WARTON LECTURE ON ENGLISH POETRY

MARVELL: A GREAT MASTER OF WORDS

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I

LOOKING at the Latin play that the young Abraham Cowley wrote to be performed at Trinity by his fellow undergraduates in 1638, *Naufragium Joculare*, I was struck by the possibility that one of the principal characters might have been acted by Cowley's fellow student, the seventeen-year-old Andrew Marvell. This character is a tutor, called Gnomicus because he speaks as far as possible in classical tags; and it seemed to me that it might be significant that he is repeatedly referred to as 'vir admirabilis', the marvellous man. There may be nothing in it, but at that time and place such a pun on a surname would have come very easily. A cast-list of the play would confirm or make an end of this speculation but it seems that none survives.

Dr. Thomas Warton, one is bound on the present occasion to remember, did not admire Cowley's Latinity: but the play with its college jokes—the tutor and his two pupils set up a market in Latin jokes—its allusions to favourite authors and local customs at least serves to bring us near to the life of the Cambridge undergraduate in that decade.

Early in the play the tutor declares his intention of putting his pupils in possession of the formulas for persuading, mocking, and making approaches to men—'persuadendi, deridendi ac adoriendi'. 'Then,' says Gnomicus, 'all men will marvel at you as they do at me.' Whether or not Marvell played the tutor in Cowley's comedy, these arts he certainly possessed. I mean today to look at some instances of his practice of them.

A most skilled rhetorician, Marvell's skills are often used to disguise art: not always, since the natural-seeming was not always what was called for. As Donne says, you would not thank a man for a panegyric with which he seems not to have taken pains. Sometimes Marvell will produce a compliment so courtly that the stiffness of the rhetoric seems to mock itself. In

a letter (*Letters*, 3rd edn., p. 143) to his Hull constituents he tells them that when he presented the Duke of Monmouth, then Governor of Hull, with their handsome offering of six gold pieces he had informed the Duke that he was 'deputed to blush on their behalf for the meanness of the present'.

Marvell is fully aware of the oddity of the willed vicarious blush: it is not merely a dead metaphor, any more than the blush with which the Nymph antithetically sees her hand less white than the foot of her fawn:

> And oft
> I blusht to see its foot more soft,
> And white (shall I say then my hand?)
> NAY any Ladies of the Land.

Of course in each instance the stiffness of the rhetoric is conscious and functional. Monmouth perhaps had the wit to smile at the courtliness of the compliment that showed the men of Hull that their representative was, so to speak, doing them proud. To show the appropriateness of the Nymph's rhetoric is a more delicate task. One might begin with the importance in that poem of the alternation between the natural and the stiff: a poem that starts with two lines in the real language of men about an actual event, or what could well be so:

> The wanton Troopers riding by
> Have shot my Faun and it will dye

to end in the frozen world of statuary. And the late J. B. Leishman, whose Warton Lecture on Marvell is so memorable, has pointed to the poem's strong contrasts of red and white.

On a more splendid occasion, on an embassy to a foreign monarch, Marvell having just said that in such a presence 'the boldest Eloquence would lose its speech' appears absolutely to break down. It is only when the effect is duplicated, the speech being recited in two languages, that the onlookers perceive that the breakdown is a rhetorical contrivance. I wonder whether the apparent collapse of the sense at a given point in Marvell's poem on the death of Cromwell is a similar miming, this time not of bashfulness but of grief. Marvell is contemplating the dead body:

> I saw him dead, a leaden slumber lyes,
> And mortal sleep over those wakefull eyes:
> Those gentle rays under the lids were fled,
> Which through his looks that piercing sweetness shed;
> That port which so majestique was and strong,
> Loose and depriv'd of vigour, stretch'd along:

All wither'd, all discolour'd, pale and wan,
How much another thing, no more that man?
Oh! humane glory, vaine, oh! death, oh! wings,
Oh! worthlesse world! oh transitory things!

'Oh! wings' is hard to make sense of except as deliberately not making sense: but here the function of rhetoric is surely to remain invisible.

When, for reasons of state or on a state occasion the note of undisguised panegyric is called for, Marvell's Cromwellian poetry provides it, most notably in the poem on *The First Anniversary of the Government under O.C.* The anniversaries of Cromwell's installation as Protector were celebrated, we know, with Latin odes by Payne Fisher[1] and music by Cromwell's favourite composer, in public places. Marvell's English panegyric, of which Mr. A. J. N. Wilson[2] has lately provided a learned analysis in classical terms, was no doubt equally formal in design. It was published by the Government printer and Cromwell seems to echo some phrases of it in the long speech in the Painted Chamber with which he dismissed Parliament at the end of January 1655.

