examples from "The Passionate Pilgrim", "The Rape of Lucrece", and Fletcher, and comments:

The origin of such a belief it is not easy to ascertain, but we suspect Sir Thomas Browne was not far from the truth when he pointed to the fact that the nightingale frequents thorny copses, and builds her nest amongst brambles on the ground. (p.127)

Marvell may have observed this fact, and recorded it in his added detail of the "Low Shrubs". Neither of his passages about the bird reproduce the ancient ideas completely, but they draw on incidental details of both: the studying, the Tryals, and the thorns.

The remark about the stork, in "Upon Appleton House", stanza LXVII, belongs here:

As if it Stork-like did pretend  
That Tribute to its Lord to send.

An explanation of this can be found in Emma Phipson's account of the stork (The Animal-Lore of Shakespeare's Time (London, 1883), cited by Margoliouth in his notes:

The Dutch held the belief that the stork, in leaving a house where she had been encouraged to build, left one of her young ones behind for the owner. (p.272)

A body of strange beliefs were current concerning the bird of Paradise. Marvell makes a passing reference to the bird in his lines on Milton's Paradise Lost:

The Bird nam'd from that Paradise you sing  
So never Flaps, but alwaies keeps on Wing.

Margoliouth notes that this species was believed to have neither wings nor feet, but to have kept itself aloft by its ample plumes. He adds that Linnaeus named the principal species "apoda" in 1760. "Marvell", he concludes, "here gives them wings". Geoffrey Whitney (A Choice of Emblems (1586)) refers to them by Linnaeus's name, and only specifies their lack of feet:

The Apodes, which doe in India breade,  
Still flie about, and seldome take their ease:  
They have no feete, to reeste them as we reade,  
But with their flighte, do compasse lande and seas.  
(p.89)

For a full discussion of the early accounts of this bird, see entries under "Milton: Bird of Paradise" in Notes and Queries, IX (1896), by W.F.Prideaux on pages 146-7, and by C.Tomlinson, C.C.B., and W.C.B. respectively on page 236.

In his satire on Clarendon, Marvell declares that he, "nestles in flames like the Salamander", alluding to the notion expressed by Pliny (Holland's translation):

[The Salamander] is of so cold a complexion, that if

hee doe but touch the fire, hee will quench it presently, as if yee were put into it. (p.305)

There is only a brief allusion to the crocodile, in stanza LXXIX of "Upon Appleton House", but some interesting lore lies behind it:

No Serpent new nor Crocodile  
Remains behind our little Nile.

The exchange between Antony and Lepidus (Antony and Cleopatra, II, vii, 26-7) comes to mind, but a more serious account of the relation between the Nile and the crocodile is furnished by Pliny:

The river Nilus nourisheth the Crocodile: . . . For a certaine naturall fore knowledge she hath, how farre Nilus the river will that yeare rise when he is at the highest, and without it will shee bee sure to sit.  
(pp.208-209)

Whitney (A Choice of Emblems) explains more clearly:

The Crocodile, by whome th'Aegyptians watche,  
How farre that yeare shall myghtie Nilus flowe,  
For theire shee likes to laie her egges, and hatche.  
(p.3)

Another odd piece of animal lore has a parallel in Antony and Cleopatra. It appears in "Upon Appleton House", stanza LX:

How Horses at their Tails do kick,  
Turn'd as they hang to Leeches quick.

Margoliouth notes the passage in Act I, sc.ii, l.190ff. of Shakespeare's play:

Much is breeding,  
Which, like the courser's hair, hath yet but life  
And not a serpent's poison;

and quotes Sir Thomas Browne's refutation of the belief in Notes on Certain Fishes found in Norfolk.

To clarify line 177 of "The Loyall Scot" - "Like Snake that Swallowes toad doth Dragon swell" - Margoliouth quotes the following remarks from Topsell's History of Serpents (1608):

It was wont to be said, because dragons are the greatest serpents, that except a Serpent eate a serpent, he shall never be a dragon.

In line 135 of "Last Instructions to a Painter", Excise is characterised as follows: "With hundred rows of Teeth the Shark exceeds". A parallel piece of natural history, which may lie behind this hyperbole, is quoted by Emma Phipson (The Animal-Lore of Shakespeare's Time, p.381): It comes from page 213 of A Learned Summary Upon the Poeme (Du Bartas's Divine Weekes and Workes). Translated by T.L.D., M.P. Fol. 1637:

. . . their mouth [i.e. Shark's] in the midst, very great, with three rankes of teeth, large and pointed.

The lines "Upon the Death of the Lord Hastings" contain the following couplet:

The Phlegmatick and Slowe prolongs his day,  
And on Times Wheel sticks like a Remora.

Margoliouth glosses this with an entry in the OED:

The sucking-fish, (*Echeneis remora*), believed by the ancients to have the power of staying the course of any ship to which it attached itself.

Mrs. E.E.Duncan-Jones has pointed out to me that Marvell's description of the Hewel, in stanzas LXVIII-LXX of "Upon Appleton House", probably owes something to a passage in De Mirabilibus Auscultationibus, spuriously attributed to Aristotle:

They say that the woodpecker climbs up trees like a lizard upside down and on its belly. It is said to feed on insects from the trees and to dig so deep into the trees in its search for worms that it actually brings them down.

(Aristotle: Minor Works, The Loeb Classical Library (London, 1936), p.245)

Another possible source can be found in Book X, Chapter XVIII of Pliny (p.278 in Holland's translation):

They that jab and pecke holes in trees, and will climbe upright like cats, are of this race. As for them, they will rampe up with their bellies to the tree, bending backward: and when they peck with their bills against the barke, they know by the sound therof that there be worms within for them to feed upon.

All the foregoing relate to generally received facts about creatures in the seventeenth century. Marvell's poetry contains a similar, though smaller, body of details relating to ideas about the plant world.

"Daphnis and Chloe", stanza XXI, expresses a popular belief about the seed of ferns:

Or the Witch that midnight wakes  
For the Fern, whose magick Weed  
In one minute casts the Seed,  
And invisible him makes.

Aitken, in the original Muses' Library edition of the poems (1892), page 205, compares lines from Ben Jonson's New Inn:

I had  
No medicine, sir, to go invisible,  
No fern-seed in my pocket;

and Margoliouth (p.224) quotes Browne's Poems, vi. 3,4:

Since my affection ever secret tried  
Blooms like the fern, and seeds still unespied;

and I Henry IV, II. i. 96:

We have the receipt o' Fern-seede, we walke invisible.

Margoliouth adds, "The reproduction of ferns not being understood they were believed to have an invisible seed".

William Turner, in Part Two of his Herbal (1568), page 3, cites the opinion of "a Christian Phisicion/named Hieronymous Tragus", that ferns do have seeds. And John Parkinson, in Theatrum Botanicum (1640), page 1037, pours scorn on the superstition, though he is not sure exactly what form it takes:

The seede which this and the female Ferne doe beare, and to be gathered onely on Midsummer eve at night, with I know not what conjuring words is superstitiously held by divers, not onely Mountebankes and Quack-salvers, but by other learned men (yet it cannot be said but by those that are too superstitiously addicted) to be of some secret hidden vertue, but I cannot finde it exprest what it should be.

Margoliouth has cited an interesting source for "Damon the Mower" in Gerarde's Herball (London, 1597). The incident of the Mower mowing himself, and his rustic remedy, seems to have been suggested by the following:

The leaves hereof [i.e. Clowns-all-heal] stamped with Axungie, or Hogs grease, and applied unto green wounds in maner of a pultis, doth heale them in such

short time & in such absolute maner, that it is hard for any that hath not had the experience thereof to beleve: for being in Kent about a Pacient, it chanced that a very poore man in mowing of Peason did cut his leg with the Sieth, whenn he made a wound to the bones, & withal very large and wide, & also with great effusion of bloud, the poore man crept unto this herbe which he brused in his hands, & tied a great quantitie of it unto the wound with a piece of his shirt, which presently stanchd the bleeding and ceased the pain, insomuch that the poore man presently went to his daies worke againe, & so did from daie to daie, without resting one day untill he was perfectly hole, which was accomplished in a fewe daies by this herbe stamped with a little Hogs grease . . . whereupon I have named it Clounes Woundwort as aforesaid. (p.852)

The lines in question are from stanza XI:

With Shepherds-purse, and Clowns-all-heal,  
The Blood I stanch, the Wound I seal.

Gerarde's book has another note, on Shepherds-purse:

Shepheardes purse staieeth bleeding in any part of the bodie, whether the iuice or the decoction thereof be drunke, or whether it be used Pultus wise, or in both, or any other way else. (p.215)

Parkinson, on page 587 of Theatrum Botanicum (1640), quotes "Gerard his testimony" as to the healing property of Clowns-all-heal, "which from a countrey man's experience, hath not onely obtained the name of a Woundwort, but famoused to posteritie, for others to receive good also thereby".

In the same work, page 1528, there is a passage which glosses the line, "So weeps the wounded Balsome", from "The Nymph Complaining for the Death of her Faun":

From the body hereof [i.e. the Balsom tree] being wounded, commeth forth a liquour (and sometimes a little of itselfe without scarifying) of a troubled

whitish colour at the first, which after some small time groweth cleare, being somewhat thicker than oyle in Summer.

In a single phrase of "An Horatian Ode", Marvell draws upon two aspects of the Laurel:

And Caesars head at last  
Did through his Laurels blast.

The emblematic significance of laurel, as a mark of honour (here of imperial office), has been discussed already. In these lines, that significance is combined with the belief that the laurel was a protection against lightning. Pliny notes:

Of all things which growe out of the earth, lightning blasteth not the Laurell tree. (Holland's translation, p.27)

Whitney incorporates this in an emblem:

Bothe Freshe, and greene, the Laurell standeth sounde,  
Thoughe lightnings flasse, and thunderbolts do flie.  
(A Choice of Emblems, p.67)

Sir Thomas Browne is sceptical:

Against so famous a quality, Vicomercatus produceth  
experiment of a Bay-tree blasted in Italy.  
(Pseudodoxia Epidemica, in The Works of Sir Thomas Browne, ed. Charles Sayle, 3 vols., (Edinburgh, 1927), Vol.I, p.298)

This section is the most suitable place for the classical legends concerning the origins of certain plants. "The Garden" furnishes examples of two of the best known:

Apollo hunted Daphne so,  
Only that she might Laurel grow.



And Pan did after Syrinx speed,  
Not as a Nymph, but for a Reed.

And the legend of Narcissus is invoked in stanza LXXX of  
"Upon Appleton House":

And for his shade which therein shines,  
Narcissus like, the Sun too pines.

In stanza LXXXVIII of the same poem, Maria is likened to  
mistletoe:

And, like a sprig of Mistletoe,  
On the Fairfacian Oak does grow;  
Whence, for some universal good,  
The Priest shall cut the sacred bud.

Sir Thomas Browne's account of the plant in Pseudodoxia  
Epidemica, Book II, Chapter VI, provides the traditional  
lore that lies behind this passage:

As for the Magical vertues of this Plant, and conceived  
efficacy unto veneficial intentions, it seemeth a  
Pagan relique derived from the ancient Druides, the  
great admirers of the Oak, especially the Misseltoe  
that grew thereon; which according unto the particular  
of Pliny, they gathered with great solemnity. For after  
sacrifice the Priest in a white garment ascended the  
tree, cut down the Misseltoe with a golden hook, and  
received it in a white coat; the vertue whereof was to  
resist all poisons, and make fruitful any that used it.

(Works, ed. Sayle (Edinburgh, 1927), Vol.I, p.295)

Besides alluding to the botanical features of the plant, and  
the ancient connection with the Druids, Marvell probably  
intends some sexual implication in the cutting of the bud,  
harking back to its property of making "fruitful any that  
used it", and forward to the "universal good" of Maria's  
continuing the Fairfax line. It is typical of Marvell's

ability to expose as many facets of his image as he can at one time.

Another plant image from this poem, in stanza XLV, can be amplified from the Theatrum Botanicum:

Conscience, that Heaven-nursed Plant,  
Which most our Earthly Gardens want.  
A prickling leaf it bears, and such  
As that which shrinks at ev'ry touch.

Parkinson's entry reads:

This other Mimick, Mocking or Sensitive plant groweth to be a wooddy Shrubbe, yea some say to be a tree, having divers sprigs rising from the root, and branching forth sundry leaves set here and there, with short thornes or prickles, leaning as Acosta unto other trees or walls, but Clusius saith it spreadeth on the ground taking roote at the joynts, and sundry wings of fresh greene leaves thereon, which upon the touch of any man, or his breathing onely, and not of any thing else would shrinken and seeme as withered. (p.1617)

The nectaren of "The Garden", stanza V, is mentioned by Parkinson in his other work, Paradis1 in Sole Paradisus terrestris (London, 1656):

. . . they have been with us not many years, yet have they been known both in Italy to Mathiolus, and others before him. (p.582)

This is an instance of Marvell's interest in unusual items in nature. He introduces this rare fruit into "The Garden", as he introduced the:

Apples, plants of such a Price  
No Tree could ever bear them twice,

into "Bermudas", and the Marvel of Peru into "The Mower Against Gardens".

Margoliouth omits to gloss another reference to fruit-plants which contains something of interest. Stanza LXVII of "Upon Appleton House" begins:

Then as I carless on the Bed  
Of gelid Straw-berryes do tread.

The coldness here refers not to any sensuous characteristics, but to a medical property, and it relates not to the strawberry itself, but to the leaves of the plant. William Turner's Herbal (1586), Part Two, page 6, under "The Vertues of Straw-berries", informs us; "The frut semeth to have som warmenes in it/but the leafe is colde".

"The Mower Against Gardens" is full of information - true and false - taken from natural histories and herbals. The poem is concerned with man's tampering with nature. Lines 9-10:

The Pink grew then as double as his Mind;  
The nutriment did change the kind,

are explained by the process described by Bacon in his Sylva Sylvarum (London, 1626):

It is a Curiosity also to make Flowers Double; Which  
is effected by Often Removing them into New Earth. (p. 134).

Ralph Austen wrote a reply to Bacon's work called Observations upon some part of Sr Francis Bacon's Natural History (1658), in which he denied the validity of the process described by Bacon and Marvell (p.32).

Marvell introduces the tulip in line 13:

The Tulip, white, did for complexion seek;  
And learn'd to interline its cheek:  
Its Onion root they then so high did hold,  
That one was for a Meadow sold.

John Gerarde has a section dealing with flowers with "onion" roots, which declares:

There is another [tulip] to be seene with a flower  
mixed with strakes of red and yellowe, resembling a  
flambe of fire, whereupon we have called it Flambent.  
(Herbal (1597), p.119)

He records several kinds of tulip, some of which, "have no smell at all which can be perceived" (p.119). This fact about tulips is brought into "Little T.C.", as one of the "errours of the Spring":

Make that the Tulips may have share  
Of sweetness, seeing they are fair.

As one of the Mower's oddities of plant-life, Marvell next introduces another item mentioned by Gerarde:

Another World was search'd, through Oceans new,  
To find the Marvel of Peru.

Margoliouth quotes Parkinson's Paradisi in Sole Paradisus Terrestris (1629):

Mirabilia Peruviana. The Marvelle of Peru . . . These plants grow naturally in the West Indies.

The continuation of Parkinson's entry is also of interest:

. . . where there is a perpetuall summer, or at least no cold frosty winters, from whence the seed hath been sent into these parts of Europe, and are dispersed into every garden almost of note. (p.366)

The first phrase might have suggested Marvell's "eternal Spring" (but see later discussion, pages 109-10 ). Parkinson witnesses to the Mower's argument that the craze for botanical oddities was widespread: "every garden almost of note" has its Marvel of Peru.

The Mower next mentions the various processes of grafting that were familiar in the Herbals of the time, and concludes his list of enormities with:

And in the Cherry he does Nature vex,  
To procreate without a Sex.

Margoliouth's note (p.225) runs, "Like Grosart, 'I do not know the garden-process to which this refers'". MacDonald's note in the new Muses' Library edition of the poems suggests a solution:

Mr. John Gilmour tells me that these lines (which previous editors have been unable to explain) only refer 'to the practice of vegetative or asexual propagation of cherries and other fruits by budding and grafting which has, of course, been extensively practised for many hundreds of years'".

This explanation is not very satisfactory because the cherry is brought into the poem as the climax to a series of perversions of nature by the gardener. We have already had references to the process of grafting, and to reintroduce it as a final item weakens the force of the argument, which requires some culminating enormity. In fact, the attack on grafting occurs in lines 19-26; with line 27 a new idea is introduced:

His green Seraglio has its Eunuchs too;  
 Lest any Tyrant him out-doe.  
 And in the Cherry he does Nature vex,  
 To procreate without a Sex.

If these two couplets are taken together, as seems logical, instead of making the Cherry couplet revert to the grafting section, then a possible explanation may be found in the discussion in Bacon's Sylva Sylvarum (London, 1626) concerning the production of fruit without stones:

There is a Cherry-Tree, that hath Double Blossomes;  
 But that Tree beareth no Fruit . . . The Making of  
 Fruits, without Core or Stone, is likewise a Curiosity;  
 And somewhat better: Because what soever maketh them  
 so, is like to make them more Tender and Delicate. If  
 a Cions or Shoot, fit to be set in the Ground, have  
 the Pith finely taken forth, (and not altogether, but  
 some of it left, the better to save the life,) it will  
 beare a Fruit with little, or no Core, or Stone. And  
 the like is said to be, of dividing a Quicke-Tree  
 downe to the Ground, and Taking out the Pith, and then  
 binding it up againe . . . It is reported, that not  
 only the Taking out of the Pith, but the Stopping of  
 the Iuyce of the Pith, from Rising <sup>to</sup> the Middest, and  
 Turning it to rise on the Outside, will make the Fruit  
 without Core, or Stone . . . It is reported, that  
 Trees watred perpetually with Warme Water, will make  
 a Fruit, with little or no Core or Stone. (pp.134-135)

Bacon comes back to this subject again later:

We have partly touched before the Meanes of Producing  
 Fruits, without Coares, or Stones. And this we adde  
 further, that the Cause must be Abundance of Moisture;  
 For that the Coare, and Stone are made of a Dry Sap:  
 And we see that it is possible, to make a Tree put  
 forth onely in Blossome, without Fruit; As in Cherries  
 with Double Flowers; Much more into Fruit without  
 Stone, or Coares . . . We adde also, that it is  
 delivered for certaine by some, that if the Cions be  
 grafted, the Small End downwards, it will make Fruit  
 have little or no Coares, and Stones. (p.227)

There is some difficulty in applying these processes to Marvell's lines. In the first place, Bacon does not specifically talk about producing a stoneless cherry. But on both occasions when he deals with the subject, he mentions the breeding of double cherry blossom, as if the two processes are connected in his mind. In the second place, there is some ambiguity in the phrasing of Marvell's lines. Most obviously, They mean that man has devised a method of reproducing a cherry-tree without the intervention of the natural fertilisation of the female blossom from the male. However, if "procreate" is taken to mean simply "produce" (as it can be, according to OED s.v. 4), the lines could be paraphrased, "Man vexes Nature by producing a sexless cherry", where "cherry" is taken as referring to the fruit, not the tree. The conceit could have been suggested by the word "Stone" in Bacon's exposition. OED records regular occurrences of the word in the sense of "testicle" from 1154 till 1713. If this alternative meaning is applied in reading Bacon, it is easy to regard the result of his experiments as a "sexless cherry". This would fit the context of the Mower poem, as it is a witty expansion of the preceding idea, "His green Seraglio has its Eunuchs too". Indeed, this particular line is meaningless without some such interpretation of the cherry couplet as that offered above. A mere reversion to

the theme of grafting is inadequate. From what we know of Marvell's delight in puns and verbal wit in his other poems, it is at least feasible that some kind of conceited treatment of Bacon's remarks (or the ideas embodied in them) is behind the lines in "The Mower Against Gardens".

Bradbrook and Lloyd Thomas (Andrew Marvell (Cambridge, 1940), p.40) suggest a similar interpretation of the couplet in a footnote, but I cannot trace their authority. They refer to William Lawson's A New Orchard and Garden (1618), but give no indication of the relevant page. Their note concludes, "Lawson, whose book is the first to consider gardening in the north of England in particular, mentions both the stoneless cherry and the stoneless plum". On consulting this book, I have been unable to find any mention of producing cherries or plums without stones. On page 16, however, Lawson explains how slips may be set from an apple-tree. He suggests taking a "bur-knot":

If it grow out of or neere the roote end, some say such an Apple will have no coare nor kinnell. And I thinke it true, because the sap runnes contrary to his course. The like I thinke of a Bur-knot set with the roote upwards, though I have not tryed it.

In the revised editions of 1623 and 1626, there appears an additional treatise by Simon Harward, called A Most Profitable new Treatise, from approved experience of the Art of propagating Plants. In the list of contents at the end (p.10),



the following occurs, "To have Cherries or Plums without Stones". In the text, there is nothing about producing stoneless fruit, except the apple passage quoted above. This entry is the only thing in the book that could be construed as referring to cherries without stones. The passages from Bacon given above seem to be a sounder basis for an argument in favour of the stoneless cherry interpretation.

There are a few more details that belong in this section, apart from those taken from the creature and plant worlds. The stars are several times invoked in terms of their astrological significance as influences over human happenings. The famous reference in "Definition of Love" relies on an acquaintance with the terminology of mediaeval astrology:

Is the Conjunction of the Mind,  
And Opposition of the Stars.

In "The First Anniversary of the Government under O.C.", ll.101-2, Cromwell is seen as wielding the powers of the stars:

And in his sev'ral Aspects, like a Star,  
Here shines in Peace, and thither shoots a War.

Similar ideas are used in "The Death of O.C.", ll.137-138:

The Stars that for him fought had only pow'r  
Left to determine now his fatal Hour;

and in "Blake's Victory", ll.147-148:

So prosperous Stars, though absent to the sense,  
Bless those they shine for, by their Influence.

Slightly different are the lines from "The First Song at the Marriage of Lord Fauconberg", which belong to astronomy

rather than astrology:

The Stars are fix'd unto their Sphere,  
And cannot, though they would, come near.

Comets are found in similar use: as omens in "The Mower to Glo-worms":

Ye Country Comets, that portend  
No War, nor Princes funeral;

and as items of natural history, in stanza LXXXVI of "Upon Appleton House":

No new-born Comet such a Train  
Draws through the Skie, nor Star new-slain.  
For streight those giddy Rockets fail,  
Which from the putrid Earth exhale.

The natural phenomenon alluded to here is the same as that described in Vaughan's early poem, "To Amoret, of the difference 'twixt him, and other Lovers, and what true Love is," in Poems (1646):

Those spurious flames suckt up from slime, and earth  
To their first, low birth,  
Resignes, and brings.

They shoot their tinsill beames, and vanities,  
Thredding with those false fires their way . . .

The image of the lightning in "An Horatian Ode":

And, like the three-fork'd Lightning, first  
Breaking the Clouds where it was nurst,

is a pithy expression of the information set out at length in Pliny's:

And if this flatuositie or vapour doe struggle and  
wrestle within the cloud from thence it commeth that  
thunder~~appe~~ be heard; but if it breake through still

burning, then flieth out the thunderbolt: if it bee longer time a struggling, and cannot pierce through, then leames and flashes are seene. With these, the cloud is cloven; with the other, burst in sunder.

(Holland's translation, p.24)

Lastly, there is the lore behind some details in "Damon the Mower". Stanzas II-IV deal with the heat brought on by the Mower's love for Juliana. Stanza III is devoted in particular to a comparison between this heat, and the heat caused by the rising of the Dog-star:

This heat the Sun could never raise,  
Nor Dog-star so inflame's the dayes.  
It from a higher Beauty grow'th,  
Which burns the Fields and Mower both:  
Which made the Dog, and makes the Sun  
Hotter then his own Phaeton,  
Not July causeth these extremes,  
But Juliana's scorching beams.

In stanza V, the Mower enumerates the gifts he has offered to his lady, one of which consists of, "Oak leaves tipt with hony due". The following passage from Holland's version of Pliny supplies the background:

This pleasant and sweet liquor which we call honie, is engendered naturally in the aire, and especially by the influence and rising of some starres: but principally during the fervent heat of the canicular daies, even when the Dog starre is in his full power and force: never before the appearing of the starre Vergiliae, but alwaies before day. For so about the day breake betimes in the morning, the leaves of trees are found bedewed with honnie: . . . [this hony is] sucked and drunke . . . by the Bees from the leaves of trees and grasses . . . The best simply that Bees can sucke, and least infected with the corruption of tree branches, is that which they get out of the leaves of Oke, Tilia, and Canes.

(pp.315-316)

#### 4) NON-TRADITIONAL DETAILS

The contents of this section are less clear-cut than those of the three preceding. Many items are details for which a definite source has been found - a source either for the substance of the detail or for its verbal presentation in Marvell's poetry. Other items are details occurring from time to time in the poetry of the half-century before Marvell, which have more vitality than the clichés of section 2, but which cannot be cited individually as sources for Marvell. Finally, there are details of which no earlier examples have been discovered. For convenience, the poems will be dealt with in the order in which they appear in Margoliouth's edition. "A Dialogue between the Resolved Soul, and Created Pleasure".

J.B. Leishman, in his The Art of Marvell's Poetry<sup>1</sup> (p.31, note 1) suggests that the lines:

And of Nature's banquet share;  
Where the Souls of fruits and flow'rs  
Stand prepar'd to heighten yours;

may be a reminiscence of Marvell's reading of Milton's Paradise Lost (V, 482-7):

. . . flows and thir fruit  
Mans nourishment, by gradual scale sublim'd  
To vital Spirits aspire, to animal,  
To intellectual, give both life and sense,

<sup>1</sup> All future appeals to Leishman's authority refer to this book.

Fancie and understanding, when the Soule  
Reason receives, and reason is her being.

One cannot be sure that Marvell is taking his hint from Milton here, but Leishman considers it likely, taking into account Marvell's known aptitude for reworking ideas and phrases from other poets.

"On A Drop of Dew".

The descriptive conceit by which the drop of dew is seen as being, "Like its own Tear", is almost certainly, Leishman says (p.202) a recollection of a similar image in Crashaw's "Wishes. To his (supposed) Mistress" (ll.52-54):

Each Ruby there,  
Or Pearle that dare appeare,  
Bee its owne blush, bee its owne Teare.

"The Coronet".

Leishman (p.195) has traced the descriptive phrase of line 14, "twining in his speckled breast", to Spenser's description of the dragon in The Faerie Queene, I.xi.15:

Forelifting up aloft his speckled brest.

He considers (p.196) the central conceit of this poem - the contrast between a crown of thorns and a crown of flowers - may have been suggested by a similar contrast in Randolph's "An Eglogue occasion'd by two Doctors disputing upon predestination":

More wonders did he, for all which suppose  
How he was crown'd, with Lilly, or with Rose?  
The winding Ivy, or the glorious Bay,

Or mirtle, with the which Venus, they say,  
Girts her proud Temples? Shepheards, none of them,  
But wore (poore head) a thorny Diadem.

There is much more resemblance, however, to Vaughan's "The Wreath", where the poet presents to Christ, "a twin'd wreath of grief and praise", using the flowers as symbols for abstractions, like Marvell's, "wreaths of Fame and Interest".

More likely than either of these resemblances to other poets, is the verbal similarity of the last line of "The Coronet" to a line in Crashaw's "A Hymne of the Nativity, sung by the Shepherds". Marvell's line reads, "May crown thy Feet, that could not crown thy Head". In stanza 14 of Crashaw's poem, the shepherds bring the first-born flowers of May, "To kisse thy feet, and crowne thy head". If Marvell was remembering this line, the conversion of a simple parallel into a complex antithesis and paradox would be typical of the way he improved on, and made more subtle, the conceits and phrases of earlier poets.

"Eyes and Tears".

The connection between "Eyes and Tears" and Crashaw's "The Weeper" has long been recognized (see Leishman, pp.38-9). Leishman (p.39, note) also discerns echoes of Venus and Adonis and The Lover's Complaint. But even confining attention to the natural details, one finds that what seem to be the most original touches had already appeared in earlier works. The

most striking descriptive conceit in the poem:

And Stars show lovely in the Night,  
But as they seem the Tears of Light,

is in effect a conflation of images used by Waller and Vaughan. Vaughan, in "To Etesia looking from her Casement at the full Moon", refers to "the tears of Starres", and Waller, in "An Apology for Having Loved", talks of the stars as "little drops of light".

"Bermudas".

"Bermudas" has been well documented by source-hunters. As early as 1893, in Firth's DNB article, the connection between this poem and Marvell's stay with John Oxenbridge had been mooted. Margoliouth's edition draws particular attention to Captain John Smith's The Generall Historie of Virginia, New-England and the Summer Isles (1624), and to Waller's "Battle of the Summer Islands". It certainly looks as if the famous evocation of tropical plenty took its details from Waller's lines:

That happy island where huge lemons grow,  
And orange-trees, which golden fruit do bear,  
Th'Hesperian garden boasts of none so fair;

<sup>1</sup> This was not published till 1678, in Thalia Rediviva, but was probably written before Vaughan's conversion, and his dedication to the religious verse which appeared in Silex Scintillans (1650). Marvell may well have seen it in MS, as much poetry was circulated privately in this way in the seventeenth century.

Where shining pearl, coral, and many a pound,  
 On the rich shore, of ambergris is found.  
 The lofty cedar, which to heaven aspires,  
 The prince of trees! is fuel to their fires.

Rosalie Colie, in "Marvell's Bermudas and the Puritan Paradise" (Renaissance News, X (1957), 75-79), has gone into the literature of the colonists that may be relevant to the poem.

One couplet in particular has a great weight of established phraseology behind it:

He gave us this eternal Spring,  
 Which here enamels every thing.

The use of the word "enamel" to describe spring greenery goes back through many seventeenth-century poets, including Milton, with his, "O're the smooth enameld green" ("Arcades"), to Sylvester, in his translation of Du Bartas's Devine Weekes and Workes. Leishman (pp.275-276), quoting from the edition of 1621, mentions several examples: "th'inammeld mead" (Second Week, First Day, Third Part); "this enammeld vale" (Second Week, Second Day, Second Part); and "Th'inammell'd Vallies" (Second Week, Second Day, Third Part) etc. Leishman speaks as if the use of the word in English was adopted from Sylvester, but in fact it was current long before in the works of William Dunbar, for example in "The Goldyn Targe", line 13, "Anamalit was the felde wyth all colouris".

The idea of an "eternal Spring" took the imagination of



sixteenth and seventeenth-century poets, since the tropical abundance of newly discovered lands seemed to be a fulfilment of the ancient tradition of a land of continual fruitfulness recorded, for example, in the seventh book of the Odyssey, where Homer describes the orchard of King Alcinous. In Spenser's "Garden of Adonis", "There is continuall spring, and haruest"; and in Waller's "Battle of the Summer Islands":

. . . the kind Spring, which but salutes us here,  
Inhabits there, and courts them all the year.

