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## Review of *Imagining Andrew Marvell at 400*, edited by Matthew C. Augustine, Giulio J. Pertile, and Steven N. Zwicker

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Matthew C. Augustine, Giulio J. Pertile, and Steven N. Zwicker, eds., *Imagining Andrew Marvell at 400*. Oxford: Oxford University Press for The British Academy, 2022. 418 pp. \$110.

*Imagining Andrew Marvell at 400* derives from a conference celebrating the quatercentenary of Marvell's birth in 2021. The conference, and by extension the volume, reflects the trajectory of modern Marvell scholarship, a period that began a hundred years ago with T.S. Eliot's tercentenary essay in the *TLS*. More immediately, it represents the culmination, or perhaps merely the continuation, of the period of extraordinary efflorescence in Marvell studies that produced authoritative editions of his prose (2003), poetry (2003), a chronology (2005), two biographies (2010, 2021), a *Cambridge Companion* (2011), *Oxford Handbook* (2019), and the foundation of this journal (2016), alongside numerous studies. The authors and editors of these works are responsible for many of *Imagining Andrew Marvell at 400*'s nineteen chapters, and the influence of their scholarship is visible in the remaining essays.

It is no surprise, then, that the figure that emerges in its pages will be a broadly familiar one to readers of this journal, albeit viewed with an ever-finer resolution and from an ever-greater range of angles. Marvell is shown to be a highly responsive writer, minutely sensitive to the shifting intellectual currents of his age. In many of the chapters, the relevant contexts are political and religious: the politically engaged poet who came into focus in such classic studies as John M. Wallace's *His Destiny His Choice* (1968) and Annabel Patterson's *Marvell and the Civic Crown* (1978) is alive and well, though now possessed of a decidedly more international outlook. In other essays, the relevant factor is early modern media, testifying to the profound impact book and manuscript history have had in recent decades. All the contributors to the volume are well aware, however, that identifying Marvell's sources and interlocutors is only a first step to understanding the qualities of his verse; essays variously draw on the analysis of language, form, cognition, and affect to reveal the imagination with which Marvell transformed his materials.

*Imagining Andrew Marvell at 400* begins with an elegant and informative introduction by Matthew Augustine, Giulio Pertile, and Steven Zwicker, orienting the reader and delineating common themes and problems. The book is then divided into four sections. Its first, "Andrew Marvell's Occasions," begins with an essay by Nicholas McDowell, entitled "The Conversion of Andrew Marvell: Religion, Poetics, Sexuality." McDowell discusses the young poet's brief conversion to Catholicism while a student at Cambridge, before turning to his engagement with Counter-Reformation poetics, incisively demonstrating the influence of a Baroque, cosmopolitan wit on the verse of

this period. In the next essay, “Hollowing After Cromwell in ‘The First Anniversary,’” James Loxley describes how Marvell makes the passage and manipulation of time one of the poem’s subjects and an element of its form; his discussion of rhyme is particularly fruitful. The chapter is followed by Steven Zwicker’s “‘Let Us Now Praise Famous Men’: Andrew Marvell and the Problem of Panegyric” which describes “the proximity of praise to shame” (63) in Marvell’s verse, revealing a poet who at once smoothly fulfills the conventions of this pervasive early modern genre and exposes his, and our, unease at them. In “‘Business Either of Truth or of Eternity’: Marvell’s View from 1672,” Kathleen Lynch turns to the prose to ask a question as fundamental as it is elusive: does *The Rehearsal Transpros’d* offer the reader a glimpse of Marvell’s own religious beliefs, or merely a political position on toleration? The final essay in the section is David Norbrook’s “‘A Fleet of Worlds’: Marvell, Globalization, and Slavery,” a meticulously informed rereading of Marvell’s “Bermudas,” among other works, in light of the politics of the burgeoning slave trade.

The second section, “Polyglot and Transnational Perspectives,” begins with a superb essay by Victoria Moul, “Marvell and Bilingual Verse Culture,” which reads Marvell’s “Horatian Ode” in light of neo-Latin Horatian poetry. Moul’s essay draws on the large-scale, collaborative catalog of neo-Latin manuscript poetry she is assembling; it is hard to imagine a better case for the complementarity of quantitative methods and close reading. In “Marvell and the Abrupt Style,” Nicholas von Maltzahn traces the impact of the sharp, pointed style associated with Seneca across Marvell’s prose, letters, and poetry—a key element of Renaissance stylistics that has hitherto received little attention in Marvell scholarship. The two following essays, Esther van Raamsdonk’s “Maritime Mirrors: Marvell’s Dutch Satires” and Giulio Pertile’s “Marvell and the Poetics of Creation,” place Marvell in dialogue with contemporary European writing. Van Raamsdonk describes parallels between “Last Instructions” and Dutch pamphlet literature and poetry, while Pertile’s penetrating essay shows how the epistemology of creation was transformed in early modernity.

