Marvell's Re-imagining of Anthropocentric Architecture in *Upon Appleton House*

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**Abstract.** Marvell initiates the dynastic mythology that he fashions around Sir Thomas Fairfax in *Upon Appleton House* by re-imagining a concept widely known to early modern readers from Vitruvius’s *De Architectura*. At the start of *Upon Appleton House* Marvell’s speaker implicitly supplants this idea of an anthropocentric architecture with what might be called not so much its sacred as rather its incarnational counterpart. He puts forward the concept of an architecture that manifests *renovatio* and, hence, true humanity: the restoration within fallen humankind of *imago Dei*. The sophistication with which Marvell achieves this reformulation and in effect presents a sanctified Vitruvianism gives impetus to all that follows throughout his poem.

Marvell initiates the dynastic mythology fashioned around Sir Thomas Fairfax in *Upon Appleton House* by re-imagining a concept widely known to early modern readers from Vitruvius’s *De Architectura*. According to Vitruvius, architecture should manifest the human body’s proportions and therefore be centered in its essential principles of design on those structuring its maker. At the start of *Upon Appleton House* Marvell’s speaker implicitly but unmistakably supplants this idea of an anthropocentric architecture with what might be called not so much its sacred as rather its incarnational counterpart. He puts forward the concept of an architecture that manifests *renovatio* and, hence, true humanity: the restoration within fallen humankind of *imago Dei*. One cannot view the Fairfax residence and its owner, Marvell suggests, merely in terms of a Vitruvian anthropocentrism, for to apply those terms is to recognize their limitations and the need to formulate them anew.

The sophistication with which Marvell achieves this reformulation and in effect presents a sanctified Vitruvianism gives impetus to all that follows throughout his poem. In order to clarify how Marvell thus re-imagines an anthropocentric architecture, portraying at once Appleton House and Fairfax himself, I shall argue that Marvell directly or indirectly evokes the verse of Statius, the letters of Pliny the Younger, the theology of Calvin, and the political thought of Justus Lipsius. At first glance, Statius’s celebrating the grandeur and extravagance of Flavian villas or statuary might seem to

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have little in common with Marvell’s praise of what, at his poem’s start, he calls “this sober frame”—a less than ostentatious home belonging to an aristocratic puritan family under the English Republic.² Pliny’s elaborate portrayals of his country villas—Pliny was Statius’s contemporary—might seem no less culturally remote. Connections between Calvin’s theology and the poem might not be cause for surprise, although one might not also expect Marvell’s portrayal of Fairfax and his residence to be congruent with values emphasized in Lipsius’s *Politica* and *De Constantia*. Yet it is through noting likenesses and contrasts between Marvell’s text and their writings that we gain insight into the tactic with which he begins *Upon Appleton House*: a tactic that indicates the primacy of religion, under-emphasized by current scholarship, in his most ambitious poem.³

To remark an important dissimilarity between Marvell’s *Upon Appleton House* and Statius’s *The Villa of Manilius Vopiscus at Tibur* will introduce a significant similarity between Marvell and Statius as, in his *Silvae*, the Roman originator of the estate poem.⁴ At 1.3.34-37 Statius’s persona creates a confluence of rhetorical maneuvers, the luxurious intricacy of his rhetoric mirroring the opulence of the villa and estate that he celebrates. Bringing together *adynaton*, *dubitatio*, *admiratio*, and *ratiocinatio* in *commoratio* on the richness of Manilius’s demesne, he asks: “What shall I sing to begin with or halfway, on what ending shall I fall silent? Shall I wonder at gilded beams or Moorish doorposts everywhere on marble lucent with colours or water discharged through every bedchamber?”⁵ The reference in those lines to “gilded beams” (*auratasne trabes*) is a calculated allusion to, and repudiation of, Horace’s *Carmina* 2.18.1-5, which run: “No panelled ceiling of ivory and gold glitters in my house; no beams of Hymettian marble rest on columns quarried in the depths of Africa.”⁶ This emphasis on the absence of luxury from Horace’s home is anticipated by and complements the attack in 2.15.1-2 on building extravagant villas. Horace’s speaker says: “Soon our princely piles will leave only a few acres for the plough.”⁷ For Statius, however, the era of Domitian is not that of Augustus and so the Rome of Domitian does not have to resemble that of his predecessor. An age of extraordinary wealth allows and indeed justifies construction of grand villas with sumptuous interiors and splendid grounds. Statius himself cannot hope to match his patrons in the lavishness of their lifestyles—and, much less of course, that patron of patrons who is the emperor.⁸ Nevertheless, he has an equivalent stature to that of his non-imperial superiors and friends; and, recognizing it, we appreciate better his difference from and affinity with Marvell as poet of the Fairfax estate.

Horace’s denial of luxury in ode 2.18 contributed to a modesty topos in the English country house poem. One could cite for example *To Penshurst* (ll. 1-3) or *A Panegyric to Sir Lewis Pemberton* (ll. 115-30).⁹ Additionally, as we know, one could cite the opening line of *Upon Appleton House* with its allusion to “this sober frame.” Marvell’s iteration of the topos turns his poem, from its very start, away from an exaltation of luxury such as that
by Statius in his poem on Manilius’s villa. Yet we see, in despite of so im-
portant a difference, that Marvell nonetheless resembles Statius as eulogist
of a patron’s estate and way of living. In fact the English Republican poet
who celebrates a Presbyterian family’s estate specifically recalls his Flavian
predecessor who lauds that of an Epicurean. His role as eulogist unexpect-
edly resembles Statius’s, and it is further illuminated by a moment in one of
Pliny the Younger’s letters, when Pliny mentions conversation with learned
members of his familia.\textsuperscript{10}