Commenting on Waller's poem, Leishman suggests the complex of thought and feeling that can lie behind the production of a poem:

I seem to perceive in such a passage as this, a fascinating interaction between ancient fable and the reports of contemporary travellers: fact and fiction melting into and modifying one another, the old familiarising and integrating the new and, at the same time, reacquiring from it the charm of novelty; literature and life, books and experience, literary reminiscence and fresh visual perception all combining in that manner which is so characteristic of so much that is best in seventeenth-century poetry, above all, in Marvell's. (p.282)

Bradbrook and Lloyd Thomas find a different literary progenitor for the poem, "The dominant influences are obviously the 104th. Psalm and the Benedicite" (Andrew Marvell (1940), pp.64-65). They also suggest a comparison with Drayton's "To the Virginian Voyage" (p.58). There are no verbal echoes from this in Marvell's poem, but the attitude to the new lands is similar:

Where nature hath in store,  
 Fowle, venison, and fish,  
 And the fruitfull'st soyle,  
 Without your toyle,  
 Three harvests more,  
 All greater then you wish.

"Clorinda and Damon".

Leishman has found a source for one of the descriptive conceits in "Clorinda and Damon":

I have a grassy Scutcheon spy'd,  
 Where Flora blazons all her pride.

This seems to be a reminiscence of the "Bower of Bliss"  
 (The Faerie Queene, II.xii.50):

. . . whose fayre grassy ground  
 Mantled with greene, and goodly beautifide  
 With all the ornaments of Floraes pride.

But, as usual, Marvell is not a simple borrower. He adds to the Spenserian phrase:

. . . a characteristic piece of seventeenth-century particularity and wit; for his 'Scutcheon' and 'blazons' recall Gervase Markham's information (in The English Husbandman (1637)) that in the gardens of noblemen their coats-of-arms were often delineated.  
 (p.119)

"The Nymph Complaining for the Death of her Faun".

Many critics have pointed out the connection between this poem and the Song of Songs. Solomon's beloved is "like a roe". and feeds in a garden among the lilies, just as the Nymph's fawn does. Bradbrook and Lloyd Thomas also suggest, along with Margoliouth, that the whole poem may be related to the death of Fida's hind in William Browne's Britannia's

Pastorals (Book I, Songs 4 & 5) (See Andrew Marvell, p.49, note).

D.C.Allen, in Image and Meaning (1960), thinks that Marvell is developing a hint from Calpurnius Siculus, in an Eclogue where a shepherd offers as a prize for a song-contest: "that stag reclining there among the lilies" (p.96).

Leishman (pp.159-160) proposes two phrases from Crashaw's "The Weeper" - "The Amber-weeping Tree" and "the Balsome-sweating bough" - as sources for Marvell's "wounded"balsam" and "Amber Tears".

"Young Love".

Leishman (p.167ff) traces a tradition of poems addressed to young children, who are presented as either beauty in the bud, or as already old enough for love, though young. The comparison of a child to a bud or blossom, "Whose fair Blossoms are too green", is very common. Marvell uses it again in "Little T.C." Vaughan brings both images together in his "The Burial of an Infant":

Blest Infant Bud, Whose Blossom-life  
Did only look about, and fal.

"Mourning".

Leishman (p.45) sets stanza VIII of "Mourning" and a passage from Wotton's "A Description of the Countrey's Recreations" side by side:

How wide they dream! The Indian Slaves  
That sink for Pearl through Seas profound,  
Would find her Tears yet deeper Waves  
And not of one the bottom sound.

And Wotton's:  
 Go, let the diving Negro seek  
 For Gems hid in some forlorn creek;  
 We all Pearls scorn,  
 Save what the dewy morne  
 Congeales upon each little spire of grasse;  
 Which careless Shepherds beat down as they passe;  
 And Gold ne're here appears,  
 Save what the yellow Ceres bears.

He admits that the relationship is not "self-evident", but uses it as a means of dating "Mourning" after 1651, when Wotton's poem appeared. The evidence is even more tenuous than Leishman allows, since the image of a man diving for pearls is frequent in seventeenth-century verse. Herbert uses it, in "Vanitie I":

The nimble Diver with his side  
 Cuts through the working waves, that he may fetch  
 His dearly-earned pearl.

Henry Hawkins, in Partheneia Sacra (Rouen, 1633), writing about bees gathering dew, uses the same image: "they will venture for them, as farre into the ayre, as any Moor shal dive into the seas for the best pearls"(p.60). Vaughan, like Marvell, particularizes the diver as an Indian, in "An Elegy":

I made the Indian curse the hours he spent  
 To seeke his pearles.

"Daphnis and Chloe".

Stanza XXII of "Daphnis and Chloe" contains what appears to be a strikingly original conceit - a piece of observation which appeals to the senses, and embodies an emotional as well-as a sensuous truth:

Gentler times for Love are meant  
 Who for parting pleasure strain  
 Gather Roses in the rain,  
 Wet themselves and spoil their Sent.

In fact, neither the perception nor the conceit is new - only the phrasing gives Marvell's lines the freshness of originality. Leishman (p.121) mentions that Pliny had said that roses were best gathered in clear weather, but presents an almost indisputable source for the conceit, discovered by Mrs. E.E.Duncan-Jones. It occurs in Act III, scene 11, lines 62-64 of Suckling's Aglaure:

Gather  
 Not roses in a wet and frowning hour:  
 They'll lose their sweets then, trust me they will, sir.  
 What pleasure can love take to play his game out,  
 When death must keep the stakes.

(The Works of Sir John Suckling, ed. A.Hamilton  
 Thompson (London, 1910), p.109)

"The Picture of Little T.C. in a Prospect of Flowers".

This poem is in the same tradition as "Young Love", though the blossom image is given a further twist:

And, ere we see,  
 Nip in the blossome all our hopes and Thee.

One of the "erreurs of the Spring" that Little T.C. is to reform is this:

Make that the Tulips may have share  
 Of sweetness, seeing they are fair.

The same defect had been expressed with similar words by Quarles in his Emblems, Divine and Moral, Book I, Emblem III:

The fairest tulip's not the sweetest flow'r.

Marvell may have remembered this; he may have remembered the remarks in Gerard's Herbal (see p.97, above); he may have noticed the phenomenon himself. What matters is that what seems an original detail had found its way into poetry before Marvell made use of it, and the chances are that it was from books that he derived it, not from nature direct.

"The Mower Against Gardens".

The probable connection between Marvell's poem and the Natural Histories has already been discussed. A more literary source was suggested by Professor Kermode in "Marvell and Randolph", (Notes and Queries, 197 (1952), 136-7). He cites Randolph's "Upon Love Fondly refus'd for Conscience sake", and Leishman (p.132) increases the likelihood that this poem was in Marvell's mind by noting that it is in the same metre and verse-form as "The Mower Against Gardens" - a form which Marvell only used this once. The relevant lines are:

If the fresh Trunke have sap enough to give  
That each insertive branch may live;  
The Gardner grafts not only Apples there,  
But addes the Warden and the Peare,  
The Peach and Apricocke together grow,  
The Cherry and the Damson too.  
Till he hath made by skilfull husbandry  
An intire Orchard of one Tree.  
So least our Paradise perfection want,  
We may as well inoculate as plant.

"Damon the Mower".

"Damon the Mower" uses much of the imagery of the Petrarchan love-sonnet - the contrasts of heat and cold, and the

unkindness of the lady. It also uses as Leishman has shown (pp.137-141), two ancient poetic topics: the "pastoral hyperbole" and the "catalogue of delights". He thinks that the initial impulse for the poem came from the heat and cold conceits of Randolph's "A Dialogue. Thirsis. Lalage". The only direct imitation that he finds in the poem is the near-burlesque rendering of a passage from Vergil's second Eclogue:

Nec sum adeo informis: nuper me in litore vidi,  
cum placidum ventis staret mare; non ego Daphnim  
indice me metuum, si nunquam fallit imago.

The Marvell "version" runs:

Nor am I so deform'd to sight,  
If in my Sithe I looked right;  
In which I see my Picture done,  
As in a crescent Moon the Sun.

The vividly rendered details of stanza II may have been suggested by some lines in Lord Fairfax's translation<sup>1</sup> of Saint-Amant's "La Solitude":

'Mongst sedge and bulrush we may heare  
The lepinge frogge: see where they hide  
Themselves for fear when they espy  
A man or beast approaching nye.

Marvell may have remembered these lines, and applied their details to his frogs and grasshoppers:

The Grass-hopper its pipe gives ore;  
And hamstring'd Frogs can dance no more.  
But in the brook the green Frog wades;  
And Grass-hoppers seek out the shades.

The interesting thing is that the frogs, which seem so Marvellian a subject for poetry, had in fact been used in

<sup>1</sup> Printed in M.A.Gibb's The Lord General (1938), p.283 ff.

a similar way in poetry that was readily accessible to him at the time he is supposed to have been writing "Damon the Mower".

Another detail in the poem may owe its inclusion to the work of another of the Fairfax circle. Mildmay Fane's "To Sir John Wentworth" contains the couplet:

Nor yet enchanted by those shadowed rings  
Some say the Fairies print with Revellings.

Stanza VIII of "Damon the Mower" ends:

The deathless Fairyes take me oft  
To lead them in their Dances soft;  
And, when I tune myself to sing,  
About me they contract their Ring.

"The Mower to Glo-worms".

M.C. Bradbrook, in "Marvell and the Poetry of Rural Solitude" (Review of English Studies, XVII (1941), 37-46), compares the conceit of the lady outshining the glow-worm with the same conceit in Stanley's "The Glow-worm".

"The Mower's Song".

Leishman (pp.153-154) relates the image of the last stanza, that the mown grass:

Shall now the Heraldry become  
With which I shall adorn my Tomb,

to the third chapter of the twenty-second book of Pliny, entitled by Holland Of Grasse Chaplets:

No Coronets verily were there euer at Rome better  
esteemed, either to testifie the triumphant majestic



of that victorious citie (the soueraign lady of the whole world) or to giue testimony of honour and recourd for some notable seruice performed for the Commonweale, than those which were made simply of green grasse.

(Ed. 1635, II 115)

The fourth chapter is also important:

For in truth, the greatest signe of vistory in old time, and of yeelding to the mercy of the enemy, was this, if the vanquished did take vp grasse, and tender it vnto the Conqueror: for this serued as a confession and protestation, that they rendered vp all their interest which they might challenge in the earth (the mother that bred and fed them) yea, and the very right of sepulture in her.

(op. cit. p.116)

The figure of the Mower himself was not new. Benlowes has introduced realistic mowers in the meadows in "Theophilus" (1652), as Professor Røetvig has shown (see The Happy Man (1954), p.233). And the extension of the symbol of the Mower to include the ideas of ruin and death follows naturally from the association of Time the Mower with his Scythe. For, example, in Townshend's "A Dialogue between Time and a Pilgrim", Time appears as, "Aged man, that mowes these fields" (printed in The Oxford Book of Seventeenth Century Verse, (Oxford, 1934), p.223).

"The Garden".

"The Garden" has been very well documented by interpreters and scholars alike, and many sources, echoes, or traditional details have been discovered, some more feasible than others.

The poem as a whole, with its themes of retirement from

the world of man's affairs, and the enjoyment of the sensuous richness and contemplative quiet of nature, has been related to a number of literary fashions. M.C. Bradbrook (see p.47 above) sees it as a development of the Libertin poetry of Saint-Amant and Théophile, and the English imitations of Stanley and Fane; Maren-Sofie Røstvig links it with the retirement poetry of a line running from Horace, through Casimire Sarbiewski, More, Benlowes, and Fane (see pp.53-54 above); Leishman (p.296) sees it as a "reply" poem, answering a long tradition which regards the garden as a "dignus amore locus". Røstvig (The Happy Man, p.223) points out that Marvell borrowed the verse-form of "The Garden" from Mildmay Fane's "To Retiredness".

The sources or parallels of details in "The Garden" are manifold. The idea of an "amorous" nature, wooing man, has been traced by Røstvig to the influence of Hermetic philosophy on seventeenth-century poetry ("Andrew Marvell's 'The Garden': A Hermetic Poem", English Studies, XL, (1959), 65-76). Leishman has looked into the growth of the "pastoral hyperbole" (pp. 224-237). Many detailed parallels have been found. A minor poet like Nathaniel Whiting is clearly writing in the same tradition as Marvell's "amorous green" when he describes, in "Upon Bellama's walking in the garden, and with him", how, "Each twig, with amorous touch, embraced his mate" (l.1183

of Albino and Bellama, in Minor Poets of the Caroline Period, ed. George Saintsbury (Oxford, 1921), Vol.III, p.467).

The practice of cutting a lover's name in the bark of trees is a common motif in seventeenth-century lyrics, occurring, for example, in Herrick's "A Pastoral sung to the King":

And in the Rind of every comely tree  
Ile carve thy name, and in that name kisse thee.  
(The Poetical Works of Robert Herrick, ed. F.W. Moorman (Oxford, 1915), p.160)

Cowley plays with the idea for five stanzas in "The Tree". Marvell takes up the traditional detail, and gives it a paradoxical twist in stanza III, making it contribute to the total paradox of the rejection of woman in favour of nature:

Fair Trees! where s'eer your barks I wound,  
No Name shall but your own be found.

The witty distortion of the Daphne and Syrinx myths in stanza IV appears to be Marvell's own invention, but there is a near parallel in Waller's "To the Mutable Fair":

For in their story one, we see,  
Pursues a nymph, and takes a tree.

The structure of the second line of this couplet is very close to Marvell's, "Not as a Nymph, but for a Reed".

Stanza V contains Marvell's most famous collection of natural details, and the scholars have been eager to find reminiscences and borrowings. Røstvig ("Benlowes, Marvell,

and the Divine Casimire", The Huntington Library Quarterly, XVIII (1954), 13-35) cites a passage from C.Hill's translation of Casimire's Ode 21. Lib.4, which bears a striking resemblance to Marvell's stanza:

No want appeares; th'officious Vine doth stand  
 With bending clusters to our hand.  
 Here, thou shalt pick sweet Violets, and there  
 Fresh Lillyes all the yeare:  
 The Apple ripe drops from its stalke to thee,  
 From tast of death made free.  
 The luscious fruit from the full Figtree shall  
 Into thy bosome fall.

The general movement of nature towards man is the same, and besides the reference to apples dropping, the proximity of vines, clusters, and luscious fruit is similar to Marvell's combination of words and details. But too much should not be made of this passage as an actual source, since many of its details and verbal elements were common property among poets. Dennis Davison, in "Notes on Marvell's Garden", Notes and Queries, Jan. (1966), 25-26, has noted similar thoughts and expressions in Quarles and Spenser:

See how the laden boughs make silent suit  
 To be enjoy'd: look how their bending fruit  
 Meet thee half-way: observe but how they crouch  
 To kiss thy hand.

(Quarles, I Emb. i. 9-12)

. . . an embracing vine,  
 Whose bounches hanging downe, seemed to entice  
 All passers by, to tast their lushious wine,  
 And did themselves into their hands incline,  
 As freely offering to be gathered.

(The Faerie Queene, II. xii. 54)

L.N.Wall, in "Some Notes on Marvell's Sources", Notes and Queries (1957), 170-173, had already noted the Spenser passage, and suggested a comparison with Jonson's "Penshurst", ll. 43-44:

The blushing apricot, and woolly peach  
Hang on thy walls, that every child may reach.

Other poets have like passages. Fane, in "Annus Annulus", speaks of the "lustfull Clusters" of grapes (Otia Sacra (1648) p.16), and Crashaw, in his "Epithalamium", writes:

Nor may thy Vine, faire oake, embrace thee  
with ivy armes, and empty wishes,  
but with full bosome enterlace thee,  
and reach her Clusters to thy kisses.

(The Poems of Richard Crashaw, ed. L.C.Martin, 2nd. ed. (Oxford, 1957), p.408)

Denham's "Of Old Age" is remarkably close to Marvell's phrasing: "Age, like ripe apples, on earth's bosom drops" (The Poetical Works of Edmund Waller and Sir John Denham, ed. Charles Cowden Clarke (Edinburgh, 1862), p.323).

Davison, in "Notes on Marvell's Garden" (see reference on page 121 above), mentions "similar ideas of withdrawal, creation and annihilation" to those of stanza VI, in Habington's "To my noblest Friend, I.C. Esq" and in Henry More's "Cupid's Conflict", lines 37-42. A similar process occurs in Casimire's poems, notably in Ode 12. Lib. 4, where he speaks of the "retyring house o'th'mind" (Odes of Casimire, trans. G.Hilg (London, 1646)).

And for the idea of the mind as an ocean full of creatures,  
compare Hawkins's Parthenoia Sacra (Rouen, 1633):

In fine, they [the seas] are another world in themselves,  
wherein God hath plunged and drencht the diversities  
of al earthlie creatures. (p.235)

Margoliouth (p.226) glosses the phrase "green thought in  
a green shade" with two lines from King Edward III (1596),  
II. 1. 63-64:

Since green our thoughts, green be the conventicle  
Where we will ease us by disburdening them.

"The Fountains sliding foot" of stanza VII seems to be  
an echo of a couplet from Joseph Hall's "On the Death and  
Works of Master Greenham":

Set Time and Enuy gazing at the roote,  
Cursing their bootlesse hand, and sliding foote.  
(See Davison's article, page 121 above, p.26)

The symbolic bird has exercised the scholars a great deal.  
Leishman (p.317) found the source for this image in Sir  
Thomas Hoby's translation of Castiglione's The Courtier:

Wherefore such as come to this love, are like to  
yong birdes almost flush, which for all they flitter  
a litle their tender winges, yet dare they not stray  
farre from the nest, nor commit themselves to the  
winds and open weather.  
(Everyman ed. (1928, reprinted 1956), p.318)

This image of the soul as a bird, rising from one apprehen-  
sion of beauty to another, was taken up by Spenser, in his  
Hymne of Heavenly Beautie, and the last line of the fourth  
stanza of this poem was probably in Marvell's mind as he  
developed the bird image of "The Garden": "Till she her

selfe for stronger flight can breath". (See Leishman, pp. 317-318). Davison (op. cit.) has an alternative or supplementary source, in some lines from Quarles's Emblems, V, x:

My soul is like a bird, my flesh the cage . . .  
 From sense she climbs to faith; where for a season  
 She sits and sings: then down again to reason.

But Marvell need not have resorted to a specific source for this image, since the bird-soul was a standard piece of mediaeval symbolism. D.W. Robertson, in "The Doctrine of Charity in Mediaeval Literary Gardens", Speculum, XXVI (1951), 24-49, has shown that, "the birds who rest in the shade are the pious spirits who desire to abandon terrestrial things and fly to celestial realms" (p. 31). The tree and the fountain are also traditional:

The Water of Life, which either flows by the tree or emanates from it, is variously interpreted as baptism, wisdom, true doctrine, Christus irrigans, Charity, or the Holy Spirit. (p. 31)

Fairfax's translation of "La Solitude" contains another resemblance to Marvell's bird:

Some, toying in the sun's warm beams,  
 Their feathers busily do plume.

This is like the picture of the bird whetting its wings in "The Garden". The beams of sunlight in Fairfax's poem may have suggested the "various light" of Marvell. Beeching, in 1901, (see page 28 above), was the first to suggest a source for this detail - a line from Milton's "Il Penseroso", "Waves at his wings in aery streams". Much more elaborate sources

and complex meanings have since been found, however. Rósvig interprets it in terms of platonic-hermetic mysticism, and cites similar light images in More, Benlowes, and Casimire. (See The Happy Man (1954), p.264).

Herbal sun-dials do not seem to have been made in England as early as the 1650s, but Marvell could easily have seen them on the Continent, and Henry Hawkins mentions one in his Partheneia Sacra (1633), "It is the Gnomon of the Garden, a Dial artificially made in hearbs, to express all the howers of the day" (p.49). Bradbrook and Lloyd Thomas note (Andrew Marvell (1940), p.63, n.2) that floral sun-dials were popular in the West Indies, according to William Hughes in his Flower Garden (1692), and surmise that Oxenbridge may have brought the fashion back with him. They have also discovered a reference to one in the Master's garden at Pembroke College, Cambridge, in Loggan's Cantabrigia Illustrata (1690). Both these accounts are from many years after Marvell wrote his poem, however. There is no evidence that such devices could be seen in England in the 1650s.

A possible source for stanza IX may be Francis Thynne's 25th. Epigram:

The Curious gardiner, with his cruell Shires  
doth cutt the wholesome tyme, and her sweet flowers;  
which hee doth cutt soe longe till tyme at length  
cuts off his life by doome of heavenlie powres,  
for tyme, in tyme cutts him with full despight,  
that first by tyme cutt tyme from his delight.



(Emblemes and Epigrames (1600), ed. F.J.Furnivall,  
EETS (London, 1876))

Marvell clearly makes more subtle use of the Thyme-time pun than the clumsy Thynne. But the resemblances do not stop there. Both poets introduce a gardener, one "Curious" and one "skilful", and Thynne's "wholsome tyme, and her sweet flowers", may have suggested Marvell's "sweet and wholesome Hours".  
 "Upon the Hill and Grove at Bil-Borow".

Professor Rostvig considers the relationship between this poem and Casimire's first epode on the estate of the Duke of Bracchiano as very close, "the very phrases used by Marvell sometimes seem suggested by the Polish poet" (The Happy Man, p.239).

Joseph Summers ("Marvell's Nature", ELH, XX, No.2 (1953), 121-135) compares Jonson's "To Sir Lucius Grey" with Marvell's poem as an earlier example of how nature as a principle of order can be used for hyperbolical compliment.

Fairfax's translation of "La Solitude" contains a similar oak-wood scene, but there are no verbal echoes of one poem in the other.

Margoliouth cites one apparent source:

Grove of Pikes. Waller uses this phrase, 'Battle of the Summer Islands', iii, 54. 'Forêts de lances (de piques)' is a stock phrase in French poetry. (p.229)

"Upon Appleton House".

The natural details in "Upon Appleton House" occur after

the description of the house and the account of the early history of the Fairfax family. The later part of the poem can be clearly divided into a) the account of the gardens, stanzas XXXVI-XLIII; b) the pageant of the meadows, stanzas XLVII-LX; c) the poet's retirement into the wood, and his personal experience of nature, stanzas LXI-LXXXI; d) the evening scene, in which nature pays homage to Maria, stanzas LXXXII-LXXXVII. Many of the descriptive details, and the descriptive conceits presenting them, can be paralleled in earlier poetry.

a) The account of the gardens is governed throughout by the military conceit suggested by the ornamentation of the grounds at Appleton House:

But laid these Gardens out in sport  
In the just Figure of a Fort.

The flowers stand like regiments on parade (stanza XXXIX), and the striped tulips are seen as, "the Switzers of our Guard" (stanza XLII). Fane had described plants as a "Life-guard" in "To Sir J. Wentworth"; and Waller, in "At Penshurst", had plants standing "in even ranks", "Like some well-marshalled and obsequious band"; while Cleveland, in "Upon Phillis walking", had pictured:

The trees, like yeomen of her guard,  
Serving more for pomp than ward,  
Ranked on each side, with loyal duty  
Weave branches to enclose her beauty.

In the same poem, he writes:

The flowers, called out of their beds,  
Start and raise up their drowsy heads.

(Minor Poets of the Caroline Period, ed. George  
Saintsbury (Oxford, 1921), Vol.III, pp.35-36)

Marvell, in stanza XXXVII, has a similar phrase, "Then  
Flow'rs their drowsie Eylids raise".

The meditation on England as "the Garden of the World" in  
stanza XLI, is reminiscent of Fane's "Anglia Hortus".

"The vigilant Patroul/Of stars", in stanza XL, reminds one  
of Lovelace's image in "To Lucasta": "Like to the Sent'nel  
Stars".

Leishman (p.223) finds it:

. . . hard not to suppose that both the rhyme and the  
substance of the following couplet from his (Cleveland)  
'Fuscara, or the Bee Errant', about the bee feasting  
upon Fuscara's arm and

"Tuning his draughts with drowsy hums  
As Danes carouse by kettle-drums",  
did not suggest both the rhyme and, to some extent,  
the substance of a famous couplet in stanza XXXVII of  
'Appleton House':-

"The Bee through these known Allies hums,  
Beating the Diane with its Drums".

He adds (pp.223-224) that there is plenty of Renaissance  
precedent for the bees drumming, and for the sentinel bee  
of stanza XL. The descriptions of warrior-bees probably goes  
back to a passage about the bees' Commonwealth in Pliny (Book  
XI, chapter X).

From the foregoing, it appears that there was a good deal  
of poetic material to hand when Marvell wished to elaborate

his account of the Fairfax gardens in terms of his employer's former occupation.

b) The grasshoppers of stanza XLVII have excited considerable comment. Pierre Legouis first drew attention to the similarity to a passage in the Old Testament Book of Numbers, in The Review of English Studies, X (1934), p. 450; and the same detail was rediscovered by Joan Grundy in "Marvell's Grasshoppers", Notes and Queries (1957), p.142. Røstvig mentions the Biblical source ("Upon Appleton House and the Universal History of Man", English Studies, XLII (1961), 337-351), and adds that the grasshoppers reappear in Benlowes's "Theophila", XIII, xi, "The skipping grasshopper's hoarse notes". There are many other details in common between "Theophila", books XII and XIII, and this section of "Upon Appleton House". Besides the grasshoppers, there are the realistic mowers, the idea of the grass as a sea, the Cinquports, and the later retreat to a natural fortress. Røstvig (The Happy Man, p.230) sees the giant moths and gnats of Canto XII, stanza 74, as similar to Marvell's giant grasshoppers. The same kinds of distortions in size and perspective are found in both poems. The parallels go back through Benlowes to Casimire, who also records the hoarse notes of the grasshopper, and likens the fields of corn to waves. But the observed detail of the grasshopper calling, "from the

Precipice's tall/Of the green spir's", is similar to the opening detail of Lovelace's "The Grasse-hopper":

Oh thou that swingst upon the waving haire  
Of some well-filled Oaten Beard.  
(The Poems of Richard Lovelace, ed. C.H. Wilkinson  
(Oxford, 1930))

Leishman (p.222) considers that the comparison of cows to constellations in stanza LVIII may have been suggested by the 25th. Idyll of Theocritus, in which cattle are likened to clouds moving across the heavens.

The flood was a common poetic property by Marvell's time. In Du Bartas's "Weekes" (2nd. Day), there is a description of fish in towns reminiscent of Marvell's paradoxes in stanza LX. The popular and influential "Cooper's Hill" has a flood sequence. And in Fairfax's "La Solitude", an oakwood on a hill is a refuge from flooding:

When heaven with earth was at odds,  
As Jupiter in rage had laid  
O'er all a deluge, these high woods  
Preserved them from the swelling floods.

But most closely parallel to Marvell, Crashaw has some paradoxical lines in "On bleeding wounds":

Raine-swolne Rivers may rise proud  
Threatning all to overflow,  
But when indeed all's overflow'd  
They themselves are drowned too.  
(The Poems of Richard Crashaw, ed. L.C. Martin, 2nd.  
ed. (Oxford, 1957))

Marvell's line seems to be a direct echo of this, "The River in it self is drown'd".

e) M.C. Bradbrook considers the woodland episode in terms of the poetry of retirement as practised by the French libertin poets, seeing a special resemblance to Stanley's translation of Saint-Amant's "La Jouissance" (see p.47 above). Rostvig (The Happy Man, pp.248-249) deals with the scene at length, rejecting the comparison with the French poets. She finds a much closer resemblance to Casimire, and in particular to the Latin Argument to Canto XII of Benlowes's "Theophila". She compares various references to "Nature's mystick Book" in Benlowes and Fane, and cites Lovelace's "Aramantha" as an interesting parallel. In this, Aramantha, like Marvell, retires into a wood. Another parallel between "Theophila" and this part of "Upon Appleton House" is found in the crucifixion imagery of stanzas LXXVII-LXXVIII (The Happy Man, pp. 254-256).

Kitty Scoular, in Natural Magic (Oxford, 1965), page 182, has discovered a very similar piece of observation to Marvell's detail in stanza LXIII:

When first the Eye this Forrest sees  
 It seems indeed as Wood not Trees;  
 As if their Neighbourhood so old  
 To one great Trunk them all did mold.

James Howell, in "Before the Second Part of Dodona's Grove", describes the effect of mist, "the whole Grove appear'd as one great log" (Dodona's Grove, or the Vocall Forest (London,

1640)).

A.B. Chambers ("I Was But an Inverted Tree: Notes toward the History of an Idea", Studies in the Renaissance, VIII (1961), 291-299) has explored the ancestry of Marvell's transformation into "an inverted Tree" in stanza LXXI, and found that it goes back to Plato and Aristotle.

The nightingale singing in the bushes has already been related to Pliny (see p.86 above). Other, purely literary, parallels can be found. Casimire (Ode 3, Lib. Epod.) has nightingales in the bushes, and in Ode 1, Epode, they sing to animate trees, as in "Upon Appleton House", stanza LXV. There are verbal echoes of Marvell's low shrubs and thorns in Fane's "Humane Science Handmaid to Divine":

The Beech, Ash, Elm, tak't not in scorn  
From the low Shrub and prickly Thorn  
That underneath their shades they dwell,  
And guard their roots as Sentinell.  
(Otia Sacra (London, 1648), p.126)

The picture of a poet lying beneath trees, while a breeze fans his hair, (stanza LXXV), was an established one. Examples occur in Waller's "The Battle of the Summer Islands":

Oh! how I long my careless limbs to lay  
Under the platan's shade, and all the day  
With amorous airs my fancy entertain;

and in Thomas Flatman's "The Retirement", where he sits "down at an aged poplars root", while "a cool breeze had fann'd the air". (Minor Poets of the Caroline Period, ed. George Saintsbury (Oxford, 1921) Vol.III).

Leishman (p.252) has pointed out that Marvell borrowed the phrase "gadding Vines" from Milton's "Lycidas", "With wilde Thyme and the gadding Vine oregrown"; and suggested that the same stanza - LXXVII - is also indebted to Randolph's "A Pastorall Courtship":

Come let those thighs, those legs, those feet  
With mine in thousand windings meet,  
And woven in more subtle twines  
Then Woodbine, Ivy, or the vines.

D.C.Allen, in Image and Meaning (1960), perceives echoes of "L'Allegro" and "Il Penseroso" in this part of the poem, where, "the experiences . . . [of Milton's poems] . . . are being repeated in Nunappleton forest" (pp.143-144).

The trees distending like a Guard in stanza LXXVIII can be paralleled by the lines from Cleveland's "To Phyllis", already quoted in connection with stanza XLII, page 127 above.

The river as serpent (stanza LXXIX) turns up also in Fairfax's "La Solitude":

Then gliding under th'arbored banks,  
As winding serpent in the grass.

