Upon ‘Upon Appleton House’
and other marvellous matters

One of the most wonderful things about that wonderful bird, the halcyon, is its nest: ‘And what is most to be wondred at’, Montaigne reports (following Plutarch and here in Florio’s English),

is the proportion and figure of the concavitie within; for, it is so composed and proportioned, that it can receive or admit no manner of thing, but the Bird that built it; for, to all things else, it is so impenetrable, close and hard, that nothing can possibly enter in; no, not so much as the Sea-water.¹

‘The Beasts are by their Denns exprest’, Marvell observes at the beginning of ‘Upon Appleton House’,

And Birds contrive an equal Nest;
The low-roof’d Tortoises do dwell
In cases fit of Tortoise-shell:
No Creature loves an empty space;
Their Bodies measure out their Place² –

none, apparently, more exactly than the halcyon’s; she (this is Plutarch, still, but now translated by Philemon Holland)

employing her whole body or the most part thereof about her worke, as doth the bee, which entering in the hony-combe with her entire bodie; and working with all six feet together, devideth the place in six angled cells.³

So, despite ‘having but one instrument, one toole, one engine to worke with-all, even her owne bill’, the halcyon, but to even better effect. What price, in comparison, ‘Romulus his Bee-like Cell’ in ‘Upon Appleton House’? – let alone the frail coracles of those ‘Salmon-Fishers moist’ who

Their Leathern Boats begin to hoist;
And, like Antipodes in Shoes,
Have shod their Heads in their Canoos,⁴

and so bring the poem, one way or another, back to earth and an ending, and T. S. Eliot into rumination about the ‘error of images which are over-
developed or distracting; which support nothing but their own misshapen bodies”.5

How Tortoise like, but not so slow, These rational Amphibii go?6

Yet in contrast, what less ‘misshapen’, incongruous or apt to turn thus disconcertingly turtle than the halcyon’s ‘round kind of vessel’, ‘being in deed’ (to run Florio once more into Philemon)

such a fabricke and piece of worke, which onely of all other cannot bee overthrowen nor drenched with the sea.7

Not, it has to be confessed, that Marvell ever makes explicit mention of this marvellous structure. He does, however, liken Maria Fairfax to ‘the Bird that built it’; about whom all ‘loose Nature’, he claims, ‘it self doth recollect’: conglobes – ‘recollect’ recalling his ‘Drop of Dew’ which,

recollecting its own Light, Does, in its pure and circling thoughts, express The greater Heaven in an Heaven less8

– conglobes and consolidates (becomes ‘wholly vitrifi’d’, indeed) into just such a well-knit nursery; making for her short, halcyon days in the midst of civil war and tempestuous interregnum politics, a halcyon’s nest or temporary ‘Domestick Heaven’,

Under the Discipline severe Of Fairfax, and the starry Vere9

– ‘starry’ because, to quote from Camden’s Remains,

The Veres, Earles of Oxeford who bare before quarterly Guels and Or, inserted a Mollet in the first quarter, for that a shooting starre fell thereon, when one of them served in the Holy-land.10

(‘Calvinists’, remarks Michael Walzer, in his book on The Revolution of the Saints, ‘would one day look back to the crusades as a fine example of religious activism’.11

‘The starry Vere’, then, and Fairfax himself – ‘that is, Faire-lockes’, explains Camden,12 and when Apollo, the sun god, is conventionally golden-haired, who is going to quibble here that the man himself was dark: ‘Black Tom’? – ‘Fairfax’, then, ‘and the starry Vere’ are the ‘two great lights’, ruly sun and (if not moon) morning-and-evening-star of Maria’s ‘Domestick Heaven’: a Venus and Apollonian Mars whose daughter is Harmonia,13 the Ceyx and Alcione of her halcyon’s nest.
Now, ‘commentators like Gregory and Augustine’, records Terry Comito, writing on ‘The Redemption of Space’ in his The Idea of the Garden in the Renaissance,14 ‘introduce a distinction, crucial for the monastic life’ – ‘Discipline severe’ that that was supposed to be – ‘between domus and nidus’, ‘house’ and ‘nest’. He goes on to quote Augustine: ‘a house is chosen for eternity, a nest is put together for a time’15 – the halcyon’s legendarily no less than the common-or-garden constructions of the swallows and sparrows which Augustine has here in mind. At the same time, domus and ‘dome’ are cognate: heaven so wittily ‘Domestick’, and the arch of the empyrean echoed in the roof over one’s head. And the halcyon’s nest, too, (‘wonderously made in the fashion of a round ball’, says Pliny16): the halcyon’s nest is also domed and, as ‘a round kind of vessel’, the natural (but fabulously perfect) paradigm of the notoriously precarious and merely hemispherical coracles which, inverted at the end and borne in upon the atlantean shoulders of the fishermen, supply a valedictory image of incumbent night. It’s time to call it a day!

Let’s in: for the dark Hemisphere
Does now like one of them appear.17

‘Let’s in’ where? Fairfax’s ‘Place’, naturally (in the sense of ‘seat, mansion, chief residence’18): Appleton House itself, complete with its own cupola. For it has earlier been seen how its ‘swelling Hall/ Stirs, and the Square grows Spherical’19 in an effort to ‘express’ (as ‘Beasts are by their Denns exprest’) ‘the Master great’ – Vitruvian man, whose extended limbs describe and are described by the circle and the square: ‘measure out their Place’ ‘as doth’, according to Plutarch, ‘the bee, which … working with all six feet together, deedeth the place in six angled cels’.