Unable to match his patrons in social significance and power, or wealth,
Statius is careful to indicate throughout \textit{Silvae} that he too has status, power,
and resources. Exact parity is not at issue—personal dignity and a certain
independence are. Sometimes his claims for himself are more direct than at
others; and that is hardly surprising, given the demands of decorum when
Statius writes to and about his patrons. His most forthright identification
of his own status thus unsurprisingly occurs in a personal poem, the \textit{Lament
for His Father} (5.3). There, describing how he would commemorate his
deeased father if he had wealth and social influence equal to his desires, his
persona says: “[W]ould it were my fortune to build an altar to your spirit,
a work to match temples, and raise high an airy mass, outdoing Cyclopean
cliffs and the bold stones of the Pyramids, and screen your tomb with a
great grove!” (ll. 47-50).\textsuperscript{11} He continues: “I myself moist-eyed would lead
the dirge, priest of the altar and of your soul. Not Cerberus with all his
mouths nor laws of Orpheus could turn you away from it. And as I there
sang your ways and deeds, Piety mayhap would have accounted me not
inferior to mighty-mouthed Homer and striven to match me with immortal
Maro” (ll. 57-63).\textsuperscript{12} That description of the material splendor with which
Statius would like his father interred may be entirely imagined; so, too, may
his account of the lofty verse with which, in that grand environment, he
would hope to mourn and laud his father. But even if his heroic dreams are
either beyond his wealth and social status, or notionally beyond his reach as
a poet impeded by sorrow, through them he implies his possession of high
status, unique power, extensive resources.

We recognize at once that his hyperbolic fantasy of rivaling Homer and
Virgil suggests the extent to which he claims he would become inspired—if
his ambitions could be realized—by grief and duty to lament his father. We
also recognize at once that the fantasy gestures towards his poetic lineage.
Although emphasizing his present distance from the great tradition of po-
etic aspiration and achievement, his visionary moment indicates at the same
time that misery has not wholly divorced him from it. His epic imaginings
in miniature imply that he, who at this time has nearly completed \textit{The
Thebaid}, can be seen as actually still possessing an exalted cultural kinship
and no mean poetic aspiration: which is precisely what his lament’s high
style, textured with elaborate mythological allusions including allusions to
the legend of Troy, has itself already suggested.\textsuperscript{13} Elsewhere in \textit{Silvae} he
argues that virtue rather than birth creates true nobility; here he implies,
in addition, that virtuous poetic inventiveness truly ennobles. Those epic imaginings, moreover, indirectly but distinctly draw attention to the power and resources at his command—that is, which accompany his poetic stature. A hallmark of the latter is Statius’s power to memorialize. This he asserts here in defiance of his lacking social power, that is, through his negative reference to the Pyramids. He cannot raise a vast and enduring monument of stone for his father, a rival to the tombs of the Pharaohs. Yet his lament offers an image of his father’s life and death and afterlife; it comprehensively captures and sustains his father’s likeness. And, finally, that moment of epic vision likewise indirectly draws attention to the resources available to a poet of Statius’s stature, even though he lacks wealth such as that of his patrons—again, wealth that might raise a gigantic monument. What he does not lack is *copia*: “copia rerum ac verborum,” to use Quintilian’s phrase. In that he is rich, as his poem’s abundant deployment of *exornationes* demonstrates, and as we have already inferred from the rhetorical luxuriance with which he praises the opulence of Manilius Vopiscus’s villa.

A further, pertinent instance of Statius’s implicitly asserting his status, power, and resources in his role as poet appears in *The Hercules of Pollius Felix at Surrentum* (3.1). There Statius honors Pollius for upholding and celebrating traditional Roman values: for raising a shrine that forms an aesthetic, if not primarily a religious, affirmation of inherited pieties. In his poem on the villa of Manilius Vopiscus, he had similarly lauded Manilius himself for placing and so preserving at the heart of his residence a tree possibly sacred to “some little Nymph or Hamadryad” (1.3.62-3). Manilius’s tree, like Pollius’s statue of Hercules, is not however important because it represents adherence to old Roman beliefs about the sacred, but rather because it emblematizes reverence for, maintenance of, *mos maiorum*. Both Manilius and Pollius are devout adherents of Epicureanism, as Statius acknowledges (see, severally, 1.3.90-94 and 2.2.71-72 as well as 121-46). Yet neither shows merely tolerant acceptance of Roman religious tradition; each expresses respect for the faith of his ancestors. According to Statius, in doing so Pollius reveals that he—like the god whose ancient significance he venerates—is a culture hero. Pollius’s construction of the shrine for the god has been a Herculean labor in defense of the Roman past (3.1.166-70). In fact, by way of *sermocinatio* Statius’s persona has Hercules himself link the achievements of donor and divinity. The patron of Statius, in becoming as it were a patron also of Hercules, has become like the god whom he honors. This is an interesting rhetorical maneuver, for if in Epicurus’s view the gods as traditionally portrayed often image human behavior at its worst, here one of those gods models human behavior at its best. And Statius’s poem, memorializing the *pietas* of his patron, becomes a shrine to Pollius’s sacred structure. Elaborate in its own stylistic riches, the abundant inlay of mythic lore as decorous ornament, it enshrines both shrine and maker. Statius too becomes a culture hero.
The originator of the Roman estate poem implicitly establishes, then, a role for subsequent poets who celebrate their patrons’ domains and possessions. As it appears throughout *Silvae*, that role can be described briefly as follows. The poet—perhaps a friend but nevertheless a client—praises and wonders at the microcosm shaped by his patron, yet does so while indicating discreet consciousness of independent merit. He has status because possessing personal *auitoritas* as heir to a distinguished creative inheritance, an ancient poetic lineage. He has power and resources. Drawing on the plenitude of his *cpia* he can create an enduring icon of his patron and that patron’s little world: he can at once commemorate and transform them, offering fables of transcendence—not simply excess—narrated as if awed recordings of the actual. The patron is metamorphosed, becoming more than merely human. In the necessarily singular case of the Emperor, he becomes a god; in that of Manilius or Pollius, an exemplar of virtue empowered to go beyond ordinary human achievement. The estate is rendered not so much in terms of *topographia* as of *topothesia*. Moreover, the poet’s lavish mythologizing vision attests to grandeur while remaining constantly attentive to detail—and is aware at all times of its own scope and finesse. Statius thus fashions a subtle and precarious role for himself as estate poet. It is one familiar to Jonson and his successors in the country house sub-genre: *To Penshurst*, for example, appears in a collection of verse called *The Forest*. Yet I am not arguing here that Marvell chose to imitate and emulate Statius’s persona in *Silvae*, though maybe he did. I am suggesting rather that the role of estate poet created by Statius offers a paradigm to which, with whatever degree of intent, Marvell’s speaker in *Upon Appleton House* significantly if not of course completely conforms. It is in other words a role illuminating Marvell’s self-presentation as guide, mythmaker, ludic philosopher in retreat, and member of the Fairfax *familia*: his self-presentation as servant and yet figure not without his own *auitoritas*. Those last two aspects of Marvell’s self-characterization are further elucidated by Pliny’s account of life on his country estates.