And Bradbrook and Lloyd Thomas (op. cit. p.24) point out a similarity between the same poem and Marvell's picture of the sun gazing "Narcissus like" into the river, in stanza LXXX. They quote Fairfax's description of the river Denton:

Sometimes so cleare and so serene  
It seems as 'twere a looking glass,  
And to our views preventing seem



As heavens beneath the water was.  
 The sun in it's so clearly scene  
 That, contemplating this bright sight,  
 As 'twas a doubt whether itt had beene  
 Himself or image gave the light,  
 At first appearing to our eyes,  
 As if he had fall'n from the skyes.

The idea of hedging one's temples "with heavy sedge", in stanza LXXXI, is reminiscent of Milton's Camus, in "Lycidas", who came with "his Bonnet sedge".

d) The last section consists mostly of nature's homage to Maria. Leishman has documented extensively what he calls the "pastoral hyperbole" (pp.224-237), by which nature personified glorifies a human being. Good examples are Stanley's "Sylvia's Park", Waller's "At Penshurst", and Hookes's "To Amanda Walking".

The image of the sun retiring to bed is a common one. It can be found in Milton's "Nativity Ode"; in Casimire's Ode 2, Lib.I; and in Crashaw's "Circumcision", which speaks of, "The crimson curtains of thy bed". D.C.Allen believes that the influence of the "Nativity Ode" can be felt throughout this part of the poem, where a special person brings calm and quiet to nature, and renders the oracles and nature itself dumb.

Lastly, Margolioth and Leishman cite a couplet from Cleveland's "Square-Cap" as a source for the outrageous simile in the final stanza:

The Antipedes wear their shoes on their heads,  
And why may not we in their imitation?

Margoliouth notes that a descriptive detail from a simile in the "First Anniversary of the Government under O.C." (ll. 233-234), has been taken from the Old Testament, I Kings, 18. 44, ". . . a small Cloud, like a Mans hand".

It certainly appears, from the many similarities between Marvell's poetry and that of previous poets and the writers of the Natural Histories and so on, that he was an extremely eclectic poet, taking not only many of his details and turns of phrase, but also the ideas for many of his poems, from his reading. One feels that J.B. Leishman's account of Marvell is the most satisfying, corresponding most fully to the experience of reading the poems:

. . . perhaps the most remarkable example we have of interaction between what Mr. Eliot, in a famous phrase, called Tradition and the Individual Talent. For, although Marvell's poetry is highly original and, at its best, unmistakably his own and no one else's, he is almost always acting upon hints and suggestions provided by earlier poets, and almost never writing entirely, as children would say, out of his own head.  
(The Art of Marvell's Poetry, p.29)

Instances do occur, however, of details which do seem to come "out of his own head". The best known is the glimpse of the thrush on its nest, from "Upon Appleton House", stanza LXVII:

And through the Hazels thick espy

The hatching Thraustes shining Eye.

Other accounts of birds may be original, perhaps from things Marvell had actually seen in the Nun Appleton estate or elsewhere. In stanza LXVII, we also watch the Heron teaching its young to fly:

The Heron from the Ashes top,  
The eldest of its young lets drop.

The specification of the kind of tree used by the bird suggests that this detail is from observation. The stockdoves of stanza LXVI are a traditional symbol, but Marvell adds a piece of particular description which makes them more individual:

The Stock-doves, whose fair necks are grac'd  
With Nuptial Rings their ensigns chaste.

And the Rails seem to be from observation, with the details of the unfeathered quills and the parents' call of distress (stanzas L-LII):

While one, unknowing, carves the Rail,  
Whose yet unfeather'd Quills her fail . . .  
Unhappy Birds! what does it boot  
To build below the Grasses Root . . .  
And now your Orphan Parents Call  
Sounds your untimely Funeral.  
Death-Trumpets creak in such a Note,  
And 'tis the Sourdine in their Throat.

The Hewel (stanzas LXVIII-LXX) had been described felling a tree by Aristotle (see p.90 above), but Marvell's picture contains many details, and comes over very vividly, as if from personal experience:

He walks still upright from the Root,  
 Meas'ring the Timber with his Foot;  
 And all the way, to keep it clean,  
 Doth from the Bark the Wood-moths glean.  
 He, with his Beak, examines well  
 Which fit to stand and which to fell.

The good he numbers up, and hacks;  
 As if he mark'd them with the Ax.  
 But where he, tinkling with his Beak,  
 Doth find the hollow Oak to speak,  
 That for his building he designs,  
 And through the tainted Side he mines.

Frogs, as we have seen (pp.116-117 above), had appeared in similar circumstances before, but the details of the hamstringing and the wading seem to be original to "Damon the Mower":

And hamstring'd Frogs can dance no more.  
 But in the Brook the green Frog wades.

Also striking as a picture of the actions of an animal is the description of the Faun:

It is a wondrous thing, how fleet  
 'Twas on those little silver feet.  
 With what a pretty skipping grace,  
 It oft would challenge me the Race:  
 And when 'thad left me far away,  
 'Twould stay, and run again, and stay.

Marvell's descriptions of grass and meadows often strike with a freshness that seems to come from observation. The most vivid example is the picture of the meadows after the flood:

Whose Grass, with moister colour dasht,  
 Seems as green Silks but newly washt.  
 ("Upon Appleton House", stanza LXXIX)

The appearance of the cattle in the fields is expressed in

a remarkable image:

They seem within the polisht Grass  
A Landskip drawn in Looking-Glass.  
(ibid. stanza LVIII)

The Mowers cutting the hay are particularized strongly:

With whistling Sithe, and Elbow strong,  
These massacre the Grass along.  
(ibid. stanza L)

The mown hay of stanza LV is accurately presented through what appear to be original images:

When after this 'tis pil'd in Cocks,  
Like a calm Sea it shews the Rocks:  
We wondring in the River near  
How Boats among them safely steer.  
Or, like the Desert Memphis Sand,  
Short Pyramids of Hay do stand.

The perception of the way in which perspective can play tricks, and make the boats on the river appear to be sailing between the hay-cocks is exceptionally exact.

So is the minute observation of the play of light on a drop of dew, in the poem of that name, "Dark beneath, but bright above".

Although part of a set of images, the description of the leaf curling round the stem of a tulip like a sheath is precise and unprecedented:

Their Leaves, that to the Stalks are curl'd,  
Seem to their Staves the Ensigns furl'd.

Another apparently fresh detail is the description of the plenty of the fields in "The Mower's Song":

That not one Blade of Grass you spy'd,  
But had a Flower on either side.

The appearance of the inside of a pomegranate is brilliantly caught in the image of "Bermudas":

And does in the Pomgranates close,  
Jewels more rich than Ormus shows.

So, although one feels some sympathy for Pierre Legouis' comment on the thrush couplet, "one would be hard put to it to find others of the same sort" (Andrew Marvell (1965), p.54); nevertheless, there is in Marvell's verse a certain amount of evidence that he was a man of keen senses, who took delight in the details of the world around him. We can never be really sure that any detail in a poem is there because the poet actually noticed it in the countryside, or because he remembered it from reading or conversation. Some can be traced to more or less definite sources of a literary kind; some cannot. What we can be sure of is the effect of the poetry as we read it, and the impression we get is that Marvell must have enjoyed the sights and sounds of the Nun Appleton estate and elsewhere, and his ability to convey that sense of enjoyment to us is what finally concerns us as readers of poetry.

## Chapter IV

### TYPE AND IMPACT

Rosemond Tuve begins her examination of Elizabethan and Metaphysical Imagery (Phoenix Edition, Chicago, 1961) with the following remarks:

It is obvious that images carry into poetry the sights and sounds of the physical world. The theorist of the Renaissance is likely to remark upon this one of their powers when he treats of mere descriptive detail - the naming of concrete particulars. He takes far greater care, however, than do the authors of modern discussions of poetry, to preserve the important logical distinction between such imagery and imagery introducing the element of metaphor and similitude. Especially when he talks of or uses the latter sort, the Elizabethan, unlike the modern, appears to be little interested in the capacity of an image to all but reproduce sensations. This is the simplest function an image can have: the accurate transliteration of a sense impression. Yet not even the schoolboy of the sixteenth century is told to keep his eye on the object. (p.3)

A few pages later, discussing the function of epithets, she writes:

Characteristically, the theorist does not single out sensuous vividness to recommend in the figure epitheton, but rather advises, as Puttenham does, for instance, that 'he must be apt and proper for the thing he is added unto'. It is interesting that, although this detection of sensuous comparableness is now thought of as native to poetry, it is easier to find in prose or common speech than in pre-Romantic poetry. (p.10)

These passages will serve as a useful general statement of the place of natural details in the poetry of the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries. It is not usual in this

period to find "the accurate transliteration of a sense impression",<sup>1</sup> even insofar as such a thing is really possible in poetry. When the "sights and sounds of the physical world" do occur, there is rarely any indication that the poet has kept "his eye on the object". This is true not only of Miss Tuve's distinction of "imagery introducing the element of metaphor and similitude", but even of passages containing "mere descriptive detail - the naming of concrete particulars". Description in Elizabethan poetry tends to be literary in origin and impact, a development of the mediaeval trope of the "May morning" and the idealized landscape of classical pastoral.

Andrew Marvell's poetry, as was seen in the previous chapter, contains a high incidence of natural details, and the purpose of the present chapter is to analyse these details against the background just referred to. It will be necessary to investigate the type of detail he uses, and the kind of impact it makes on the reader.

A broad distinction can be drawn between the details which

<sup>1</sup>For a qualification of this idea, see the discussion of Edmund Burke's views on the sensuous power of words in Chapter VII (pp. 233-5), and Chapter VIII (p.271n.1) of this thesis.



make their impact initially, and perhaps chiefly, through the senses; and those which exist primarily, or only, as an idea. In other words, between those which give a clear sense of a real object; and those in which some aspect or quality is referred to, without evoking the object itself.

The details in stanza II of "Damon the Mower", for example, are almost exclusively sensuous in their immediate appeal:

The Grasshopper its pipe gives ore;  
And hamstring'd Frogs can dance no more.  
But in the brook the green Frog wades;  
And Grass-hoppers seek out the shades.  
Only the Snake, that kept within,  
Now glitters in its second skin.

This, as it stands, is pure description - "the naming of concrete particulars" - such as Renaissance theory allowed for. But the same kind of direct appeal to the senses is found in stanza VII of "The Garden":

Casting the Bodies Vest aside,  
My Soul into the boughs does glide:  
There like a Bird it sits, and sings,  
Then whets, and combs its silver Wings;  
And, till prepar'd for longer flight,  
Waves in its Plumes the various Light.

The vivid details of colour and movement here comprise not a description, but a simile. Marvell has used his image less to define than to evoke. He has offered us a sensuously realised object from the physical world, as a means of apprehending a spiritual experience.

Metaphor, too, can be primarily sensuous in his poetry:

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. . .  
 But thou who only could'st the Serpent tame,  
 Either his slipp'ry knots at once untie,  
 And disentangle all his winding Snare:  
 Or shatter too with him my curious frame.

Many of the key words in these lines from "The Coronet" are sensuous: twining, speckled, fold, slipp'ry, disentangle, winding. We have here a metaphor with the capacity "to all but reproduce sensations".

In contrast to these three passages, are the more restricted details, like this one from stanza IX of "Damon the Mower":

How happy might I still have mow'd,  
 Had not Love here his Thistles sow'd!

The thistles are not realised in the poetry. Their evocative range is limited by the mere naming of them: their traditional values and the ideas of sharpness and troublesomeness. Marvell relies on the associations of the bare word, and makes no attempt to reproduce any sense of the thistle as an object. Even more restricted are the plants in stanza I of "The Garden":

How vainly men themselves amaze  
 To win the Palm, the Oke, or Bayes.

At least the thistles were apprehended as growing things - they were sow'd - but the Palm, the Oke, and the Bayes only exist as marks of something else. Their identity as trees is almost entirely obliterated, and they become ideas in a witty

play on things and their significances.

A similar abstraction takes place in stanza LXXXVIII of "Upon Appleton House", where one aspect of a natural detail is isolated:

And, like a sprig of Mistletoe,  
On the Fairfacian Oak does grow;  
Whence, for some universal good,  
The Priest shall cut the sacred Bud.

Attention is directed solely to the idea that mistletoe is a holy plant which grows upon another, and any sense of it as a thing in its own right is ignored.

Inevitably, the majority of the natural details in Marvell's poetry are used in this limited way. Such use is common at all periods, and was especially so up to the beginnings of Romanticism. Much more interesting, because so unusual in the mid-seventeenth century, is the frequency of natural details presented with the sensuous immediacy of the first three quotations. The rest of this chapter will be concerned with details which make some kind of appeal to the senses, whether evoking them or using them as the basis for witty play.

That Marvell took conscious notice of the power and variety of the senses can be seen from two of his poems. In the first part of "A Dialogue between the Resolved Soul and Created Pleasure", he subjects the soul to, "The Batteries of alluring Sense", offering a temptation to each of the

senses in turn. In stanza XXXVI of "Upon Appleton House", he wittily interprets the formation of Lord Fairfax's gardens:

But laid these Gardens out in sport  
In the just Figure of a Fort;  
And with five Bastions it did fence,  
As aiming one for ev'ry Sense.

In Marvell's poetry as a whole, as may be expected, the largest group of details is of things seen; next, more surprisingly, of things apprehended by means of touch; next, of things heard; and lastly of things smelt. There is no real instance of the sense of taste being evoked, unless in the following:

Where the Souls of fruits and flow'rs  
Stand prepar'd to heighten yours.

This is from the series of temptations referred to above, but it makes no pretence at any "transliteration" of an actual taste experience. Similarly, in stanza XLI of "Upon Appleton House", the mere adducing of the concept of taste does not constitute a sensuous evocation of taste:

What luckless Apple did we tast,  
To make us Mortal, and The Wast?

Honey has connotations of sweetness, but these are not stressed in the references in "Eyes and Tears" and "Damon the Mower":

And yet, from all the flow'rs I saw,  
No Hony, but these Tears could draw.

And Oak leaves tipt with hony due.

Two other details, from "The Garden" and "Bermudas", have

suggestions of taste, but seem better regarded as tactual:

The Luscious Clusters of the Vine  
Upon my Mouth do crush their Wine.

He makes the Figs our Mouths to meet.

The few olfactory details taken from the natural world are quite varied. Most of them are from descriptive passages, and range from the mischievous realism of "Upon Appleton House", stanza LIV:

Where every Mowers wholesome Heat  
Smells like an Alexanders sweat.  
Their Females fragrant as the Mead  
Which they in Fairy Circles tread:  
When at their Dances End they kiss,  
Their new-made Hay not sweeter is;

to the wittily artificial account of the waking flowers, in stanza XXXVII: "And fills its Flask with Odours new". The delicately observed phenomenon of "The Gallery", stanza V:

Nor blows more Wind than what may well  
Convoy the Perfume to the Smell;

contrasts with the much more intellectually applied observations of nature's perfumes - or lack of them - in "The Mower against Gardens" and "Little T.C.":

With strange perfumes he did the Roses taint;

Make that the Tulips may have share  
Of sweetness, seeing they are fair.

"Upon Appleton House" provides a strange mingling of several senses, including the olfactory, in the account of the flowers in stanza XXXIX:

Well shot ye Firemen! Oh how sweet,  
 And round your equal Fires do meet;  
 Whose shrill report no Ear can tell,  
 But Echoes to the Eye and smell.

Lastly, in stanza XXII of "Daphnis and Chloe", there is Marvell's most subtle and effective use of the sense of smell, in the image taken from Suckling, but expressed in his own economical phrasing:

Gentler times for Love are ment  
 Who for parting pleasure strain  
 Gather Roses in the rain,  
 Wet themselves and spoil their Sent.

This is an excellent example of Marvell's ability to express a psychological fact in terms of a sensuous fact. The image has a clear logical basis, but the reader arrives at its significance primarily by a "detection of sensuous comparableness".

There are scarcely more aural than olfactory details from nature in Marvell's poetry. Nearly all the noteworthy references to the sounds of nature are concerned with small, inconspicuous things. The louder noises are more conventional, like the cries of birds of evil omen in "The First Anniversary of the Government under O.C.", lines 333-334:

And Owls and Ravens with their screeching noyse  
 Did make the Fun'erals sadder by their Joyes.

Other noises exceptional by their loudness are found in "Bermudas":

And makes the hollow seas, that roar,  
Proclaime the Ambergris on shoar;

"Eyes and Tears":

Yea oft the Thund'rer pitty takes  
And here the hissing Lightning slakes;

and "The Unfortunate Lover":

While round the ratling Thunder hurl'd,  
As at the Fun'ral of the World.

Thunder and lightning are mentioned elsewhere in the poems, but without any distinctive "sound" words, such as the "hissing," and the "ratling", here, to give them any strong aural appeal. Other possible loud noise references occur, but they are presented as phenomena rather than specifically aural experiences.

Marvell seems much more sensitive to the subtler sounds of nature: the rustle of leaves, or the murmur of insects:

Onely sometimes a flubb'ring Breez  
Discourses with the breathing Trees.  
("Upon the Hill and Grove at Bill-borow", stanza  
VIII)

In "Upon Appleton House", stanza LXXII, he makes a point of stressing this sensitivity:

No leaf does tremble in the Wind  
Which I returning cannot find.

He characterizes the chirrup of the grasshoppers in stanza XLVII:

They, in their squeaking laugh, contemn  
Us as we walk more low then them;

and in "Damon the Mower" is aware of the sudden coming of silence: "The Grass-hopper its pipe gives ore". The bees are brought into line with the prevailing military metaphor of the descriptions in stanza XXXVII of "Upon Appleton House":

The Bee through these known Allies hums,  
Beating the Dian with its Drumms.

In contrast to this grotesquely inappropriate image, is the carefully recorded noise of the mowers at work, in stanza L:

With whistling Sithe, and Elbow strong,  
These Massacre the Grass along,

where the whistle of the blade is echoed in the sibilance of the words - massacre, grass.

The bird-noises in Marvell vary in particularity. On the one hand, there is the general, "While all the morning Quire does sing" ("The Gallery"); on the other, there is the precision of stanza LXIX of "Upon Appleton House":

But where he, tinkling with his Beak,  
Does find the hollow Oak to speak. . .

Between these extremes are passages in which an aural fact is merely the starting-point for witty elaborations:

The Nightingale does here make choice  
To sing the Tryals of her Voise.  
Low Shrubs she sits in, and adorns  
With Musick high the squatted thorns.  
("Upon Appleton House", stanza LXV)

He characteristically selects an appropriate verb to give some measure of new life to the hackneyed poetic property of the doves' cooing:



Yet always, for some Cause unknown,  
 Sad pair unto the Elms they moan;  
 ("Upon Appleton House", stanza LXVI)

and finds a striking variation for expressing bird-song in general:

And underneath the winged Quires  
 Echo about their tuned Fires.  
 ("Upon Appleton House", stanza LXIV)

"Clorinda and Damon" furnishes one more example of the softer sounds of nature:

Near this, a Fountaines liquid Bell  
 Tinkles within the concave Shell.

Marvell's characteristic sounds and sound-words - tinkle, whistle, flutt'ring, squeaking - are symptomatic of his instinctive love of little things and subtleties of observation. He had an ear - as he had an eye - for the minuter, less obtrusive aspects of the world around him.

But more important in his poetry than the sense of hearing, is a highly developed sense of touch. Marvell has been compared with Keats as a poet in whom the senses are prominent. It is most likely the prevalence in certain passages of tactile impressions which has led to this comparison, for the insistence on touch impressions is obvious in both poets. There is very little evidence of a developed tactile imagination among poets before Marvell, and even among the Romantics Keats was exceptional. Wordsworth and Coleridge are predominantly visual poets, and touch does not play a notable rôle in

Shelley's poetry, 'because he is so much concerned with interpreting natural phenomena in accordance with discoverable laws that he tends to neglect the surface impressions. Tactile imagination in any age seems to be rare. It is very significant, therefore, that touch details are second only to visual details in Marvell's work.

Tactile details in his poetry fall into two main groups: passages in which he is acted upon by natural objects; and more objective descriptions and images. The first group is by far the more interesting, because it includes some of his most famous and successful stretches of writing. For the purposes of the present chapter, it is sufficient to record them and examine their immediate impact. Stanza V of "The Garden" is the obvious place to start:

What wond'rous Life in this I lead!  
 Ripe Apples drop about my Head;  
 The Luscious Clusters of the Vine  
 Upon my Mouth do crush their Wine;  
 The Nectaren, and curious Peach,  
 Into my hands themselves do reach;  
 Stumbling on Melons, as I pass,  
 Insnar'd with Flow'rs, I fall on Grass.

The sensuousness of these lines seems to depend not only on the details mentioned, nor on the careful disposition of sounds - the "p"s of the first line, the repeated vowels and consonants in "Luscious Clusters", "crush",<sup>1</sup> the reaching effect

<sup>1</sup> This is not to suggest that sounds in themselves have meaning,

of the distorted syntax in line six - but also largely on the pairing of natural and human elements. The apples are related to the head, the grapes to the mouth, the peaches and nectarens to the hand, the melons, flowers, and grass to the total "I". It is a much more immediate way of pointing up tactile qualities, than merely attributing qualities - of softness, roughness etc. - to the objects in question. Keats used the same technique in his famous image in the "Ode to Melancholy":

Though seen of none save him whose strenuous tongue  
Can burst Joy's grape against his palate fine.

An identical effect is achieved in "Bermudas":

He makes the Figs our mouths to meet;  
And throws the Melons at our feet.

There are many instances of a close tactual relationship between the poet and natural objects in "Upon Appleton House". In stanza LXVII, the contact is felt through the verb of the second line:

but merely that these repeated sounds reinforce the lexical content of the lines. See Winifred Nowotny's discussion of the relation between sound and meaning in Chapter I of The Language Poets Use (London, 1962, corrected 1965). She concludes an examination of a passage from Matthew Arnold's poem "Resignation": "This sound-structure could not of course mean or do by itself what it means and does in conjunction with the sense of the words that contain these sounds, but the sound-structure makes the reader feel, as an immediate experience, what the sense of the words call up". (p.14)

Then as I careless on the Bed  
Of gelid Straw-berries do tread. . .

In stanza LXXIV, the effect is secured mainly by the verbs and the inverted syntax which displaces "me":

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

The use of the word "familiar" adds to the tactile vividness. Touch is the most familiar or intimate<sup>1</sup> of all the senses. It unites, as sight and sound can never do. This is why it predominates in these passages in which Marvell is establishing some sort of communion with the world of nature. We find it again in stanza LXXV:

Then, languishing with ease, I toss  
On Pallets swoln of Velvet Moss;  
While the Wind, cooling through the Boughs,  
Flatters with Air my panting Brows.

Here, besides the action of nature - flatters - in the verb, there is also a strongly active, muscular sense in the adjectival past participle - swoln. Again, a Keats comparison comes to mind:

To swell the gourd, and plump the hazel shells  
With a sweet kernel.  
(The Ode to Autumn)

And nearer to Marvell in time is the unusually sensuous

1

A sense recorded by OED from 1340 (2a), and current in Marvell's day.

moment in Donne:

Where, like a pillow on a bed,  
A Pregnant banke swel'd up, to rest  
The violets reclining head.  
("The Extasie")

The wish to be made one with nature comes to a climax in the tactile details of stanza LXXVII:

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. . .  
Do you, O Brambles, chain me too,  
And courteous Briars nail me through.

The desire for intimate contact is strengthened in these lines by the personal appeal to the plants. Indeed, in many of the examples quoted above, there is a sexual note, which is in accord with the treatment of nature as a mistress in "The Garden", where woman is rejected:

No white nor red was ever seen  
So am'rous as this lovely green.

Stanza LXXXI of "Upon Appleton House" provides further instances of the method of pairing natural details with particular parts of the body:

Oh what a Pleasure 'tis to hedge  
My Temples here with heavy Sedge;  
Abandoning my lazy Side,  
Stretcht as a Bank unto the Tide;  
Or to suspend my sliding Foot  
On the Osiers undermined Root,  
And in its Branches tough to hang,  
While at my Lines the Fishes twang.

One other poem is concerned with man's possible or past

union with nature, and here too the tactile vividness reaches a climax:

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.  
("Damon the Mower", stanza VI)

The passages above are the most significant examples of Marvell's tactile imagination at work, but they by no means exhaust his store of touch description and metaphor. Details of touch occur in the account of the Drop of Dew:

How it the purple flow'r does slight,  
Scarce touching where it lyes;

in the serpent metaphor of "The Coronet"; and in stanza XXIV of "Upon Appleton House", which has another couplet very similar in sensuous appeal to Keats:

All Night embracing Arm in Arm,  
Like Chrystal pure with Cotton warm.

(Compare this with the line from "The Eve of St. Agnes",  
"Unclasps her warmed jewels one by one".)

The method of specifying the contacted parts of the body is used in the touch temptation in "A Dialogue between the Resolved Soul and Created Pleasure":

On these Roses strow'd so plain  
Lest one Leaf thy Side should strain.

Touch is the dominant feature in the comparison of Conscience to a sensitive plant, in "Upon Appleton House", stanza XLV:

A prickling leaf it bears, and such  
As that which shrinks at ev'ry touch;

and in the description of nature's homage to the nightingale  
in stanza LXV:

The Thorn, lest it should hurt her, draws  
Within the Skin its shrunken claws.

There are several other passages which contain an element of physical, almost muscular exertion, which properly belong under this heading. But enough has been said to indicate the frequency and importance of tactile details in Marvell's apprehension of nature. It is one of his most distinguishing features, and probably the chief reason for his reputation as a sensuous poet.

The last, and biggest, group of details is inevitably that of things seen. In a sense almost any introduction of a natural detail into poetry may be put in this category, since in most people the visual imagination is more highly developed than the other sensory powers. The mere naming of an object can produce some kind of visual image in the mind of the reader. But the interesting thing about Marvell's poetry, is that it often insists on the visual appeal of the object.<sup>1</sup> He directs the reader to it not simply as an object,

<sup>1</sup> See the discussion of Burke's views on this matter in Chapter VII (pp.233-5).

but as an object to be seen.

One device is to preface the detail with the command to "see":

See how the Orient Dew . . .  
 . . . Round in it self incloses.  
 ("On a Drop of Dew")

See how the arched Earth does here  
 Rise in a perfect Hemisphere!

See what a soft access and wide  
 Lyes open to its grassy side.

See then how courteous it ascends,  
 And all the way it rises bends.  
 ("Upon the Hill and Grove at Bill-borow")

See how the Flow'rs, as at Parade,  
 Under their Colours stand displaid.

See in what wanton harmless folds  
 It ev'ry where the Meadow holds.  
 ("Upon Appleton House", stanzas XXXIX and LXXX)

Similar are the lines from stanza XLVIII:

To see Men through this Meadow Dive,  
 We wonder how they rise alive.

Marvell's sensitivity to the subtler, more obscure, details of the world around him has been seen in his selection of aural details. The same is true of his visual perception. Bowles noticed this characteristic, though he failed to understand the function of these perceptions in the poetry, "[he] observes little circumstances of rural nature with the eye and feeling of a true poet". This remark can be substantiated from many of the poems, and in particular by reference to the



device under discussion. Marvell varies his formula for visual compulsion in several ways, one of which is the substitution of the word "espy" for "see". He uses this in four cases where the thing seen is not obvious to the casual beholder. The best example, in which the connotative force of the word is used to the full, contains the most famous of all Marvell's "little circumstances of rural nature". It is found in stanza LXVII of "Upon Appleton House":

And through the Hazles thick espy  
The hatching Threstles shining eye.

Stanza II of "The Mower's Song" has another detail that reveals the apparent sharpness of the poet's observation:

That not one Blade of Grass you spy'd,  
But had a Flower on either side.

In "Clorinda and Damon" the word is used for the discovery of something less minute, but nevertheless removed from common view:

I have a grassy Scutcheon spy'd,  
Where Flora blazons all her pride.

It occurs again to suggest the remoteness of the Bermudas, lost in the vastness of the Atlantic:

Where the remote Bermudas ride  
In th'Oceans bosome unespy'd.

There are several other formulae for emphasising the visual nature of particular details. "Upon Appleton House", stanza LXXXIV, has:

The modest Halcyon comes in sight,  
Flying betwixt the Day and Night.

A passive construction is used, in stanza XLVIII:

They bring up Flow'rs so to be seen,  
And prove they've at the bottom been;

and in "The Garden":

No white nor red was ever seen  
So am'rous as this lovely green.

In two instances, the directing word is "shew": in "Eyes and Tears":

The Stars shew lovely in the Night,  
But as they seem the Tears of Light;

and in "Upon Appleton House", stanza LV:

When after this 'tis pil'd in Cocks,  
Like a Calm Sea it shews the Rocks.

This method of underlining the visual aspect of an observation can be made even more immediate by explicitly relating the observer and the thing observed. The result is similar to that noted in the presentation of tactile details: man and nature are brought together as the two necessary elements in the experience of seeing. The most striking example is found in "Upon Appleton House", stanzas X and XI:

In fragrant Gardens, shaddy Woods,  
Deep Meadows, and transparent Floods.  
While with slow Eyes we these survey . . .

These lines attempt to give a "transliteration" of the very act of seeing - the movement of the eyes, sweeping over the scene and taking it in, detail by detail. The same device

occurs in stanza LXIII:

When first the Eye this Forrest sees  
It seems indeed as Wood not Trees.

Nature is deceptive; the deception in this case is visual, and Marvell ensures a fuller participation in the experience by bringing the betrayed organ - the eye - into the statement of what happened.

The definitely visual nature of an experience is captured in stanza XLVI, where the abstract "sight" is this time the operative word:

The sight does from these Bastions ply,  
Th'invisible Artillery . . .  
But ore the Meads below it plays,  
Or innocently seems to gaze.

An extension of the device of introducing a deliberate "seeing" word occurs when the thing seen is distorted in some way, so that it is mistaken for something else. This is indicated by the modified terms of seeing, "seems" or "appears". An example is the couplet quoted above, in which the eye is deceived by distance, so that the forest, "seems indeed as Wood not Trees". The grass-hoppers of stanza XLVII are seen from an unusual vantage point, as the poet walks through the tall grass and looks up at them:

And now to the Abbyss I pass  
Of that unfathomable Grass,  
Where Men like Grasshoppers appear,  
But Grasshoppers are Gyants there.

A witty elaboration of this device sees the concrete

phenomenon as an embodiment of the abstract, in stanza LXII:

The double Wood of ancient Stocks  
Link'd in so thick, an Union locks,  
It like two Pedigrees appears.

This kind of playing with the appearances of nature is a very characteristic feature of Marvell's imagination. His delight in the physical world is not voluptuous. He has a keen perception of the things around him, but he values them largely as material for his wit to play with. His fascination with tricks of vision, like those caused by distance and position, can be seen also in an interest in the distortions of reflected or magnified images. The grazing cattle of stanza LVIII of "Upon Appleton House" are subjected to a series of witty visual transformations:

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 lye.  
They feed so wide, so slowly move,  
As Constellations do above.