A hexagon will fit, ‘express’, the bee exactly; but for man, ‘that great and true Amphibium’, as Sir Thomas Browne famously christens him in Religio Medici,

whose nature is disposed to live not onely like other creatures in divers elements, but in divided and distinguished worlds20

– for man, not one but two figures will be necessary: the square and the circle, symbolical of ‘divided and distinguished worlds’ in that the quadrature of the circle was the great, irresolvable problem of classical geometry; its solution – ‘At the round earth’s imagined corners, blow/ Your trumpets, angels’, he cries, opening ‘Holy Sonnet’ 7 – implicitly deferred by John Donne to Doomsday.

As scapegrace Jack, of course, author of ‘Songs and Sonnets’, he had hinted, in flagrante delicto, at a profaner answer, roundly informing his ‘Busy
old fool, unruly sun’ that ‘This bed thy centre is, these walls, they sphere’ in *The Sun Rising*.21

More highly and holily once again, in prose this time, and the vestments of the Dean of St Paul’s, preaching ‘upon Christmas Day, in the Evening, 1624’, he was to edify his congregation with ‘three remarkable conjunctions’:

First, a Conjunction of God, and Man in one person, Christ Jesus; Then a conjunction of the incompatible Titles, Maid and Mother, in one blessed woman, the blessed Virgin *Mary*: And thirdly a conjunction of Faith, and the Reason of man, that so believes and comprehends those two conjunctions.22

All of which will add up to a trinity of circles squared, or vice versa, since God, Donne is shortly to explain,

shall bring thee up, to meet thy selfe, in the bosome of thy God, where thou wast at first, and in an eternall election: God is a circle himselfe, and he will make thee one –

‘raise thee’, as he has just been arguing, ‘peece by peece, into a spirituall building’. And thus ‘the swelling Hall/ Stirs, and the *Square* grows *Spherical*’: the dark-cornered, doubting, earthily angular self is transformed into something transcendently circular!

Goe not thou about to square eyther circle, to bring that which is equall in it selfe, to Angles, and Corners, into dark and sad suspicions of God, or of thy selfe, that God can give, or that thou canst receive no more Mercy, then thou hast had already.23

‘Let’, in short,

_ others vainly strive t’immure_  
_The Circle in the Quadrature!_  
_These holy Mathematicks can_  
_In ev’ry Figure equal Man._24

Piero della Francesca, interestingly enough, had long ago tried his pictorial hand at such ‘*holy Mathematicks*’, as Rudolf Wittkower’s and B. A. R. Carter’s analysis of the architecture of his *Flagellation* in the ducal palace at Urbino shows.25 Drawing, as Piero’s scrupulous perspective permits, the hall in which the scene is set in both plan and elevation, they fix upon a basic unit of spatial organisation within the picture, only to discover that the remarkably elaborate pattern decorating certain key squares of the marble pavement around Christ’s pillar is not, seemingly, developed from this module. Instead it derives from the polygonal division of the circle in which Christ is standing, bound to the central column. The inscribing of
regular polygons into a circle was one of the established methods of trying to square it.

The patterned squares contain therefore suggestions of polygon and circle, and reconcile geometrically Christ’s circle with the module which determines the over-all size of the squares,

concludes Wittkower, adding, after some further complicated comment upon ‘multiplications of the module 1.85” with \( \pi \)’ and the estimated ‘distances of the eye from the picture plane’ and sundry other crucial figures and features, that

Perio may have chosen this curious relation between the module scale and the ‘mystic’ scale to symbolize the interweaving of this-worldly space with that belonging to the Kingdom of Christ:26
to symbolise, in sum (and the title of Comito’s aforementioned chapter), ‘The Redemption of Space’ and celebrate one more ‘remarkable conjunction’.

Marvell’s interweavings in ‘Upon Appleton House’ are far more loosely, self-deprecatingly allusive and elusive, and, in contrast to the timelessly epiphanic lucidity of Piero’s picture, shiftingly kaleidoscopic. The ‘streightness’ of a ‘green, yet growing Ark’27 – and note that the Ark is depicted as box-like and rectangular in the cut illustrating Genesis chapter 12 in some Geneva Bibles:28 remains so, too, in Bishop Wilkins’s ‘scientific’ reconstruction in his post-restoration Essay towards a Real Character, and a Philosophical Language29 – the ‘streightness’ of a ‘green, yet growing Ark’ is deftly shaken out of the sphere of the halcyon’s nest and into the contours of a coracle-cum-empyrean. His muse, to borrow a disapprobatory phrase from Ben Jonson’s Poetaster, is ‘Lubricall and glibbery’, even when supposedly ‘recollecting’ itself, dew-drop-like at the end. After all, the dew-drop itself had been ‘Moving but on a point below’:30 an image also of restless volubility. ‘God is a circle himselfe’, Donne warns, ‘and he will make thee one; Goe not about to square eyther circle’.

But,

He first enclos’d within the Gardens square
A dead and standing pool of Air:

that is, according to Marvell’s own ‘Mower Against Gardens’,31 ‘luxurious Man’ did, ‘to bring his Vice in use’ and wreak revenge upon fruits and flowers for his seduction by means of Eve and the apple. In this poem, therefore, the square exclusive is the figure of Fallen Man who, as ‘that sov’raign thing and proud’, corrupts an innocently rustic flora with court
manners (a ‘court’ being, at root, ‘a yard, an enclosed space’) before turning Turk completely; so that now, as a result of cutting and grafting on top of selective breeding,

    His green Seraglio has its Eunuchs too;
    Lest any Tyrant him out-doe.32

‘Serraglio’ is defined by Florio in his Italian-to-English dictionary, Queen Anna’s New World of Words,33 as

used for the great Turkes chief Court or houshold. Also a seraile, an enclosure, a close, a secluse, a Cloyster, a Parke, a Padocke, any place shut or closed in.