*Upon Appleton House* opens, as does *The Villa of Manilius Vopiscus at Tibur*, with reference to visualization of the patron’s residence. Statius’s persona says: “He that has had the chance to view the chill Tiburtine estate of eloquent Vopiscus and the twin homes threaded by Anio...” (1-2). His first word is a word for “seeing” (*Cernere*). Marvell’s speaker warns, “Within this sober frame expect / Work of no foreign architect” (ll. 1-2). Both introduce themselves as guides to their respective patrons’ estates. Soon after the casually monitory statement with which he begins, Marvell’s speaker transitions from his account of Appleton House itself to that of its conventual origins by alluding to the *siste, viator* topos, which reminds us that *Upon Appleton House* is both an estate and a prospect poem: “While with slow eyes we these survey, / And on each pleasant footstep stay” (ll. 81-82). What we initially see of Appleton House, as has been mentioned above, contrasts with what Statius’s persona shows us of Manilius’s villa.
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at Tibur or, one could add, of Pollius’s villa at Surrentum. He wonders at the latter’s material luxury, “My eyes scarce held out in the long procession, scarce my steps, as I was led from item to item. What a multitude of objects!” (2.2.42-44). He continues: “Some spots Nature has favoured, in others she has been overcome and yielded to the developer” (2.2.52-53). Statius emphasizes his patron’s power to display or exercise art’s plenitude and power. We become witnesses to Pollius’s hoard of desirable artifacts, to his domination of nature—or his choice that nature be left untouched. This is not the vision Marvell’s speaker shares with us at his poem’s start; but its beginning does have an important commonality with Statius’s celebrations of his patrons’ estates.

When celebrating Pollius’s villa, Statius’s persona asks himself, “Should I marvel first at the place’s ingenuity or its master’s?” (2.2.44-45). Pollius’s residence manifests the mind of its owner. His ingenium informs it; he is in effect its genius loci. Yet we are told that at the heart of his residence lies not so much greatness of mind as greatness of soul. Pollius is a type of the Epicurean sage: “[Y]our great soul masters hope and fear, loftier than any desire, immune from the Fates and rebuffing indignant Fortune” (2.2.124-27; compare the Lucretian echoes of 131-32). Statius’s persona makes a similar point about Manilius, as we have seen. Centuries later, Marvell’s speaker will portray Fairfax and his relationship to Appleton House in terms that recall Statius’s imaging of Pollius and Manilius—but he will do so with differences that express a more ambitious presentation of his patron’s character. For a start, he will recalibrate Statius’s balance between praise of the estate and praise of its owner. Marvell’s speaker begins with a celebration of Appleton House at once moral and religious rather than material. This celebration of the Fairfax residence has simultaneous consequences: it points unmistakably from the dwelling to its owner—to the presiding spirit and his family; it evinces the re-imagining of an anthropocentric architecture. This far-reaching characterization of Fairfax forms the basis for a number of dialogues interwoven throughout the unfolding ekphrasis of the estate. Initially—and implicitly—there is a sophisticated dialogue between otium and negotium: a dialogue ultimately about choice. Inseparable from it is, second, a dialogue between past and present, which is dynastic and concerned with cosmopoiesis. Third is another, between the microcosm of the estate and its macrocosmic environment: between inner and outer worlds, between versions of negotium. Finally, there is as well a dialogue between client and patron, staged as interaction between private space and microcosm, familia and immediate family, present and future, choice and providence. Marvell’s speaker cumulatively offers a reading of the homeland—the patria—in terms of a specific home.

