

A Gardenist Reading of Andrew Marvell's "Upon Appleton House"

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1. INTRODUCTION

"Upon Appleton House" is an odd poem, and one proof of its oddness is the diversity of readings to which it has been subjected by twentieth-century literary critics. The poem has been read as a masque, as an allegory on any number of themes (the Civil War, or Marvell's employer Thomas Fairfax's military career), as an exercise in shifting visual perspectives, as a experiment is fused genres, as a continuation of the country house poem genre in which Ben Jonson and Robert Herrick wrote "To Penshurst" and "Panegyrick to Sir Lewis Pemberton" respectively, and as justification (or celebration) of the seizure of property (Williams 1975: 72-74). Though the action of the poem is set on the grounds of an estate that had been newly laid out in the 1640s, "Appleton House" has seldom been read in terms of Renaissance and Baroque landscape architecture and garden design. After reviewing the relevant secondary literature, I mean in this paper to detect hints that Fairfax's garden is described as it was, and to suggest that a number of fanciful or impossible elements in the poem are informed by contemporary European gardens. In explicating one passage which is both 'gardenist'¹ and something else, I will make a brief incursion into seventeenth-century theories of language and knowledge.

Maren-Sofie Røstvig pegs Andrew Marvell as a syncretistic Platonist: by her reckoning "Appleton House" depicts "a world which is by definition paradoxical" (Røstvig 1970: 238), based upon "a theological or religious concept (...) the contrast between innocence and corruption" (Røstvig 1961: 337) and dovetailing nicely with Old Testament redemption history. The landscape is a stage; what goes on there is a masque in which the crossing of the Red Sea, the Flood and Eden before the Fall are invoked in the reverse of their Biblical sequence; a New Creation is then achieved by the poet/Adam's vegetable crucifixion in the woods (he runs into a few thorns in stanza seventy-seven). Mary Fairfax's role in a redeemed world is not made terribly clear: perhaps she represents the God the Mother of Gnosticism, or a female fertility goddess recovered for human worship after the deconstruction of patriarchal religion. In the latter case, "Upon Appleton House" would be transformed into a remarkable precursor of contemporary feminist theology. If only Marvell weren't

¹ I have taken this term from the art historian John Dixon Hunt, who takes it from Horace Walpole.

concerned, in stanzas ninety-three and ninety-four, with Mary's marriage plans and the fate of Fairfax's properties.

Ann Berthoff also reads the poem in terms of staged spectacle, "a masque of nature presented as a tribute to a public figure whom Marvell seeks to honour as a man of virtue" (Berthoff 1970: 165) depicting "the aesthetic and political aspects of the soul's temporal life" (Berthoff 1970: 163). As in other masque-readings, Berthoff assigns the stanzas preceding the meadow/harvest scene to other genres. Rosalie Colie, in the more than two hundred pages given over to "Upon Appleton House" in *My Echoing Song: Andrew Marvell's Poetry of Criticism*, finds echoes of Dutch landscape painting, Renaissance emblem books, various experiments and advances in the science of optics, and magic lanterns. In terms of purely literary antiquarianism, she identifies a series of traditional Renaissance devices² used in the poem to present flux, mutability and metamorphosis, as well as numerous instances of Biblical typology.³ Interestingly, whereas Berthoff reads the woods episode in terms of Genesis, Colie sees it as re-casting of the Song of Solomon (1970: 251).

"Appleton House" has also been read as political allegory on the Civil War, the king and Cromwell (D. C. Allen, qtd. in Berthoff 1970: 164 and Warnke 1978: 237): the ground-nesting rail cut down by a mower's scythe is made to represent the beheaded monarch. Warnke interprets the meadow sequence as a ritual, "steps performed in order to assure the continuation of fertility, the vital recharging of the seasonal cycle" (Warnke 1978: 243). The poem's weirdness is thus derived from a need to "enact chaos, for without the return of chaos no new return is possible" (Warnke 1978: 243). The woods are again taken as the site of rebirth, and Mary Fairfax is fitted into the pattern as "the female principle, the epitome of all that has been learned in the meadow and the forest" (Warnke 1978: 249). Donald Friedman takes "the life of the spirit and the mind" to be Marvell's "commanding theme", emphasising the poet's scientific treatment of the process of perception in a roving consciousness. The landscape he treats as "imagined" (Friedman 1978: 328) in the sense of "free fantasia". A spokesman for judicious fence-sitters, Thomas Wheeler⁴ remarks on Marvell's "ability to surprise us with an unexpected and decidedly private view of the world" (Wheeler 1996: 35) while affirming that the poem lacks logical progression, argumentative structure, and a conclusion. A. Álvarez, in a flash of enviable lucidity, has suggested that at least some of the poem's special effects have nothing more than entertainment value and owe their inclusion to a desire to amuse Mary Fairfax (qtd. in Berthoff 1970: 172).