‘A Cloyster’, in this list, recalls the nunnery in ‘Upon Appleton House’, another ‘dead and standing pool of Air’ where the ‘Suttle Nuns’, evading all ‘Discipline severe’, also knead ‘a more luscious Earth’, ‘put the Palate in dispute’ and contrive, too (almost), ‘to procreate without a Sex’34 - take statues for gods,

and betake themselves to I wot not what new forme of Fasting and Prayer, and a contemplative idle life, a lip-labour devotion, and a will-worship, Eccl. 4 & 17. which by the word of God is no better then a specious kind of Idelnesse.

‘Oh’, persists this diatribe against monasticism from The Arminian Nunnery: Or, a brief Description and Relation of the late erected Monasticall Place, called the Arminian Nunnery at Little Gidding in Huntingdon-shire35 –

Oh the stupid and blind devotion of these people, for Men and Women in health of able and active bodies and parts to have no particular Callings, or to quit their Callings,

as Isabel Thwaites had been briefly seduced into quitting hers (as potential wife and mother of a future hero), sucked by the ‘Nuns smooth Tongue’36 into ‘A dead and standing pool of Air’ or Little Gidding of deceptively equivocal, as opposed to real, generation.

However, ‘Very Agitation laves,/ And purges out the corruptible waves’, Marvell observes in ‘The Character of Holland’.37 The vigorously masculine activity of an earlier Fairfax, backed up by that of an earlier Cromwell (Henry VIII’s Thomas), had combined to rescue the ‘blooming Virgin’38 and sweep away all such stagnantly festering enclaves in the Dissolution of the Monasteries. Out of the ruin of this particular nunnery has arisen Appleton House: so far from a ‘dead and standing’ structure that its ‘swelling Hall’, in extraordinary animation, ‘Stirs, and the Square grows Spherical’.

An eminently ‘sober Frame’ it remains, nevertheless, and, like Ben Jonson’s Penshurhurst before it, the
Work of no Forrain Architect;
That unto Caves the Quarries drew,
And Forrests did to Pastures hew;
Who of his great Design in pain
Did for a Model vault his Brain.\textsuperscript{39}

‘Vaulting Ambition’, as we know from \textit{Macbeth}, makes for anything but ‘a Domestick Heaven’, ‘ore-leapes it self,/ And falles on th’other’. So Inigo Jones’s plot ‘for the Re-edifying of the said Church of St. Paule’ (the cathedral, that is) had fallen heavily on the adjacent ‘Church of St. Gregoryes’,\textsuperscript{40} which he proposed to pull down, much to the ire of its parishioners and irritation of ‘puritans’ more generally, who took legal steps to prevent what, Jonson had fulminated (though fired, admittedly, by other considerations),

\begin{quote}
by a specious fyne
Terme of ye Architects is called Designe!
But in ye practised truth Destruction is.\textsuperscript{41}
\end{quote}

‘Designe!’ is, then, the shibboleth. Johnson returns to it later on in his \textit{Expostulation},\textsuperscript{42} sardonic on the subject of ‘that unbounded lyne/ Aymed at in thy omnipotent Designe!’ – with, again, an exclamation mark. It is, moreover, a characteristic of the cant of In-and-In Medlay, the caricature of Jones in \textit{A Tale of a Tub}, and plainly, therefore, an Inigan trademark: the trademark, that is, of ‘huomo vanissimo e molto vantatore’, as he was un-flatteringly described by the papal agent accredited to Charles I’s papistical queen, Henrietta Maria.\textsuperscript{43}

It seems not impossible, in view of this, that the late king’s erstwhile surveyor is somewhere behind the ‘Forrain Architect’ of Marvell’s opening. ‘Inigo’ sounds more Welsh than English. Besides, he was pontifical on the theme of Palladio, Serlio, Scamozzi and all, and did make extraordinary inroads, in the process of restoring St Paul’s, into the Portland stone. Furthermore, the ‘Stately Frontispice’, not ‘of Poor’, as at Appleton House,\textsuperscript{44} but this very substance, which he so controversially erected at the king’s expense at the west end of that cathedral, is to be more innocently remembered in the middle of the poem, where the wood ‘in as loose an order grows,/ As the Corinthian Porticoes’.\textsuperscript{45} For there was no more famous Corinthian portico north of the Alps.

Inigo Jones’s works in general, it would seem, and his re-edifying of St Paul’s in particular, stand as an object lesson in how not, architect-like, and in the well-known words of ‘A Dialogue between the Soul and Body’,\textsuperscript{46} to ‘square and hew,/ Green Trees that in the Forest grew’. Unlike Penshurst, the cathedral can, thanks to Jones, ‘boast a row/ Of polish’d pillars’ – the
tallest north the Alps – and is, unlike Appleton House, ‘built to envious show’. At least, the puritanical Lord Brooke, ‘passing by water, upon the Thames, March 13th. Anno MDCXL. with three other Lords’, had been moved most invidiously to remark.

Yet this obnoxiously pretentious Corinthian portico, acme of prideful artifice, is innocuously shadowed in the wood of ‘Upon Appleton House’: ‘this green, yet growing Ark’, as Marvell calls it; ‘yet growing’, of course, as distinct from – ‘My God, I read this day’, writes George Herbert,

That planted Paradise was not so firm,  
As was and is thy floting Ark; whose stay  
And anchor thou art onely, to confirm  
And strengthen it in ev’ry age,  
When waves do rise, and tempests rage

– ‘yet growing’ as distinct from ‘floting’, like Noah’s, or the halcyon’s nest; this latter confirmed and strengthened, indeed, ‘When waves do rise, and tempests rage’ because, as Montaigne records,

that which is closely wrought, the Sea beating on it, doth so fasten and conjoyne together, that nothing, no, not stone or yron, can any way loosen, divide, or break the same, except with great violence.