The sudden shift from the minute to the immeasurably great in the final couplet, is an example of metaphysical audacity. What is unusual, is that the wit is mainly visual. The wit makes its impact after the initial visual details have been registered. Marvell interprets or expresses nature's sights wittily - but first of all, he sees them quite clearly. The natural world is for him a collection, primarily, of things,

not of ideas or commonplaces.

A more metaphoric application of his delight in reflected images occurs in "The Mower's Song":

And in the greenness of the Grass  
Did see its Hopes as in a Glass.

Another strange visual distortion takes place in "Damon the Mower":

Nor am I so deform'd to sight,  
If in my Sithe I looked right;  
In which I see my Picture done,  
As in a crescent Moon the Sun.

In stanza LXXX of "Upon Appleton House", the sun is seen reflected and diminished in the purified river:

And for his shade which therein shines,  
Narcissus like, the Sun too pines.

Stanza LV provides another instance of a trick of seeing:

When after this 'tis pil'd in Cocks,  
Like a calm Sea it shows the Rocks;  
We wond'ring in the River near  
How Boats among them safely steer.

Here, one witty image of the piled-up hay as rocks, is combined with a witty application of the trick of sight which confuses distances.

Often the perceptive accuracy and freshness of a detail passes unnoticed because it is absorbed into a context of imagery which is basically witty, rather than sensuous. For example, the four lines just quoted about the boats on the river, or the description of the gardens at Appleton House, which makes great play with military metaphors suggested by

the lay-out of the gardens as forts. In much of this the wit is uppermost, but a number of details are keenly observed and precisely expressed in terms of the prevailing figure:

See how the Flow'rs, as at Parade,  
Under their Colours stand displaid:  
Each Regiment in order grows,  
That of the Tulip, Pinke and Rose.

That, in fact, is a very clear and vivid picture of a carefully laid-out set of flower-beds.

Their Leaves, that to the stalks are curl'd,  
Seem to their Staves the Ensigns furl'd.

And that is an accurate description of the shape of a tulip-plant.

Then in some Flow'rs' beloved Hut  
Each Bee as Sentinel is shut.

That is essentially the same observation as Keats's remark about the deer startling, "the wild bee from the fox-glove bell".

When allowances for the difference in poetic mode and climate have been made, it seems clear that Marvell gives the impression of having his "eye on the object" as intently as later nature poets. It is what he does with his apparent observations that puts him in another poetic tradition.

There are many references to actual colours in Marvell's poetry, as well as to more general terms for colour. In "The Garden", there is the symbolic bird, which, "whets, and combs its silver Wings". One of the portraits in "The Gallery" depicts

Aurora, who slumbers in the east, "And stretches out her milky Thighs". The most brilliant of all Marvell's colour evocations, however, is in "Bermudas":

He hangs in shades the Orange bright,  
Like golden Lamps in a green Night.

Silver is again seen in the description of the Fawn:

It is a wondrous thing, how fleet  
'Twas on those little silver feet.

In the account of the drop of dew, we are told, "How it the purple flow'r does slight"; and how it is, "Dark beneath, but bright above". The serpent of "The Coronet" has, "a speckled breast"; and men, in stanza LXXXV of "Upon Appleton House", are, "Charm'd with the Saphir-winged Mist". And, of course, there are the numerous invocations of the colour green. Sometimes, the colour itself is exclusively referred to, as in the falcon image from "An Horatian Ode":

She, having kill'd, no more does search,  
But on the next green Bow to perch.

Sometimes the colour's traditional emblematic significances of innocence, naturalness, youth, and hope, are exclusively invoked, as in "Damon the Mower":

And thus, ye Meadows, which have been  
Companions of my thoughts more green.

And sometimes, actual and conceptual greenness are both invoked, in the rich natural symbolism that is a mark of Marvell's most mature poetry. An example can be found in

"Damon the Mower", "But in the brook the green Frog wades", where the Frog as an object is vividly particularised by the adjective, and by the same adjective given a symbolic extension of meaning.

A similar double significance is present in "The Mower's Song":

And in the greenness of the Grass,  
Did see its Hopes as in a Glass.

Stanza LXIV of "Upon Appleton House" has, "The Columnes of the Temple green", where the Temple is identified as being both literally green - made of trees - and symbolically green - natural and innocent, a temple for worshipping nature.

Many other references to green occur, but only one needs special mention here. The floods on the Appleton estate have receded, and in stanza LXXIX:

... now the Meadows fresher dy'd;  
Whose Grass, with moister colour dasht,  
Seems as green Silks but newly washt.

This image goes with the Bermudan oranges and the thrush's eye, as one of Marvell's most vivid and immediate visual impressions.

Besides the direct mention of actual colours, there are a lot of general appeals to the sense of colour. The Coy Mistress is physically characterized in terms of her colouring:

Now therefore, while the youthful hew



Sits on thy skin like morning dew.

The Fawn feeds on rose petals, "Until its Lips ev'n seem'd to bleed". The tulip's colour is stressed, in "The Mower against Gardens":

The Tulip, white, did for complexion seek;  
And learn'd to interline its cheek.

The military imagery of "Upon Appleton House" plays on details of colour:

Tulips, in several Colours barr'd,  
Were then the Switzers of our Guard.  
(stanza XLII)

See how the Flow'rs, as at Parade,  
Under their Colours stand displaid.  
(stanza XXXIX)

When in the East the Morning Ray  
Hangs out the Colours of the Day.  
(stanza XXXVII)

Marvell's attention is caught by variations in colour and light. The bird of "The Garden", "waves in its Plumes the various Light". He is attracted by the "glitter" of the snake's second skin; by the "Chameleon's changing-hue"; by the light of the glow-worm. The fading of light is pictured in "The Unfortunate Lover":

But soon these Flames do lose their Light,  
Like Meteors of a Summers night;

and the coming of darkness, in "Upon Appleton House", stanza LXXXIV:

So when the Shadows laid asleep  
From underneath these Banks do creep,

And on the River as it flows  
 With Eben Shute begin to close . . .

This interest in the movement of colours and light is one aspect of a persistent fascination by movement itself. Marvell's world is vibrant with life and motion. The natural objects in his poetry are rarely passive - they are seen moving. The most important element in his vocabulary is the verb. His animals are most naturally seen as actively doing something, rather than passively being something. An examination of his animal references reveals his creatures in the acts of, among other things:

beating, rousing, whetting, combing, waving, crawling, pinching, feeding, dancing, wading, skipping, staying-running-staying, tripping, printing, falling, pearching, working, hatching, letting drop, walking up a tree, pecking at the bark, mining, flying, scaling, collecting, building, perfecting loves, moving, squeaking, calling, singing, moaning, twanging, bellowing, kicking, drawing, changing hue . . .

Compared with these very graphic accounts of activity, there are few descriptive details concerning what the creatures look like. They include principally:

yellow, blue, or green; speckled, hamstring'd, little silver feet, yet unfeather'd quills, Corm'rants black, fair necks grac'd with Nuptial rings, shining eye, azure dye, snowy lamb, low-roof'd Tortoises . . .

Of these only a handful are particularly graphic, or simulate any keen observation.

The plants are more colourfully presented in terms of what they are. For example:

polisht, with moister colour dasht, purple, green,  
silken, white, gelid, golden, bright, faire, squatted,  
shrunken, thick, ripe, luscious, mossy, swoln, velvet,  
undermined . . .

But they are also busily doing as well:

divide, wither, fade, raise their eyelids, display  
their leaves, close in garlands, seek, grow, wave,  
unite, draw in their claws, stoop down, speak, fall,  
prick their ears, drop, crush, reach, lick, clasp,  
curl, hale, bind, chain, nail . . .

Much more than in the animal details, the plants are acted  
upon by some superior agency - God or man:

With strange Perfumes he did the Roses taint.  
("The Mower against Gardens")

Transplanting flowers from the green Hill.  
("The Gallery")

[He] throws the Melons at our feet.  
("Bermudas")

So Architects do square and hew  
Green Trees that in the Forest grew.  
("A Dialogue between the Soul and Body")

The sense of life in inanimate things is achieved mainly  
by the device of personification:

the Patroul of Stars walking, the River licking its  
muddy back, the Sun pining and blushing and licking  
off sweat, the Dew mourning and gazing, the Hill  
rising and offering easy ascent, Aurora stretching  
her thighs and hanging out the colours of the day.

One last feature of Marvell's choice of natural details  
deserves mention. It has been shown how his interest in  
nature was inspired by intellectual as well as sensuous  
delight. As a result of this curiosity about nature, he

introduced into his poems a number of oddities, not of perception, like those discussed earlier, but of fact. He was fascinated by the pineapple:

But Apples plants of such a price,  
No Tree could ever bear them twice;  
("Bermudas")

and by the possibilities of altering nature:

The Pinke grewthen as double as his Mind;

The Tulip, white, did for complexion seek;  
And learn'd to interline its cheek;

And in the Cherry he does nature vex,  
To procreate without a Sex.  
("The Mower against Gardens")

The details discussed in this chapter form only a part of Marvell's stock of natural references. Very often, especially in the satires that belong to his later life, nature is felt as a source of ideas, with little sensuous immediacy. Even in his "nature" poems, there is a strong, often predominant, logical and witty element. But there is, in his most characteristic and successful poetry, a constant reference to the world of sights and sounds and sensations. As J.B. Leishman has written:

Even the most purely conceptual passages are, so to speak, supplied by their context with a visual or sensuous core. (The Art of Marvell's Poetry, pp. 268-269)

## **PART III**

### **NATURE IN MARVELL'S POETRY**

## Chapter V

### NATURE AS A CONCEPT

In the introduction to her book Mountain Gloom and Mountain Glory (New York, 1959), Professor Marjorie Hope Nicolson discusses the way in which people react to the world around them:

What men see in Nature is the result of what they have been taught to see - lessons they have learned in school, doctrines they have heard in church, books they have read. They are conditioned most of all by what they mean by Nature, a word that has gathered around itself paradox and ambiguity ever since the fifth century B.C. Human response to mountains has been influenced by inherited conventions of literature and theology, but even more profoundly it has been motivated by man's conception of the world which he inhabits. (p.3)

This chapter will attempt to elucidate what Marvell meant by "Nature"; to show which "inherited conventions of literature and theology" influenced his response to the natural world; and to examine to what extent contemporary developments in science and philosophy affected his "conception of the world".

Marvell inherited from the Elizabethan age a modified, but still basically intact, structure of ideas about the nature of things, which had come down from the Middle Ages. This structure of ideas was a synthesis of much older traditions, going back to the earliest attempts to understand the human environment:

Now the Middle Ages derived their world picture from an amalgam of Plato and the Old Testament, invented by the Jews of Alexandria and vivified by the new religion of Christ.

(E.M.W.Tillyard, The Elizabethan World Picture  
(Peregrine Books, 1963), p.12)

According to this established view, nature could be studied under two aspects: as "Natura naturata" and as "Natura naturans" - as the natural creation, or as the creative force that gave it existence. "Natura naturans" was a well-known figure in mediaeval and Renaissance literature. In Chaucer's "Parlement of Foules", she had appeared as "this noble goddess Nature", and as:

Nature, the vicaire of the almyghty Lord,  
That hot, cold, hevvy, lyght, and moyst and dreye  
Hath knyght by evene noumbres of acord.

(The Works of Geoffrey Chaucer, ed. F.W.Robinson,  
2nd. ed. (London, 1957), ll.379-381)

Hooker, two centuries later, reiterated the view that nature is an agent of God:

Those things which nature is said to do, are by  
divine art performed, using nature as an instrument.

(Ecclesiasticall Politie, (1597), Bk.I, Section 3, p.54)

Nature's function in Chaucer's poem is to maintain harmony among the creatures, and, in the lines quoted, to hold the entire creation together in an ordered combination of the elements. This brings us to the other aspect of nature, "Natura naturata", the world which man apprehends as sensuous reality. Fundamental to the ancient beliefs is the notion that everything is "knyght by evene noumbres of acord". Under

what Spenser calls "Natures Sergeant (that is Order)", all things are "well disposed". Not only are the elements knit together, but each part of the creation is linked harmoniously with every other part. Various kinds and dimensions of harmony are discerned. Perhaps the most common was the concept of the Great Chain of Being, which saw the creation as a continuous chain, beginning with the lowliest parts, such as the inanimate elements and liquids, rising through the various forms of life, from plants to beasts to man to spiritual creatures, and finally reaching the Creator himself. Tillyard sums up the attractiveness of this image, which served to express the deeply felt need for order at all levels:

This metaphor served to express the unimaginable plenitude of God's creation, its unfaltering order, and its ultimate unity. (op. cit., pp.37-38)

Another metaphor was current - that of the dance. Sir John Davies, in Orchestra, uses it to present his concept of an ordered universe:

Dancing, bright lady, then began to be  
 When the first seeds whereof the world did spring,  
 The fire air earth and water, did agree  
 By Love's persuasion, nature's mighty king,  
 To leave their first discorded combating  
 And in a dance such measure to observe  
 As all the world their motion should preserve.  
 (Silver Poets of the Sixteenth Century, ed. Gerald  
 Bullett, Everyman's Library (London, 1947, reprinted  
 1960), p.322)

Yet a third way of discerning the order of things (although all three express the same basic idea of harmony among great



variety) was to see the creation as a series of correspondences, as a pattern of analogies. Within the general hierarchy of the Great Chain, there were several distinct levels of existence, and each level was similar in design to other levels. Tillyard gives the main divisions:

The different planes were the divine and angelic, the universe or macrocosm, the commonwealth or body politic, man or the microcosm, and the lower creation.  
(op. cit., p.103)

This system obviously provided a rich source for poetic or theological imagery. But it was felt as much more than that. To say that Man was made in the image of God, or that the Church was the Body of Christ; that, as Menenius argues in Coriolanus, the rulers of a state are its "belly" and the people its "members"; that Man, the microcosm, is a "little world" who sums up the whole macrocosm in himself; all this was not just figurative - it was a perception of the way the creation is designed. This sense of a pattern of analogies in the created universe lies behind much of Marvell's poetry, and involves both his ideas and his poetic method. The richness of texture in poems like "A Nymph Complaining for the Death of her Faun" and "Upon Appleton House" depends on the variety of allusions which combine to form a unity. The Faun's death has a likeness to the sacrifice of Christ; the mowers in their meadows are an imaginatively convincing parallel to the wandering Israelites; the reaping of the

fields and the slaughter of the Civil Wars are two aspects of the same truth. The universe is made like that. Macrocosm and microcosm reflect each other.

One poem is built entirely on this analogy. Professor Nicolson has called "On a Drop of Dew" the "poetic climax" of "the long belief in epitomes and correspondences" (The Breaking of the Circle, Revised ed. (Columbia Univ. Press, 1960), p.75). The drop of dew and the human soul are seen to correspond at every point. So much so, that they can be completely fused in expression. Indeed, the final couplet refers equally to the dew and the soul:

Congeal'd on Earth: but does, dissolving, run  
Into the Glories of th'Almighty Sun.

Syntactically it is impossible to limit the reference of "Congeal'd on Earth" to either the soul, which is the topic of this half of the poem, or to the "Manna's sacred Dew", which has just been introduced as a simile. The whole process of the poem is one of identification rather than of comparison, and it is clinched in this final couplet with its culminating pun on sun/son.

The idea of the "little world" is specifically alluded to at the close of "Upon Appleton House", where the Nun Appleton estate is seen as an epitome of the greater world. Various places famous for beauty are rejected - Tempe, Aranjuez, the Idalian Grove:

'Tis not, what once it was, the World;  
 But a rude heap together hurl'd;  
 All negligently overthrown,  
 Gulfes, Deserts, Precipices, Stone.  
 Your lesser World contains the same.  
 But in more decent Order tame;  
 You Heaven's Center Nature's Lap.  
And Paradise's only Map.  
 (stanza LXXXVI)

Nun Appleton, felt throughout the poem as containing in epitome politics, history and religion; expressing through its characteristic plants, creatures and seasonal activities, the conflicts of the Civil Wars, the exploits of the Israelites, and the redemptive processes of Flood, Baptism and Crucifixion; is now elevated as a symbol or embodiment of what the creation should be like. And the quality which Marvell singles out as justifying this extravagant claim, is the superior harmony to be found there: "in more decent Order tame". In fact, this is more than extravagant compliment to Fairfax. The peaceful evening scene on which the poem closes is in reality a vision of "more decent Order" than could be found in the England or the theology and philosophy of Marvell's day. Nature seemed to him the one stable thing in a world that human waywardness was handing over to violence and chaos.<sup>1</sup> At the very beginning of the poem he points to

<sup>1</sup> See the article, "Cowley, Marvell and the Second Temple", in Scrutiny, XIX (1953), pp.184-205, in which Harold Wendell Smith discusses some of the motives behind the retreat to nature by men like Cowley and Marvell in the middle of the century: "Nature is for Marvell imbued with far more of the sensory

the natural harmony:

But all things are composed here  
Like Nature, orderly and near.  
(stanza IV)

However, although Marvell usually subscribed to the old idea of nature as Order, there were modifications of it which he occasionally employed for special purposes. One modification was to see the creation as gradually moving towards its close, slowly decaying from its pristine perfection. This is the subject of Spenser's final two cantos of The Faerie Queene - the Mutability Cantos. The Titanesse, Mutability, has subjected the whole sublunary creation to the process of corruption:

For, she the face of earthly things so changed,  
That all which Nature had establisht first  
In good estate, and in meet order ranged,  
She did pervert, and all their statutes burst:  
And all the worlds faire frame (which none yet durst  
Of Gods or men to alter or misguide)  
She alter'd quite, and made them all accurst  
That God had blest; and did at first prouide  
In that still happy state for euer to abide.

Ne shee the lawes of Nature onely brake,  
But eke of Iustice, and of Policie;  
And wrong of right, and bad of good did make,  
And death for life exchanged foolishlie:  
Since which, all liuing wights haue learn'd to die,  
And all this world is woxen daily worse.  
(Book VII, Canto VI, stanzas v and vi)

and sensual than it is for Cowley . . . but it also performs the same function for Marvell as for Cowley - that of being a stable comforter in a world upset by movement"(p.189).

This upsetting of "meet order" is generally regarded as the result of the Fall of Man. The microcosm was infected by sin, and the earth partook of the consequences. Spenser optimistically denied, in the end, the supremacy of Mutability. Nature admits that things change and decay:

But by their change their being doe dilate:  
And turning to themselves at length againe,  
Doe work their owne perfection so by fate.  
(Book VII, Canto VII, stanza lviii)

Everything will ultimately return to the perfect state in which it began. This doctrine is found in the Consolation of Philosophy of Boethius, one of the most powerful influences on thought throughout the Middle Ages:

Alle thynges seken ayen to hir propre cours, and alle thynges rejoyssen hem of hir retornyng ayen to hir nature. Ne noon ordenaunce is bytaken to thynges, but that that hath joynded the endyng to the bygynnyng, and hath makid the cours of itself stable (that it chaunge nat from his propre kynde).  
(Book III, metrum 2, Chaucer's translation, Robinson's ed., p.343)

Spenser has a second answer to the arguments of Mutability - an answer stemming from Christian tradition rather than Platonic:

But time shall come that all shall changed bee,  
And from thenceforth, none no more change shall see.  
(Book VII, Canto VII, stanza lix)

Change rules now, but at the last God will intervene:

For, all that moueth, doth in Change delight:  
But thence-forth all shall rest eternally  
With Him that is the God of Sabbath hight:  
O! that great Sabbath God, grant me that Sabbath's sight!  
(Book VII, Canto VIII, stanza ii)

St. Paul has similar things to say about the problem of mutability, in his First Letter to the Corinthians, Chapter XV, verses 51-53:

We shall not all sleepe, but wee shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpe . . . For this corruptible must put on incorruptible, and this mortall must put on immortalitie.

Donne also expresses the idea that the created world is decaying. But he is pessimistic about the outcome. There is to be no returning of everything to perfection. Only in heaven can the human soul find the lost beauty that the decaying earth has forfeited. The earth fell with man, and harmony - "beauties best, proportion" - is banished. The Anatomie of the World paints a very gloomy picture of the state of things:

Then, as mankinde, so is the worlds whole frame  
Quite out of joynt, almost created lame:  
For, before God had made up all the rest,  
Corruption entred, and deprav'd the best:  
It seis'd the Angels, and then first of all  
The world did in her cradle take a fall,  
And turn'd her braines, and tooke a generall maim,  
Wronging each joynt of th'universall frame.

(John Donne: Complete Poetry and Selected Prose,  
ed. John Hayward, The Nonesuch Library, (London,  
1955), p.202)

Corruption, then, entered right at the start, "So did the world from the firste houre decay".<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>

Compare also the classical tradition, especially in pastoral, of the decline from a Golden Age: Donne calls this age "Iron, and rustie too" (Nonesuch ed., p.208).

This idea of a decaying and corrupt world does not seem to have appealed to Marvell, although there is evidence that he knew of it and was prepared to use it when it suited a particular poem. The most explicit reference is in "The Match":

Nature had long a Treasure made  
Of all her choicest store;  
Fearing, when She should be decay'd,  
To beg in vain for more.

Here, however, Marvell plays with the idea as a conceit in a very trivial poem, and no effort is made to give it any imaginative depth. In "Upon Appleton House", on the other hand, the notions expressed by Spenser and Donne provide the framework for the entire poem. Everything at Nun Appleton is initially harmonious: "Like Nature, orderly and near" (stanza IV), just as Spenser's Nature had established all things: "In good estate; and in meet order ranged". But the gardens turn out to be full of images of war, and suggest to the poet a comparison with strife-torn 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?  
(stanza XLI)

In the same way, Mutability, working on men, had:

. . . made them all accurst  
That God had blest; and did at first prouide  
In that still happy state for euer to abide.

At the end of Marvell's poem, Maria re-establishes the lost harmony. After the mowing of the fields and the rise of the flood, both processes having strong suggestions of Civil War, a new and refreshed world appears. Maria is introduced by the halcyon simile. The halcyon, like Maria, brings all nature to a standstill; movement freezes into permanence:

And such an horror calm and dumb,  
Admiring Nature does benum.

The viscous Air, wheres'ere She fly,  
 Follows and sucks her Azure dy;  
 The gelling Stream compacts below,  
 If it might fix her shadow so;  
 The stupid Fishes hang, as plain  
 As Flies in Chrystal overt'ane;  
 And Men the silent Scene assist,  
 Charm'd with the Saphir-winged Mist.  
 (stanzas LXXXIV-LXXXV)

Men, fish, the river, nature herself are benumbed, charmed by the halcyon. In the next stanza, Maria affects the whole of nature:

Maria such, and so doth hush  
The World, and through the EV'ning rush.  
 No new-born Comet such a Train  
 Draws through the Skie, nor Star new-slain.  
 For streight those giddy Rockets fail,  
 Which from the putrid Earth exhale,  
 But by her Flames, in Heaven try'd,  
Nature is wholly vitrifi'd.

The "new-born Comet" and the "Star new-slain" bring with them suggestions of the cycle of life, but significantly they are rejected: they have no place in this scene. They are "giddy Rockets" because they rise from the "putrid Earth" - the



"sicke world" of Donne's poem. Maria will bring about the change to permanence that St. Paul and Spenser prophesied, when "all shall be changed". The final couplet of the passage above refers to another theory about the end of the world. H.E. Tolliver quotes from a letter by James Howell, taken from the OED:

Surely, that grand Universal-fire . . . at the day of judgment may by its violent ardor vitrifie and turn to one lump of Crystal, the whole Body of the Earth.  
(Marvell's Ironic Vision (New Haven and London, 1965), p.126, n.36)

After the rupture of nature's order in the mowing scene, and the rise and fall of the purifying flood, God's agent Maria transforms nature, giving beauty to the gardens, straightness to the woods, sweetness to the meadow, chrystalline purity to the river. Nature is vitrified, made transparent like glass, easy to understand.

This is not intended as an interpretation of "Upon Appleton House"; the poem is so rich in allusion, and is so obviously not to be read as a consistent allegory, that to impose any one meaning on it would be alien to its method and spirit. It is simply worth noticing that certain ideas about the nature of things, and the past and future course of the creation, find a place in the poetry. How far Marvell believed in them, and how far he employed them as useful material for wit, hyperbole, and compliment, is not in question. He is not, like Spenser, writing a philosophic poem. He is writing an

estate poem, and letting his imagination play with what comes to hand. This consists of real natural details, literary genres and conventions, historical facts from Israel, Rome and England; and it includes theories about nature.

There is one other related idea that he uses twice in the poems: that the world was originally smooth and round.

Professor Nicolson explains:

The original earth was not the world we see. The Great Sculptor had not carved out hills and mountains, valleys and depths of ocean. He was rather a classical aesthete to whom symmetry, proportion, and the restraint of the circle were of first importance.  
(Mountain Gloom and Mountain Glory, p.77)

Since the fall, this perfect sphere had been distorted. Donne, ruminating on the general disorder, poses the question:

But keeps the earth her round proportion still?  
Doth not a Tenariff, or a higher Hill  
Rise so high like a Roocke, that one might thinke  
The floating Moone would shipwrack there, and sinke?  
(An Anatomie of the World, The First Anniversary  
(Nonesuch ed.), p.204)

He concludes that:

. . . solidnesse, and roundnesse have no place.  
Are these but warts, and peck-holes in the face  
Of th'earth? Thinke so: but yet confesse, in this  
The world's proportion disfigured is.  
(*ibid.*, p.205)

For the purposes of complimenting Fairfax in "Upon the Hill and Grove at Bill-borow", Marvell agrees with Donne. The hill itself, a favourite spot of the retired Lord General, has the perfection of the original creation:

See how the arched Earth does here  
 Rise in a perfect Hemisphere!  
 The stiffest Compass could not strike  
 A Line more circular and like;  
 Nor softest Pencil draw a Brow  
 So equal as this Hill does bow.  
 It seems as for a Model laid,  
 And that the World by it was made.

Contrasted to it are the "pock-holes in the face of th'earth":

Here learn ye Mountains more unjust,  
 Which to abrupter greatness thrust,  
 That do with your hook-shoulder'd height  
 The Earth deform and Heaven fright,  
 For whose excrescence ill design'd,  
 Nature must a new centre find,  
 Learn here those humble steps to tread,  
 Which to securer Glory lead.

The reasons for abhorring mountains are noteworthy: they are "unjust", ambitious, "hook-shoulder'd", an "excrescence ill design'd", and they "deform" and "fright" the earth. The idea expressed by Donne, that they are distortions of an earlier physical proportion - "ill design'd" - mingles with a moral condemnation - "unjust", and, by comparison with Bill-borow, not "humble". This double vision of the thing itself, and of a moral implicit in it, is part of Marvell's inherited way of looking at nature. He sees mountains as the Bible often sees them, as symbols that contain truths about the human condition. Behind his lines are remarks like the following from Isaiah, Chapter 40, verse 4:

Every valley shall be exalted, and every mountain  
 and hill shall be made low.

J.F.Danby emphasises the difference between this way of

regarding nature, and the modern attitude:

Where we study Nature in order to exploit it, Bacon  
and Hooker study her in order to discover their duties.  
(Shakespeare's Doctrine of Nature (Faber and Faber  
Paperback ed., 1961), pp. 20-21).

Although Marvell makes use of several ideas about the  
origins and fate of the created world, these problems are not  
his main concern. They are incidental to his main set of  
attitudes to nature. Like Keats, he may have held that:

Axioms in philosophy are not axioms until they are  
proved upon our pulses.  
(Letter 64, The Letters of John Keats, ed. Maurice  
Buxton Forman, 4th. ed. (London, 1960), p. 141)

This is certainly the impression his poetry gives. He is  
interested in living here and now, and nature is important to  
him insofar as it can influence life today. It is difficult  
to be sure of the convictions of a poet as allusive as Marvell,  
who is capable of introducing any idea of fact that can be  
turned to poetic advantage or witty end. But the feeling that  
comes through the poems most strongly is that nature is not  
corrupt, did not fall with man, but still maintains its  
original innocence. It is true "The Mower against Gardens"  
begins:

Luxurious Man, to bring his Vice in use,  
Did after him the World seduce.

But the rest of the poem makes it plain that there has been  
no general fall of nature, only a gradual process of corruption  
by man, which is by no means complete. The "sweet Fields" of

nature may "I've forgot", but they still exist as places:

Where willing Nature does to all dispence  
A wild and fragrant Innocence.

This feeling that nature is basically unspoilt, and that it can "dispence" its "Innocence", is a central motif in Marvell's nature poetry. He retreats from the busy and corrupt "Companies of Men", to seek it in the garden:

Fair Quiet, have I found thee here,  
And Innocence thy Sister dear!

Marvell, then, went to nature expecting to learn and to regain a sense of innocence. Douglas Bush describes the attitude to nature the teacher, in his Prefaces to Renaissance Literature (Cambridge, Mass., 1965):

For the medieval Catholic Aquinas and the sixteenth-century Protestant Calvin, the book of nature, the book of the creatures, was a revelation of God, secondary, of course, to his Word, but authentic in its degree.  
(p.58)

The clearest expression of this idea in Marvell's poetry is at the end of the pastoral "Clorinda and Damon", where nature tells of Pan - here representative of Christ, as in Milton's "Nativity Ode":

Of Pan the flowery Pastures sing,  
Caves echo, and the Fountains ring.  
Sing then while he doth us inspire;  
For all the World is our Pan's Quire.

In this passage, nature actively tells of the Maker, as in the Psalms:

The heauens declare the glory of God: and the firma-  
ment sheweth his handy worke.  
(Psalm XIX, verse 1)

Elsewhere, in "The Mower's Song" and "Upon Appleton House", man must make an effort to interpret what lies about him:

My Mind was once the true survey  
Of all these Medows fresh and gay;  
And in the greenness of the Grass  
Did read its Hopes as in a Glass.

Stanza LXXIII of the longer poem actually introduces the traditional image of the book:

Out of these scatter'd Sibyl's Leaves  
Strange Prophecies my Phancy weaves:  
And in one History consumes,  
Like Mexique Paintings, all the Plumes.  
What Rome, Greece, Palestine, ere said  
I in this light Mosaick read.  
Thrice happy he who, not mistook,  
Hath read in Natures mystick Book.

As might be expected of the man who wrote the "Dialogue between the Soul and Body" and "An Horatian Ode", Marvell is reluctant to commit himself. He does not claim that he can understand the "light Mosaick". Like Wordsworth, he appears to believe that:

One impulse from a vernal wood  
May teach you more of man;  
Of moral evil and of good,  
Than all the sages can.  
("The Tables Turned", Lyrical Ballads, ed. H. Little-  
dale (London, 1911), p.187)

"All the sages" are certainly included under the colours of Rome, Greece, and Palestine; and he does glean "strange

Prophecies" from his acquaintance with nature. But these prophecies are woven by "Phancy", a suspect faculty in the mid-seventeenth century. The OED gives an example from 1609 and another from 1659 of the word used to mean "an illusion of the senses" (2); and from 1597 and 1693 examples of the meaning "an instance of delusive imagination" (3). 1663 is the first recorded date for the meaning "mental image" (4.b.). Several examples, including one from Marvell's own "Rehearsal Transposed", support the meaning, "A supposition resting on no solid grounds" (6). So to attribute the prophecies caught from nature to the fancy is no recommendation of their authority as truth.