Few critics consider the Appleton estate in much detail. William Alexander McClung's thesis concerning manor houses, prodigy houses, hospitality, and incipient capitalism is directly relevant to his discussion of Jonson, Carew, and Herrick: Marvell he takes to "deform Jonson's genre" (1977: 5) by stressing solitude rather than the estate as a model of ethical life in community.⁵ Where in the case of the earlier poets McClung includes a detailed and copiously illustrated discussion of architecture and garden design, of Appleton he remarks only that it was a rather plain structure with a number of

² The uniting of classical with Christian elements, allusions to Virgil, and the theme of the "world turned upside-down", to name a few.

³ Mary Fairfax, for example, is typologically related to Eve before the Fall, as is her ancestress Isabel Thwaites (Colie 1970: 252); and the mowers in the meadow are the anti-type of the mowing angels in Revelations (Colie 1970: 260).

⁴ As an industry, Marvell would seem to have peaked in the late New Critical period, as close readings merged with old historicism—in imitation, perhaps, of seventeenth-century antiquarians. It is worthy of note that 1970 saw two hefty Marvell studies published by Princeton University Press, while the latest monograph on Marvell, part of the Twayne World Authors Series, is intended for under-graduate rather than scholarly consumption. Even the title—*Andrew Marvell Revisited*—implies that interest had faded.

⁵ The genre is characterised by descriptions of the typical behaviour of the owner of the house and of the routine of his household, as well as an estate tour that ends in the great hall where, by custom, all members of the estate community were invited to segregated banquets.

Dutch-inspired elements, such as stepped gables on the roof. McClung does point out that the antithetic houses of the earlier poems –“proud ambitious heaps” like Hardwick Hall and Wollaton Hall, built for “envious show”– have their counterparts here in the nunnery (no longer standing) and in the work of an unidentified foreign architect. Stanzas which could be read architecturally, though not to the exclusion of other readings, McClung prefers to interpret idealistically. For instance, stanza seven reads:

Yet thus the laden House does sweat,
And scarce induces the Master great:
But where he comes the swelling Hall
Stirs, and the Square grows Spherical;
More by his Magnitude distrest,
Then he is by its straitness prest:
And too officiously it slights
That in it self which him delights.⁶

Of this stanza, McClung writes, “I agree with Ann Berthoff that the image is purely verbal” (McClung 1977: 162), having to do with an anthropomorphic house rather than a dome or cupola over a cubic space.

The art historian Roy Strong takes the opposite tack in *The Renaissance Garden in England* (1979). Almost in passing he suggests that “Upon Appleton House” could be fitted into a history of landscape architecture as well as a history of poetry. More specifically, he sees Marvell’s poem as a narrative patterned after visitors’ “literary” experience of Italian Renaissance gardens: both poem and park are “iconographic scenario[s] celebrating national local and familial history” (Strong 1979: 214). Strong makes some odd statements that seem to have more to do with the cohesion of his narrative than with “Upon Appleton House”. “[I]n the person of Marvell,” he writes, “we stand on the brink of change”:

On the one hand his garden is still royalist and emblematic, on the other it is scientific. More important it is a reflection of the owner’s mind, stretching designedly out from the walls of the country house to embrace the estate around, whether formal gardens or parkland or meadow, all of which are to be read in the same manner as expressions of the ideals, aspirations and achievement of the owning family. With this we look forward to the ideas that were to create the revolutionary style of *le jardin anglaise* in the eighteenth century. (Strong 1979: 215)

Rather than reading “Upon Appleton House” into parks designed by Capability Brown or decoding both the animated landscape and its foliage as emblems or mystic hieroglyphs, I would like to take up Strong’s notion that a seventeenth-century poem about a garden may have to do with seventeenth-century gardens. To that end there follow two discussions of gardens: the former is a frame for the latter, which in turns becomes a frame for the poem.

2. GARDENIST BACKGROUND I: CANONS OF TASTE

Why the Garden of Eden? Why not the Meadow of Eden? Or the Grove of Eden? The oldest image of a harmonious relationship between humanity and the natural world is that of a place not naturally occurring—not accidentally, randomly, arbitrarily growing, but planted. God plants the garden; the

⁶ This and all further quotations from “Upon Appleton House” are taken from Gordon Campbell’s 1997 edition.

garden satisfies all the worldly needs of humanity. The garden is climate-controlled at something like 23 degrees, with an ever-so-soft breeze blowing; there is no need to wear clothes, the body goes unprotected; and vegetable fertility has human meaning. The garden provides: though planted, it would seem not to be planted in rows: no-one has to worry about turning a team of cattle or a tractor around in Eden. In Eden there is no work.