F. E. Hutchinson, in his note on Herbert’s ‘floting Ark’, refers to ‘the Arke of Christ’s Church’ mentioned during the Baptismal Office, within which Christians ‘may so passe the waves of this troublesome world, that finally they may come to the land of everlasting life’. But an ark ‘yet green, yet growing’ will be rooted, still, in mould: of this earth, earthy, and so in the end mortal, no matter how seemingly paradisal. ‘Planted Paradise’ comes, along with pride, before a Fall. So verdant wood and reconstructed cathedral (which, by the bye, Edmund Waller, in its lately dilapidated state, had compared to ‘That shipwrackt vessel which th’Apostle bore’ when writing ‘Upon His Majesties repairing of Pauls’) – reconstructed cathedral and verdant wood mirror each other; and there are, as well as Corinthian porticos, ‘antick Cope[s]’ in both, and prelate-Lauds to wear them.


Because you have thrown off your prelate Lord,  
And with stiff vows renounced his liturgy . . .
And the pun is palpable upon the name of Charles’s recently executed primate, sometime advocate of 'the beauty of holiness' and chief instigator of the work on Paul’s. But Marvell, with supple insouciance, blithely puts on what was stiffly thrown off, and

Under this antick Cope I move
Like some great Prelate of the Grove.55

His 'antick Cope', if Duncan Jones’s note is to be believed,56 is salvaged from another of Milton’s works: his mordantly anti-prelatical An Apology Against a Pamphlet,57 while 'Prelate of the Grove' is calculated to recall, as well as the Lauds, Wrens, Cosins, Montagus of the immediate past, the many times in the Old Testament when

the children of Israell did evill in the sight of the LORD, and forgate the LORD their God, and served Baalim, and the groves

– 'Asheroth' in the Geneva Version’s transliteration of the original, marginally glossed as 'Trees or woods erected for idolatrie'.58

Nature, it follows, even at its 'most plain and pure' and in the very greenness of its grass,59 will reflect – innocently enough, may be, though it all adds an archly piquant relish to the experience – an opposite extreme of human artifice and adulteration. The double, post-lapsarian mind remembers a primitive oneness only through simile and metaphor which speak, necessarily when you come to think of it, with forked, however playfully flickering, tongues. The medium, perforce, sophisticates the message. But may not the message, also, to some extent, disinfect the medium? Notoriously, Marvell is inclined to eat his apple and have it. Look, for instance, at what has become of Milton’s bitingly direct and scornfully corrosive 'antick Coape upon the Stage of a High Altar'; transformed, now, in the dappled depths of the wood, into a canopy of oak-leaves dipped in honey-dew, ‘Between which Caterpillars crawl’60 whose names are not Bushy, Bagot or Greene ('The Caterpillars of the Commonwealth', it will be remembered, in Shakespeare’s The Life and Death of King Richard the Second61): a canopy of ‘Antike worke’; this being, John Bullokar’s English Expositor explains,

A worke in painting or carving, of divers shapes of beasts, birds, flowers, &c. unperfectlie mixt and made one out of another,

while Milton’s nephew, Edward Phillips’s The New World of English Words explicitly adds ‘men’ to the imbroglio.62

The leaf-canopy thus lightly – the stanza before, with its ‘light Mosaick’, having already waived the necessity for any heavily literal regard for the
Law or its Ceremonies – the leaf-canopy lightly descends to make, with the help of some hyperactive ivy, a richly embroidered though anything but burdensome cope about Marvell’s facetiously prelatical shoulders, turning him, in one definition of the word ‘antic’, into a ‘merry andrew’, indeed, or species of Jack-in-the-green; and yet, as ‘antic’ shades into the at-that-date similarly spelt ‘antique’, also something much more venerable than this. For,

In such green Palaces the first Kings reign’d,
Slept in their shades, and Angels entertain’d:
With such old Counsellors they did advise,
And by frequenting sacred Groves grew wise,

as Edmund Waller was to remind the restored Charles II in his poem ‘On St. James’s Park, as lately improved by His Majesty’. There is paradoxical nostalgia, in ‘Like some great Prelate of the Grove’, for ‘pious times, e’r Priest-craft did begin’ (forget what, in Absalom and Achitophel, is to follow!), as well as irony at the expense of more recent, whether prelatically or presbyterianly inspired antics: ‘New Presbyter’ being, in the Miltonic view, ‘but old Priest writ large’. Somehow, Marvell succeeds in being at once both appreciative and depreciative; simultaneously self-indulgent and self-critical.

‘Antike-worke’, we have heard, is ‘divers shapes ... unperfectlie mixt and made one out of another’, so that it will be impossible to say where one thing begins and another ends; what is animal, what human or –

Or turn me but, and you shall see
I was but an inverted Tree

– what plant; what is within, what without; what the mind’s, what nature’s; what is craft, what innocence, happy accident or artful design, playing or reality. It is a world rather more like that of, say, an Archimboldo than a Piero della Francesca: one where fruit, vegetables, leaves and the stumps of trees conspire to adopt human features; not one of perfected geometry and perfectly proportioned, classically Vitruvian man. It is not altogether serious. Milton almost always is. At any rate, he is not given to playing ‘dandillie, bischop, dandillie’ in the middle of an anti-prelatical tract. Drawing distinctions between passages from Sidney’s Arcadia and the Sixth, the pastoral Book of Spenser’s Faerie Queene, Paul Alpers has remarked that ‘Sidney fails to render the claims an interest of pastoral experience, because he identifies intelligence with judging’, whereas Spenser ‘is not moved to make any one of the perspectives that wit provides here decisive against the others’. For ‘Spenser’ read ‘Marvell’; but Milton’s ‘antick Coape’ is
all judgment, and, should it be objected that he is not, at this juncture, writing pastoral, the reply must be,

But that two-handed engine at the door,
Stands ready to smite once, and smite no more,
even when he is, in *Lycidas*.