Further doubt is cast upon the validity of his perceptions by the qualification of the final couplet, "not mistook". Keats admitted similar dubiousness about the reliability of his interpretation of nature's phenomena:

Was it a vision, or a waking dream?  
Fled is that music: - Do I wake or sleep?  
("Ode to a Nightingale", The Poetical Works of John Keats, ed. H. Buxton Forman (London, 1908, reprinted 1940), p.233)

It seems, then, that nature in itself, as the Book of God, is meaningless without a perceptive reader. Nature, in fact, was felt to be meaningless without man. Man was on the highest rung on earth of the ladder leading up to God. He was the highest of the animals, and the lowest of the spiritual

beings. In him, the different planes touched. He was the centre of the creation, just as in the system of Ptolemy the earth was the centre of the physical universe. He seemed justified in believing that the world and all it contained had been made for him. It was made to minister to his needs, both material and spiritual. It provided him with food and shelter, and also with guidance. As Tillyard says:

The Elizabethans looked on the lower end of the chain of being mainly in the light of themselves. Its great variety and ingenuity were indeed testimonies of the creator's wonderful power, but its main function was to provide symbols or to point morals for the benefit of man. The ant was a wonderful creation, but the chief thing was that he was there for the sluggard to go to. The bees were wonderfully organized, but the chief thing was that they should 'teach the art of order to a peopled kingdom'.

(The Elizabethan World Picture, p.99)

Nature taught, and nature served man. Nature was to be enjoyed, not exploited. Man did not have to force her to serve him. In Marvell's day the modern exploitation was beginning, as "The Mower against Gardens" complains. But Marvell adhered to the older view, and from it emerged some of his finest and most generally admired poetry. In "Bermudas"

He gave us this eternal Spring,  
Which here enamells every thing;  
And sends the Fowl's to us in Care,  
On daily Visits through the Air.

It is significant that to enjoy this natural abundance Marvell has to postulate a retreat from the "Storms, and Prelat's rage" of contemporary England, to an Isle "far



kinder [i.e. more natural] than our own".<sup>1</sup>

Similarly in stanza V of "The Garden", nature serves man, but only after he has left the "Palm, the Oke, or Bayes" for the "Garlands of repose". In stanza VI of "Damon the Mower", man is ministered to:

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;

and in stanza LXXV of "Upon Appleton House":

Then, languishing with ease, I toss  
On Pallets swoln of Velvet Moss;  
While the Wind, cooling through the Boughs,  
Flatters with Air my panting Brows.

Marvell, in fact, never discusses nature except in terms of its relationship with a human being: Maria, Fairfax, the Mower, the Bermudan exiles, Little T.C., the poet himself. For the feeling is strong that man and nature are part of a single design, that they complement each other and ideally should harmonize. This feeling permeated the world-picture that Marvell inherited, leaving its marks on many areas of

<sup>1</sup> Compare Montaigne's preference of nature to society, in the essay "Of the Caniballes": ". . . there is no reason, art should gaine the point of honour of our great and puissant mother Nature. We have so much by our inventions surcharged the beauties and riches of her workes, that we have altogether overchoaked her: yet where ever her puritie shineth, she makes our vaine and frivolous enterprises wonderfully ashamed". (Essays, Everyman's Library, Vol.I, p.219)

human activity. For example, H.V.S. and M.S.Ogden have shown that the most important "mood" of the newly developing art of landscape-painting in the first half of the seventeenth century in England, was that of "well-being", of "prospering activity". They explain:

The emotion which accompanies the portrayal of such a world is one evoked by the fact that nature and man are properly functioning in their various relationships.  
(English Taste in Landscape in the Seventeenth Century (Ann Arbor, 1955), p.50)

An important - perhaps the central - theme of Marvell's "nature" poetry, is the loss of this feeling of well-being, a disruption of the necessary and healthy relationship between man and his surroundings. "The Mower's Song" treats of this explicitly. Stanza I, quoted above (see page 187), describes the former harmony of the Mower's mind and the meadows. In stanza II, the bond of sympathy is broken:

But these, while I with Sorrow pine,  
 Grew more luxuriant still and fine.

The meadows do not share or condole his grief. The third stanza denounces them for this betrayal:

Unthankful Meadows, could you so  
 A fellowship so true forego,  
 And in your gawdy May-games meet,  
 While I lay trodden under feet?

In the fourth stanza, the break in sympathy leads to a violent act of retaliation, as the Mower exacts his "Revenge":

And Flow'rs, and Grass, and I and all,  
 Will in one common Ruine fall.

In the final stanza, man and nature are reunited in death -  
a poor solution to the problem of alienation:

And thus, ye Meadows, which have been  
Companions of my thoughts more green,  
Shall now the Heraldry become  
With which I shall adorn my Tomb.

The cause of all this is the coming of Juliana, who:

What I do to the Grass, does to my Thoughts and Me.

"Damon the Mower" follows a similar pattern. Here also,  
Juliana disrupts the natural order:

Oh what unusual Heats are here,  
Which thus our Sun-burn'd Meadows sear!

A contrast is implicit in the phrasing: the meadows are  
naturally "Sun-burn'd", but in the "unusual", and therefore  
unnatural, heat, they are "seared". Natural creatures are  
forced to abandon their proper activities in the presence of  
Juliana:

The Grass-hopper its pipe gives ore;  
And hamstring'd Frogs can dance no more.

Only by retreating further into nature, or remaining out  
of reach of Juliana's influence, can they live out their  
natural existence:

But in the brook the green Frog wades;  
And Grass-hoppers seek out the shades.  
Only the Snake, that kept within,  
Now glitters in its second skin.

Damon was once in complete and proper harmony with nature  
(stanza VI); he joined in the ritual harmony of dance and song:

The deathless Fairyes take me oft  
 To lead them in their Dances soft;  
 And, when I tune my self to sing,  
 About me they contract their Ring.

It is possible that Marvell is glancing here at the metaphor of the dance and music as order, expressed in Davies's Orchestra (see page 173 above). Tillyard, discussing the Cosmic Dance, quotes Dryden's:

From harmony, from heavenly harmony,  
 This universal frame began;  
 From harmony to harmony  
 Through all the compass of the notes it ran.  
 The diapason closing full in man.  
 ("A Song for St. Cecilia's Day", quoted in The Elizabethan World Picture, p.123)

The last line may mean something similar to Marvell's, "About me they contract their Ring". The symbol of the ring is certainly suggestive in a poet brought up in the mediaeval tradition, in which the circle was the perfect form. Also there is the covert reference to the marriage contract and ring. Marvell here is presenting the bond between man and nature as a perfect harmony, a wedding of one to the other. The "deathless Fairyes" are presumably related to the "Fauns and Faryes" who till nature's Meadows of Innocence in "The Mower against Gardens". The coming of Juliana destroys this intimacy. The ring is broken, the contract annulled, and the Mower turns against the meadows, as he did in "The Mower's Song", "And with my Sythe cut down the Grass".

The scythe is a suggestive implement. It not only has

traditional associations (exploited at the end of the poem) with time and death; but its stated uses in the context of the poem seem to be significant. It is first mentioned in stanza VII:

This Sithe of mine discovers wide  
More ground then all his Sheep do hide.

Marvell probably intends a pun on the word "discovers". In the seventeenth century several meanings were extant. OED, besides citing examples of the commonest modern meaning of "To obtain sight or knowledge of (something previously unknown) for the first time" (8), also has seventeenth-century instances of the sense to "uncover" (2) and the sense to "expose to view" (3). The scythe is thus an instrument of both uncovering and discovery. The modern sense of discovery seems to be foremost, however; the actual business of uncovering by cutting and destroying is kept in the background. Again, in stanza VIII, the scythe reveals something to the Mower:

Nor am I so deform'd to sight,  
If in my Sithe I looked right;  
In which I see my Picture done,  
As in a crescent Moon the Sun.

It is a means of self-discovery, although the revelation is not complete. Only as much is seen as the moon reflects of the sun. With stanza IX, the destructive function of the scythe is at last allowed to enter the forefront of conscious-

ness, as it is seen to, "cut down the Grass". Gradually, as the process of destruction continues, "the Iron blunter grows", and has to be resharpened along with the Mower's "Woes". In stanza X, the violence of the scythe and its master are not only allowed, but emphasised:

While thus he threw his Elbow round,  
Depopulating all the Ground,  
And, with his whistling Sythe, does cut  
Each stroke between the Earth and Root.

The concreteness and realism of these lines are among the finest things in Marvell's poetry. The careless energy of the first line gives a sense of the physical effort, and of the lack of control: an abandon similar to, "And Flow'rs, and Grass, and I and all". The "Depopulating" of line two gives the shock of surprise needed to bring home the new turn of violence that the poem has taken. OED cites an example from 1650 of the simple meaning "to destroy, cut off" (5), but the word had many other possible applications at the time. It could mean to "lay waste, pillage" (1), or to "reduce the population of" (2). The associations of the word suggest that the Mower is doing something more portentous than merely reaping hay. The "whistling" of the scythe helps to provide a sense of realism, of an action taking place. And the final clause focuses attention with brutal precision on the physical act of slicing through the living plants. At last, the "edged Stele", no longer an instrument of discovery or reflection,

but of destruction, brings down the Mower himself. It would be unwise to try to allegorize the scythe, to impose upon it some fixed and analysable meaning. But simply from the contexts it is placed in within the poem, and from the uses it is put to, it is obvious that it has a significance beyond itself. It seems to represent some faculty of the Mower's which, when harmony is maintained between man and his environment, is an instrument of good, of discovery and self-awareness. To say that it definitely represents Reason is to limit its associative power; but some such meaning seems to be attached to it. By means of reason, or more widely the "Mind" of "The Mower's Song", man can discover the world around him, and the world within. But because man is a limited creature, he only perceives a certain amount in the mind's mirror, "As in a crescent Moon the Sun". When Juliana comes, sowing the meadows with Love's thistle, and breaking the bond between man and nature, reason is blunted, becomes a dangerous weapon in the hands of the disturbed Mower who uses it carelessly. Man uses his mind and ingenuity against nature: in this poem and "The Mower's Song" to destroy nature; in "The Mower against Gardens" to seduce nature.

In the last stanza, it is made clear that the Mower's deepest hurt is in his mind; and whereas the wounded ankle can be cured by applying natural remedies, the wounded mind can

be healed only by death, as in "The Mower's Song", "For Death thou art, a Mower too".

Obviously, unless we follow a recent critic (see page 63 above) and read the poem as nothing more than "a variation upon the hot-cold paradoxes of the conventional love-poem", we are bound to wonder about the significance of Juliana. If she stands for Woman, and can be seen as a representative of the Eve who "brought death into the world, and all our woe, with loss of Eden", then these poems are closely related to "The Garden" and "Upon Appleton House". In "The Garden":

Such was that happy Garden-state,  
While Man there walk'd without a Mate.

In stanza LXXVI of the other poem, Marvell takes refuge from women in the wood:

How safe, methinks, and strong, behind  
These Trees, have I incamp'd my Mind;  
Where Beauty, aiming at the Heart,  
Bends in some Tree its useless Dart.

Notice that it is the mind again that needs shielding from the influence of Woman. Professor Røstvig sees in these passages a much more esoteric reference to Hermetic philosophy:

The rejection of Eve, then, is no mere rejection of female companionship in favour of masculine solitude. It is a rejection of the reign of matter, symbolised by the act of generation, and an acceptance, instead, of that bi-sexual structure which man and the rest of the creatures originally shared with God, but which God alone retained together with the vegetable world.  
("Andrew Marvell's 'The Garden': a Hermetic Poem", English Studies, XL (1959), 65-76, p.74)



In spite of all this, it seems to me a mistake to try to interpret the poems as if they were philosophical utterances, whose main objective was to express, or perhaps even obscure, some theory about the origins and nature of sin, or the relation between matter and spirit. This does not mean that they must be read as simple love poems in an established form, with no deeper implications. They are clearly dealing with the problem of alienation, of a profoundly felt dislocation of man and his environment. That much is conveyed through the surface details. It is also clear that a vast store of traditional theory is being drawn upon - the Cosmic Dance, the system of analogies, etc. - not to mention the age-old pastoral preoccupations of Art and Nature, and the lost Golden Age. But to go beyond this "profoundly felt dislocation", and ask the poem to supply an exact philosophical explanation of how it came about, is to reach beyond poetry's terms of reference. Poetry tells us, in its own way, what it is like to be a human being. We should not expect it to tell us how we came to be what we are. Poetry uses ideas, because they are part of our experience, but its job is not to formulate ideas. We read poems for experience, not for philosophy.

The feeling of alienation, of being alone and forsaken in a universe that ought to be man's companion and home, can occur in any age. It must have been especially acute in the

century which saw the replacement of the old universe of analogies, guided by God and his beneficent agent, Nature, by a new impersonal universe, operating according to its own mechanical laws. Marvell's poems capture this feeling as powerfully as any in the language. Because he was educated in a culture which still felt the Genesis account of man's earliest experiences as a forceful expression of the nature of things, he is satisfied with the symbol of woman as the cause of the alienation. As such, Juliana is a powerful imaginative device, and much of her power depends on preserving a certain amount of vagueness as to her exact "meaning".

Whereas the Mower poems deal with the feeling, "That I shall never find my home" ("The Mower to Glo-Worms"), "The Garden" and "Upon Appleton House" express man's urge to reintegrate himself with nature, to get back to his "home". Marvell seeks escape from the "busie Companies of Men" in the "fair Quiet" of the garden. He retreats from all the endeavours involved in winning "the Palm, the Oke, or Bayes", but especially from love, from whatever is meant by Juliana in the Mower poems. In them, death was the only remedy for the "scorching . . . Care". There was no "cool Cave" or "gelid Fountain" to comfort and assuage the "Fires/Of the hot day, or hot desires". In "The Garden" an escape is offered:

When we have run our Passions heat,  
Love hither makes his best retreat.

Man can find a place, "Here at the Fountains sliding foot". Like the grasshoppers, he can retreat into the shadows, and re-establish a state of concord with his environment, reducing everything to the harmonious reality of, "a green Thought in a green Shade".

In "Upon Appleton House", the retreat is put in a wider context. Man wishes to seek refuge from more than love. The trees on the hill save him from the dart of "Beauty", but also from everything suggested by the "World", with its associates the Flesh and the Devil:

And where the World no certain Shot  
Can make, or me it toucheth not.  
(stanza LXXVI)

The rich allusiveness of Marvell's natural symbolism allows specific and general to be presented at the same time:

But I, retiring from the Flood,  
Take Sanctuary in the Wood;  
And, while it lasts, my self imbark  
In this yet green, yet growing Ark.  
(stanza LXI)

Literally he can escape the flooding of the Denton; figuratively, as the mention of the Ark insists, he can escape the flood which comes as a result of man's corruption after the Fall, by retreating to the sanctuary of innocent nature - "yet green" signifying, as so often, youth and innocence. But the symbol of the flood can also be applied to a particular historical situation. It has been used before as a metaphor for civil

<sup>1</sup>  
war, and the mowing scene earlier had been presented in terms of battle and pillage, thus preparing for this extension of the flood symbol.

The four lines quoted take us even further into the question of retreat. The poet does not merely run away from the problems of Sin and Civil Disorder, and regard nature as an escape from society. More than a quest for solitude is involved. Some kind of mystical union with nature is sought. As man and nature regained a lost harmony in "The Garden" and "green Shade", so Marvell is to "imbark" himself in the Ark of the Wood. He will set sail on the flood; and he will become a tree. A little later his identification with nature is almost accomplished:

And little now to make me, wants  
Or of the Fowles, or of the Plants.  
Give me but Wings as they, and I  
Streight floting on the Air shall fly:  
Or turn me but, and you shall see  
I was but an inverted Tree.  
(stanza LXXI)

Notice again the reluctance to go all the way in such statements. Marvell is not really identified with fowls and plants, as Keats felt he was with the sparrow. There still wants a "little" for such an identification. He would be a bird - if he had wings, but he hasn't. A very ancient philosophical tradition allowed him to see himself as an "inverted Tree",<sup>2</sup> and

<sup>1</sup>  
See D.C.Allen, Image and Meaning (Baltimore, 1960), pp.132-3.

<sup>2</sup>  
See A.B.Chambers, "I Was But an Inverted Tree: Notes toward

Marvell seized with delight on the grotesque possibilities of this image.

In finding a refuge in nature, Marvell is not being startlingly Romantic. H.N. Clement has shown how a poetry of solitude and retreat to nature was developed in Renaissance France, partly as a result of the anarchy of the wars of the sixteenth century - see "Nature and the Country in Sixteenth and Seventeenth Century French Poetry", PMLA, XLIV (1929), 1005-1047. In Marvell's own day, the literary tradition spreading from the continent must have been greatly reinforced by the troubles of the Civil War. Maren-Sofie Røstvig, in The Happy Man, has done a lot to explain the kind of forces that combined to form the mid-seventeenth-century conception of nature, especially as a refuge:

The pursuit of virtue, truth, or happiness became a question, not of scholastic discipline or an active life, but of introspective meditation inside a real or imaginary hortus conclusus. The garden-theme of Stoical and Epicurean philosophy combined with the neo-Platonic theme of the liber creaturorum and with a scientific and humanistic interest in nature, and through the fusion of these currents was created the philosophical background for the poetry dealing with the happiness of the retired life. (p.67)

During the seventeenth century, an old world-view was

the History of an Idea", Studies in the Renaissance, VIII (1961), 291-299.

being replaced by a new one. The new mechanical concept of the universe was destroying the ancient system of analogies and hierarchies. Ernst Robert Curtius notes the changing outlook in his study of European Literature and the Latin Middle Ages, trans. Willard R. Trask (New York, 1953):

The founder of exact natural science gives the book metaphor a significant new turn. Galileo speaks of the great book of the Universe, which lies forever before our eyes but which we cannot read if we have not learned the script in which it is written. "It is written in a mathematical language, and the characters are triangles, circles and other geometrical figures". The book of nature no longer legible? - a revolutionary change had occurred, which penetrated the consciousness of the humblest. Now too the plant and animal kingdoms are newly studied by the aid of optical instruments. (p.324.)

Marvell does not actually express the theories of the new science (as Cowley was to), although his references to the microscope and developments in horticulture, show that he was aware of what was going on. But the sense of uneasiness in the relation between man and his environment, leading to the preoccupation with alienation, was probably a direct result of the uncertainties caused by the revolutionary discoveries of the scientists and astronomers.

Donne had given voice to the distressing fact that, "[THE] new Philosophy calls all in doubt"; Marvell was one of the first English poets to attempt some kind of reintegration of man and the environment. He sees in nature not just the escape that contemporaries like Cowley sought there, but a

means of repairing the damage done by the Civil War and the religious controversy. He stands at the beginning of a poetic line which leads to Wordsworth. As John D. Rosenberg concludes his article on "Marvell and the Christian Idiom", in Boston University Studies in English, IV (1960), 152-161:

It is to Nature, with her gifts of innocence and energy, that Marvell confides the progress of the Spirit. A century and more after Marvell, writing in a greatly simplified idiom, Wordsworth invoked the same standard [i.e. the innocence and energy of nature] to a similar end. (p.161)

Marvell's task was simpler than Wordsworth's, because he was imaginatively close to a view of the universe which saw all creation as a harmonious design, with man at its centre, securely placed. Reason and Faith could still reach the same conclusions. L.V. Lyman draws the comparison and points the differences:

Finding the disjunction between man and nature so great that no intellectual bridge would join them together, Wordsworth joined the two realms by faith and feeling . . . That was a matter of faith and feeling to Wordsworth was a belief to Marvell . . . As in most of the Renaissance poetry, a keen analytical wit and a magical view of nature could go together without undue strain.

(Andrew Marvell, pp.17-18)

## Chapter VI

### NATURE AS A REALITY

Chapter III has shown that Marvell took his natural details from many sources, and from many kinds of source: from the Natural Histories, from folklore, from botanical treatises and medical herbals, from previous poets, and from his own experience as an observant human being. So his "nature" is a complex of fact and fiction, abstraction and sensuous realism, literary knowledge and actual perception. Chapter V has shown something of his attitudes to nature as a concept, whether felt as "Natura naturans", Shakespeare's "Great creating Nature", or as "Natura naturata", the physical creation. This chapter will examine Marvell's version of "Natura naturata" insofar as it consists of a particular set of details, drawn from a particular landscape. What kind of countryside emerges from the poems? How does it differ physically from that found in, say, Wordsworth's poetry, or Sir Gawain and the Green Knight?

Marvell, as a man of his time, inherited the classical and mediaeval preference for cultivated, undemonstrative landscape - what Ernst Robert Curtius has summed up as, "the mixed forest and the locus amoenus (with flowery meadows ad libitum)" (European Literature and the Latin Middle Ages, p.193).



Wild and rugged scenery presented a threat, not only in a personal way to the individual traveller, but in a general way to civilization and its precarious hold in the face of the unruly and powerful forces of nature. Mountains and forests, as Professor Nicolson has demonstrated (Mountain Gloom and Mountain Glory (New York, 1959)), were objects of terror rather than awe. Marvell rejects mountains because they: "The Earth deform and Heaven fright". The fear of the unknown, disorderly, and dangerous in nature was fed by the fantasies of a religious imagination. G.G.Coulton, in Chaucer and his England (2nd.ed., London, 1909), highlights the difference between mediaeval and modern or Romantic attitudes to the physical aspects of nature:

Popular religion was then too often frankly dualistic; to many men, the Devil was a more insistent reality than God; and none doubted that the former had special power over the wilder side of nature. The night, the mountain, the forest were notoriously haunted; and, though many of the finest monasteries were built in the wildest scenery, this was prompted not by love of nature but by the spirit of mortification . . . What appealed to the founders of the Chartreuse or Tintern was not the beauty of 'those steep woods and lofty cliffs', but their ascetic solitude. (p.105)

This feeling that the wilds were the haunt of evil is objectified in Beowulf, where the moors and lonely marshes are the stronghold of Grendel and his mother, part of the monstrous progeny of Cain cast out from God. When rugged scenery is described in Sir Gawain and the Green Knight, it is as a setting for hardship and danger, and an embodiment of threat and physical and mental pain.

Winter is felt in the same way - as a time of bitter endurance and deprivation. Sir Gawain and the Green Knight again provides the best example of the imaginative and physical horror of winter, but Henryson expresses the same revulsion at the start of The Testament of Cresseid, and is followed by Gavin Douglas in his seventh Prologue. Winter is felt most strongly and most frequently in early poetry as the antithesis of spring and summer. William Dunbar's "Meditatioun in Wyntir" gives the orthodox reaction to winter:

Quhone that the nycht dois lenthin houris,  
With wind, with haill, and havy schouris,  
My dule spreit dois lurk for schoir,  
My hairt for languor dois forloir  
For laik of symmer with his flouris.  
(The Poems of William Dunbar, ed. W. Mackay Mackenzie  
(London, 1932, reprinted 1960), p.26)

Generally, the parts of nature's scenery and cycle that men shied away from in life, were shied away from in literature. The courtly French tradition, which was paramount in English poetry from Chaucer on, preferred to dwell on the freshness of spring, and the comfortable, civilized landscape of gardens and gentle meadows. J.A.W. Bennett, in his study of The Parlement of Foules (Oxford, 1957), explains the popularity of the mediaeval topos of the ideal landscape:

For in one sense, the walled park, the garden enclosed were civilization; and to some medieval, even to some Renaissance painters, they were almost the whole of art. The wall enclosed the known, the beautiful, and the ordered, shutting them off from the wilderness and wildness and rough weather. (p.63)

The facts of wild nature were too real and brutal in everyday life for men to wish to be reminded of them in their literary entertainment.

The landscape that Marvell presents in his poetry - nature as a collection and arrangement of objects rather than nature as a philosophical concept - is limited in this way. It was said in the preceding chapter that nature seemed to him the one stable thing in a world that human waywardness was handing over to violence and chaos. For this impression to be conveyed through the poetry, he had to omit a great deal from the possible range of his actual experience. He had to omit the bitterness of winter, and reject the "excrecence ill design'd" of mountains. The years he spent abroad before joining Fairfax at Nun Appleton, his journeys to Sweden and Russia, his contact at home with - at least - the Yorkshire moors - all this leaves no mark on his poetry.<sup>1</sup> Pierre Legouis noticed the

<sup>1</sup> Compare Bacon's advice in his essay "Of Travel": "The things to be seen and observed are: the courts of princes . . . the courts of justice; . . . the churches and monasteries . . . the walls and fortifications . . . antiquities and ruins . . . libraries, colleges, disputations, and lectures . . . shipping and navies; houses and gardens of state and pleasure . . . armories; arsenals; magazines . . . and, to conclude, whatsoever is memorable in the places where they go". (The Essays of Francis Bacon (1625), Everyman ed. (1906), p. 54. Bacon makes no mention of the wonders of nature as part of a young man's educational tour. His nearest approach is in the recommendation of "gardens of state and pleasure".

narrow range of his descriptive interests:

Marvell belongs to his age. He also belongs to his country: the scenery in the foreign lands he visited provided no inspiration for him; he described the Bermudas and the Canary Islands without having seen them, Sweden before he saw it, Holland as he could have done even if he had not seen it. Everything in his descriptive poetry that bears the mark of loving observation concerns Britain. Even within his native island he ignores much.

(Andrew Marvell: Poet, Puritan, Patriot (Oxford, 1965), p.47)

Marvell evokes most vividly the symmetrical formality of a garden, and the cultivated surroundings of a country house - the meadows and river of "Upon Appleton House", the gently rising eminence of Bill-borow, and the garden itself. In this he is following very much the taste of his time - a time in which landscape painting was beginning to establish itself as an acceptable genre, and the country gentleman was beginning to take an aesthetic interest in his estate. H.V.S. and M.S. Ogden note that there was a great vogue for paintings of houses in a landscape in the later decades of the century:

The prominence of the prospect in such landscapes is thus partly owing to the conception of the esthetic unity of the house with its surroundings, and partly to the owner-patron's pride in a good prospect. An extensive view was regarded as an important attribute of a country house.

(English Taste in Landscape in the Seventeenth Century (Ann Arbor, 1955), p.160)

Marvell's "Upon Appleton House" belongs to this movement of taste. He begins the poem with an account of the house, and then lets his gaze wander slowly over the prospect, "While

with slow Eyes we these survey" (stanza XI). The prospect is a typical English scene: subdued, gentle, cultivated:

. . . fragrant Gardens, shaddy Woods,  
Deep Meadows, and transparent Floods.

Marvell cāims that this is delightful because it is "natural" - it is not a product of human art:

But Nature here hath been so free  
As if she said leave this to me.  
Art would more neatly have defac'd  
What she had laid so sweetly wast.  
(stanza X)

But the prospect contains gardens and meadows, signs of man's cultivation of nature. Even if nature has created this landscape herself, without man's interference, she has made it in the image of man's tame version of her. Nature is praised for being like Art only better. There is no suggestion that really wild, untamed scenery is better than nature brought to order by art.

Some critics (Emile Legouis and Victoria Sackville-West among them) have found hints of a more Romantic feeling for nature's wilder aspects in Marvell. The lines from stanza X of "Upon Appleton House" quoted above, and "The Mower against Cardens" are cited as evidence. Miss Sackville-West (Andrew Marvell (London, 1929)) quotes in particular the following passage:

'Tis all enforc'd; the Fountain and the Grot;  
While the sweet Fields do lye forgot:  
Where willing Nature does to all dispence

A wild and fragrant Innocence:  
 And Fauns and Faryes do the Meadows till,  
 More by their presence than their skill.

Miss Sackville-West detects in these two passages, "some appreciation of uncultivated nature" (page 42), and concludes that Marvell had an appetite "for something a little less sleek, a little less demure" (page 43) than was at all "proper" to the seventeenth century. But there is surely no suggestion, in either of the passages invoked as evidence, that Marvell enjoyed unruly scenery; that he is rejecting the artificiality of gardens in favour of a Romantic wild and savage landscape. What he values in the "sweet Fields" is the innocence - which has overtones of the gentle, mild simplicity of infancy. The words "sweet" and "fragrant" indicate this, and "wild", as Pierre Legouis has pointed out (see page 37 above), in the seventeenth century meant anything not made by man.<sup>1</sup> Its Romantic associations of passion or splendour or savagery are a later development. The "sweet Fields" are still cultivated, - under control: the "Fauns and Faryes" "till" them.

Apart from all this, it must be remembered that in "The

<sup>1</sup> Compare Montaigne's essay "Of the Caniballes": "They are even savage, as we call those fruits wilde, which nature of her selfe, and of her ordinarie progresse hath produced". (The Essayes of Michael Lord of Montaigne Translated by John Florio 1603 (Everyman's Library, 1910), Vol. I, p. 219)

Mower against Gardens", it is the Mower speaking, not Marvell. And he belongs to a tradition of rejecting "artificiality" in gardening, which includes Perdita's speeches in The Winter's Tale, and Randolph's "Upon Love fondly refus'd for Conscience Sake".

Marvell's nature never exists apart from man, as a phenomenon of value in itself. It is always seen as an adjunct of man and his civilization. This is in line with the classical treatment of nature, summed up by Curtius:

As in Homer, so in all the poetry of antiquity  
nature is always inhabited nature.

(European Literature and the Latin Middle Ages  
(New York, 1948), p.186)

In "Upon Appleton House", the house, its occupants, and their history, come first. Only then does the poem wander off into the gardens, and later into the meadows and the woods. Similarly in "Upon the Hill and Grove at Bill-borow", the hill and the trees are only worth describing insofar as they are associated with Fairfax, and can be used to symbolize his civilized and humane characteristics.

In "The Garden", the poet looks not for nature in itself, but for the state in which man and nature harmonize: It is the same in the Mower poems, "Bermudas", and "Little T.C.". Nature only has significance in terms of its fruitful relationship with man. Either it is seen as ministering to man; as in stanza VI of "Damon the Mower" or stanza V of "The Garden",

or it is seen as governed by man - by the Mower who cuts down its grasses, by the "skilful Gardner" who fashions it into sun-dials, or by Little T.C., as:

In the green Grass she loves to lie,  
And there with her fair Aspect tames  
The Wilder flow'rs, and gives them names:  
But only with the Roses playes.