Now that I have represented the Garden of Eden, I want to speculate as to why the Tuscans are trying to copyright Tuscany. The Tuscan authorities claim that too many television adverts – especially car adverts – are shot in the Tuscan countryside; apparently, nothing could seem more like an earthly paradise for the average European. What Tuscan and Catalan and (in a very different form) Chinese landscapes have in common is an ancient, continuous, shaping human presence: terracing, planting in rows, irregular fields that fit the folds of the land: the human presence responds to its natural environment – notice the way the Catalan prose writer Josep Pla describes farmhouses in the his native Empurdà region: they are configured by wind and soil and sunlight and flowing water; they seem like outcrops of rocks, or to have grown there. Nonetheless, building them is sweaty business, and the land does not provide unless it is worked. We are still in a kind of garden, but certainly out of Eden.

The result of this ancient, continuous, immediate, unplanned (in the sense of plotting actions on paper before execution) shaping human presence is beautiful. If this shaping human presence comes to predominate, if it is discontinuous, if it shapes more suddenly, then we move down a *continuum* of increasing geometry, less and less recognisably natural forms; more metal and stone, more densely packed together; and (significantly) less visible water. The *continuum* I am imagining begins with eighteenth-century English gardens and parkland (Capability Brown; no ‘Keep off the Grass’ signs) and proceeds through more formal, French or Italian gardens, to the notion of a garden city, that of a North American suburb. If we were to remove nature from the picture all-together we’d get Wall Street. In fact, the suburb is as much a built environment as the skyscraper is: a lawn is not a meadow with a house built felicitously on its back fringe, but the absence a natural “something else” that was bulldozed, making way for workers with turf to unroll. Not everyone agrees that the result is beautiful.

What if this shaping presence should recede? You soon find yourself in the Wordsworthian landscape, where nature is not shaped but transmuted into mind; or, going further back, you might find yourself in the sublime landscapes described in Edmund Burke’s *Philosophical Enquiry*, sudden suspensions of the perceiver’s sense of scale, or sudden absence of presences that seem immutable and permanent – Alpine landscapes (for example) provide tranquillity tinged with terror.

The landscape with I am most familiar, that of Canada, is the other extreme of the *continuum*, the unshaped counterpart of suburbia and Wall Street: it is something you never see in European literary traditions, the meeting of a consciousness molded by Romantic nature poetry and landscape painting from Lorraine to Constable and a landscape that – even when over-logged – had not been conquered, but merely over-run. It’s big, but you can’t see its bigness all at once; it’s an endless undulation of low hills, an endless series of lakes, fir and spruce trees, and dense undergrowth. It’s not hospitable: it’s cold; it can’t be farmed – under a few centimetres of top-soil you find fire clay – and it’s almost without landmarks. It’s a meaningless landscape, unless you call blackflies meaning.

As one moves from the ‘bush’ extreme of the *continuum* to the other, the architectural element increases. The architect sometimes works by subterfuge: the sort of landscape in which Diana Spencer was recently interred no doubt required huge earthworks and a team of hydraulic engineer, but the architect’s intervention as such is unseen. The degree to which garden-goers expect architecture, or any other design, to be conspicuous underlies the canons of taste predominant in any one culture. Every North American come to live in Spain has at first felt that some major parks – Barcelona’s de la Ciutadella and de l’Espanya Industrial parks, for instance – were not *real* parks: in

real parks, dusty paths have been worn down by generations of walkers, everything is green, and very little is regular; in real parks, there are few buildings, and the lawns are not raised. Nonetheless, the best-known and in many ways prototypical parks in North America –Central Park in New York and Mount Royal in Montreal, both designed by Frederick Law Olmsted– are not roped-off snippets of virgin country: rather, they are *simulacra* of wilderness sprinkled with the simulacra of settlement.

Renaissance parks were neither wilderness nor *simulacra* of wilderness but (to adapt a phrase of Northrop Frye's) the conquest of nature by an intelligence that loved both nature and conquest. They called attention to love of conquest and love of nature in roughly equal measure: in England the former would diminish in prominence over time, though of course parks never ceased to be devised and constructed by mechanical means. In the period, they were meant to amuse and astonish by means of engineered special effects which no-one mistook for naturally occurring phenomena. Gardens were open-air museums, displayed scientific collections and vast thematically-programmed entertainment complexes, the Disneyworlds of their time.⁷ It is the context of such gardens that I propose to re-read "Upon Appleton House".

3. GARDENIST BACKGROUND II: THE SEVENTEENTH CENTURY

"The history of gardening, as far as it concerns England during the seventeenth century," writes John Dixon Hunt in his paper on the gardenist background for Marvell's poetry, "is essentially the importation of European models to enlarge the scale and the concept of the Tudor garden" (Hunt 1978: 331). The garden at smaller country houses in the second half of the sixteenth century were "generally small and unadventurous in scope or decoration" (Hunt 1978: 332). They constituted an extension of the house's floor-plan onto the surrounding grounds, with corridors and rooms marked off. Decoration was quite limited. Prodigy house gardens, such as those at Theobalds and Wimbledon, included grottoes, labyrinths, cisterns, columns, and spouting fountains. They were nevertheless laid out on quite simple plans based on squares and rectangles. These parks juxtaposed weight-triggered fountains that sprayed unsuspecting visitors with sculpture gardens and elaborate topiary figures:⁸ but they were not "to draw a visitor from one section to the next nor to involve him mentally or psychologically in his explorations" (Hunt 1978: 332).