Nor can a continued refusal ever to ‘square and hew,/ Green Trees that in the Forest grew’ be regarded, even at Nunappleton, as a serious option. Equally, in pursuing a policy of ‘Thorough’ in this respect, and hewing woods to pastures in the process, Inigo Jones (if he is the ‘Forrain Architect’) has gone seriously wrong: built no new Ark, but a second Tower of Babel.

‘The worlds restorer’, relates Waller, fashioning a conclusive compliment to Charles I in ‘To the King on his Navy’ (the poem which preceded ‘Upon His Majesties repairing of Pauls’ in the 1645 edition of his *Poems*) –

The worlds restorer once could not endure
That finish’d Babell should those men secure:
Whose pride design’d, that fabricke should have stood
Above the reach of any second floud.
To thee his chosen more indulgent he
Dares trust such power with so much piety.

The Tower of Babel was begun, according to popular theory, to provide a refuge from a Second Deluge, in brazen contempt (contrast the ‘floting Ark’) of Providence and the covenant attested by the rainbow. Waller’s conceit is that, as ‘towers of oak’ as he calls them –

Should natures selfe invade the worlde againe,
And ore the center spread the liquid maine:
Thy power were safe and her destructive hand,
Would but enlarge the bounds of [thy] command.
Thy dreadfull fleet would stile thee Lord of all,
And ride in triumph ore the drowned ball.
Those towers of oake ore fertile plaines might goe
And visit mountains where they once did grow

– Charles’s ships (paid for, incidentally, by the exaction of ‘Ship-money’, arbitrarily extended inland) represent a kind of triumphant hybridization of Noah’s Ark and Nimrod’s Tower, piety and power, submissive acquiescence to the Divine Will and arrogant assertion of one’s own. ‘Here is’, comments Thomas Rymer admiringly in *A Short View of Tragedy*, ‘both Homer and Virgil; the fortis Achilles, and the pius Aeneas, in the person he compliments’. Both this, and more: ‘The First Book of Moses, called *GENESIS*, the fortis Nimrodus and the pius Noachus, ‘a mighty hunter before the Lord’ (‘His tyranie came into a proverbe as hated both of God and man’,
runs the Geneva gloss; ‘for he passed not to commit cruelty even in Gods presence’) and the man who ‘did according unto all that God commanded him’, the obedient preserver of all animal and human life.\textsuperscript{70}

King Charles clearly has it both ways. Equally clearly, ‘Humility alone’ has not, as at Appleton House,\textsuperscript{71} designed these fully blown decasyllabic and, if Rymer is right, highly commendable heroic couplets; and the ‘Mathematicks’ that have gone into them are something more (or less) than ‘holy’. Inoculating Nimrod upon Noah, in the terms of ‘The Mower Against Gardens’, is dealing

between the Bark and Tree,
Forbidden mixtures there to see.
No Plant now knew the Stock from which it came;
He grafts upon the Wild the Tame\textsuperscript{72}

– or, worse still, vice versa.

Waller plays a bold hand skilfully, reconciling the apparently irreconcilable; and at a time, too, when (because of the controversy about Ship-money, amongst other things) many were coming to see Charles I as more of a Nimrod than Noah: more of a tyrant and hunter of men, his own subjects, than a genuine Father of his People. But such expertly filed and acutely meretricious syntheses dislimn and become innocuously indistinct, as water is in water, in the verdurous gloom of a ‘yet green, yet growing Ark’ – green thoughts in a green shade: a cool collation! Afterwards, perhaps, there will be time for more explicitly ‘holy Mathematicks’ again, which ‘can/ In ev’ry Figure equal Man’ – and did, too, in the Ark as in the cupolaed hall at Nunappleton; at least, ‘if those great Doctors truly said/ That the Ark to man’s proportions was made’.

This is John Donne again, striving to type Mistress Elizabeth Drury in ‘An Anatomy of the World’ and deciding that, if Ambrose, Augustine and all the others were correct, then she

Had been a type for that, as that might be
A type of her in this, that contrary
Both elements, and passions lived at peace
In her, who caused all civil war to cease.

But alas!

She, after whom, what form soe’er we see,
Is discord, and rude incongruity;
She, she is dead, she’s dead; when thou know’st this
Thou know’st how ugly a monster this world is:\textsuperscript{73}

’Tis not, what once it was, the World;
But a rude heap together hurl’d;
All negligently overthrown,
Gulfes, Deserts, Precipices, Stone.\textsuperscript{74}

Marvell’s own ‘short but admirable Lines’ are as different from Donne’s pentameter, prolonged and tortuous with thought, as they are from Waller’s finely polished, precisely stepped and stepping couplets. (How feat the footwork of that climactic ‘To thee[,] his chosen[,] more indulgent[,] he/ Dares trust’, despite Dennis and dissonance and captious art’s complaint that ‘That He seems to be a Botch’. Far from it! But Dennis was bound to disagree with Rymer.\textsuperscript{75}) In ‘Upon Appleton House’ words seem set afloat (not, however, adrift) in a buoyant medium, as though in trust to a grace beyond the reach of art – like the Ark itself, which is sometimes not ship-shaped precisely because it was not meant to be humanly navigated but rather consigned to the winds and waves of a greater Providence.