Beginning, as has been noted above, with the modesty topos recurrent across country house poems, Marvell’s speaker ties the architectural restraint of Appleton House to its native Englishness. “Within this sober frame expect / Work of no foreign architect,” he says (ll. 1-2). But his emphasis on
moderation proceeds to give that nationalistic gesture considerable scope and force. In embodying moderation, he goes on to suggest, Appleton House accords with natural law. It therefore likewise embodies both decorum and prudentialia. In a sequence of sententiae he declares:

The beasts are by their dens expressed:
And birds contrive an equal nest;
The low-roofed tortoises do dwell
In cases fit of tortoise-shell:
No creature loves an empty space;
Their bodies measure out their place.
(ll. 11-16)

The image of the tortoise is especially telling (ll. 13-14). There, “fit” clearly albeit indirectly associates the English architecture of Fairfax’s residence with at once the natural and the decorous; in addition, that image’s emblematic affiliations associate natural self-containment with prudentialia. Valeriano’s emblem “Honos et Virtus,” for instance, alludes to “Prudentia, cuius symbolum est testudo.” Marvell’s speaker thus has the architecture of Fairfax’s house gesture towards the character of its owner—towards his moral values as an aspect of his national identity. Thereby Marvell’s speaker both parallels and departs from, say, the account of Pollius and his villa by Statius’s persona. In Silvae 2.2, Pollius’s accumulation of artifacts and the design of his villa are said to bespeak his ingenuity (see ll. 44-45, quoted above); yet he is not, we are assured, so much the ingenious fashioner of his luxurious estate as he is the rigorously moderate, Epicurean presence at its core (and see, again, ll. 69-72 along with ll. 121-32). Villa and owner are congruent but also in contradiction. From the start of Upon Appleton House however we see that Fairfax’s home and its owner are in unison. Underlying those evident differences between Statius’s and Marvell’s estate poems is, then, a signal similarity: just as Statius’s persona implies that wise restraint informs the Villa at Surrentum, so Marvell’s speaker intimates that a moderation indicative of prudentialia informs Appleton House.

To note this similarity is nonetheless to acknowledge that Pollius and Fairfax would have divergent notions of prudentialia—and how their notions diverge can be seen when Marvell’s speaker translates the value of moderation into a Christian context. Affirming the connections among natural law, decorum, and prudence that he has made earlier, Marvell’s speaker summarily observes: “But all things are composed here / Like Nature, orderly and near” (ll. 25-26). He then immediately adds:

In which we the dimensions find
Of that more sober age and mind,
When larger-sized men did stoop
To enter at a narrow loop;
As practising, in doors so strait,
To strain themselves through heaven’s gate.
(ll. 27-32)

The last of those couplets ends the fourth stanza with a climactic reference to Matthew 7:13-14, namely, “Enter ye in at the strait gate, for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereof: Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way which leadeth unto life, and few there be that finde it.” Widely acknowledged Protestant commentary interpreted Christ’s words as enjoining self-restraint and moderation on his followers. Calvin asserts: “As nothing is more opposed to the flesh than the doctrine of Christ, no man will ever make great proficiency in it who has not learned to confine his senses and feelings, so as to keep them within those boundaries, which our heavenly Teacher prescribes for curbing our wantonness.” The Geneva Bible explains in an annotation that “[w]e must overcome and mortifie our affections, if we wil be true disciples.” The architecture of Appleton House thus accords with the order of grace as well as with that of nature. It also embodies a loftier concept of moderation, a more elevated decorum, a more urgent prudentia.

Marvell’s speaker suggests in effect that, because it accords so closely with the words of Christ, the house is built on the rock of the Word rather than merely on rocks quarried from the nunnery that first stood on the estate. As we read later in the same chapter of Matthew: “Therefore, whosoever heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them, I will liken him vnto a wise man, which built his house vpon a rocke” (24). The villas celebrated in Silvae display art’s dominance and perfection of nature; Appleton House, according to Marvell’s speaker, expresses the perfection of nature—and art articulating natural law—by grace.

A subtle and important exemplum of grace’s perfecting nature is actually generated within the stanza itself. When, in line 28, Marvell’s speaker refers to a “more sober age and mind” he is of course echoing his initial description of Appleton House as “this sober frame.” But his second use of the phrase now serves to deepen its significance. Here, the phrase opens an allusion in the following couplet to Aeneid 8.359-68, where Virgil relates Aeneas’s acceptance of Evander’s hospitality. Marvell’s speaker indicates that the moderation of Fairfax’s residence iterates the lowliness of Evander’s. At one point, Evander says to Aeneas: “Have the courage, my guest, to scorn riches; make yourself, too, worthy of deity, and come not disdainful of our poverty” (8.364-65). Yet Marvell emphasizes more than a shared restraint. Evander’s dwelling has welcomed Hercules, and now it welcomes Aeneas. One demi-god, a culture hero, has accommodated himself to a modest home, and now so too does another. By analogy, Appleton House is to be similarly recognized as the home of their latter-day counterpart, a founding father of the English Republic. However, this evocation of ancient culture heroes by way of Virgilian epic suddenly modulates, as we have seen, into an evocation of Christ by way of Matthew’s gospel—and a virtuosic transformation of
myth ensues. We are abruptly confronted with the image of Roman heroic virtue as finding its ultimate value, its perfection, in prefiguring arduous pursuit of the Christian life. We are to understand that it gains its ultimate value when viewed sub specie Christi. Thereby Marvell’s speaker implies that Appleton House does not merely iterate the moderation of Evander’s dwelling but transcends it; and, at the same time, he indicates that Fairfax does not merely reflect the heroic virtue of pater et pius Aeneas but expresses it in a higher form. Marvell’s speaker will elaborate on the latter intimation when concluding his description of the house itself.