The introduction of Italian Renaissance architecture into England brought with it the 'staged' qualities of Italian garden design; Hunt points to Inigo Jones's use of divided staircases and covered walks in his designs for Jacobean and Caroline masques as evidence that divisions were to be understood theatrically, as a "sequential experience of discovery" (Hunt 1978: 335). Roy Strong stresses the role of a little-known French engineer, Salomon de Caus, who worked in England during the reign of James I. Caus had been instrumental in the revival of complex air- and water-driven machinery (Strong 1979: 75): Caus exploited the tricks he had found in a 1589 Italian translation of an ancient text (the *Pneumatics* by Hero of Alexandria) to devise speaking statues, mobile sculptures and performing automata.⁹ He planned, but may not have executed, an automaton designed to play an organ in an artificial cave (Strong 1979: 101). Other effects were descriptive or imitative, though

⁷ Tim Burton, who has often based set design on American amusement or theme parks, united the suburban and Renaissance gardening traditions to considerable effect in *Edward Scissorhands* by having the protagonist clip hedges and evergreens into fantastically elaborate shapes.

⁸ The gardener William Lawson (c. 1570-1618) assured the readers of *A New Orchard and Garden* that "[y]our gardener can frame your lesser wood to the shape of men armed in the field, ready to give battle: or swift running hounds" (qtd. in Sieveking 1899: 80). In Holland in the 1630s, English traveller William Brereton saw box trimmed to the shape of a captain on horseback (Hunt 1978: 342).

⁹ A minor attraction, visible in de Caus's drawings, is "l'ou com balla" (print in Strong 1979: 94), a hard-boiled egg balanced in the main jet of a fountain. I use the Catalan term because "l'ou com balla" forms a well-known part of the Barcelona Corpus Christi festivities.

Strong calls them symbolic: one garden of the 1610s was a diagram of the pre-Copernican universe; another, somewhat earlier garden was shaped like a star-fort, with bulwarks and ramparts.¹⁰

For the remainder of the century, according to Hunt, Continental garden designs circulated in England in two forms: first-hand reports from travellers; and second-hand in engravings, paintings, and travel books. The models for these designs had at first been Italian, and were based Classical literary descriptions of aristocratic gardens –archeological evidence was scanty. They featured terraced landscapes on sloping ground, zigzagging paths, and plenty of ancient statues. The effect was no longer regularly geometrical, but ‘magical’, as the Jacobean diplomat Sir Henry Wotton suggests in this passage from *The Elements of Architecture*.

First, I must note a certain contrariety between building and gardening; for as the Fabrics should be regular, so Gardens should be irregular, or at least cast into a very wild Regularity. To exemplifie my conceit, I have seen a garden, for the manner perchance incomparable, into which the first Access was a high walk like a Terrace, from whence might be taken a general view of the whole Plot below, but rather in a delightful confusion, then with any plain distinction of the pieces. From this the Beholder descending many steps, was afterwards conveyed again by several mountings and valings, to various entertainments of his sent and sight: which I shall not need describe, for that were poetical, let me only note this, that every one of these diversities, was as if he had been magically transported into a new Garden. (qtd. in Sieveking 1899: 84)

The landscapes so designed were often quite large: they normally illustrated episodes from classical mythology in a series of formal gardens –varied in design and botany, with parterres in simple quarters or in any number of knots or dough-cutter shapes– and ‘informal’ areas. The latter were not yet the English gardens or parks that became so well known in the eighteenth century: Capability Brown’s work was meant to fill a frame, shutting out all other elements. In Renaissance frames, these ‘wild’ landscapes were compartmentalised, and fitted into regular shapes. The only exception is the self-conscious use on the part of architects of agricultural land as a backdrop (Hunt 1978: 338).

These gardens also differed from their English counterparts in engineering bravado. Simulated thunder sounded from within caves; rain fell from trees; ducks pecked; Fame tooted a trumpet and flew away; clowns fed tigers, and tigers looked about contentedly; figures from Ovid’s *Metamorphoses* metamorphosed; Orpheus played his harp and animals danced to his music, humans became trees; animals turned to stone; and artificial birds chirped and flapped their wings. Automata were sometimes set amidst formal gardens, along alleys, or in amphitheatres; most were in grottoes, and their actions formed stages in a long mechanical performance.

Hunt claims that most Italian Renaissance gardens were “constructed after a specific literary programme” (Hunt 1978: 338); that is, gardens were “hieroglyphs” to be read.¹¹ Not only statuary and grottoes contributed to this: arcane and mystic meanings were associated with plants. Some gardens were laid out as allegories of political and family histories; others used heraldic devices to “brand” the estate with the mark of the family of owners. This not to deny that Italian and English

¹⁰The commissioner of this star-fort garden, Sir Henry Fanshawe, was a favourite of Henry, Prince of Wales’s: the precedent for Fairfax’s military flower beds was royalist.