Noah himself (witness ‘Upon Appleton House’) was no ‘Architect’, despite the inviting pun, but merely ‘the first Carpenter’,\textsuperscript{76} who humbly took all his dimensions from God:

the length … six times the breadth, and ten times the height, like the human body, to show that Christ appeared in a human body,

according to Augustine.\textsuperscript{77} But Donne, in his way, was another ‘Architect’ apt, ‘of his great Design in Pain’, to ‘for a Model vault his Brain’, like Inigo Jones; and in The First Anniversary he essays art’s utmost: to sustain, without benefit of irony, the thesis – ‘If it had been written of ye Virgin Marie’, Ben Jonson told him, ‘it had been something’ – that ‘the Frailty and Decay of the Whole World’ necessarily resulted from the death of Mistress Elizabeth Drury (whom he had never met), aged just fourteen. (His excuse to Johnson was ‘that he described the Idea of a Woman, and not as she was’.\textsuperscript{78})

Marvell deals marginally less macroscopically with his Virgin Maria, aged approximately thirteen (she was to survive until 1704). She, she, not being dead, gives focal point to everything at Nunappleton, imposing upon a landscape which otherwise threatens to lapse into ‘Antike worke’ a more rigorous and coherent perspective. And ‘by her Flames, in Heaven try’d,/ Nature is wholly vitrifi’d’\textsuperscript{79} – just as it appears to have been in Piero della Francesca’s Flagellation, where the preternaturally precise and all-pervasive geometry, illuminated mysteriously from within, seems designed to remember the description of the Heavenly City in Revelation, ‘like unto cleare glasse’, ‘The matter most precious and glittering, which the presence of God maketh most glorious’, as Laurence Tomson’s gloss explains.\textsuperscript{80}

Things in Marvell remain more trickily unstable. Yet Maria Fairfax is the measure of her landscape. With the advent of her ‘judicious Eyes’,\textsuperscript{81}
intelligence becomes, once again, aligned with judging. She it is who lends point to Fairfax’s retirement. It is her presence which makes Nunappleton truly a nest, not nunnery: ‘not a place of origin or final rest, but merely a temporary shelter’, to recall Comito’s distinction between *nidus* and *domus* in *The Idea of the Garden in the Renaissance.*

The wood Marvell is half-tempted to see as just such ‘a place of origin or final rest’; offers to plant himself there: punningly to ‘imbark’ not as upon a ‘floting Ark’, but like a latter-day Daphne or root-bound dryad. Maria’s plant, significantly, is the mistletoe: ‘for some things there be’, notes Pliny in his *Naturall Historie,* that not willing to grow out of the earth, engender in trees; & having no proper place of their own habitation to seat themselves in, sojourn as it were & make their abode with others, and of this nature is the Missletoe.

And of this nature is Maria Fairfax; of this nature humanity itself, ‘dispos’d to live’, as Sir Thomas Browne will testify, ‘not onely like other creatures in divers elements, but in divided and distinguished worlds’. Men have ‘no proper place’ in this world ‘of their own habitation’; and so, ‘No Earthly thing to be enjoyed properly, but used only’, prescribes uncompromisingly ‘The Analysis’ set before Ralph Austen’s *A Treatise of Fruit Trees,* epitomising Augustine. As it is subsequently to be expounded:

If we fall to enjoying of such things as we ought but only to use, we are thereby hindred in our course, and many times even turn’d out of it . . . And if the *Pleasures and Contentments* of the journey and the carriage, by which we are conveyed, over much please and delight us, then we turne to *Enjoying* of those things which we ought but onely to *use,* and therefore are unwilling to come to our journeys end, and are intangled in corrupt delights, and brought thereby to be estranged from the Countrie, the sweetnesse and pleasure whereof maketh blessed.

Maria’s arrival (for she is her master’s mistress in this: one more semi-serious inversion) recollects Marvell from childish ‘enjoyment’ to adult ‘use’ – from, to borrow a dichotomy formulated by Bernard Blackstone in connection with Byron’s poem, *The Island,* ‘mergence to interpretation’. Yet ‘the *Pleasures and Contentments* of the journey’ through the grounds of Nunappleton, not excepting the entanglements of its wood, have proved nothing if not recreative. ‘*Holy Mathematicks can/* In ev’ry Figure equal Man’; and ‘Go not thou about to square eyther circle’, advises Donne. Nor does Marvell, as ‘easie Philosopher’, ‘vainly strive t’immure/ The *Circle* in the *Quadrature*.’ The problem simply seems no problem as the poem shape-shifts its way, ‘ungirt and unconstrain’d’, in relaxed serendipity from house to nunnery to garden, meadows, wood and back
again, its ‘hatching Thraste’ at light years’ remove from the robin redbreast to be encountered in Bunyan’s ‘House of the Interpreter’ in *The Pilgrim’s Progress*, part 2, peremptorily taxidermised into an emblem of those who, however ‘pretty of Note, Colour and Carriages’, nevertheless,

when they are by themselves ... can catch and gobble up *Spiders*, they can change their Diet, drink *Iniquity*, and swallow down *Sin* like Water.90

‘‘Tis all enforc’d’, protests ‘The Mower Against Gardens’.91 And ‘enforc’d’ it is, too, when Ralph Austen, turning from practical arboriculture to ‘The Spirituall use of an Orchard’ in the Second Part of his *Treatise*, cuts-and-dries the observation, for example, that

> Fruit-trees that bring forth the fairest and most beautifull blossomes, Leaves, and shoots, they (usually) bring forth the fewest and least fruits,

into ‘another *Similitude*, &c: whence we may learne; that’,

> Generally those persons who are excessive and most curious about the Formes of duties, have least of the power of godlinesse.