Geoffrey Walton, in Metaphysical to Augustan (Cambridge, 1955), has picked out three main features of Marvell's nature:

For Marvell the country is a place of great natural beauty, filled with both traditional and scholarly associations, and also the background of a civilized community. (p.136)

It is the last feature that is relevant here: "the background of a civilized community"; the point being that it partakes of the civilization itself. In "Upon Appleton House" especially, the countryside is more than a passive background, however; it is more like a mirror, reflecting in its own rhythms and changes the movement of men and society. The garden at Nun Appleton is full of reminders of the Civil War in England, the Garden of the World; the meadows are like a battlefield; and throughout the poem, the metaphors used to describe the natural world and its processes are drawn from the world of human affairs, and so fuse the two worlds in one imaginative act. The relation between man and nature, the significance of one for the other, and ultimately the indistinguishability of each, are caught in the image of the river after the flood as a mirror:



Where all things gaze themselves, and doubt  
 If they be in it or without.  
 (stanza LXXX)

In Marvell's poetry, indeed, "background" is not really a suitable word. There is a merging of background and foreground; distance and perspective are often meaningless. Commenting on the way in which Marvell plunges the reader into the middle of the meadow grass in stanzas XLVII and XLVIII, Robert Ellrodt<sup>1</sup> remarks that the poet:

. . . nous donne l'expérience de la profondeur, de préférence à la vision distante de la hauteur.  
 (Les Poètes Métaphysiques Anglais (Paris, 1960), p.120)

At other times Marvell plays with the effects of distance, seeing the boats on the river apparently passing between the haycocks (stanza LV), or seeing the trees on the hill as a single mass of wood, but then banishing distance, and thrusting us into a close-up experience:

Dark all without it knits; within  
 It opens passable and thin;  
 And in as loose an order grows,  
 As the Corinthean Porticoes.  
 ("Upon Appleton House", stanza LXIV)

The other two features of Marvell's countryside which Walton mentions are worth looking at more closely: "a place

<sup>1</sup>

See also the quotation from this critic's work given at the bottom of page 57 above.

of great natural beauty", and "filled with both traditional and scholarly associations". The beauty is felt mainly as a number of separate items - the Howel climbing the tree, the thrush's eye, the heron teaching its young to fly, the green frogs wading, the parade of flowers, ripe apples dropping, etc. There is nothing extravagant - no mountains or spectacular waterfalls. Professor Nicolson comments on stanza IV of "Upon Appleton House":

To Marvell, as to other classical and Christian poets, beauty was, as Aristotle and the Fathers had taught, a mean between extremes, appealing to Reason that recognized proportion, limitation, and restraint as qualities imposed by God upon Nature when he brought order out of chaos.

(Mountain Gloom and Mountain Glory (New York, 1959), p.69)

As indicated above, a wide view is not given, except for the vague prospect of stanzas X and XI, and the picture of the cattle grazing in stanzas LVII and LVIII:

They feed so wide, so slowly move,  
As Constellations do above.

It is the sense of a countryside full of associations that helps to bring about the merging of the human and natural worlds. One feels that a landscape - Marvell's chosen landscape of rich meadows and meandering rivers - contains the Israelites crossing the Red Sea, the battlefields of the Civil War, the refuge of the Ark, and the pyramids of Egypt, just as truly as it contains tall grass,

reapers, wooded hills, and haycocks. Two realities - two kinds of reality - seem to interpenetrate each other, and to qualify and complete the truth which each holds.

But Marvell's natural scene is not just "scholarly" in that it is inseparably involved in its presentation with events and ideas from the past; it is also "traditional", in that many of its details are determined by previous attempts at describing or interpreting the world of nature. D.C.Allen (Image and Meaning (Baltimore, 1960), pp.127-8) has remarked upon the bareness of the gardens at Nun Appleton. They contain only three kinds of flower - the tulip, the pink, and the rose; no birds; and only the bee among insects. And Pierre Legouis notes that Marvell's choice of details is largely that of previous poetry:

With him the oak, the rose, the nightingale, the  
bee remain secure in their lordship of trees, flowers,  
birds, and insects.  
(Andrew Marvell (Oxford, 1965), p.55)

Marvell does, of course, have his less hackneyed details - his throstle's eye, his green frogs, his golden oranges, his Hewel and melons and kingfisher - but however vividly these are felt as real, independent objects, they rarely seem to be there for their own sake. However keen his senses, and his enjoyment of their perceptions, he passes on to a deeper enjoyment - that of the intellect, the wit, the comparing

fancy. M.F.E.Rainbow puts it well in the article on "Marvell and Nature", in The Durham University Journal, XXXVII (1945),

22-27:

The enthusiasm aroused in him is an intellectual enthusiasm, a delighted accepting of nature as a storehouse of fascinating possibilities. (p.23)

## **PART IV**

### **THE USE OF NATURAL DETAILS IN MARVELL'S POETRY**

## INTRODUCTORY

This study has so far been concerned with the background and ingredients of Marvell's poetry: with his attitudes to nature as a philosophical concept and as a physical reality; with the different kinds of natural details that occur in the poems, and their sources; and with the sort of impact they have on the reader, intellectual, moral, and sensuous. It is now time to look at these details in their context, and to see what they contribute to whole poems. How did Marvell use the many details that he gathered from the books and the countryside around him? What kind of relationship did he create between an object or fact from nature and the meaning of a complete poem? What sort of meaning can a natural detail carry, and how can it be made to carry a meaning at all?

Details taken from the world of nature can obviously be put to many uses by the poet. But one can distinguish three broad categories, based on the relationship between the natural detail and the total pattern and meaning of the poem in which it occurs.

a) The poet may begin with an idea or a state of mind or emotion, and seek for a natural detail that will illustrate or embody it. Donne, wishing to express the growth of his love, turns (unusually for him) to nature for an image:

Gentle love deeds, as blossomes on a bough,  
From loves awakened root do bud out now.

("Loves Growth", John Donne: Complete Poetry and Selected Prose, ed. John Hayward, The Nonesuch Library (London, 1955), p.24)

Keats resorts to natural imagery to describe Porphyro's complicated reaction as he thinks about Madeline:

Sudden a thought came like a full-blown rose,  
Flushing his brow, and in his pained heart  
Made purple riot.

("The Eve of St. Agnes", stanza XVI, The Poetical Works of John Keats, ed. H. Buxton Forman (London, 1908, reprinted 1940), p.218)

b) The poet may begin with a detail, or collection of details, and allow some significance or pattern to emerge, or be imposed upon it. Matthew Arnold's "Dover Beach" develops in this way. It begins with description:

The sea is calm to-night.  
The tide is full, the moon lies fair  
Upon the straits; etc.

By the end of this movement, an emotional response has been generated by the accumulation of details, and the poet has perceived in this natural scene, "The eternal note of sadness". But the moonlit beach holds more significance yet. To Sophocles it had symbolized:

The turbid ebb and flow  
Of human misery.

The Victorian poet can, "Find also in the sound a thought". To him, the "Sea of Faith" was once "at the full", but is now ebbing away:

Retreating, to the breath  
Of the night-wind, down the vast, edges drear  
And naked shingles of the world.<sup>1</sup>

This is a fairly common procedure among the Romantic poets, passing from some observed phenomenon to a wider significance: the West Wind becomes for Shelley a symbol first of the creative forces in the universe, and then of his own poetic energy; the song of the nightingale prompts Keats to a meditation about death and immortality. The seventeenth-century poets, more accustomed to an allegorical or emblematic way of thought than to a symbolic one, are more straightforward in their inferences. Herrick's "Divination by a Daffadill" is representative:

When a Daffadill I see,  
Hanging down his head t'wards me;  
Guesse I may, what I must be:  
First I shall decline my head;  
Secondly, I shall be dead;  
Lastly, safely buried.

(The Poetical Works of Robert Herrick, ed. F.W. Moorman (Oxford, 1915), p.38)

c) The poet may present a particular personal experience of nature through the details which are associated with it.

Edward Thomas's "Tall Nettles" is a poem of this kind:

Tall nettles cover up, as they have done  
These many springs, the rusty harrow, the plough  
Long worn out, and the roller made of stone:  
Only the elm butt tops the nettles now.

<sup>1</sup>

The quotations are from Matthew Arnold: Poetry and Prose, ed. John Bryson, The Reynard Library (London, 1954), pp.144-5.



This corner of the farmyard I like most:  
 As well as any bloom upon a flower  
 I like the dust on the nettles, never lost  
 Except to prove the sweetness of a shower.

(Collected Poems by Edward Thomas (London, 1961) p.70)

This leads to no stated significance, like Arnold's "Sea of Faith", but captures vividly the quality of Thomas's response to the scene.

Much of Wordsworth's poetry belongs to this category. For example, in Book XI of The Prelude, he describes a scene on a lonely crag, and explains how it continued to exert an influence on him:

And afterwards, the wind and sleety rain  
 And all the business of the elements,  
 The single sheep, and the one blasted tree,  
 And the bleak music of that old stone wall,  
 The noise of wood and water, and the mist  
 Which on the line of each of those two Roads  
 Advanced in such indisputable shapes,  
 All these were spectacles and sounds to which  
 I often would repair and thence would drink,  
 As at a fountain. (ll.376-385)

(The Prelude (Text of 1805), ed. Ernest De Selincourt, Revised Impression by Helen Darbishire (London, 1960), p.216)

This is not pure description. Wordsworth is not concerned with painting a picture for its own sake, but with recreating an experience which can only be expressed through the natural objects which stimulated it.

We may characterize these three kinds of use as:

a) Figurative, in which natural details are brought in to aid the expression of something else;

- b) Objective, in which natural details prompt reflection and interpretation;
- c) Subjective, in which poet and nature are involved in some unique personal relationship.

## Chapter VII

### FIGURATIVE USE OF NATURAL DETAILS

Before embarking upon an examination of Marvell's use of nature as a source for imagery, one must be aware of the status of nature in the poetry of the period. Until the eighteenth century, a natural detail rarely appears in poetry as a thing of interest in its own right. When Bowles praised Marvell for observing "little circumstances of rural nature", he was speaking out of a completely different tradition from that in which Marvell wrote. In the nineteenth century, emphasis was laid on accuracy and originality of perception; in the seventeenth century the important things were audacity in comparison and aptness in applying conventional analogies. In early poetry, nature, in the sense of "natura naturata", is almost never the subject of the poem. Attention is centred on the world of nature only in descriptive settings for narrative action or lyrical expression, or in extended similes, where interest is temporarily drawn away from the actual subject to the comparison that it amplifies it. Apart from such cases, the centre of poetry is man, and nature enters a poem in order to illustrate or embody some aspect of human affairs. "The proper study of mankind is man", said Pope, and scorned the idea of writing poems about the countryside as such: "a poem

consisting wholly of description would be like a meal made up of sauces". (A remark he made to Warton, quoted in Bonamy Dobrée's article, "Nature Poetry in the Early Eighteenth Century", Essays and Studies (1965), 13-33.)

John Ruskin, in Modern Painters, Part IV, Chapter XI, evokes a situation which prevailed for six thousand years. Man, he says, was a beautiful, warlike, god-fearing creature:

He took, however, very little interest in anything but what belonged to humanity; caring in no wise for the external world, except as it influenced his own destiny; honouring the lightning because it could strike him, the sea because it could drown him, the fountains because they gave him drink, and the grass because it yielded him seed; but utterly incapable of feeling any special happiness in the love of such things, or any earnest emotion about them, considered as separate from man; therefore giving no time to the study of them; - knowing little of herbs, except only which were hurtful and which healing; of stones, only which would glitter brightest in a crown, or last the longest in a wall: of the wild beasts, which were best for food, and which the stoutest quarry for the hunter; - thus spending only on the lower creatures and inanimate things his waste energy, his dullest thoughts, his most languid emotions, and reserving all acuter intellect for researches into his own nature and that of the gods; all his strength of will for the acquirement of political or moral power; all his sense of beauty for things immediately connected with his own person and life; and all his deep affections for domestic or divine companionship.

(New edition in small form, 1897, Vol.III, pp.157-8)

It seems then that, until the changes which began with the Renaissance, man had no interest in nature as a collection of separate objects worthy of study and contemplation in their own right. Insofar as he enjoyed the countryside, it

was as a place of peace, a refuge for "one who, long in populous city, pent" wished to escape to quiet and solitude. But more often, he turned to nature as a source of imagery, and in doing this he was working within a long tradition of established analogies. Many details had a significance firmly attached to them. In "A Glance at Theophila", prefixed to Benlowes's poem (1652), W.Dennie provides a list of trees, each with its characteristic quality or significance:

The chosen wood . . .  
 Was Laurel, that guards lightning frights,  
 The weeping Fir, sad Yew for funeral,  
 The lasting Oak, and joyful Vine,  
 The fruitful Fig-tree billets did consign;  
 The peaceful Olive with cleft Juniper did join.  
 (Minor Poets of the Caroline Period, ed. George  
 Saintsbury (Oxford, 1905), Vol.I)

Henry Hawkins has a similar roll-call of trees on page 14 of Partheneia Sacra (Rouen, 1633), and of flowers on page 11:

where (I say) are the Flowers of al Vertues: The  
 LILLIE of spotles and immaculate Chastitie, the ROSE  
 of Shamfastnes and bashful Modestie, the VIOLET of  
 Humilitie, the Marygold of Charitie, the Hiacinth of  
 Hope, the SUN-FLOWER of Contemplation, the Tulip of  
 Beautie and gracefulness.

Chaucer has lists of this kind, in The Parlement of Foules, presenting birds and trees in terms of their characters or uses; and Perdita distributes her flowers according to their significances.

A man of the Middle Ages or the Renaissance seldom seems to have looked lovingly or excitedly at a natural object, and

if he did, he rarely thought it worthwhile to record its details in words. Rather he looked through it to some meaning that lay behind it, or he saw it through the distorting spectacles of a literary or theological tradition. Rosemary Freeman quotes a Latin rhyme by Alain of Lille, from F.J.E. Raby's A History of Christian-Latin Poetry (1927, p.355):

Omnis mundi creatura  
quasi liber et pictura  
nobis est in speculum,  
nostrae vitae, nostrae sortis,  
nostri status, nostrae mortis  
fidele signaculum.  
(English Emblem Books (London, 1948), p.20)

This approach to nature was still general in the first half of the seventeenth century, but already the old system of analogies was beginning to break down, and the objects of nature were coming to be noticed for what they were, as well as being studied for what they meant. This development was probably due in part to the new approach of the scientists. The emphasis of man's questioning of the universe was changing from "What does it mean?" to "What is it like, and how does it work?" Leonardo da Vinci made accurate sketches of the movements of flowing water; Galileo studied the surface of the moon with his telescope. The authority of ancient writers, and the method of abstract reasoning from traditionally accepted "facts", gave way to Cartesian reasoning from first principles, and the direct appeal to the evidence of

things. T.H.White describes how the mediaeval Book of Beasts was superseded:

With the establishment of the Royal Society in 1662, direct observation and experiment had outmoded the old approach through the library shelves.

(The Book of Beasts (New York, 1954), p.236)

Thomas Sprat, in his History of the Royal Society (1667), sums up the aims of the new body:

They have endeavour'd to separate the Knowledge of Nature from the Colours of Rhetorick, the Devices of Fancy, or delightful Deceit of Fables. (p.62)

This insistence on the "Knowledge of Nature" through direct observation of natural phenomena carried over into the arts. Cowley offers advice to the painter in his poem "To the Royal Society":

Who from the Life, an exact Piece would make,  
Must not from others Work a Copy take . . .  
No, he before his sight must place  
The Natural and Living Face;  
The Real Object must command  
Each judgement of his Eye, and Motion of his Hand.  
(Poems, ed. A.R.Waller (Cambridge, 1905), p.450)

In time, the whole way of thinking and feeling about the natural world changed. As Rosemary Freeman says:

It became possible, and then customary, to observe the river independently of its significance, and individual experience broke free of the haunting presence of a perpetual memento mori.  
(English Emblem Books, p.2)

Bearing this situation in mind, we can return to the question of natural imagery, and the kind of meaning a poet can make it carry.

C. Day Lewis, in his Clark Lectures, The Poetic Image (Jonathan Cape Paperback ed., London, 1965), defines an image, at its simplest, as "a picture made out of words" (p. 18). If we add to this the idea that a poetic image exists not for itself, but as a means of expressing something else, we can say that the simplest function of an image is to provide a visually descriptive comparison. This simplest use of a natural detail is very uncommon in Marvell's work, and in seventeenth-century verse generally. There are a few possible examples from Marvell: in the "Second Song for the Marriage of Lord Fauconberg":

Not our Lambs own Fleeces are  
Curl'd so lovely as her Hair;

and in the last stanza of "Upon Appleton House":

But now the Salmon-Fishers moist  
Their Leathern Boats begin to hoist;  
And, like Antipodes in Shoes,  
Have shod their Heads in their Canoos.  
How Tortoise like, but not so slow,  
These rational Amphibii go?

But even in this witty picture of the Salmon-fishers, there are suggestions of a significance other than the merely visual. The topsy-turvy vision of the fishers as Antipodes and tortoises is emblematic of the strange transformations and inversions found elsewhere in the Appleton estate, where grasshoppers look down on men, fishes scale the stables, and man is turned upside down to discover that he is "an inverted tree".



Elsewhere, because of the view of all creation as a pattern of meanings, an object brought in to illustrate a visual fact carries with it some further non-visual comment. Many of Chaucer's images work in this way. When he described the hairs on the Miller's nose as, "Reed as the bristles of a sowes erys", he was not only providing a vivid physical comparison, but also linking the pilgrim with the pig, thus commenting on his character and manners.

Marvell's Nymph tells how she often looked for the Faun:

Yet could not. till it self would rise,  
Find it, although before mine Eyes.  
For, in the flaxen Lillies shade,  
It like a bank of Lillies laid.

The visual force of the simile is insisted upon by the context - "although before mine Eyes" - but the significance of the lily, and thus of the Faun, as a symbol of "spotles and immaculate Chastitie", is also invoked, as well as the associations of the Song of Songs. This dimension of the image is made explicit a few lines later:

And its pure virgin Limbs to fold  
In whitest sheets of Lillies cold.

More natural similes follow:

The Tears do come  
Sad, slowly dropping like a Gumme.  
So weeps the wounded Balsome: so  
The holy Frankincense doth flow.

The pictorial element is strong, capturing the movement of the tears, but the comparison expands to take in the signif-

icance of the balsom and the "holy" frankincense.

C. Day Lewis qualifies his original definition of an image:

The commonest type of image is the visual one; and many more images, which may seem un-sensuous, have still in fact some faint visual association adhering to them. But obviously an image may derive from and appeal to other senses than that of sight.  
(The Poetic Image, p.18)

The images that Marvell uses to describe the comforts of convent life, in the nun's speech in "Upon Appleton House", stanza XXIV, are both visual and tactile:

Where you may lye as chaste in Bed,  
As Pearls together billeted.  
All Night embracing Arm in Arm,  
Like Chrystal pure with Cotton warm.

But once again, the traditional significance of pearls<sup>1</sup> and crystal as emblems of purity adds a non-sensuous dimension to the image.

Marvell's poetry contains a number of extended similes along classical lines, like the rhetorical set-pieces found in the Aeneid and Paradise Lost. Only one of these aims at visual or other sensuous comparison. This is the description of the fleet in "The Last Instructions to a Painter":

So have I seen in April's bud, arise  
A Fleet of Clouds, sailing along the Skies:

<sup>1</sup>  
For example, in the fourteenth-century alliterative poem, The Pearl.

The liquid Region with their Squadrons fill'd,  
 The airy Sterns the Sun behind does guild;  
 And gentle Gales them steer, and Heaven drives,  
 When, all on sudden, their calm bosoms rive  
 With Thunder and Lightning from each armed Cloud;  
 Shepherds themselves in vain in bushes shrowd.  
 Such up the stream the Belgick Navy glides,  
 And ~~at~~ Sheerness unloads its stormy sides.  
 (11.551-560)

Although this is like a classical simile in form, it functions in a different way. A Miltonic simile turns aside from the main narrative, and presents a self-contained picture, taking its origin from some narrative fact, and returning to it at the end, but within its own formal limits maintaining a consistency of reference. For example, in Book I of Paradise Lost, Milton likens the fallen Satan to:

. . . that Sea-beast  
Leviathan, which God of all his works  
 Created hugest that swim th'Ocean stream:  
 Him haply slumbring on the Norway foam  
 The Pilot of some small night-founderd Skiff,  
 Deeming some Island, oft, as Sea-men tell,  
 With fixed Anchor in his skaly rinde  
 Moors by his side under the Lee, while Night  
 Invests the Sea, and wished Morn delays:  
 So strecht out huge in length the Arch-fiend lay.  
 (The Poetical Works of John Milton, ed. Helen  
 Darbishire (Oxford, 1952), Vol.I, p.10)

Nothing of the main narrative intrudes into this account of Leviathan. Its application is quite clear - both the size and deceptiveness of Satan are illustrated - but within its own confines there is no explicit reference to the narrative situation. In comparison, Marvell's simile is much less pure. It is, as it were, two-faced throughout. Clouds are used to

describe ships, but are themselves described in terms of ships. The clouds sail, have sterns, are guided and steered, are armed, and so on. Then, when attention has shifted back to the real fleet, the imagery breaks in again with the "stormy" sides. The two phenomena, natural and man-made, thus illuminate each other throughout. The two sides of the comparison are both presented in one statement, instead of being separate entities that can merely be seen to have features in common. This fusion of tenor and vehicle, this transformation of simile, and elsewhere of natural emblem or description, into virtual metaphor, is one of Marvell's most characteristic devices.

The next stage of our examination of Marvell's use of imagery may be introduced by some remarks made by Burke in his treatise on The Sublime and Beautiful. (All quotations are from the edition of J.T.Boulton (London, 1958)). In Part V, he examines the nature of words and their effect in poetry. He makes a rough division, for the purposes of his treatise, of words into three sorts: "aggregate words", like man, horse, tree, castle; "simple abstract words", like red, blue, round, square; and "compounded abstract words", like virtue, honour, persuasion, magistrate. The first two sorts are capable of "raising sensible images"; the latter is not:

Of these I am convinced, that whatever power they may have on the passions, they do not derive it from any

representation raised in the mind of the things for which they stand. (p.164)

But even though the aggregate and simple abstract words can act as sensuous counters, they very often do not:

But I am of opinion, that the most general effect even of these words, does not arise from their forming pictures of the several things they would represent in the imagination; because on a very diligent examination of my own mind, and getting others to consider theirs, I do not find that once in twenty times any such picture is formed, and when it is, there is most commonly a particular effort of the imagination for that purpose. (p.167)

He argues that words stand in the place of things, and that they excite not a mental reconstruction of the thing itself, but a set of attitudes towards it:

Certain it is, that the influence of most things on our passions is not so much from the things themselves, as from our opinions concerning them; and these again depend very much on the opinions of other men, conveyable for the most part by words only. (p.173)

His basic point is made clearly on page 170:

I know very well that the mind possesses a faculty of raising such images at pleasure; but then an act of the will is necessary to this; and in ordinary conversation or reading it is very rarely that any image at all is excited in the mind.

Since poetic images are expressed in words, we can extend Burke's discussion and say that many images taken from nature are limited to "our opinions concerning them", and make no appeal to the senses at all. This contradicts C. Day Lewis's suggestion, "that every image - even the most purely emotional or intellectual - has some trace of the sensuous in it" (pp.18-9)

As Burke argues, the mere naming of an object, an aggregate word, will not call up a picture of that object. The onus is on the poet, if he wants to excite a visual or other sensuous response, to force the reader to make "a particular effort of the imagination for that purpose". In the images from Marvell's poetry that we have discussed so far, the effort has been made. The insistence on the visual element in the lily image - "before mine Eyes"; and the physical relationship of things in the account of the Salmon-fishers - "Have shod their Heads in their Canoes"; these methods are similar to those described in Chapter IV.

But elsewhere, the sensuous elements are kept well out of the way, and only the significance is drawn upon. Particularly in the satires, images from nature derive from accepted facts or qualities, rather than from observed details.

"Truth's as Bold as a Lyon," says one of the speakers in "A Dialogue between the Two Horses", taking his simile from the traditional quality associated with the King of Beasts. The effect of this does not rely on any sense of the lion as a physical reality, but only on the common "opinion" concerning lions. A few more examples from the many available will suffice:

Blither than Hare that hath escap'd the Hounds.  
("The Last Instructions to a Painter", l.335)

Like the King-fisher chuseth to build in the Broom.  
 ("Clarindon's House-Warming", 1.7)

. . . purer then dissolved snow.  
 ("To his worthy Friend Doctor Witty", 1.18)

As th'Eagles Plumes from other birds divide.  
 ("Tom May's Death", 1.88)

Greedy as Kites has trust it up.  
 ("Upon Appleton House", stanza LI)

In all these images, a single property of the natural phenomenon is taken as illustrative of something else, and the phenomenon itself is ignored. This is the weakest kind of image, often passing unnoticed, often adding nothing substantial to the poem. As Burke said, "in ordinary conversation or reading it is very rarely that any image at all is excited in the mind". These images are basically like those in conversation, fetched from further afield sometimes, but making no more impact than the clichés of colloquial speech, such as "strong as an ox", or "quick as lightning". It is no surprise to find that most images of this kind in Marvell's work occur in the satires, where the poetic texture is much looser, and the meaning much less concentrated.

Turning back to Marvell's more characteristic and more interesting pieces, the next type of image to notice is the one which expresses the abstract in sensuous terms. The most striking example of this is the description of the soul in stanza VII of "The Garden":

Casting the Bodies Vest aside,  
 My Soul into the boughs does glide:  
 There like a Bird it sits, and sings,  
 Then, whets, and combs its silver Wings;  
 And, till prepar'd for longer flight,  
 Waves in its Plumes the various Light.

The comparison of the soul to a bird is traditional, and, as was shown in Chapter III, there are traceable sources for these lines. But the pictorial vividness is Marvell's own. Whatever the influences that combined to produce the image, the effect is of a precisely observed object. Marvell forces the reader to make the "particular effort of the imagination" that is necessary for the visual impact of the image to strike home. He seems to achieve this by means of the cluster of active verbs: glide, sit, whet, comb, wave; and the colour terms: silver and various light. It is probable that whereas the mere naming of an object will not, without effort, be accompanied by a mental image, the account of an object in precise motion, or of two objects in active relationship to each other, will result in the "raising of sensible images". (The sensuous impact of the simile in "The Gallery", for instance, depends more on the verb of the third line than on the descriptive adjectives:

Like to Aurora in the Dawn;  
 When in the East she slumb'ring lyes,  
 And stretches out her milky Thighs.)

Another point of interest in the Bird image is its relationship to the thing it is describing. The particular physical



details of the bird have no counterpart in the soul. It would be difficult to answer the question, "How does the soul "whet and comb its silver wings"?" The bird becomes a substitute for the soul, not exactly corresponding to it, but somehow able to express the quality of the soul more fully than any abstract exposition.<sup>1</sup>

Rather similar is the account of Cromwell in "An Horatian Ode":

So, when the Falcon high  
Falls heavy from the Sky,  
She, having kill'd, no more does search,  
But on the next green Bow to pearch;  
Where, when he first does lure,  
The Falckner has her sure.  
(11.91-96)

Here again a picture is deliberately called up, focussed in the verbs "falls heavy", "does search" and "pearch", and in the visual detail of the "green Bow". The statable parallels

<sup>1</sup>

Cf. J. Huizinga, The Waning of the Middle Ages, (Doubleday Anchor Books, New York, 1956), Chapter XV, p.203: "From the causal point of view, Symbolism appears as a sort of short-circuit of thought. Instead of looking for the relation between two things by following the hidden detours of their causal connections, thought makes a leap and discovers their relation, not in a connection of cause or effects, but in a connection of signification or finality. Such a connection will at once appear convincing, provided only that the two things have an essential quality in common which can be referred to a general value".

between the tenor (Cromwell's conduct of the Irish war) and the vehicle (the description of the falcon) are more obvious than in the preceding simile, but one detail - "the next green Bow" - belongs exclusively to the vehicle.

These two images have much in common with the classical simile mentioned above (see pages 231-233), except that they function more as symbols of what they amplify than as logical comparisons. Their peculiar power can be judged more clearly by setting them alongside Marvell's orthodox classical similes. In "The Loyall Scot", Charles's method of reconciling the Scots and the English is likened to that of a peasant controlling his bees:

Just see the prudent Husbandman who sees  
 The Idle Tumult of his factious bees,  
 The morning dewes and flowers Neglected grown,  
 The hive a comb case, every bee a drone,  
 Powders them ore till none discern their foes  
 And all themselves in meal and friendship close.  
 The Insect Kingdome streight begins to thrive  
 And each works hony for the Common Hive.  
 (ll.266-273)

The simile provides a little inset picture, complete in itself. The scene can be partly visualized through the verb "powders" and the references to the "meal". But these details have no visual counterpart in the original situation. One has to extract from the image the similarities in the state of affairs, not detailed correspondences.<sup>1</sup> Another example of

<sup>1</sup>Extra point is given to the comparison by the traditional view of the bees as an example of political organization.

this kind of extended simile is found in the "Poem upon the Death of O.C.", as part of the famous passage beginning, "I saw him dead":

Not much unlike the sacred oak, which shoots  
 To Heav'n its branches, and through earth its roots:  
 Whose spacious boughs are hung with trophies round,  
 And honour'd wreaths have oft the victour crown'd.  
 When angry Jove darts lightning through the aire,  
 At mortalls sins, nor his own plant will spare;  
 (It groanes, and bruises all below that stood  
 So many yeares the shelter of the wood.)  
 The tree ere while foreshortened to our view,  
 When fall'n shews taller yet than as it grew:  
 So shall his praise to after times encrease.  
 (ll.261-271)

The points of similarity between Cromwell and the fallen oak can be drawn from the simile logically, but there is not the inevitability of symbol. The application of the last two lines of the simile is made clear in the final line of the quotation; the reader assents intellectually; the comparison is "just". But it has not the imaginative force of the bird image in "The Garden", where the meaning is somehow involved in the image itself, not extracted from it.

A remarkable image taken from nature (via Suckling) to express abstract feelings occurs in "Daphnis and Chloe", stanza XXII:

Gentler times for Love are ment  
 Tho for parting pleasure strain  
 Gather Roses in the rain,  
 Wet themselves and spoil their Sent.

This image works in the same way as the rose image from The

Eve of St. Agnes quoted in the introduction to this section.

Both Keats and Marvell have an unusual emotional state to express, and both choose an image from physical nature as their means. The abstract is given sensuous attributes: Keats introduces visual elements - the full-blown rose, and the purple; Marvell introduces the senses of touch - "wet themselves" - and smell - "spoil their scent". A comparison with Marvell's source for this image will show how he has turned a fact from nature into an experience of nature. Suckling writes:

Gather  
 Wet roses in a wet and frowning hour:  
 They'll lose their sweets then, trust me they will, sir.

His handling of this weakens its sensuous impact. He introduces a personification - "a wet and frowning hour" - in which the possible "sensible image" in the word "wet" is nullified by the figurative "frowning". The loss of scent by the roses is presented as a passive fact through the verb "lose", which merely connects the subject, "they", with an attribute of the subject, "their sweets".