¹¹The concluding passage of the first chapter in Sir Thomas Brown’s “The Garden of Cyrus” is a well known instance of the “hieroglyphic” theory of gardens (Browne 1969: 180). The English Jesuit Henry Hawkins in his *Parthenia Sacra* described a perfect house designed by a perfect architect and set amidst “an emblematic garden of perfection” (qtd. in Colie 1970: 187); Hawkins’s garden was, according to Hunt, a mystic “text”. For an illustrated account of Hawkins’s emblems. See Strong (1979: 209-10).

Italianate gardens were intended for nice strolls, beautiful views, pleasant smells, and wonder: 'emblematic' design existed alongside with the notion that delight was the function of a garden, as shelter is the function of a building. Roy Strong, for his part, records this double-barrelled rationale behind late Renaissance garden design:

Vieri [an Italian garden theorist who flourished in the 1580s] sees the whole garden [of Pratolino] as an emulation of all the mechanical wonders of antiquity gathered into one place. Like the *intermezzi*, he dwells on the stupendous effect that such things have on the onlookers. (Strong 1979: 82)

Indeed, contemporary English visitors returning from visits to the best-known gardens on the Continent invariably relate more wonder than allegory.

The best-known English visitor was John Evelyn, who visited France, Italy and Holland in the 1640s (Marvell was, according to Milton, travelling in France, Holland, Italy and Spain in the same period). The Continental gardens and landscape architecture Evelyn wrote of in his diary conform to the models described by Strong and Hunt: a diversity of landscapes set around a central formal garden of parterres, often on various levels; the representation of natural and architectural elements that could not otherwise have been included in the design, and mechanical or human animation. This often involved elaborate hydraulic engineering: in Brussels in 1641 Evelyn saw a "hedge of water, in the forme of lattice-worke" and another fountain whose waters resembled a palisade. In some cases manpower substitutes for water:

At the end of this garden is a little theatre, made to change with divers pretty scenes, and the stage so ordered that with figures of men and womyn paynted on light boards, and cut out, and, by a person who stands underneath, made to act as if they were speaking, by guiding them, and reciting words in different tones as the parts require. (Evelyn 1959: 65)

Here and elsewhere, Evelyn notes that labour is sensed but not seen: "you see no gardners or men at worke, and yet all is kept in such exquisite order as if they did nothing else but worke" (Evelyn 1959: 74). That this entertainment should be described as a theatre is not casual: landscaping often reminded garden-goers of theatrical structures, and the movement of water once the sluice had been opened to begin set engines going often triggered successive episodes in a performance:

'tis [the garden at Pratolino] situate in a huge meadow like an amphitheater, ascending (...) In the Grove Pan sits pan feeding his flock, the Water making a melodious sound through his pipe, & an Hercules whose Club yields a shower of Water, which falling into a huge Concha has a naked Woman riding on the back of Dolphins. (Evelyn 1959: 214)

Missing elements and perspectives cut short could be supplied and lengthened by placing walls behind landscapes, and painting further landscapes on them. The Count de Liancourt's palace is typical of such solutions:

Towards his study and bed-chamber joynes a little garden, which tho' very narrow, by the addition of a well painted perspective is to appearance greatly enlarged, to this is another, supported by arches, in which runs a stream of water, rising in the aviary, out

of a statue, and seeming to flow for some miles, by being artificially continued in the painting, when it sinks down at the wall. It is a very agreeable decept. (Evelyn 1959: 65)

In another French garden, Evelyn noted the Arch of Constantine painted onto a well-placed wall of considerable height, “as big as is the real one” (Evelyn 1959: 62); Evelyn thinks that on-lookers were deceived into thinking the painting a three-dimensional stone construction. Perhaps they wanted to be deceived. Where space permitted, productive land was featured as one more element of landscape design. At Richelieu’s villa at Rueil –often cited as the inspiration for Versailles– Evelyn admired “the vast enclosure, and variety of ground, in the large garden, containing vineyards, cornfields, meadows, groves (whereof one is of perennial greens)” (Evelyn 1959: 62).

Historians have interpreted these gardens as expressions of Renaissance hermeticism, as expressions of an enthusiasm for the sciences of botany and mechanics, as paradisiacal retreats from the world, and as *stately* pleasure parks: the most famous gardens were owned by ruling families or high state officials. Though originating in the Catholic south and owing their popularity in England in part to Jacobean and Caroline friendliness towards Catholic powers, every faction could find some element of garden design to its taste. Sir William Waller, a Parliamentary general in the Civil War, wrote “Divine Meditations (Upon the Sight of a Pleasant Garden)” in which he approves of the contriving of garden scenes to psychological ends so long as those are pious (Sieveking 1899: 92-93). Admittedly, Waller stresses well-kept alleys, well-trimmed hedges and well-pruned trees; he makes not mention of automata. When the Parliamentarians took control of royal gardens in England in 1649 they sold off fountains and statues, cut down trees for use as timber and abandoned the grounds. Yet they were not dead set against gardens: Fairfax, after all, designed at least the formal garden at Appleton along with the house as part of a single architectural unit.