And so on – and, in the second edition, on and on, as a score of such ‘Observations in Nature’ in the first are frogmarched to a century.92

At Nunappleton, contrariwise, all is comparatively unenforced. True, Fairfax has laid out his garden ‘In the just figure of a Fort’, but by way of relaxation: ‘in sport’.93 Austen is very much in earnest. And, in the wood, if ‘The hatching Thraste’ ‘hath a purpose and its eyes are bright with it’, then it is a purpose very different from that of Bunyan’s robin and more akin to that of the stoat or fieldmouse ‘peeping out of the withered grass’ during the course of a long, composite letter written between 14 February and 3 May 1819, and addressed ‘To the George Keatses’.94 ‘Sometimes Marvell observes little circumstances of rural nature with the eye and feeling of a true Poet’, concedes the Reverend William Lisle Bowles, with his own upon ‘The hatching Thrastles shining Eye’, in the introduction to his 1806 edition of *The Works of Alexander Pope, Esq.*95

Sometimes. Details are only rarely perceived thus altogether ‘without prejudice’. Even this ‘hatching Thraste’ has ‘contrive[d] an equal Nest’ and sits tight to recall the question posed by the second stanza of the poem:

> Why should of all things Man unrul’d
> Such unproportion’d dwellings build?

Shortly ‘the Hewel’s’96 (‘Hew-hole’s’, green woodpecker’s) felling of the wormed oak will shadow the execution of Charles I, and just lately arboreal ‘Corinthean Porticoes’ have been greenly figuring forth what many of Fair-
fax’s party regarded as a most offensively ‘unproportion’d’ excrescence on St Paul’s – the pillars of which, incidentally,

by Mr. Jones’s being constrain’d to observe the bredth of the old work, are set at a distance much more than one Diameter and an half, yet the Intercolumns being somewhat less than Two, (if I may use Sir H. Wotton’s words pa. 39) that Portico is of the manner Pycnostylos, and must be so acknowledged.97

Could this ‘distance much more than one Diameter and an half’ help to illuminate Marvell’s ‘as loose an order’? The passage comes from A Vindication of Stone-Heng Restored, in which John Webb, once Inigo’s pupil and assistant, defends his former master’s theories about that monument, set out in a book published ten years previously, in 1655. Here Jones announces, with characteristic assurance, that ‘the narrowness of the spaces betwixt the stones, visibly discovers the delicacy of the Corinthian Order’.98 So ‘narrowness’, where the fourth order is concerned, is diagnostic; Webb loyally anxious to demonstrate that the portico at Paul’s is not, technically speaking, ‘loose’ at all, but just as ‘densely-columned’, ‘Pycnostylos’, as architectural theory demands. How much debate had there been over this issue? Could Marvell, perhaps (who seems to be making play with various senses of the Greek ‘pycnos’, ‘solid’, ‘overgrown’, ‘close-packed’, etc.) – could Marvell and Fairfax have been aware of it? Does it matter, one way or another, except insofar as the possibility deliciously complicates a teasingly ambiguous interplay of dense and rare, sunshine and shadow?

Dark all without it knits; within
It opens passable and thin;
And in as loose an order grows,
As the Corinthian Porticoes.
The arching Boughs unite between
The Columnes of the Temple green . . .99

This ‘Temple’, this ‘Ark’ is, after all, ‘yet green, yet growing’; a place

Where the first Carpenter might best
Fit Timber for his Keel have prest,100

but didn’t; and seemingly ever since preserved from the disfiguring axe- and adze-blows of a ‘Forrain Architect’ bent on executing ‘his great Design’ at any cost, or equally designing Interpreter conscience-bound to square and hew green trees down to bare use at the expense of ‘proper’ enjoyment, ‘mergence’ and ‘a green Thought in a green Shade’.

Of course, some judicious cutting and grafting, if not wholesale squaring and hewing of the greenery will eventually prove necessary before the poem is out. Maria’s mistletoe (one of those things, in any case, ‘having no
proper place of their own habitation to seat themselves in’, and therefore, notes Pliny, esteemed by the Druids ‘as a gift sent from heaven’\textsuperscript{101} is to be translated ‘for some universal good’ from ‘the Fairfacian Oak’\textsuperscript{102} to another stock (the Duke of Buckingham’s, God help her! Dryden’s ‘various’ Zimri).

In the meantime, however, ‘She streightness on the woods bestows’ and otherwise measures out her place at Nunappleton, refashioning it (and with it Marvell’s else ‘loose’, ‘ungirt and unconstrain’d’ stanzas\textsuperscript{103}) into a kind of, not so much ‘planted Paradise’, as ‘floting Ark’; which is by way of being, in the end, something much firmer: ‘such a fabricke and piece of worke, which onely of all other’ – by a grace beyond the reach of art, certainly the art of ‘huomo vanissimo e molto vantatore’ – ‘cannot be overthrowen nor drenched with the sea’. In short, a halcyon’s nest.

Into which, as we know, only halcyons themselves will fit; ‘for, to all things else, it is so impenetrable, close and hard, that nothing can possiblie enter in: no, not so much as the Sea-water’, let alone an owlish critic. One thing is nevertheless clear enough: halcyon days are, by definition, numbered; limited to a brief fortnight of stilly seas, soft winds and peaceful incubation ‘\textit{in solstitio brumali}, “the very dead of winter”’ and rough weather.\textsuperscript{104} Furthermore, we have it on Christ’s own word that, although ‘The foxes have holes, and the birds of the heaven have nests’ (‘\textit{Word for word, shades made with boughes}’, glosses the Geneva Version, helpfully), yet ‘the Sonne of man hath not whereon to rest his head’.\textsuperscript{105}

And so, perhaps,

\begin{quote}
\textit{the Salmon-Fishers moist}
Their Leathern Boats begin to hoist
And like \textit{Antipodes in Shoes,}
Have shod their \textit{Heads} in their \textit{Canoos,}
\end{quote}

as ‘having no proper place of their own habitation’ here on earth. Are they heading off for a night’s fishing? Or (more likely, in view of their moistness) homewards, after the day’s work? In which case, obviously, it will be to rest their heads (or put their feet up), for a few hours, at least.

\begin{quote}
How \textit{Tortoise like}, but not so slow,
These rational \textit{Amphibii} go?
\end{quote}