Clearly, then, from the outset of Marvell’s poem we are directed towards recognizing that Appleton House forms a testimonial to its owner. Marvell’s presentation of Appleton House as bespeaking its owner nevertheless extends beyond praise of Fairfax himself. It evinces what I have called Marvell’s re-imagining of an anthropocentric architecture: of the familiar, Vitruvian notion that architecture reflects the human body’s proportions and therefore is quintessentially dependent on humankind. At the start of Upon Appleton House, Marvell has his speaker reconsider what constitutes a truly anthropocentric architecture. When Marvell’s speaker contrasts the English sobriety of Appleton House with architecture that would supposedly be executed by a “foreign architect” (l. 2), his emphasis is not of course just nationalistic, a simply comic association of the foreign with the extravagant. In the latter case he does, certainly, hypothesize foreign extravagance born of a phantasia distorted by hubris—architecture that necessitated quarries having been turned into caves, that caused forests to have been leveled, and that demanded ludicrously overreaching columns (severally ll. 3-4 with ll. 7-8). Such despoliation and deformation of the natural, the speaker says however, imply a brain misshapen by its unnatural fantasies of excess, become a distorted “model” of the edifice it envisioned (ll. 5-6). This contrast, as we readily appreciate, opposes foreign architectural excess with natively English moderation, variously enacted abrogation of natural law with adherence to it and, finally, the ever-expansive concupiscence of the Fall with the moderation of renovatio. Consequently it suggests that, given our inevitable inheritance from the Fall, a merely Vitruvian notion of architecture will generate an architecture of the merely natural man. When the speaker asks, “Why should of all things man unruled / Such unproportioned dwellings build?” (ll. 9-10), we all know what the answer must be. The unregenerately “wanton mote of dust” cannot abide rectitudo and will not acknowledge due “dimension” (ll. 22 and 27 respectively). So unmodified Vitruvian theory will not be able to evade or transcend the Fall’s warping of humanity: it will not produce an architecture based upon and reflective of the truly human. It will not restrain human building from extravagance (such as can be seen in the villas celebrated by Statius). But what might be called an incarnational and even sacramental architecture will: one built on the Word and hence expressing restored humanity, recovery within the
human of *imago Dei*. It will make possible a sanctified Vitruvianism, that is, Vitruvian theory as perfected by the operation of grace.

Marvell’s speaker thus suggests that Appleton House simultaneously attests to the heroically Christian *pietas* of its owner and represents an architecture of regenerate humanity. Near the close to his description of the house he affirms both:

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So Honour better lowness bears,
Than that unwonted Greatness wears.
Height with a certain grace does bend,
But low things clownishly ascend.

A stately frontispiece of poor
Adorns without the open door:
Nor less the rooms within commends
Daily new furniture of friends.
The house was built upon the place
Only as for a mark of grace;
And for an inn to entertain
Its Lord a while, but not remain.
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(ll. 57-60, 65-72)

A couple of preliminaries might be noted here. First, in lines 71-72 Marvell initiates what is in effect the interspersing of verses by Fairfax amidst his own. This scattering of allusions recurs throughout the poem, and has been often acknowledged. Its implications have received less comment. One obvious significance is that Marvell’s patron becomes not only the poem’s addressee and central point of reference but virtually a participant in the poem as well. His words echo in those of the speaker, so that at times the voices of client and patron—of their personae—sound together, creating as it were a harmonious and respectful dialogue between Marvell’s verse and that of Fairfax. Marvell’s oblique and intimate conversation with his patron reminds us of a remark by Pliny, in a letter to Fuscus Salinator, about how he spends his summers in Tuscany. Pliny’s account of his pleasures includes conversation with the lettered among his domestics. He writes: “[T]hen I walk again with the members of my household, some of whom are well educated [cum meis ambulo, quorum in numero sunt eruditi]. Thus the evening is prolonged with varied conversation…” (9.36.4-5). Marvell’s latter-day version of this learned interchange between the master of an estate and his servants overturns its predecessor, and will culminate when the speaker of *Upon Appleton House* portrays himself as, among other eruditely ludic roles, Fairfax’s personal yet elusive Hermetic *vates* and “easy philosopher” (ll. 561-84, quoted from 561). Here, moreover, one could raise a further preliminary point. The concurrent affirmation of Fairfax’s regenerate heroism and of his residence’s regenerate architecture emphasizes that both are necessarily
paradoxical. Fairfax’s humble moderation and that of his house, according to Marvell’s speaker, signify his spiritual “magnitude”—his exceeding in Christian heroic virtue (compare ll. 41-42 with 53-56, quotation being from 53). Furthermore, since the Fairfax home is an incarnational architecture, built on the Word and manifesting renovatio, it embodies the sacred in the mundane, the transcendent in the lowly. As the speaker fables through a Vitruvian allusion, to view it with insight is to perceive a startling if miraculously effortless reconciliation of opposites: “These holy mathematics can / In ev’ry figure equal man” (ll. 47-48, and see also 49-52).

This sacred harmony of contrasts appears especially, within the lines quoted above, in the suggestion that Fairfax possesses an aristocratic grazia manifesting divine grace. The “certain grace” (l. 59) attributed to Fairfax implies at once an aristocratic maniera—recalling the poise with which Marvell associates Charles I on “the tragic scaffold”—and humility. Yet patrician style and Christian virtue are in him inseparable. The entrance to Appleton House is adorned by charity rather than by architectural extravagance; friendship adorns its inner space (ll. 65-68). Caritas and, more specifically, amicitia inform its moderation, indicating that “[t]he house was built upon the place / Only as for a mark of grace” (ll. 69-70)—which is to say that through Fairfax it becomes a place where social and theological grace are reconciled.