Chandra Mukerji is the author of a recent dissenting opinion. Mukerji’s materialist reading of seventeenth-century French gardens focusses on four aspects: gardens as sites for conspicuous collection; widening participation in the discourse of garden design as a function of the publishing trade –a way for the reading and writing classes to establish, by basing their designs on (often foreign) books, membership in a societal tier just below that of the court elite; gardens as the records of the reach of the nation’s trading system– seeds and seedlings brought from afar meant that money from “here” could buy and move objects anywhere; and “gardens in the cultural redefinition of nature from a manifestation of God to a kind of secular property to be controlled and used for economic and political power” (Mukerji 1993: 441). This last point has as much to do with science, technology and a growing power to control and adapt the natural world as with mapping and controlling territory. Under Richelieu and Louis XIV the French state undertook a host of enterprises intended to study the realm in order to better regulate territory and impose standardised control over it. For example, the discrepant forms of municipal administration were gradually being made to conform to a single model. The Department of Roads and Bridges was charged with the writing of annual reports on the conditions of all the roads in France, and it sent out travelling surveyors to accomplish the task. The first mandate of government was to know the ‘things’ governed; once catalogued, these ‘things’ fell under the rubric of a single, standardising administrative initiative, an ordering intended to be permanent and designed to serve a single authority. Gardens, according to Mukerji, were playful representations of this activity, dry -runs for serious political business.

4. A GARDENIST READING OF “UPON APPLETON HOUSE”

A number of elements in “Appleton House” suggest an awareness of the extent and variety of contemporary garden design. I do not claim that Marvell approves of or celebrates such design, nor do I consider the poem evidence that Fairfax had included automata in the design executed on his estate.

Rather, I believe Marvell used the discourse at hand because it provided conventions his audience understood.

A number of explicit gardenist elements may be identified. The "wonton mote of dust" in stanza three is enclosed in a park or walled garden. The catalogue of garden elements in stanza ten—"fragrant Gardens, shaddy woods / Deep Meadows, and transparent Floods"—is a *topos* dating back to Pliny (Sieveking 1899: 15-17) and repeated by Sidney and Bacon, among others. The juxtaposition of hedging and wild creatures in stanza thirteen invokes the menageries which, along with huge aviaries, were standard fare in larger gardens. Parterres, alleys, and a planned symbolic programme appear in stanzas thirty-six and thirty-seven. The garden towers in stanza forty-two are a bit of a mystery: I can find no references to towers in English garden literature, though banqueting houses were sometimes tower-like. A tower does appear in an eighteenth-century engraving of the seventeenth-century Buen Retiro garden,¹² in the middle of a pond, looking like the steeple of a church in a flooded valley (Ozores y Saavedra 1973: 127). The wood of stanzas sixty-one to seventy-eight is "double" because a lane runs through it; the labyrinths of the latter stanza may be read as another area on the estate, adjacent to the wood. Berthoff interprets the dense wood as a pole-hedge, *i.e.* trees planted very close together and trimmed in such a way as to resemble a wall (Berthoff 1970: 181). As for the architectural elements in stanza sixty-four:

Dark all without it knits; within
It opens passable and thin;
And in as loose an order grows,
As the Corinthean Porticoes.
The Arching Boughs unite between
The Columnes of the Temple green;
And underneath the winged Quires
Echo about their tuned Fires.

they may reflect the practice of lining alleys with high-branching deciduous trees whose foliage intermingled with time, thus created a vault effect (drawing in Strong 1979: 93).

Another element comes explicitly from older garden literature, and was to be picked up by Milton. In stanza seventy-three, to which I will return in a moment, the poet reads "in this light Mosaick". Berthoff, without explaining herself, calls this "a triple pun if there ever was one" (Berthoff 1970: 183)—well-trained New Critics see more meanings than ordinary, head-scratching mortals. Rosalie Colie also considers this to be both the light of Moses, mottled real light on the forest floor, and (via etymologies) the light of emblems (Colie 1970: 234-35). As Moses is not particularly associated with light, nor with utter divine revelation, I take this to be Marvell's picking up on Sir Philip Sidney's use of "Mosaic" and the motif of a building-like canopy of trees in the following passage from *The Countess of Pembroke's Arcadia*:

[B]ut scarcely they had taken that into their consideration, but that they were suddenly
stept into a delicate Green; of each side of the Green a Thicket, and behind the
Thickets again new Beds of Flowers, which being under the trees, the trees were to
them a Pavilion, and they to the Trees a Mosaical floor. (qtd. in Sieveking 1899: 66)

This image turns up in Book IV of *Paradise Lost*, where under a "roof of thickest covert" (ll. 692-93) the mixed undergrowth in the bower of Eden "wrought/Mosaic" (ll. 690-91). Varied vegetation and light filtered through dense foliage do that; it is a common sight.