– ‘disposed to live not onely like other creatures in divers elements, but in divided and distinguished worlds’, as Sir Thomas Browne remarks, and span out both circle and square.

\begin{quote}
Let’s in: for the dark \textit{Hemisphere}
Does now like one of them appear:
\end{quote}
appear to make a figure which, although seeming at first sight a misshapen whimsy of incongruity and displacement, begins to look, on second thoughts, something like an image of Vitruvius’s ‘Homo ad circulum’, now grown, as it were ‘coracular’ and valedictorily transformed into a new kind of Atlas closing upon what the last line of the previous (and penultimate) stanza has just called ‘Paradice’s only Map’. Maps and atlases, of course, have gone together ever since Mercator, in the sixteenth century, made a customary frontispiece (the picture of that Titan supporting the celestial globe) metonymic.106

By the way, was not Mercator’s own famous ‘projection’ only another way of trying to square the circle in order to discover where in the world one stands, or might be going?

Notes

A weight of critical water has passed under the bridge since this essay was first conceived and largely executed. In particular, in a piece published, already, as long ago as 1995, Lucy Gent enjoins ‘The Rash Gazer’ to wipe his (or her, of course) eye and appreciate new ‘Economies of Vision in Britain, 1550–1600’ (see Lucy Gent, ed., Albion’s Classicism: The Visual Arts in Britain, 1550–1660, New Haven, 1995, 377–93). ‘What is needed is’, apparently, ‘an intervention on the part of materiality’ (p. 379). She intervenes accordingly, and to good effect relative to Marvell’s ‘Upon Appleton House’, the focus of her final pages. Happily, her conclusions, and remarks, in particular, about ‘reminders of the cell paradigm running through the poem’ (p. 389), would seem rather to complement than subvert what is to be said here. Maybe I should have razed and rebuilt from the ground upwards, taking advantage of such new materials. As an (appropriately, under the circumstances) ‘easie Philosopher’, however, and rashly flattering myself that old bricks-and-mortar may sometimes stand not incongruously alongside pre-stressed concrete and pressed steel, I have allowed the old structure to remain, confining myself to this minimum of necessary re-pointing.

4 UAH, ll. 40, 769–72.
6 UAH, ll. 773–4.
8 Marvell, ‘On a Drop of Dew’, ll. 24–6, Poems, 12.
17 UAH, ll. 775–6.
18 *OED*, s.v. ‘place’, sense 5b.
19 UAH, ll. 50–51.
23 Ibid., 185.
24 UAH, ll. 45–8.
27 UAH, ll. 691, 484.
29 John Wilkins, *An Essay towards a Real Character, and a Philosophical Language*, 1668; facsimile (Menston, 1968), the engraving faces p. 166.
33 John Florio, *Queen Anna’s New World of Words*, 1611; facsimile, Menston, 1968.
34 UAH, l. 94; ‘The Mower Against Gardens’, ll. 7, 26, 30.
35 Anon., *The Arminian Nunnery: Or, a brief Description and Relation of the late erected Monastical Place, called the Arminian Nunnery at Little Gidding in Huntingdon-shire* (London, 1641), 3–4.
36 UAH, l. 200.
38 UAH, l. 90.
39 UAH, ll. 1–6.
40 *Journals of the House of Lords*, 4, pp. 469–70. Entry for Saturday, 10 December 1641.
44 UAH, l. 65.
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45 UAH, ll. 507–8.
51 The Works of George Herbert, 510.
52 The Booke of Common Prayer (London, 1611), C5r–C5v.
55 UAH, ll. 591–2.
56 See Marvell, Poems, 590.
60 UAH, l. 588.
63 Waller, Poems, &c., London, 1686, p. 162.
65 UAH, ll. 567–8.
68 Waller, Poems, &c., 1645, p. 3.
70 See Genesis 10:9, and 6:22.
71 UAH, ll. 41–2.
74 UAH, ll. 761–4.
76 UAH, l. 485.
77 St Augustine, Reply to Faustus the Manichean, Works, edited and translated by Marcus Dods, 15 vols (Edinburgh, 1871–6), vol. 5, p. 215.
UAH, ll. 687–8.


UAH, l. 653.

Comito, Idea of the Garden, 156.

UAH, l. 483.

Pliny, The Naturall Historie (Holland, 1634), 496.

Ralph Austen, A Treatise of Fruit Trees (Oxford, 1657), B4°. This is the second edition. The first had been published in 1653.

Austen, A Treatise of Fruit Trees, p. 41. Austen is translating a passage from St Augustine, De Doctrina Christiana, l. 4.


UAH, l. 561.

UAH, ll. 43, 532.

John Bunyan, Grace Abounding to the Chief of Sinners and The Pilgrim’s Progress, edited with an introduction by Roger Sharrock (London, 1966), 305.

‘The Mower Against Gardens’, l. 31.

Austen, A Treatise of Fruit Trees, the Second Part, 1657, p. 18.


UAH, ll. 9–10, 537. For ‘The green Woodpecker, or Woodspite, called also the Rain-fowl, and Hew-hole’, see Francis Willughby, Ornithology (London, 1678), 135.


Inigo Jones, The most notable Antiquity of Great Britain, vulgarly called Stone-heng, on Salisbury Plain, Restored (London, 1655), 76.

UAH, ll. 505–10. See also the previous stanza, where the wood seems to have ‘one great Trunk’ and its ‘huge Bulk takes place, as ment/ To thrust up a Fifth Element’ (ll. 500–502). Is it worth noting that ‘Sir H. Wotton’s’ book, quoted by Webb, above, is entitled The Elements of Architecture (first published 1624)?

UAH, ll. 485–6.

Pliny, The Naturall Historie (Holland, 1634), 497.

UAH, l. 740.

UAH, l. 43.


Matthew 8:20.

See OED, ‘atlas’, sense 3.