N.K. Sugimura’s “‘The World Excluding Round’: Suspended Passions and Alienated Affects in Marvell’s Lyric Poetry” opens the third section, “Affect and Cognition.” Sugimura sets Marvell’s verse in philosophical perspective to consider his sophisticated treatment of perception. In essays by David Simon and Tessie Prakas, perception is also at issue: Simon’s “Knowingness and Eros: Andrew Marvell’s ‘Last Instructions to a Painter’” reads Marvell’s satire as tempting its audience into licentious interpretations only to repudiate such readings, while in “‘Contained’ and ‘Unconstrained’: Andrew Marvell and the Signs of Sound,” Prakas considers rhymed pairs in which one word contains another—hold / old, warm / arm—to reflect on form and containment in

Marvell's verse. Alongside Loxley's essay, Prakas demonstrates that there is still much to be said about early modern rhyme—indeed, the field would benefit from a systematic, perhaps even taxonomic, account. Gordon Teskey's essay "The River Overflows: Consciousness in 'Upon Appleton House'" concludes the section, arguing that in this poem Marvell "prefigures the transcendental subjectivity of the modern lyric 'I'" (256).

"Media, Mediation, and Materialities," the volume's fourth section, begins with Martin Dzelzainis's "Marvell's Poetry in Motion," a virtuosic account of the production and readership of Marvell's 1681 *Poems*, containing impressive detective work and several important new discoveries. In the following essay, "Touching Words: Marvell's Satires in Hand," Diane Purkiss turns to manuscript to discuss the material circulation and intellectual valences of hand-copied satires in the Restoration. In Joanna Picciotto's original and stimulating essay, "Practising Flow in Marvell and Ashbery," the media environment of early modern England is again under discussion. Picciotto argues that "Marvell's aesthetic achievement lies not in its distance from the larger discursive field"—a field formed in part by the nascent news industry—"but in his stylisations of it" (334). In the final essay in the section, "Learning to Read with Marvell," Matthew Augustine shows that Marvell's poetry has been at the center of successive movements in literary criticism and scholarship. Among other fascinating insights, Augustine presents a new source for T.S. Eliot's famous dissociation of intellect and sensibility—a major literary discovery that will, one hopes, reach even those students of modernism who fail to read Marvell scholarship.

The final word in the volume is given, appropriately enough, to Nigel Smith. In a typically learned and wide-ranging essay, Smith at once contextualizes past scholarship and charts new avenues of inquiry. Marvell's relationship to European poetry, his immersion in the new modes of political action associated with Tacitus, Seneca, and Lipsius, and his varied reception are all the subject of penetrating and original observations.

Anniversaries inevitably provoke reflection and reevaluation, as Marvell, like Donne before him, was acutely aware. Both the volume's occasion and its authors suggest that *Imagining Andrew Marvell at 400* is likely to be, or at least to be taken as, emblematic of the state of the field. This fact is not lost on the contributors, who are acutely aware of the history and methods of Marvell studies. At issue in many pieces is the relationship between historicist contextualism and formalist or aesthetic readings: as Augustine, Pertile, and Zwicker write in their introduction, the focus of Marvell studies "has appreciably shifted from the ironies and ambiguities so prized by earlier 20th-century criticism to the relocation of Marvell's variously dislocated texts" (5). Where some

contributors see a changing balance between these two elements, however, others are confident of their ongoing complementarity. Many essays are grounded in the analysis of literary allusions, one of the points at which form and context most obviously meet: although allusions are circumscribed by the poem's time and place, they also reveal the freedom of literature to determine its own context.

If the occasion has stimulated the volume's contributors, it will also, no doubt, inspire reflections in its readers. It seems to me that the recent history of Marvell studies, as encapsulated in this volume, is an instructive one. It is a small field that has generated tremendous intellectual energy and supremely accomplished scholarship: surely an object lesson as English literary studies inevitably loses numbers and scholars seek to avoid making diminution synonymous with decline. As *Imagining Andrew Marvell at 400* suggests, much of the field's vitality derives from personal relationships: from conferences, such as the one on which this volume is based, from collaborations, and from teaching and mentoring—there are at least five student-teacher pairs in this volume. Dense networks, able to integrate scholarly newcomers into existing forms of sociability, grounded in assiduously maintained personal ties and collaborations: the formula is as easy to identify as it is hard to imitate.

There are other consequences, too, of the sociology of the field. Difficulty, a term often discussed in conjunction with Marvell's writing, might equally be applied to this volume: although the authors' prose is uniformly lucid, this is an essay collection in which the presumed reader is a scholarly interlocutor, and so much is able to remain unsaid. It also, I suspect, inflects the choice of texts under discussion. Although it would be unwise to draw firm conclusions from a single volume, it seems to me significant that the poems that receive by far the most attention in this volume are "Upon Appleton House" and "Last Instructions," which are each analyzed in eight chapters, while "To His Coy Mistress," once a cornerstone of Marvell's reputation, is analyzed only briefly in one. There are, of course, many differences between the longer poems and the lyric, but possibly the most salient is that the longer poems are inevitably the domain of specialists, unlikely (alas) to be embraced by the general reader. Still, just as Marvell awakens his readers to the unique pleasures of literary difficulty, so this volume offers the gratification of scholarship that is brilliantly learned, methodologically acute, and aesthetically subtle.

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**Competing Interests**

The author has no competing interests to declare.

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