What matters most at this moment of the poem and for the remainder of it has close links to the concordia discors presented climactically in those lines. The heroically Christian virtue of Fairfax, identifying him as miles Christianus, implies that although his life on his country estate might seem retreat from the tumult of public life—particularly, now, from helping the Republic defend against the threat of Scottish invasion—in fact it is not. Nigel Smith writes, in his biography of Marvell:

> With the threatened invasion of a Scottish army at this time, the Council of State turned to Fairfax for his active participation, since the situation was now the one in which Fairfax had said he was ready to take up arms before he resigned [as Commander-in-Chief of the New Model Army, 25 June 1650]. Fairfax’s dilemma was whether he should take up arms for an uncertain cause, before the survival of the Commonwealth was guaranteed by its victory at Worcester on 3 September 1651.32

Marvell’s speaker implies that Fairfax might seem to have chosen otium and thereby evasion of negotium in service of the homeland, but he has as yet refrained from even negotium pro patria out of deference to what Calvin called negotium cum Deo: dealings with God. Two passages from the Institutes are helpful here. In 1.17.2 Calvin warns: “No one will weigh God’s providence properly and profitably but him who considers that his business [negotium] is with his Maker and the Framer of the universe.” Subsequently,
in 3.7.2 he adds: “For when Scripture bids us leave off self-concern, it not only erases from our minds the yearning to possess, the desire for power, and the favour of men, but it also uproots ambition and all craving for human glory and other more secret plagues. Accordingly, the Christian must surely be so disposed and minded that he feels within himself it is with God he has to deal throughout his life” (vt sibi in tota vita negotium cum Deo esse reputet). It is, by implication, precisely Fairfax’s retreat from business with the world—his withholding, at least thus far, even service to the embattled Republic—that intimates the primacy he gives as miles Christianus to dealings with God.

Marvell’s speaker will soon leave no doubt about that. After lamenting the Fall of England into civil war (ll. 321-44), he remarks of Fairfax amid the gardens of Appleton House:

And yet there walks one on the sod
Who, had it pleased him and God,
Might once have made our gardens spring
Fresh as his own and flourishing.
But he preferred to the Cinque Ports
These five imaginary forts:
And, in those half-dry trenches, spanned
Power with the ocean might command.

For he did, with his utmost skill,
Ambition weed, but conscience till.
Conscience, that heaven-nursetd plant,
Which most our earthly gardens want.
A prickling leaf it bears, and such
As that which shrinks at every touch;
But flowers eternal, and divine,
That in the crowns of saints do shine.

(ll. 345-60)

It was mentioned above that Fairfax had resigned from his role as commander-in-chief of the army on 25 June 1650. This he had done on principle, refusing to lead an invasion of Scotland unless in response to a Scottish invasion of England. Marvell’s speaker suggests that Fairfax has indeed, in Calvin’s words, forgone “the desire for power, and the favour of men,” that he has “uproot[ed] ambition and all craving for human glory.” And as he was then, Marvell’s speaker implies, so he remains. Fairfax will continue to honor the demands of conscience—and thus negotium cum Deo—before all else. He is no Caesar in Lucan’s vein, which could not entirely be said of Cromwell as imaged in An Horatian Ode; and, moreover, it was Cromwell who had taken up the office vacated by Fairfax. He is rather a miles Christianus in the Pauline terms of 1 Corinthians 9:25, seeking glory not in the world but
beyond it. Marvell’s speaker clearly hints that the priorities of Fairfax are those mandated in Matthew 6:33.

Neither a Caesar nor a Lucullus, Fairfax becomes in this episode not so much the general who might have been his homeland’s deliverer—a messiah to fallen England, perhaps a sanctified variant of Cincinnatus—but the miles Christianus who discerned that possibility as in fact a temptation. A resolved soul, he judiciously retreated: to retreat was his only way to move forward. Nevertheless, we recognize here that Marvell’s cumulative portrayal of Fairfax has affinities with elements of Lipsius’s political thought just as it does with elements of Calvin’s theology. The likenesses may be unexpected but are distinct. We recognize for example an alignment between Marvell’s image of Fairfax and Lipsius’s notion of obedience to conscience as signifying at once faith enacted and right reason followed. In his *Politica* Lipsius writes: “Conscience . . . is . . . an offshoot of Faith: and it is clearly rooted in Worship. For wherever Worship flourishes and thrives, so does Conscience. . . . [It] is THE SMALL SPARK OF RIGHT REASON LEFT IN MAN, THE JUDGE AND INDICATOR OF GOOD AND EVIL DEEDS” (1.5.1). More importantly we recognize that, in obeying the dictates of his conscience, Marvell’s Fairfax has observed what Lipsius characterizes as true piety while evading what Lipsius identifies as a false version of it—an unreasonable, excessive love for one’s country, which detracts from our duty to God and the quest for our true homeland, namely, heaven. Further, we see that Marvell’s image of Fairfax has similarities with Lipsius’s depiction of an ideal ruler.