In Marvell's version, the wetness affects the persons involved - "wet themselves". It becomes a subjective experience of rain, rather than an objective account. And the loss of scent is presented as a result of action, the subject actively "spoiling" the roses' sweetness.

This may seem to be labouring a very minor point, but in fact the slight shift of emphasis that Marvell gives to this image is characteristic of his method of using natural details: the transformation of a fact culled from some literary source, into an experience of the senses. It may be this which gives to many of his details the impression that they have been directly observed from nature.

Another excellent instance of this process occurs in "The Coronet", where the traditional idea of the serpent as an agent of evil, or as Satan himself, is clad in a vividly sensuous form:

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'st debase with them,  
And mortal Glory, Heavens Diadem!  
But thou who only could'st the Serpent tame,  
Either his slipp'ry knots at once untie,  
And disentangle all his winding Snare:  
Or shatter too with him my curious frame.

This is the most consistent and powerful expression of abstract ideas through natural details in Marvell's poetry. The flowers and the serpent never cease to be sensuous realities - the serpent in particular, twining, speckled, slipp'ry, winding - and yet they embody the theme of the poem with complete conviction. There is no need to deduce the abstract from the physical, as one often has to do in allegory. The tenor and the vehicle are entirely involved with each other, and proceed together. Marvell's achievement is not to have created a new

symbol, but to have exploited the sensuous possibilities of a conventional one. He revivifies it by insisting on the physical object as well as the established significance. So many poems of the period merely appeal to the significance.<sup>1</sup>

The serpent-image in "The Coronet" is different from the other images discussed in this chapter, in that its function as an expression of something else is not openly stated. Only in the phrase "wreaths of Fame and Interest" does the abstract side of the metaphor break through explicitly. Marvell often relies on the accepted meaning attached to his details, as here, and uses them to evoke appropriate associations, without making a formal comparison. In stanza III of "The Gallery", he adds the idea of wedded bliss to the portrait of his mistress, by simply introducing the stock symbol of marriage:

And, at thy Feet, the wooing Doves  
Sit perfecting their harmless Loves.

Notice that the conventional item is made fresh by setting it in a definite context, "at thy Feet", and by making it act, "sit perfecting".

1

eg: Crashaw: "the Violets humble head" ("The Keeper", stanza 23, Poems, ed. L.C.Martin, 2nd. ed. (Oxford, 1957), p.83); "Spying at length the lillies snowy breasts,/ Or the pure sanguine roses cheekes, she rests" ("An Elegy on Mr. Christopher Hous", *ibid.*, p.404). Cowley: "As soon as two (alas!) together joyn'd,/ The Serpent made up Three" ("Of Solitude", Essays, ed. A.R.Galler (Cambridge, 1906), p.396).

The ivy, symbol of love and familiarity, is used in stanza LXXIV of "Upon Appleton House" to suggest the bond between the poet and nature, and again the conventional significance is reinforced by sensuous immediacy:

And Ivy, with familiar trails,  
Me licks, and clasps, and curles, and haies.

The Nymph's garden of lilies and roses has obvious symbolic overtones, and at the same time is presented as a real garden, full of real flowers; the "Elizium" that the Faun will retire to is filled, "With milk-white Lambs, and Ermins pure", showing that it is a refuge for innocence.

More interesting than these stock symbols are the passages in which details from nature are presented objectively, but nevertheless seem to carry some significance beyond themselves. C. Day Lewis recognizes this kind of image:

An epithet, a metaphor, a simile may create an image; or an image may be presented to us in a phrase or passage on the face of it purely descriptive, but conveying to our imagination something more than the accurate reflection of an external reality.

(The Poetic Image, p.18)

Take for example stanza II of "Damon the Mower", which gives an impression of the grasshopper, the frogs, and the snake. The traditional significance of the grasshopper and snake as symbols of improvidence<sup>1</sup> or wisdom, and the symbolic "green",

<sup>1</sup>

See Lovelace's and Cowley's poems called "The Grasshopper".

may or may not be relevant here. The frogs, the most striking and precise detail, certainly do not appear to fit into any pattern of traditional meaning. All three details appeal most strongly to the imagination as observed phenomena; any traditional significance is secondary. The verbs, as so often in Marvell, are the chief agents enforcing a pictorial, sensuous response: dance, wades, seeks out, glitters. But the colour-adjective "green" and the relationship between things - the brook and the Frog, the grasshopper and the shades - also contribute to the total effect. Even without the possible meanings suggested by traditional usage, this scene is much more than "the accurate reflection of an external reality". As shown in Chapter V, these details gain significance from their context. They generate their own meaning, in relation to each other and to the rest of the poem. And that meaning is neither conventional (like the serpent in "The Coronet"), nor logically derived (like the bee-simile in "The Loyall Scot"), nor the result of sensible likeness (like the curliness of the lambs' fleeces in the Marriage Song). Nor is it some vague, but inherent, mystery, such as Vaughan could perceive through the veil of a sensuous exterior. They have a once-for-all significance in the peculiar context of this poem. It is in this figurative use of natural details that Marvell is nearest to later poetry - poetry in which the significance of



a detail has to be made afresh by each new poetic context. Once, to recall Rosemary Freeman's remark, the river could be seen independently of its traditional meaning, "and individual experience broke free of the haunting presence of a perpetual memento mori", the poet had to find some way of making the river carry a meaning nevertheless. Marvell shows in this poem how apparently neutral objects can be forced into service as conveyers of meaning, of the "something more" that we expect from the details in a poem. One might generalize, and say that the meaning communicated by natural details in early poetry is brought to the poem by the details, and in modern poetry it is extorted from the details by the context.

It is possible that even the reference to "the hatching Thrastles shining Eye" gains a significance as more than one of the "little circumstances of rural nature" that a poet was expected to observe in the nineteenth century. D.C.Allen, in Image and Meaning (Baltimore, 1960), p.144, has noted the sequence of the bird-portraits in "Upon Appleton House": the love-lorn, solitary nightingale; the married stock-doves; the thrush hatching a family; the heron sending mature offspring into the world. The traditional meanings of the nightingale, the doves, and the stork<sup>1</sup> (which the heron is likened to) are

<sup>1</sup> See Whitney's A Choice of Emblems (1536), p.73, for the family affection of storks:

invoked, and that of the doves is insisted on in the description:

The Stock-doves, whose fair necks are grac'd  
With Nuptial Rings their Ensigns chast.  
(stanza LXVI)

The accepted symbolism of these three birds is reinforced by the contextual pattern, and the fresh, perhaps directly observed, detail of the hatching thrush's eye, is given a significance within this pattern.

One noteworthy fact that has emerged from this survey of Marvell's figurative use of natural details is that he hardly ever expresses inner feelings through them. The roses of "Daphnis and Chloe" and the serpent of "The Coronet" are exceptional. There is nothing like the extensive natural allegory of Vaughan's "Regeneration". Also worth remarking is the fact that, apart from the conversational similes of the "bold as a lion" variety, there are not a great number of formal images taken from nature to describe other areas of experience. Many of Marvell's more striking and bizarre images work in the other direction, taking some aspect of human affairs or

"See heare the Storke provides with tender care,  
And bringeth meate, unto her hatched broode:  
The like againe, for her they doe prepare,  
When shee is oulde, and can not get her foode".

Art, to amplify an account of nature. This in itself is an important pointer to the quality of Marvell's poetic inspiration. Much of his best and most characteristic poetry begins by looking directly at nature, and deriving human significance from what it sees. This brings us to our second category.

## Chapter VIII

### OBJECTIVE USE OF NATURAL DETAILS

The passages and poems of Marvell that fall into this category have more in common with Herrick's "Divination by a Daffadill" than with the examples from Arnold, Shelley, and Keats cited in the introduction to this section. For Marvell shared with Herrick the remains of the ancient world-view outlined in Chapter V. Nature was still for him the Divine Hieroglyph: the natural world was not only created by God, and therefore a revelation of God in the way that an artist's work is a revelation of himself; particular lessons also could be drawn from the phenomena of created nature. Ralph Austen, in the Preface to the Reader of his Treatise of Fruit-trees (Oxford, 1653), explains the assumptions that lie behind his work:

The World is a great Library, and Fruit-trees are some of the Bookes wherein we may read & see plainly the Attributes of God his Power, Wisdome, Goodnesse &c. and be Instructed and taught our duty towards him in many things even from Fruit-trees for as trees (in a Metaphoricall sense) are Bookes, so likewise in the same sense they have a Voyce, and speake plainly to us, and teach us many good lessons. (p.13)

Here we have the two kinds of knowledge that could be got from nature: the general revelation of "the Attributes of God", and the particular revelation of "many good lessons". Vaughan echoes the second of these in "The Starre":

Yet, seeing all things that subsist and be,  
 Have their Commissions from Divinitie,  
 And teach us duty, I will see

What man may learn from thee.  
 (Works, ed. L.C.Martin, 2nd. ed. (Oxford, 1957),  
 p. 489)

Two aspects of the use of nature as an embodiment of meaning can be distinguished. In Chapters III and VII, it was seen that many details were imbued with traditional significance, which would be immediately recognized by the reader without any need for formal interpretation. The quotations from Austen and Vaughan indicate another approach. The natural detail - the fruit-tree or the star - is to be examined by the writer in order to discover what it has to teach. The lesson drawn from it will depend not so much on its traditional significance, as on the ingenuity or perceptiveness of the human mind. Both these approaches preclude the modern emphasis on the thing "as in itself it really is". The first obscures the thing with a cloak of attached meaning; the second looks closely, but with a perceptiveness that seeks the underlying truth, rather than the physical characteristics. Indeed, the physical characteristics may even be regarded as a barrier that has to be by-passed if the truth is to be reached. D.W. Robertson, in his article, "The Doctrine of Charity in Mediaeval Gardens", Speculum, XXVI (1951), 24-49, outlines this attitude to nature:

Creation is an expression of God's infinite love, but

to see it there, one must set aside the shell, which is in itself the object of scientific investigation, to find the kernel beneath, the food of wisdom and, in accordance with mediaeval doctrine, the source of the only true beauty human eyes may see. (p.32)

An intellectual perception of analogies is more important to the mediaeval and Renaissance writer than any mere sensuous perception of material form.<sup>1</sup>

A few lines from Mildmay Fane's "Contemplatio Diurna" will illustrate how "man may learn" from natural details:

When we behold the Morning Dew  
Dissolve ith'rising Sun: What would it shew?  
But that a Sun to us did rise,  
Our Fathers hoary sin to Atomise.  
And when the Flowers display'd appear,  
To entertain the mounting Charettier:  
What would they speak in that fair dress?  
But Man's redemption out of wretchedness.  
(Otia Sacra (London, 1648), p.13)

Each detail had a particular truth to teach, and the relation of detail to detail was according to a design which embodied a discoverable meaning. Marvell's "Clorinda and Damon" is interesting in this respect, because in it conflicting meanings are assigned to a series of natural details by the pagan

1

Compare the tendency in modern poetry to seek in nature emotional truth, not moral or intellectual conclusions. This shifts the emphasis on to the poet, and the quality of his responses, and leads to uncertainty as to the validity of the truth discovered: see Keats's "Ode to a Nightingale" and Wordsworth's "Tintern Abbey".

Clorinda and the Christian Damon.<sup>1</sup> The shepherdess offers pastoral delights to the shepherd:

I have a grassy Scutcheon spy'd,  
Where Flora blazons all her pride.  
The Grass I aim to feast thy Sheep:  
The Flow'rs I for thy Temples keep.

Damon rejects these pleasures by insisting on the Christian significance of the details: "Grass withers; and the Flow'rs too fade". What are symbols of delight to the one, are symbols of mortality and vanity to the other.

Clorinda points eagerly to "that unfrequented Cave", seeing it as "Loves Shrine"; Damon avoids it as "Virtue's Grave". To the pagan, in a natural state, it is a refuge from "the Sun"; to the Christian, in a state of grace, the sun suggests "Heaven's Eye".

Clorinda responds only to the sensuous exterior of things:

Near this, a Fountaines liquid Bell  
Tinkles within the concave Shell.

Damon sees through the object to its significance. The fountain is there, like all created things, "to teach us duty":

Might a Soul bath there and be Clean,  
Or slake its Drought?

<sup>1</sup> For the source of these remarks see John D. Rosenberg's "Marvell and the Christian Idiom", Boston University Studies in English, IV, No.3 (1960), 152-161.

The two speakers join in the concluding Chorus, which sees all creation as an expression of God:

Of Pan the flowry Pastures sing,  
Caves eccho, and the Fountains ring.

This method of presenting a detail or a set of objects, and extracting a moral significance point by point, lies behind that peculiarly Renaissance art-form, the emblem. The emblem proper results from a marrying of literary and graphic expression: a set of verses is provided to explain the meaning of a picture. It is difficult to generalize about the relationship between the picture and its interpretation. Sometimes the picture was devised to express an already existent idea or motto. Mario Praz, in Studies in Seventeenth Century Imagery, 2nd. ed. (Roma, 1964), describes the process:

Since ~~every~~ poetical image contains a potential emblem, one can understand why emblems were the characteristic of that century in which the tendency to images reached its climax, the seventeenth century. In need as he was of certainties of the senses, the seventeenth-century man did not stop at the purely fantastic cherishing of the image: he wanted to externalize it, to transpose it into a hieroglyph, an emblem. He took delight in driving home the word by the addition of a plastic representation. (p.15)

This often resulted in a complicated and unrealistic collection of objects, each having significance only insofar as it was equated with an idea in the verse.

Sometimes, however, the process was reversed, and the image provided a starting-point for the verbal reflection.



This was the case with Whitney, whose A Choice of Emblems (1586) used plates taken from Italian and French emblem books by Alciati, Hadrian Junius, Sambucus and Paradin, but did more than simply translate the morals.<sup>1</sup> Sometimes, though this is rare in emblems proper, there was no need for a contrived literary picture, since a natural object suggested a moral in itself. The sun-flower, a favourite of the emblematisers, is an obvious example. The sun, by ancient tradition, represented God, and a flower which constantly turned its face towards the source of light was clearly set there to teach a moral.

It is this aspect of the art of emblems which is relevant to a study of Marvell's use of natural details. The methods of the emblem books were gradually absorbed by poetry, and the graphic element was replaced by words. Details from nature were cited or described, as in Fane's "Contemplatio Diurna" and Herrick's Daffadill poem, and then a moral was drawn from them point by point. In other words, the poet tends to start with a natural detail, and let ideas flow from it. Henry Hawkins's Partheneia Sacra (Rouen, 1633) belongs to this development of the emblem: it is an emblem

<sup>1</sup> See Rosemary Freeman, English Emblem Books (London, 1948), p.56.

book in which the pictures and verses are secondary. The bulk of it consists of prose descriptions and meditations on these. He explains his procedure at the outset:

. . . as the manner is of such as enter into a Garden, to glance at first thereon with a light regard, then to reflect upon it with a better heed, to find some gentle mysterie or conceipt upon it, to some use or other; and then liking it better, to review the same againe, and so to make a Survey thereupon to the same use. (pp.2-3)

Hawkins's descriptions, of flowers, trees, birds, an entire landscape, are precise and colourful, but his aim was not accuracy for its own sake. He is careful to draw significance from the minutest sensuous detail. His purpose in the descriptive passages is to bring the object clearly before the reader, so that interpretation has something to work on. A brief quotation will illustrate the kind of relationship that Hawkins sets up between the detail and its "gentle mysterie or conceipt":

The Palme heerin is differing from other trees, in that the other are grosse beneath, and grow slenderer upwards; while the Palme of the contrarie, is slender beneath, and bigger and grosser, the higher it goes: So were the thoughts of the blessed Virgin, the true Palme indeed, as poor and slender downe to the earthwards, but substantial and solid up to the Heavens.  
(p.158)

This exhibits the essential weakness in the emblematic method: the two sides - object and significance - are kept apart. The object fails to become an imaginative symbol of

something in the moral realm.<sup>1</sup> The gap is bridged only by the intellect; no spark of sympathy is struck which can illuminate both worlds, and reveal them as aspects of a single truth. Rosemary Freeman regards this failure as due to:

. . . the fact that the images of the emblem writers were almost wholly visual . . . each detail in them is a pictorial detail, to be seen by the eye, and this inevitably limits the scope of the comparison.  
(op. cit., pp.28-29)

Marvell, like many of the poets of the period, absorbed something of the method of the emblem-writers. J.B. Leishman picked out the unusual poem, "The Unfortunate Lover", as:

. . . extraordinary in degree rather than kind, and as simply carrying to an unprecedented extreme that emblematisation of metaphor which is one of the distinguishing characteristics of much seventeenth-century poetry, especially English.  
(The Art of Marvell's Poetry, p.34)

But this poem is an exception. Where he used natural details as vehicles for meaning, Marvell found various means for

<sup>1</sup> Cf. these lines from Whitney's A Choice of Emblems, p.33:  
"The greedie Sowe so longe as shee doth finde  
Some scatteringes left, of harvest under foote  
She forward goes and never lookes behinde,  
While anie sweete remayneth for to roote,  
Even soe wee shoulde, to goodnes everie daie  
Still further passe, and not to turne nor staine".  
Here, there is a ludicrous discrepancy between the emblem and its lesson. We are asked to accept pig-food as a symbol of goodness, and the "greedie Sowe" as an example of man pursuing a good life.

escaping the danger referred to above. Stanzas LXVIII-LXX of "Upon Appleton House" contain Marvell's nearest approach to orthodox emblem. The first two stanzas present a striking and apparently accurate portrait of the woodpecker:

He walks still upright from the Root,  
Meas'ring the Timber with his Foot;  
And all the way, to keep it glean,  
Doth from the Bark the Wood-moths glean.

He is seen examining each tree, and heard "tinkling with his Beak". It is not until the last couplet of stanza LXIX that an overt comment is made:

Who could have thought the tallest Oak  
Should fall by such a feeble Strok'!

This naturalistic moral can be deduced quite easily from the description. The explanation of the cause of the tree's rottenness - "a Traitor-worm" - leads just as easily to a religious moral:

As first our Flesh corrupt within  
Tempte impotent and bashful Sin.

The method is basically that of the emblem. But there are vital differences. The interpretation is brief, and Marvell, unlike Hawkins, does not extract a meaning from every detail. This is because the significance is inherent in the presentation of the woodpecker. The bird removes the insects from the bark, "to keep it clean". This is not literally true. It gleans the wood-moths as food, for its own benefit, not the tree's. Moral overtones creep into the description, as the

hewel:

. . . examines well  
Which fit to stand and which to fell.

He preserves "the good", but bores through the "tainted Side" of the "hollow Oak". Long before any explicit comment is made, the hewel is felt as a moral force testing the quality of the things around him. He is more of a symbol than an emblem.

But there is more to these three stanzas than is apparent when they are discussed in isolation. They form part of the experiences which go to make the poet an "easie Philosopher", and as such are part of "Natures mystick Book". They are also part of the whole poem, and may be seen in the light of the earlier references to contemporary events. The insistence on political terms, "Traitor-worm", "Treason's Punishment", is likely to be significant beyond the context of the three hewel stanzas; and the traditional rank of the oak as a royal tree<sup>1</sup> is suggestive, especially as it is stressed that this is the tallest oak. The image running through "hacks", "the Ax", and "feeble Strok" would also suggest recent history to contemporary readers, especially to Fairfax, who had opposed the beheading of Charles. As so often, it is dangerous to allegorize too far in reading Marvell's poetry, to seek some consistent

<sup>1</sup> See Kitty Scoular, Natural Magic (Oxford, 1965), p.185: "The oak, which stood popularly for kingship, is itself executed for harbouring the traitor-worm".

correspondence of natural detail and underlying meaning (some have equated the worm with Archbishop Laud). But some allusion to the death of Charles I is surely intended.

In these stanzas, Marvell has developed an orthodox emblem, with its morals about "our Flesh corrupt within" and the sudden fall of the great; has given an example of how to "read in Natures mystick Book"; and has made a veiled reference to recent events in English history, relating, as he was to do more explicitly in "An Horatian Ode", political developments to the laws of nature.

Marvell has succeeded in overcoming the weakness of emblem. He has contrived to express meaning through description, instead of drawing a meaning from it in an arbitrary way, as Hawkins did with the palm-tree.

"Upon the Hill and Grove at Bill-borow" works basically in the emblem manner. It begins with an injunction to "see" the object from which the poem is to be derived:

See how the arched Earth does here  
Rise in a perfect Hemisphere!  
The stiffest Compass could not strike  
A Line more circular and like.

This is not an accurate description, but idealisation, or more properly conceptualisation, of a scene. Marvell is deliberately falsifying reality in order to make his details carry meaning, as he misinterpreted the reason for the hewer's search for wood-moths.

In stanza III, he continues with his "description":

See what a soft access and wide  
Lyes open to its grassy side . . .  
See then how courteous it ascends,  
And all the way it rises bends;  
Not for it self the height does gain,  
But only strives to raise the Plain.

Once more this is not direct description. The hill is given human motives of courtesy, humility, generosity, and so on. The passive fact, that it slopes gently, is transformed into an active endeavour to be helpful, "But only strives to raise the Plain".

Between these two stanzas is one which draws the moral from the physical scene, adjuring the symbolically unjust, proud, and ambitious mountains to:

Learn here those humble steps to tread,  
Which to securer Glory lead.

In the rest of the poem, there is very little reference to any physical feature of the landscape, and the few descriptive phrases that occur are couched in moral terms. In stanza IV, the hill, "in unenvy'd Greatness stands"; in stanza V:

Upon its crest this Mountain grave  
A Plump of aged Trees does wave;

in stanza VIII:

Nor to the winds uncertain gust,  
Their prudent Heads too far intrust.

The key words in each of these extracts are the moral, evaluative ones: unenvy'd, grave, prudent. Pierre Legouis' general

comment is especially true of this poem: "Our poet is readily content with traditional adjectives, moral rather than physical" (Andrew Marvell, p.54).

The emblematic and traditional values of the natural details are summed up in the final couplet:<sup>1</sup>

Nor he the Hills without the Groves,  
Nor Height but with Retirement loves.

Professor Røstvig describes the poetic technique in this poem as "an exploitation of the landscape for moral purposes" (see page 53 above). She claims that this is new in English poetry, being introduced by Denham in "Cooper's Hill", but first developed by the Polish poet, Casimire Sarbielewski, out of a fusion of Horatian and Platonic elements:

With this generation, therefore, came the joint birth of the loco-descriptive poem in which Nature is invested with moral qualities, and of the more mystic garden poem in which Nature is invested with spiritual qualities. Neither type of poem could have been conceived if the attitude towards nature had remained uninfluenced by the strong mystic or semi-mystic currents of the first half of the seventeenth century. It is the curious mixture of a Horatian rationalism with a transcendent interpretation of nature which

<sup>1</sup> Kitty Scoular, discussing this poem and Denham's "Cooper's Hill", remarks: "The emblematic significance of hill and valley and the contrast between them were sixteenth-century commonplaces of the sort which some seventeenth-century poets still found useful and important when they came to write about landscape" (Natural Magic, p.154).



marks the rural retirement-poetry of Marvell's generation, so that even a simple description of local scenes becomes charged with metaphysical or moral implications.

(The Happy Man, p.239)

This poem, then, although it has formal similarities to the emblem (a moral lesson is derived from the description of physical objects), is unlike the emblem, in that part of the lesson is conveyed through the description itself. The weakness of emblem - that the object and meaning are only arbitrarily connected - is avoided; but a new weakness appears - the landscape is lost sight of in the fog of moralizing. The Rev. George Gilfillan, introducing Denham's poems in 1862, may put the case against Marvell and others:

The great danger in this class of poems, is lest imported sentiment and historical reminiscence should overpower the living lineaments, and all but blot out the memory of the actual landscape. And so it is to some extent in 'Cooper's Hill', the scene beheld from which is speedily lost in a torrent of political reflection and moralising.

(The Poetical Works of Edmund Waller and Sir John Denham, text ed. Charles Cowden Clarke (Edinburgh, 1862), p.210)

Here we have perhaps the central dilemma of the poet who wishes to extract meaning from natural details, as opposed to conveying meaning through them. How can he maintain the integrity of both the object and its perceived significance, and at the same time produce a total impression that will be convincing to the imagination? It may be interesting to see what a young contemporary poet has to say of this problem.

Jon Silkin has deliberately set out, in a series of "Flower" poems, to integrate the object and the meaning. He explains his intentions in a note:

The method is to take one particular species of flower, and to look at the flower quite closely. I also try to characterize the life and process of the flower and, in making all three substantial, to suggest certain correspondences with human types and situations. Yet although the poems are not only, and not simply, about flowers, they are not only or simply about human beings and their predicaments. They hover tentatively between the two, although whatever object or situation they temporarily absent themselves to they never lose sight of the flower. I am trying to find some common denominator that will pull together these two kinds of life.  
(Nature with Man (London, 1965), p.54)

His flowers are the domestic and wild ones found competing and co-existing in a garden. He goes on:

I see the garden, in fact, as a kind of human bestiary, containing in the several plants earlier developed and anticipatory examples of human types and situations.  
(p.54)

In a later paragraph, he rejects the attempt to describe simply for the sake of describing, and the older, purely allegorical view which ignores the individuality of natural objects as themselves:

To remove nature, to isolate it from human nature and then write about it, is an extremity as unproductive as the one which sees all nature as a (symbolic) version of man. Man is a part of nature and to isolate one from the other, or to slide the one over the other, is to miss either the (related) complexity of both or the 'solidity' of each. The two are contiguous; and that is what I'm trying to get at in the 'flower' poems. If seen as contiguous, they can be seen as two components of a whole capable of mutual enrichment. (p.56)

We have seen that the symbolic view of nature predominates in poems like "Cooper's Hill" and "Upon the Hill and Grove at Bill-borow", to such an extent that the "solidity" of the details of nature is lost. The sliding of one over the other is typical of emblem literature, where both sides can be "solid" - the description of the palm-tree, and the analysis of the Virgin Mary's thoughts - but where the sense of a "whole" is absent, and there is no "mutual enrichment", no "common denominator that will pull together" the two perceptions.

Marvell's hewel stanzas seem to do the kind of thing Silkin is aiming at, as the hewel is already felt as a moral force before any explicit comparison is made to the human world. And when Marvell does "temporarily absent himself" to the realm of moral comment, the hewel is not lost sight of. A "common denominator" is found in a set of natural and moral values. Corruption can rot tree, man, and state alike, and we must accept that the process of cleansing may need to sweep away the good with the bad:

While the Oake seems to fall content,  
Viewing the Treason's Punishment.

In his account of the gardens at Nun Appleton, stanzas XXXVI-XLIII, Marvell is even more successful in achieving the kind of wholeness of impact that Silkin considers desirable. He manages to unite the "things" of the garden with the "types

and situations" of the human world, and while maintaining the "solidity" of each, expresses the "related complexity of both".

At the outset, the basic metaphor is stated:

But laid these Gardens out in sport  
In the just Figure of a Fort.

This brings the natural and human together, the two elements of the mutually enriching relationship. The significance of the "five Bastions" is related specifically to the five senses, and the succeeding stanzas integrate the original conceit with the description by dwelling on sensuous aspects of the scene. The senses are attacked by the sight and smell of the flowers, and by the sting of the bee, so the bastions are demonstrated to be necessary. The simile is not just a witty irrelevancy suggested by the number five.

Stanza XXXVII evokes four of the five senses: sight - the colours; sound - the humming; touch - the dankness of the dew; smell - the odours. Each detail partakes completely of the two worlds, of nature and of military man. The "Colours of the Day" are equally the dawn sky and the regimental flags; the bee hums, and drums; the flowers are like waking soldiers unfurling their ensigns, as well as waking plants opening their petals; the pun on "Pan" allows it to touch both sides, as the God of Nature, and as "the part of the musket-lock which held the priming" (note by Margoliouth); and the flask can be either a military implement, or a container for, among

other things, perfume. The technique of this stanza is that of a series of extended puns.

Stanza XXXVIII continues the double-reference of the metaphor, as the flowers let fly "fragrant Volleys", and press a "charge".

In stanza XXXIX, the senses mingle, and ear, eye and nose become involved in the shots of the flower-soldiers:

Well shot ye Firemen! Oh how sweet,  
And round your equal Fires do meet;  
Whose shrill report no Ear can tell,  
But Ecchoes to the Eye and smell.

The flowers on parade, in regiments, under various colours, are fully flowers - the description helps us to visualize them - as well as being fully presented as soldiers:

See how the Flow'rs, as at Parade,  
Under their Colours stand displaid:  
Each Regiment in order grows,  
That of the Tulip Pinke and Rose.

In stanza XL, the description of the stars as a "vigilant Patroul", walking "round about the Pole", is acceptable as an account of the movements of the heavens; the epithet "vigilant" is just right, and anticipatory of Keats's Bright Star, which watched "with eternal lids apart".

The ensign image has been remarked on earlier (see page 163 above) as a brilliantly precise picture of the shape of a tulip plant.

The flower is literally a hut for the bee that enters it,

as well as being a hut in the terms of the military conceit. Notice the form of the line, "Each Bee as Sentinel is shut". This is not a comparison, but a statement of an observable fact that has been wittily interpreted. The bee is not "like" a sentinel, but is in the flower "as Sentinel".

The important thing about this description is that Marvell is not extracting significances from a natural scene as an emblematisit would. Nor is he imposing a set of private meanings as a Romantic poet might. The two terms of the metaphor contribute equally and fully to the description. They enrich each other mutually, both gaining in significance from the imaginative contact.<sup>1</sup> The same facts occur in two realms. The garden has been, in Silkin's phrases, "a kind of human bestiary, containing in the several plants earlier developed and anticipatory examples of human types and situations".

The influence of the emblem method can still be felt in this part of the poem, as Marvell moves from the description

<sup>1</sup> See W.K.Wimsatt's "Symbol and Metaphor", from The Verbal Icon (3rd. Noonday Press Paperbound ed., 1962): "In understanding imaginative metaphor we are often required to consider not how B (vehicle) explains A (tenor), but what meanings are generated when A and B are confronted or seen each in the light of the other". (p.127)

of the Nun Appleton gardens to a meditation about the woes of England, "The Garden of the World ere while"; and thence to a lost Golden Age:

When Gardens only had their Towrs,  
And all the Garrisons were Flowrs,  
When Roses only Arms might bear,  
And Men did rosie Garlands wear?  
Tulips, in several Colours barr'd,  
Were then the Switzers of our Guard.  
(stanza XLII)

But these steps towards interpretation do not appear arbitrary, because the original description has already prepared the way for them imaginatively.