¹²Marvell mentions the "Bel Retiro" in stanza ninety-five.

In the same paragraph, Milton uses the verb “to frame” to describe the activity of God “the sovran Planter” (l. 691) in making “[a]ll things to man’s delightful use”. “To frame” often conveyed the planning and planting of a garden in the Renaissance: William Lawson, in *A New Orchard & Garden*, speaks of “framing” both topiary and labyrinths (Sieveking 1899: 80). It seems possible, then, that the “sober Frame” of the first line or “Appleton House” is not the house but the garden, or at least the house and the garden: the “Forrain architect” might then be an architecturally trained garden designer such as the Frenchman André Le Nôtre, already active in the 1640s, who would go on to create the gargantuan gardens at Versailles. If the foreign architect is a garden planner, the quarries drawn to caves must grottoes, artificial caves; and the “dwellings” of the second stanza may be identified with the “hollow Palace” of the third, a windy structure built for the sake of the ordering a vast area, analogous (by virtue of the word “impark”) to a garden. What could be windier than the open air? What could be more hollow than a floor-plan without walls, the geometry of architecture inflicted on green rather than grey?

Perhaps the greatest conjunction of contemporary garden discourse and Marvell’s imagination occurs in the meadow sequence. The meadow sequence ‘reminds’ many critics of a masque staged in Marvell’s mind, and projected on the landscape; it ‘reminds’ me of the sort of mechanised theatre driven by hydraulics: the mnemonic devices to which Marvell subjects his critics are the same: “scene” and “engine” near the beginning of the meadow sequence, and “scene” and “acts” just before the flood:

No Scene that turns with Engines strange
Does oftner then these Meadows change,
For when the Sun the Grass hath vext,
The tawny Mowers enter next;
Who seem like Israelites to be,
Walking on foot through a green Sea.
To them the Grassy Deeps divide,
And crowd a Lane to either Side.
(Stanza 49)

(...)

This Scene again withdrawing brings
A new and empty Face of things;
A levell’d space, as smooth and plain,
As Clothes for Lilly strecht to stain.
The World when first created sure
Was such a Table rase and pure.
Or rather such is the Toril
Ere the Bulls enter at Madril.
(Stanza 56)

The meadow sequence is a seventeenth-century action movie, though there is no action hero: giant grasshoppers appear and disappear; mowers proceed through the field and cull flowers; they swing their scythes and cut the grass in a war-like fashion; one of them unwittingly slices through a bird, which dies; “bloody Thestylis”, in the Mediterranean tradition of improvising with readily available ingredients, cooks the bird and remarks on her good fortune; the mowers finish cutting the hay; there is much dancing and kissing; the hay is piled; the mowers, their friends and relations all leave; local villagers chase their cows through the meadow; and the meadow is flooded. Eleven events in fewer than eighty lines is a quick pace for poetry, and by all rights stanza fifty-two should be deducted from the total. Masque, the usual model suggested for this sequence, relied on spectacle, sumptuous costumes, stage machinery and scene changes: more often than not, masques set symbolically

important characters against elaborate settings –Charles I perched on a mountain peak as the British Hercules, to cite one instance. Spectators were meant to dwell on tableaux. In the meadow sequence and in the design of automata for real garden spectacles, the emphasis is not on tableaux but on actions triggering actions. The implied contrast, then, is not with masques (which were more often than not indoor entertainments) but with the hidden outdoor “Engines strange” on which a lesser species of theatre depended. Moreover, the setting –a soon-to-be flooded meadow– is consistent with the latest advances in garden design: Evelyn, travelling in Italy, marvels that a technique for controlling the flow of water has been developed to such a sophisticated level: “[T]his artificial river is in places so shallow that reserves of water are kept with sluices, which they open and shut with a most ingenious invention or Engine, so as to be governed by a child” (Evelyn 1959: 229). Sluices were used to flood and drain “water parterres” (Strong 1979: 84), sunken gardens featuring mounts (raised ground which visitors climbed to admire the prospect) which became islands when the sluices were opened. Flooding is, of course, presaged in the passage: the meadow is compared to the sea in stanzas forty-eight, forty-nine and fifty-five. Marvell’s reference to “pyramids of hay” in “rocks” in the last of these stanzas correlates with the widespread practice of decorating artificial lakes and ponds with rocks and geometric mounts (Strong 1979: 128-29). All in all, the meadow sequence is the kind of spectacle one might expect to see in a garden. Marvell does not tell us that Fairfax had installed automata and sluices on his estate, nor does he include them in the passage: the “scenes that turn with Engines strange” are elsewhere. He invokes these elements, playing off contemporary tastes and expectations.