At least some of those shared attributes can be discerned in both Fairfax himself and Appleton house—and this we might expect. Of those not revealed simultaneously by patron and residence, auctoritas, potentia and constantia are preeminent. In a remark that usefully clarifies how Marvell represents his patron’s status amid retirement from public affairs, Lipsius writes: “Majesty [maiestas] is A GREATNESS WHICH COMMANDS RESPECT, FOUND ON THE CREDIT OF VIRTUE OR RELATED QUALITIES. The Greeks called it Semnotes; we call it Authority when it is found in a private person [in privato Auctoritas], and Majesty in a Prince” (*Politica* 2.16.1). If, like Cromwell, Fairfax appears to possess auctoritas in the Roman sense, like Cromwell he possesses it also in the related though not identical sense given by Lipsius. On the other hand, unlike Cromwell he has laid potentia aside—at least, for now. Marvell’s speaker leaves unmentioned the Council of State’s request that Fairfax resume his military power in order to defend the Republic, for this decision is his alone to make. (Crucial decision-making is however a motif throughout the poem’s fables of the Fairfax dynasty, and of course includes references to other choices made by Marvell’s patron.) Lipsius’s reflections on power tellingly differentiate Fairfax, with this request before him, from Cromwell as depicted in An Horatian Ode:
Power . . . is the straight and royal way itself to unshakeable Authority. If everything else is there, but power isn’t: of what use is it? . . . Power, then, I here take to be THE COMMAND OF THE MEANS USEFUL FOR PRESERVING ONE’S OWN GOODS AND OBTAINING OTHER PEOPLE’S GOODS. Which command the following five instruments will give you: Riches, Arms, Planning, Alliances, Fortune. (4.9.5)\textsuperscript{37}

According to Marvell’s speaker, Fairfax has wholly avoided the dangers inherent in this formulation of power and yet has retained auctoritas. It is not apparent from An Horatian Ode that Cromwell, in extending his auctoritas, has altogether done so. Moreover, since Fairfax’s avoidance of those dangers resulted from his resignation in obedience to the dictates of his conscience, as Marvell’s speaker emphasizes, he has revealed himself as a person guided by right reason and hence capable of achieving constantia. In An Horatian Ode, Cromwell reveals not so much constantia as industria and diligentia. One could almost say that the two generals manifest complementary aspects of virtus.

The attributes of Lipsius’s ideal ruler that are revealed in both Fairfax and his residence are chiefly pietas and modestia. I have discussed the first of those above, and its consonance with Calvin’s notion of negotium cum Deo needs no further comment; but there does need to be some comment on how Lipsius’s concept of modestia accords with Calvin’s thought on moderation as in effect reworked by Marvell’s speaker at the poem’s start. In 2.15.1 of Lipsius’s Politica we read: “[M]odesty is AN UNDERSTANDING OF ONESELF AND ONE’S RELATIONS, WHICH IS MODERATED BY REASON AND NOT BOASTFUL IN ACTION.”\textsuperscript{38} He adds, prior to quoting Tacitus’s Annales 15.2, “But let my Prince temperate himself” (noster temperet). Marvell’s speaker suggests that the moderation embodied in Fairfax and likewise in his home is certainly reasonable inasmuch as it accords with the demands of nature, which is to say, with natural law. But the speaker also indicates the paradoxicality of that reasonableness. The humility of Fairfax himself and that of his residence at once reveal and understate his magnanimity. In doing so they transcend the rule of reason and adhere to the rule of grace; as we have seen, Fairfax’s moderation expresses an aristocratic grazia yet, more important, the higher grace informing his practices of caritas and amicitia. Lipsius’s Stoic ethic and the courtier’s maniera are both subsumed by a Calvinist pietas.

At the start to our tour of the Fairfax estate, then, Marvell’s speaker would have us perceive Appleton House as expressive of its owner’s renovatio and, in effect, princely attributes. Doing so, he implies Marvell’s re-imagining of an anthropocentric architecture, for at the poem’s outset Marvell thus presents a sanctified counterpart to Vitruvian thought, which sets before the reader a new model of place for the new polity, the new
society that is the Republic. In the subsequent nunnery episode he caricatures a much older, Catholic England’s version of sacred place and spiritual authority (ll. 81-280), while in his yet later reference to Cawood Castle (ll. 361-66) he satirizes the institutional religious power of the Stuart monarchy. Here, however, he presents a microcosm of spiritually renewed Protestant governance for a renewed England.

One immediate consequence is that Marvell simultaneously redirects the tradition of English country-house poetry and re-invents the paradigm of the Roman estate poem as developed by Statius. Upon Appleton House differs ambitiously from antecedent, royalist country house poems in its political allegiance, the degree of its religious emphasis, and its theological affiliations. It differs from its predecessors in scope as well. Across ninety-seven stanzas, Marvell’s speaker sings of the warrior hero—the culture hero—who has laid his arms aside but may at any moment take them up again. The patron whom Marvell’s speaker celebrates, with whose writings Marvell at times engages in dialogue, for whom he stages himself as a not always ludic vates, has his retreat from public life rendered on a grand scale. And that retreat, as we have seen, is in fact not the pursuit of otium at the expense of negotium but, rather, a heroic turning from the latter so as more rigorously to pursue negotium cum Deo. If Upon Appleton House therefore suggests Marvell’s aspiration to rewrite the country house poem, it also indicates his formulating anew—whether deliberately or otherwise—Statius’s model of the estate poem. Through his Christianizing of Vitruvius, for example, he elaborates upon rather than merely departs from that Roman precedent. Statius emphasizes that to see Pollius’s villa and its environs is to recognize that their owner upholds traditional values though not traditional religious beliefs. Marvell emphasizes that to view Appleton House is to perceive its owner’s affirmation of both. Yet, as the example of Pollius indicates, Marvell’s elaborating upon his Roman predecessor’s work has another aspect as well: Statius depicts Pollius as the genius loci of his estate; just so, with evident differences, does Marvell portray Fairfax. Finally, one could add that there is a subtle and important discontinuity between the two poets’ deployments of epideictic rhetoric, which points to the divergences between their ways of revealing poetic auctoritas. Whereas Statius uses amplificatio for the most part to display and celebrate a luxury that, governed by Epicurean restraint, implies the plenitude of his patrons’ lives, Marvell uses it in order to praise the riches of moderate living informed by renovatio and to mock extravagant living reflective of unchecked, fallen concupiscence.