One more poem of Marvell's has close affinities with the emblem: "On a Drop of Dew". It begins, like the Bill-bobow poem, with an injunction to "see": "See how the Orient Dew" etc. The first part of the poem provides the "picture" from which the significance is to be drawn. But, as in Marvell's other emblem-like poems, the moral lessons or parallels are already evident in the description itself. In this, more than in any other of the poems except "The Coronet", the moral or spiritual and the physical unite, and the terms that are properly reserved for one or other become interchangeable. We see the drop of dew "gazing back upon the skies"; "restless"; "unsecure"; "Trembling lest it grow impure". And we see the soul "Dark beneath, but bright above"; "recollecting its own Light"; a thing which "Shuns the sweat leaves and blossoms green".

There is complete identification, as shown in Chapter V (see page 175 above). The descriptive section already contains part of the interpretation of the emblem, and the formally interpretative section continues to amplify the physical description.

So far we have considered the passages and poems which have affinities with the emblem tradition, which depend for part of their meaning on traditional material, like the hollow oak, the contrast between hill and plain, the comparison of gardens and soldiering. But Marvell also has other methods of conveying meaning through what is ostensibly description. In the works of a poet who has been praised as a forerunner of the Romantics, and as an observant lover of nature, there are remarkably few passages that even appear to be pure description. We have seen that the details in stanza II of "Damon the Mower" and the bird stanzas of "Upon Appleton House" are not primarily items of description; they fit into and contribute to a pattern of meaning, and it is as conveyers of meaning that they are poetically important. The same is true of the vivid detail from "The Mower's Song":

That not one Blade of Grass you spy'd,  
But had a Flower on either side.

This couplet is not there for its prettiness or its accuracy as a piece of observation, but as an example of nature's lack of sympathy with man: while he sorrows, the meadows grow "more



luxuriant".

"Bermudas", in spite of its accumulation of sensuous detail, is not descriptive, in purpose or effect. Only two couplets compel the reader to produce a mental image of the things mentioned:

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 shows.

And even here the purpose is not exclusively, or even chiefly, descriptive. The associations of the image-words "golden" and "Jewels" are as important as their visual evocativeness. The whole poem aims at conveying an impression of the natural wealth of the islands. The spring is "eternal", and "enamells every thing"; the fowls come "daily"; the pine-apples are "plants of such a pride"; God "stores" the land with cedars; the Gospel is a "Pearl". It is to this sense of overwhelming abundance and richness that the "golden" oranges and the "Jewels" of the pomegranates contribute, not to the representation of a scene. The relationship between God and nature and man is what matters, not the characteristics of any individual natural detail:

He makes the Figs our mouths to meet;  
And throws the Melons at our feet.

The same can be said of the famous fifth stanza of "The Garden", which again is not description, but a hyperbolical

fantasy in which nature thrusts her riches upon man. It is extremely sensuous, but not a sensuous description. The details are part of an experience, not part of a scene.<sup>1</sup>

Of all Marvell's poems, "Upon Appleton House" is the one most firmly tied to a particular set of natural details: those making up the gardens and estate at Nun Appleton. The poem passes from the house itself, to the gardens, to the fields, to the woods, and back to the river-meadows; and moves from dawn to nightfall. But hardly any of the descriptions, which form the bulk of the poem, are direct, because Marvell's purpose is not photographic. He takes what is "there", and uses it as a starting-point for witty elaborations. Pierre Legouis has some useful remarks on this process:

Nature in his poetry is a metaphysical Nature sprung from the brain rather than the senses. To speak more precisely, as soon as the senses have made their harvest, now plentiful now scanty, the brain begins its task: out of its object it abstracts the essential

<sup>1</sup>

A few remarks from Burke's discussion of the sensuous power of words are interesting as an adjunct to the foregoing: "In reality poetry and rhetoric do not succeed in exact description so well as painting does; their business is to affect rather by sympathy than imitation; to display rather the effect of things on the mind of the speaker, or of others, than to present a clear idea of the things themselves. This is their most extensive province, and that in which they succeed the best". (A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful, ed. J.T.Boulton (London, 1958), p.172)

quality, which it substitutes for the object and on which it works, making it live and shine anew by dint of unexpected metaphors and of comparisons that suddenly bring to light unsuspected analogies.

(Andrew Marvell, p.58)

Take, for example, stanza LVIII, which describes the cattle grazing in the meadows of the estate:

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 lye.  
They feed so wide, so slowly move,  
As Constellations do above.

The physical reality has been established in the previous stanza:

The Villagers in common chase  
Their Cattle, which it [the grass] closer rase;  
And what below the Sith increast  
Is pincht yet nearer by the Beast.

From this fact, the "harvest" of the senses, Marvell has abstracted "the essential quality" - a collection of tiny figures against a flat background - and worked upon this, producing bizarre similes. The four analogies are not introduced to aid the description of the cattle; they are there because it is delightful to notice such similarities between widely differing things, and because such similarities are a fragment of the truth. It is worth noting that although wit is the principal agent in producing these similes, it depends on observation: the wit is visual. Donne's or Herbert's wit is almost always logical or dialectical, concerned with, and

originating in, ideas rather than sensuous perception.<sup>1</sup>

The same sort of visual aptness at the outset is found in stanza LV, where the mown fields are described:

When after this 'tis pil'd in Cocks,  
Like a calm Sea it shews the Rocks:  
We wondring in the River near  
How Boats among them safely steer.  
Or, like the Desert Memphis Sand,  
Short Pyramids of Hay do stand.  
And such the Roman Camps do rise  
In Hills for Soldiers Obsequies.

This begins with a particular item in the landscape: the hay piled in cocks. Then follows the simile of the sea and rocks, which is a legitimate visual parallel, especially as it is made more plausible by the actual view of boats on the nearby river, which, by a trick of perspective, seem to be sailing between the cocks/rocks. The rest of the stanza rings the

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Cf. Robert Ellrodt: "Il n'est point de poète, avant Keats, qui ait exprimé plus sensuellement les jouissances que la nature procure aux sens. Que Marvell décrive la nature à la manière des poètes baroques ou précieux, en empruntant comparaisons et métaphores au monde artificiel créé par l'homme, qu'il compare l'herbe humide à de la soie verte fraîchement lavée ou l'étendue lisse d'un pré fauché à la toile vierge d'un peintre, cela n'empêche point que la sensation soit l'objet de son art et la source de plaisir poétique. Et que la sensation souvent s'intellectualise en conceit ne change rien à l'affaire. Décrivant le domaine de Nunappleton, Marvell dépense son esprit à broder des fantaisies intellectuelles sur les objets de sa contemplation, alors que Donne et Herbert font appel à la sensation à seule fin de signifier concrètement l'idée ou le sentiment". (Les Poètes Métaphysiques Anglais, II, p.150)

changes on the abstract idea of a series of protuberances rising from a flat area. The comparisons to the pyramids and Roman burial mounds are not really intended to help us to visualize the scene in the hay-field. For Marvell is not interested in describing, but in exploring the Nun Appleton estate, and finding in it an epitome of the greater world. By means of imagery and conceit, he can absorb into his account of Fairfax's lands many aspects of the macrocosm and the body politic, of history and theology. In stanza LVIII he incorporates in his vision of the cattle the infinitely great - the constellations - and the infinitesimally small - the fleas. In stanza LV, the reference to the sea connects with the previous analogy of the uncut grass dividing before the mowers as the Red Sea opening to let the Israelites escape. In stanza LIX, the river floods:

And makes the Meadow truly be  
(What it but seem'd before) a Sea.

What is bizarre analogy one minute, is revealed as truth the next.

The monuments of the past - the pyramids and Roman camps - are seen as "Soldiers Obsequies", suggesting the outcome of the Civil War that was fought out in the process of mowing in stanzas L-LIV. The similes also work in reverse, and recognize that the relics of past civilizations are part of the same transient scheme as the hay.

When Marvell rejects "the World" at the end of the poem, along with its "Gulfes, Deserts, Precipices, Stone", he adds: "Your lesser World contains the same". And it is through the poem's imagery that we understand how an English estate can contain everything. The desert is that of stanza LV, and the stone may be the pyramids or rocks; the gulphs and precipices look back to stanza XLVII, with its "Abyss" of "unfathomable Grass", and its "Precipices tall of the green spir's".

The imagery of the final stanza could serve as an emblem of the entire poem. As Kitty Scoular has pointed out:

The world consists of one shell within another: over all is 'the dark Hemisphere', and within are men and animals similarly housed and enclosed.

(Natural Magic, p.172)

It should be clear by now that Marvell's use of simile and metaphor to describe nature, though witty and amusing, is at the same time a serious device. Gosse's fussy objection to Marvell's "childish" lack of seriousness, and Quiller-Couch's patronizing tolerance of his "quaint conceits", both reveal a complete failure to understand what the poet was doing. They regarded his technique as a method of ornamentation, whereas it was really a method of exploration and revelation.

J.A.Mazzeo, in an interesting chapter on "Metaphysical Poetry and the Poetic of Correspondence" in his Renaissance and Seventeenth Century Studies (New York, 1964), pp.44-59, has examined contemporary theories of imagery, and discovered

just such a division of thought. Brought up in the tradition of Aristotelian rhetoric, the critical theorists of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries could not quite escape from the belief that imagery served as an adornment for plain truth. Mazzeo singles out Il cannochiale aristotelico, by E.Tesauro (2nd. ed., Venezia, 1663), as the work which formulated a theory to explain the "metaphysical" function of imagery. Tesauro developed further the view that nature was the book or poem of God, and declared that it was a "metaphysical" poem created by a God who was a "witty creator".

Mazzeo comments:

Thus God created a world full of metaphors, analogies and conceits, and so far from being ornamentation, they are the law by which creation was effected. God wrote the book of nature in metaphor, and so it should be read . . . Now the poetic involved in this view of the world is not the poetic of ornamental metaphor, but what I call 'the poetic of correspondences'. When the conceit is said to have those properties which enable it to pierce the intellect or to arouse sensations of marvel and wonder, we do wrong to think, as some critics have, of the more excessive kinds of Baroque art. What is meant is that quality of vision which the discovery of correspondences can bring, the 'thrill' which the awareness of an analogy gives the intellect when it first becomes aware of the identity between things formerly believed unconnected. The universe is a vast net of correspondences which unites the whole multiplicity of being. The poet approaches and creates his reality by a series of more or less elaborate correspondences . . . Nature then was not the object of simple observation and enjoyment; it was the 'matter' in which man discovered and read the metaphors of divine wisdom, for the world itself was a 'metaphysical' poem.

(pp.54-55)

This provides a completely satisfying gloss on Marvell's

method of treating nature in "Upon Appleton House". His conceits are revelations, not descriptions; they are amusing because wit is amusing; the poet enjoys discovering the witty structure of the universe created by a witty God - a structure which stretches through time as well as space, which includes fleas and constellations, Israelites, Romans, and English mowers.<sup>1</sup>

But in this poetry, we must never forget the importance of the real object, as it impresses our senses here and now. Marvell's elaborate analogies are never random; they are always tied securely to the things around him. As Miss Scoular admirably remarks:

Marvell's conceits are saved from mere extravagance by a continual sense of place, so that even the most surprising image serves to build up the landscape because it springs directly from it as the only way of presenting some oddity of perception or another.  
(Natural Magic, p.187)

Throughout the poem, we are continually being delighted by

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Critics in more recent times have acknowledged the serious function of the conceits, and realized how integral they are to the poem. Bradbrook and Lloyd Thomas: "The keynote here is wonder; the wit is now led by the subject, it is no longer playing upon it; the writing is no longer so neatly explicit" (Andrew Marvell, pp.36-37). Robert Ellrodt: "Aussi ce qui ne serait chez Cowley que le bric-à-brac d'une rhétorique impersonnelle semble chez Marvell surgir naturellement au fil de la pensée dans un esprit bien meublé" (Les Poètes Métaphysiques Anglais, Vol. II, p.163).



the precision and brilliance of a sense-impression, often expressed through an image from the human world, like the one in stanza LXXIX:

Whose Grass, with moister colour dasht,  
Seems as green Silks but newly washt;

or the kinetic effect of stanza LXXVIII:

While, like a Guard on either side,  
The Trees before their Lord divide;

or the picture of the flood, in stanza LIX:

The River in it self is drown'd,  
And Iel's th'astonish'd Cattle round;

or the hewel, and the thrush's eye, the tulips, the rail with "unfeather'd Quills", and the woodland refuge. None appear merely for their own sake, as an item of observed detail. But the very fact that they can be enjoyed for their vividness and precision, makes them all the more successful as parts of an infinitely complex and profound pattern: the pattern which Marvell perceived when he surveyed the world around him, and for which he found a perfect epitome in the Lord Fairfax's country estate.

## Chapter IX

### SUBJECTIVE USE OF NATURAL DETAILS

The introduction to this section explained the subjective use of natural details as the presentation of "a particular personal experience of nature through the details which are associated with it"; or as a "unique personal relationship between the poet and nature. Such a relationship is rare in poetry before the eighteenth century. As we have seen, men expected from nature a lesson rather than an experience. It is true that Wordsworth, the greatest exponent of this kind of poetry, also insisted on the value of nature as a teacher, but the lessons he derived from the countryside were instinctive, absorbed subconsciously from experiences, rather than logically deduced from observation. His view of nature's power to teach is expressed in these lines from the first book of The Prelude:

Wisdom and Spirit of the universe!  
 Thou Soul that art the Eternity of Thought!  
 That giv'st to forms and images a breath  
 And everlasting motion! not in vain,  
 By day or star-light thus from my first dawn  
 Of Childhood didst Thou intertwine for me  
 The passions that build up our human Soul,  
 Not with the mean and vulgar works of Man,  
 But with high objects, with enduring things,  
 With life and nature, purifying thus  
 The elements of feeling and of thought,  
 And sanctifying, by such discipline,  
 Both pain and fear, until we recognize  
 A grandeur in the beatings of the heart.

(The Prelude, ed. E. de Selincourt, revised Helen Darbishire (London, 1960), pp.12-13, ll.428-441)

True "nature poetry", as defined by N.H.Clements in "Nature and the Country in Sixteenth and Seventeenth Century French Poetry", PMLA, XLIV (1929), 1005-1047, is poetry:

. . . consisting essentially in a sincere love and a spontaneous, as opposed to a conventional, treatment of nature; a concern with nature for its own sake instead of using it merely as an ornament in poetry with a primarily human interest; and a sympathetic interpenetration between the soul of man and the soul of things. (p.1005)

He adds later:

. . . the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries were not centuries of observation; they ran to synthesis, meaning here seeing things as a whole, whereas analysis, in the sense of seeing things in their details, is an essential of nature poetry . . . another essential is an introspective sensibility. (p.1024)

No seventeenth-century English poet combined all these qualities, although several of them produced poetry that might be called "nature poetry". Traherne had the introspective sensibility and the love or sympathy for nature. He tells, in "The Preparative", how:

A Meditating Inward Ey  
Gazing at Quiet did within me lie,  
And evry Thing  
Delighted me that was their Heavnlly King;  
(Thomas Traherne: Centuries, Poems, and Thanksgivings, ed. H.M.Margoliouth (Oxford, 1958), Vol. II, p.20)

and in "Wonder", exclaims, "How Bright are all Things here" (p.6), and:

The Skies in their Magnificence,  
 The Lively, Lovely Air;  
 Oh how Divine, how soft, how Sweet, how fair!  
 The Stars did entertain my Sence,  
 And all the Works of GOD so Bright and pure,  
 So Rich and Great did seem,  
 As if they ever must endure,  
 In my Esteem.  
 (p.8)

The weakness of Traherne's poetry is its lack of particularity. The strength of his love and wonder comes through in the excitement and vigour of his rhythms, but rhythm is not enough to convey the fulness of his experience. The generalized objects of his passion - "evry Thing", "all Things", "Skies", "Stars" - are too vague to make much impression on the reader's imagination. The successful nature poet must see things "in their details", and re-create his experience through the natural objects that helped to produce it.

Henry Vaughan is usually cited as the nature poet of the seventeenth century. But though he is more sensitive than Traherne to the actual things around him, he very rarely attempts any detailed evocation of them. Pierre Legouis, commenting on the disciples of Donne, remarks:

Their poetry keeps to the town; it will haunt the  
~~puelles~~ <sup>hues</sup> or the Court; when they compose their verse  
 in the country, as Herbert and Vaughan largely do,  
 their engrossing preoccupation with the Creator  
 prevents them from dwelling on description of the  
 Creation.

(Andrew Marvell, pp.42-43)

The third stanza of Vaughan's "Rules and Lessons" provides a

typical example:

Walk with thy fellow-creatures: note the hush  
 And whispers amongst them. There's not a Spring,  
 Or Leafe but hath his Morning-hymn; Each Bush  
 And Oak doth know I AM.  
 (Works, ed. L.C.Martin, 2nd. ed. (Oxford, 1957),  
 p.436)

The same kind of general enumeration occurs in "The Morning-watch":

The rising winds,  
 The falling springs,  
 Birds, beasts, all things  
 Adore him in their kinds.  
 Thus all is hurl'd  
 In sacred Hymnes, and Order, The great Chime  
 And Symphony of nature.  
 (p.424)

When Vaughan does present an experience of nature, deriving from specific contact with a natural scene - in "The Water-fall" (pp.537-538) - he works well within the emblem tradition. The initial description of the waterfall is similar to Marvell's "On a Drop of Dew", suggesting the significance of the details as he presents them:

The common pass  
 Where, clear as glass,  
 All must descend  
 Not to an end:  
 But quickened by this deep and rocky grave,  
 Rise to a longer course more bright and brave.

He postulates his own involvement in the scene, in words that look forward to Wordsworth's "Lines above Tintern Abbey":

Dear stream! dear bank, where often I  
 Have sate, and pleas'd my pensive eye.

But his interpretation of the scene rests on traditional emblem-values:

O useful Element and clear!  
My sacred wash and cleanser here.

(Compare Damon's response to Clorinda's fountain). Vaughan hints at the mystic quality of his experience:

What sublime truths, and wholesome themes,  
Lodge in thy mystical, deep streams!

But the truths he discovers are extracted logically. The waterfall remains in the end a chapter in Nature's Book, that must be read, not experienced:

As this loud brooks incessant fall  
In streaming rings restagnates all,  
Which reach by course the bank, and then  
Are no more seen, just so pass men.

Similarly, "The Showre" (pp.412-413) begins with description: "'Twas so, I saw thy birth etc."; then leads into meditation: "Ah! it is so with me"; and concludes with a wished-for synthesis:

Perhaps at last  
(Some such showres past,)  
My God would give a Sun-shine after raine.

J.B.Leishman summed up the characteristics of Vaughan's nature poetry:

To describe Vaughan, as many have done, as a 'Nature-poet', and to compare him with Wordsworth, is wide of the mark. It is true that the starting-point of several of his most memorable poems is some natural sight which he has observed during a solitary walk, but such sights are significant to him only as more or less imperfect emblems of spiritual truths, and the poems they inspire

are essentially expository and didactic and only incidentally descriptive.

(The Art of Marvell's Poetry, p.201)

There are only two or three passages in Marvell's work that might legitimately be called nature poetry. Generally, he is too impersonal a poet to exhibit the essential "introspective sensibility". He holds himself more aloof than Vaughan, Herbert, Traherne, or Donne. The "coldness" of his love-poems has been remarked upon.<sup>1</sup> He often expresses himself through the medium of pastoral figures - the Mower, the Bermudan exiles, Damon and Clorinda - or through abstractions like the Body and the Soul and Created Pleasure. In most of the lyrics, he seems more concerned with making a fine poem than with examining his own state of mind or "expressing" himself. His senses seem to contribute more to a poem than his emotions. Robert Ellrodt, discussing the brilliance of Marvell's sensuous images compared with the emotional precision of Donne's poetry, says:

Mais c'est qu'il incline à la description plus qu'à la dialectique. C'est qu'il est plus attentif à la sensation qu'à l'émotion et que la première exige la survivance de l'image précise.

(Les Poètes Métaphysiques Anglais, Vol. II, p.128)

But on the few occasions when he does involve himself in a scene as more than a spectator or reporter, the resulting poetry is much nearer true nature poetry than anything in Traherne or Vaughan. The most striking instance is the wood-

<sup>1</sup>In Goldwin Smith's notice in The English Poets (1880), II, p.383.

land passage in "Upon Appleton House", stanzas LXI-LXXXI. The "I" is introduced at the start, the first time the pronoun occurs in the poem referring to the poet-narrator:

But I, retiring from the Flood,  
Take Sanctuary in the Wood;  
And, while it lasts, my self imbark  
In this yet green, yet growing Ark.

The pun on "imbark" prepares the way for the subsequent "inter-penetration between the soul of man and the soul of things". Four stanzas of impersonal description follow, before the "I" reappears, rejecting the song of the nightingale in favour of the stock-doves:

But I have for my Musick found  
A Sadder, yet more pleasing Sound.

Next come the references to the birds, and the emblematic Hewel stanzas. Only with stanza LXXI does the poet's personal involvement with the things he has been describing become the centre of attention. He, the "easie Philosopher", confers among birds and trees, and almost becomes identified with the "Fowles" and the "Plants". He speaks to the birds, "In their most learned Original"; or where he fails, communicates with signs:

The reservations about his ability to read correctly "in Natures mystick Book" have already been discussed (see above, pages 187-188). His closeness to nature is expressed in richly sensuous terms, in stanza LXXIV:



The Oak-Leaves me embroyder all,  
 Between which Caterpillars crawl:  
 And Ivy, with familiar trails,  
 Me licks, and clasps, and curles, and hales;

and in stanza LXXVII:

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.

The traditional significance of ivy, woodbine, and vine may contribute something to this sense of loving intimacy, but it is achieved mainly by the sensuous effects. These stanzas do not offer a literally real experience, any more than the similar passages in "The Garden" or "Damon the Mower", but they do produce, through the relation between man and natural objects, a strong and imaginatively "real" experience. The poet is not here describing or drawing analogies from nature; he is experiencing nature. The contrast with Vaughan can be seen in the significance within a poem of the wind. Stanza LXXII concludes:

No Leaf does tremble in the Wind  
 Which I returning cannot find.

Coming at the end of the passage which tells how he confers with plants and birds, this detail is charged with meaning. The physical fact becomes a spiritual fact - an instance of the hypersensitivity of the man at one with nature.

Stanza LXXV also deals with the wind:

Then, languishing with ease, I toss

On Pallets swoln of Velvet Moss;  
 While the Wind, cooling through the Boughs,  
 Flatters with Air my panting Brows.  
 Thanks for my Rest ye Mossy Banks,  
 And unto you cool Zephyr's Thanks,  
 Who, as my Hair, my Thoughts too shed,  
 And winnow from the Chaff my Head.

The function of the wind is complex. It somehow purifies the Mind, cleansing it of "Thoughts", the "chaff" of the mind, and leaving the "Head", the pure grain that is essential being. Marvell, as pointed out before, is not philosophizing. This stanza presents in concrete detail, an experience that is both physical - the insistence on the brows, the mossy banks, the hair, etc. - and spiritual. Marvell does not try to explain what happens; he expresses it as a fact that the senses can apprehend, if not comprehend.

Compare the last stanza of Vaughan's "Regeneration", which describes his reaction to "a rushing wind":

I turn'd me round, and to each shade  
   Dispatch'd an Eye,  
 To see, if any leafe had made  
                         Least motion, or Reply,  
                         But while I listning sought  
   My mind to ease  
 By knowing, where 'twas, or where not,  
                         It whisper'd; Where I please.

Lord, then said I, On me one breath,  
And let me dye before my death!  
 (Works, ed. L.C.Martin, p.399)

Vaughan's wind, though "natural" at the start, soon gets transformed into the Holy Spirit. Marvell's wind remains itself, and is significant as itself, as a part of nature.

Vaughan interprets; Marvell leaves us with the experience. When Vaughan senses a mystery in nature, he explains it, usually along orthodox Christian lines; Marvell lets his natural details work their own mystery in the reader's mind.

The other poem in which Marvell speaks as of a personal experience of nature is "The Garden". The actual experience is confined to stanzas V-VII, but the rest of the poem forms a necessary frame. Although one must allow for the obvious differences in technique and outlook, "The Garden" and Wordsworth's "Lines above Tintern Abbey" seem to deal with a similar experience. Both poets turn away from the world of men, to seek peace in nature, Wordsworth relishing the "thoughts of more deep seclusion", and Marvell "this delicious Solitude". The whole of the opening section of "Tintern Abbey" stresses the quiet of the scene, in contrast to the "din/Of towns and cities", and "The Garden" prefers "Fair Quiet" to the "busie Companies of Men". Both poets imply a loss of earlier vitality:

When we have run our Passions heat; (Marvell)

That time is past,  
And all its aching joys are now no more. (Wordsworth).

The central experience of the two poems seems to be the same, though it is easier to trace in Marvell's neat stanzas than in Wordsworth's erratic poem: Marvell's experience is a present one; Wordsworth's spans a longer period, and is "re-collected in tranquility". But basically, each moves from

intense excitement of the senses, to the pleasures of the mind and imagination, and thence to some transcendent spiritual state, in which the soul escapes from the restraints of the body. The richly sensuous delight of stanza V is paralleled by Wordsworth's early responsiveness to the sensuous qualities of the objects of the countryside:

Their colours and their forms, were then to me  
 An appetite; a feeling and a love,  
 That had no need of a remoter charm,  
 By thought supplied, nor any interest  
 Unborrowed from the eye.

The retreat into the Mind, the interpenetration of mind and matter, where all is reduced "To a green Thought in a green Shade", may be the same as the process by which Wordsworth's "sensations sweet" pass "even into my purer mind,/ With tranquil restoration"; and as the identification of man and his surroundings:

A presence that disturbs me with the joy  
 Of elevated thoughts; a sense sublime  
 Of something far more deeply interfused,  
 Whose dwelling is the light of setting suns,  
 And the round ocean and the living air,  
 And the blue sky, and in the mind of man.

The freeing of the soul from the body, expressed in Marvell's poem through the bird-simile, is described more explicitly by the Romantic:

. . . that serene and blessed mood,  
 In which the affections gently lead us on, -  
 Until, the breath of this corporeal frame  
 And even the motion of our human blood  
 Almost suspended, we are laid asleep  
 In body, and become a living soul.

Both poems come to rest, after the ecstasy, in the landscape which prompted it - Wordsworth returning to:

. . . these steep woods and lofty cliffs,  
And this green pastoral landscape;

and Marvell to the garden, with its "herbs and flowers".

This examination has obviously left out much that secures the distinctive character of the two poems:<sup>1</sup> Marvell relies on wit, and on distilling the utmost from his words and images; Wordsworth is more rhetorical, less compressed, in his use of language. But the central development, from sensuous to mental to spiritual awareness, is the same, and both poets depend for their experience on a close contact with nature. It is an experience of nature, communicated through nature. It can only be related through the natural objects that are associated with it, as Marvell says:

How could such sweet and wholesome Hours  
Be reckon'd but with herbs and flow'rs!

<sup>1</sup>  
The traditional element in "The Garden" must not be forgotten. See Bradbrook and Lloyd Thomas: "The weight of the whole Spenserian tradition, in which Metamorphosis is the poetical answer to the decay of beauty and the triumph of time, is behind the exultation of this transformation. In the garden life is perpetually renewed, as it was for Spenser in the Garden of Adonis". (Andrew Marvell, p.61). See also Stanley Stewart's The Enclosed Garden (Madison, Milwaukee, and London, 1966) for an exhaustive study of the poem's place in the context of the literature emanating from the Song of Songs.

Robert Ellrodt, trying to account for the extraordinary immediacy of "The Garden", says that the poem gives the impression that:

Le poète peint ses sentiments au moment même où il les éprouve . . . Ce n'est pas un sentiment universel mais une expérience unique qui nous est communiquée.  
(Les Poètes Métaphysiques Anglais, Vol. II, p.115)

The only other poems in which Marvell presents a "unique personal relationship" between man and nature, are the Mower poems. The sensuous harmony ("Damon the Mower") and the harmony of mind ("The Mower's Song") have their parallels in stanzas V and VI of "The Garden". How these poems convey the feeling of alienation when this harmony is broken has already been discussed (see pages 191-199 above).

It is impossible to say how far the Mower speaks for Marvell, or even whether "The Garden" and the woodland passage of "Upon Appleton House" record actual experiences. Marvell was not a Romantic poet. Poetry for him, as for most men of his age, seems to have been an elegant pastime, to be cultivated at leisure, but discarded when more serious matters, like politics, required his energies. One cannot know how far his "nature poems" were spun out of his reading of mystics, from Hugh of St. Victor to Casimire Barbiowski, and how far they came from his own experiences - probably from a complicated fusion of the two. But one can examine the finished poems, and find in them the effect of "a particular personal experience

of nature expressed through the details that are associated with it",<sup>1</sup> an effect which no other poet of the period could produce - not even one like Traherne, who did have mystical experiences. And after all, it is the achievement that ultimately matters, not the forces that went into its making.

<sup>1</sup>

See M.C. Bradbrook's discussion of "The Garden": "The 'I' of the poem is no mere first person singular. If it is not autobiographical, the poem is conceived as the experience of a single mind at a single time and place. It is not generalized, and it does not record a common experience but an exceptional one". ("Marvell and the Poetry of Rural Solitude", Review of English Studies, XVII, (1941), 37-46, p.44)

## Chapter X

### CONCLUSION

This study began with a discussion of the occurrence in English poetry of general and particular details from nature. George Rylands, in "English Poets and the Abstract Word" (Essays and Studies, XVI (1930), 53-84), examines a similar question, and, taking Johnson and Wordsworth as his examples, remarks:

Literature oscillates between these two poles; between, one may say, philosophy and experience, the moral idea and the material object. (p.54)

Most poetry, perhaps all poetry of lasting value, is extended between these two poles, inclining now more nearly to one, now more nearly to the other. Josephine Miles's investigations have suggested that during the seventeenth century a shift was taking place, away from moral or philosophical generalisations, and towards particular material objects and individual experiences. It was in this context that Marvell wrote his poems. If we concentrate on one end of the scale, he appears as a traditional poet, having affinities with Spenser and the emblematisers; if we concentrate on the other, he appears as a "modern" poet born before his time. But his poetry defies such simplifications. A poem like "The Garden", or "Upon Appleton House", or "Damon the Mower", is not so



patently an experience as Wordsworth's "The Daffodils", or Clare's nature sonnets; nor is it so patently a moral or philosophical statement as Herrick's "To the Virgins, to make much of Time", or Herbert's "Vertue". Marvell had the good fortune to be writing at a time when the resources of the classical and scholastic traditions were still available to poetry as a vital force. He also had the good fortune to possess a more developed or acute sensitivity to the forms of the natural world than most of his contemporaries among the poets, and to live at a time when such a gift was beginning to be felt necessary to the art of poetry.

It is outside the scope of this study to demonstrate exactly where Marvell belongs in the development of the use of natural details in English literature, but the examination of the details themselves, and of their function in the context of individual poems, gives an indication of the changing direction of one movement of mid-seventeenth-century verse - a movement which was to assume major proportions in the eighteenth century, and culminate in the poetry of Wordsworth.

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