Marvell invokes a less public discourse elsewhere in the poem, toying a weird but popular mixture of early philology and religious thought, and playing off the interests of a scholarly audience. In the woods, in stanzas seventy-one to seventy-three, the speaker of “Upon Appleton House” talks to birds and trees. They talk back, and all the knowledge of the classical world is transmitted in the conversation. Perhaps *all* knowledge is transmitted to the speaker: Rosalie Colie sees the speaker as a Solomonic high priest experiencing the numinous (Colie 1970: 235); Røstvig sees the speaker as a pre-lapsarian Adam. Yet Marvell’s contemporaries thought the language of nature and of Adam recoverable without reversing history and returning to Eden. The theory they bandied about spoke of a hot-line to all learning, an un-learning of all post-lapsarian knowledge. In stanza seventy-two:

Already I begin to call
In their most-learned Original:
And where I Language want, my Signs
The Bird upon the Bough divines;
And more attentive there doth sit
Then if She were with Lime-twigs knit.¹³
No Leaf does tremble in the Wind
Which I returning cannot find.

that theory, the theory of Adamic language, is present.

The Adamic argument, though well known, bears repeating. If we could speak that tongue that Adam spoke in Eden we would have no need for philosophy or science or any speculation: we would know it all in the saying of it all. Words would have an expanded, a complete sense. No sliding would occur between signifier and signified, nor any semantic confusion: meaning would no longer depend on one speaker more or less coinciding with another in arbitrary sounds and arbitrary semantic packets.

¹³Lime-twigs were twigs coated with a sticky, white substance and used to ensnare birds.

Hans Aarsleff calls 1492 the watershed year for western theories of the origin and nature of language. After the expulsion of the Jews from Spain, cabalistic doctrines spread across the Continent; these provided, according to Aarsleff, new means of reading the Old Testament (Aarsleff 1982: 281). Two stories in Genesis are key: Adam's name-giving and the confusion of tongues after Babel. If Adam was the greatest philosopher (and philologist) who had ever lived, and if his state in Eden before the Fall implied perfect knowledge, the names he gave to all the animals must express their essence far better than any names since. Indeed, his words must have been nearly divine; his creation (of human language) could almost be read as a parallel to God's creation of the world. God knows the name before the thing named exists, and so speaks it and makes it. For God the creation of a verbal universe is the same as the creation of the physical universe, so saying is doing. Adam must have known the thing before he knew the name, so saying was knowing: the human verbal universe was, before the Fall, perfect knowledge of God's creation.

In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries it was possible to reject the possibility that, in knowing Adam's 'natural' language, one could know the nature of things: any trace of Adam's language would have been swept away by the Babylonian Confusion. It was also possible to argue that a vast etymological enterprise, studying all known tongues, would reveal trace elements of the original natural language. Aarsleff points out that such hopes gave rise to comparative language study centred on the Hebrew of the Bible, studies that earned the attention and respect of Leibnitz (Aarsleff 1982: 58).

Another route to a recovered Adamic language was revelation. Jacob Boehme's mystical contacts with God were characterised by comprehensive knowledge and an understanding of Adam's language. Vision reveals the relation between creation, man and God, but language gives knowledge of the nature of particulars. So Boehme and the cabalistic thinkers did not pretend mystical knowledge of mystical things, but mystical knowledge of all things.

Early experimental scientists were very much aware that new routes to revelation had been charted, if only because these two lines of seventeenth-century thought sometimes mixed. John Webster, in his *Academarium Examen* (1654), professed great admiration for Bacon, esteem for the vernacular, support for wider education in English, and lack of faith in non-experimental "School Philosophy". It also encouraged mysticism, especially in the line of Boehme. Webster held to a view that natural language exists, that the mind holds innate notions of things, and that a lost and "Catholique" language fitted these notions to perfection (Aarsleff 1982: 60). In Adam's language "lies hid all the rich treasury of nature's admirable and excellent secrets" (qtd. in Aarsleff 1982: 60).

5. CONCLUSION

The above detour marks the limit of any attempt to interpret "Upon Appleton House" by the predominant use of any one set of sources. What happens in the woods could be read gardenistically: gesturing oaks and a human enchained and smothered by creeping vegetable matter would make for a very ambitious grotto, but probably exceeded the grasp of seventeenth-century technology. Here, as elsewhere in the poem, not all of the 'magical' aspects of the speaker's experience of the may be understood as responses to the gardens of the poets time. Nonetheless, in order that the poem be understood historically, one more gardenist context should be supplied. Parliamentarians and Puritans have been written in and out of literary history, in and out of different stock roles in political history. In non-literary aesthetic history they are absent. Although architectural historians sometimes speak of a 'Protectorate style' (a sort of Classicism stripped bare, the creation more of builders than of architects), I have found no studies of the gardens planted under Cromwell. Rather, 'real' gardening history is taken by both Hunt and Strong to have ground to a halt in 1642 and resumed in 1660. The Parliamentarians had conveniently undone the old king's gardens, giving the new king a large canvas to dapple. Yet the winners of the Civil War must have planted: and it may be that "Appleton House"

plays of both the gardens Marvel had seen and, I think, enjoyed abroad, and the gardens his employers were, as a class, creating.

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