This intricate myth of home and patron at the start of Marvell’s poem forms his foundation for the dynastic fables that he will thereafter unfold and integrate with portrayal of himself as a member of the Fairfax familia. His re-imagining of an anthropocentric architecture initiates at the same time, that is to say, those dialogues through which Marvell will interpret the homeland’s recent devastation—reading homeland and self in terms of a home secure but nevertheless surrounded by uncertainties. In particular,
it will thereby enable him to speculate that from his patron’s commitment to *negotium cum Deo* may ultimately follow deliverance of the *patria*. He implies that, whatever Fairfax may decide in response to the Council of State’s invitation, the Fairfax family has the potential to play an almost messianic role in resolving England’s discords. From Appleton House and its estate as “heaven’s centre, Nature’s lap, / And Paradise’s only map” (ll. 767-78) will come the eventual marriage of Mary Fairfax and so, he fables in erring kindness, an inevitably benign impact of the Fairfax dynasty once more upon England.

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Notes


5 “Quid primum mediumque canam, quo fine quiescam? / auratasne trabes an Mauros undique postes / an picturata lucentia marmora vena / mirer an emissas per cuncta cubilia Nymphas?”


7 “Iam paucia aratro iugera regiae / moles relinquent”—where “regiae” is obviously pejorative.


11 “atque utinam Fortuna mihi dare manibus aras, / par templis opus, aëriamque educere molem / Cyclopum scopulos ultra atque audaciae saxa / Pyramidum, et magno tumulum praetexere luco.”

12 “ipse madens oculis, araque animaeque sacerdos / praecinerem gemitum, cui te nec Cerberus omni / ore nec Orpheae quirent avertere leges. / atque tibi moresque tuos et facta canentem / fors et magniloquio non posthabuisset Homero, / tenderet aeterno [et] Pietas aequare Maroni.”

13 Compare, in this regard, 209-38. Allowing for the heavily stylized modesty topos of 237-38, see especially 233-34: “te nostra magistro / Thebais urgebate priscorum exordia vatum.”

In 2.2, Statius had celebrated Pollius Felix’s villa at Surrentum.

See 3.1.12: “o velox pietas!” Cf. 3.3.1: “Summa deum, Pietas.”

“Cernere facundi Tibur[s] glaciale Vopisci / si quis et inserto geminos Aniene penates...”

“vix ordine longo / suffecere oculi, vix, dum per singula ducor, / suffecere gradus, quae rerum turba!”

“his favit Natura locis, hic victa coleti / cessit.”

“locine / ingenium an domini mirer prius?”

“qui pectore magno / spemque metumque domas voto sublimior omni, / exemptus Fatis indignantemque refellens / Fortunam.”


And, further, just as by implication Fairfax is emphatically English, so Pollius is emphatically Roman (inasmuch as he is a venerator of mos maiorum).

Reference here and subsequently is to The Holy Bible, Quatercentenary Edition: An Exact Reprint in Roman Type, Page for Page, Line for Line and Letter for Letter of the King James Version, Otherwise known as the Authorized Version Published in the Year 1611, intro. Gordon Campbell (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2010).


The subsequent stanza’s brief reference to “Romulus his bee-like cell” (l. 40) further instances a culture hero who inhabits an environment smaller than he is great.

So Seneca had for example interpreted the villa of Scipio Africanus—and in terms that are directly pertinent to Marvell’s praise of Fairfax. Scipio’s greatest achievement was, according to Seneca, that “he showed moderation and a sense of duty to a marvelous extent.” Seneca continues: “I regard this trait in him as more admirable after his withdrawal from his native land than while he was defending her.” Further, he remarks to Lucilius when describing the small space where Scipio bathed, “Think, in this tiny recess the ‘terror of Carthage’, to whom Rome should offer thanks . . . used to bathe a body weary with work in the fields.” For the Senecan references, see his “On Scipio’s Villa,” in Epistulae Morales, trans. Richard M. Gummere, Loeb Classical Library, 3 vols. (1920;


31. In fact, as Nigel Smith notes, *Upon Appleton House* engages as well with verse by other members of the Fairfax family. See his *Andrew Marvell: The Chameleon*, at 95.


35. “Conscientia ... Pietatis soboles est: et origo ei palam a radice Cultus. Ubi enim ille floret et viget: haec pariter ... Est ... RELIQUA IN HOMINE RECTAE RATIONIS SCINTILLA BONORUM MALORUMQUE IUDEX ET INDEX.”

36. On true *pietas*, see *Politica* 1.2.1 and 3.5.1. On false, see *Concerning Constancy*, 1.8 and 1.11.


38. “[Modestia est] RATIONE TEMPERATUM, NEC ACTIONE EXSULTANTEM, DE SE SUISQUE SENSUM.”

39. This occurs too, with inclusion of Lady Fairfax, in *Upon the Hill and Grove at Bilbrough* (ll. 33-42). There are also references to humility and courtesy that gesture towards *caritas* (ll. 16-24—cf. 15), to *rectitudo* (ll. 55-56), to *prudentia* (l. 60), to Fairfax’s heroic virtue (ll. 65-72), and to Fairfax’ s repudiation of public glory (ll. 76-80).