It has been said that the relation between Marvell's hyperboles and what was actually going on in his mind at any point in *The First Anniversary* is impossible to discern. Yet even here before he embarks on the most hyperbolical passage Marvell takes precautions. On Michaelmas Day 1654 Cromwell's furious driving had overturned the carriage in which he was travelling with his secretary Thurloe.

How many a Hurl
Had poor Mr. Thurl-
-Lo

says the Rump song. Marvell makes it explicit that he is going to treat this untoward happening as if it had ended tragically.

So with more Modesty we may be True
And speak as of the Dead the Praises due.

Marvell's awareness of the narrow line that divides hyperbolical praise from latent satire is what one would expect. 'Improbable

[1] Payne Fisher, *Oratio Anniversaria in diem inaugurationis serenissimi nostri Principis Olivari . . . Habita in Aula Medii Templi Decembri decim sept 1654* and *Oratio Secunda Anniversaria . . . habita in Aedibus Ancrumianis Una cum Ode . . . Hengistonum cum suis ibidem decantabantur . . . 1657.*

[2] A. J. N. Wilson, 'Andrew Marvell's *The First Anniversary* . . . The Poem and its Frame of Reference', *M.L.R.* April 1974.

Eulogies' as he says in *The Rehearsal Transpros'd* (ed. D. I. B. Smith, p. 12) 'are of the greatest disservice to their own design, and do in effect diminish always the Person whom they pretend to magnifie.' In his own eulogies some saving note of reserve, of playfulness, of banter, or some invocation of convention will usually be found. In Marvell's Latin verses to Ingelo, Christina of Sweden becomes a pattern monarch, a saintly virgin, but she is none the less gently teased about the scrupulousness with which, according to her portrait, she parts her hair. In a song written for the wedding of Mary Cromwell, Marvell may make Cromwell Jove: but the masque-like conventions of the occasion preserve the fancy from appearing anything but a fancy, almost a jest.

II

The most troubling examples of Marvell's hyperbolical compliments seem to be the Latin epigrams written 1671–2, *Inscribenda Luparae*, to be inscribed on the Louvre, on the impressive façade then just completed by Perrault. Although his first couplet praises only the building, the mathematical severity of which Marvell may well have genuinely admired, others exalt Louis XIV into a deity. To praise in this style a king, and the French king, and at a time when Marvell's private letters show him to have been angered by our truckling to France—what can he be at? Is it a case such as Prior was later to denounce?—

> When once the poet's honour ceases
> From reason far his transports rove;
> And Boileau for eight hundred pieces
> Makes Louis take the wall of Jove.[1]

Is Marvell putting himself on a level with Louis XIV's adorers without the excuse of being French? Marvell who cites approvingly a year or two later the lines of *Gondibert* in which Davenant describes the extremes of praise as proper only to God:

> Its utmost force, like Powder, is unknown.
> And though weak Kings excess of praise may fear,
> Heavens vault receives what would the Palace tear.

True, there was money to be got. Louis XIV had, it was reported, offered 'a thousand Pistolls' for the couplet to be used. The wits of many countries, including England, were competing. Marvell's skill in Latin verses was undoubted, he was

[1] Matthew Prior, 'An English Ballad, On the Taking of Namur' . . . 1695.

probably short of money and if he won the prize it might do him some good, without, he might feel, in the slightest degree injuring the English alliance with the Dutch. To compliment the master of a house by praising the building was much in his style. And as for the fame attending the author of the winning distich, it would not, judging by the difficulty posterity has had in discovering his identity, be overwhelming. Perhaps it might even be argued that to be known as the author of a compliment to the French king might have been useful to Marvell as a cover-up for the pro-Dutch activities in which he seems to have been engaged.

And yet most Englishmen of anything like Marvell's political colour seem to have felt distaste for the cult of Louis XIV. Sir William Temple[1] complained of him as a comet that expected not only to be gazed at but adored. Burnet[2] was to write of the 'blasphemous impieties' with which Louis' victories were celebrated and Rochester savagely parodied one boastful epigram.[3] If at the end of his lampoon on the English court Marvell had been prepared to address the English monarch as the sun, indeed in a tremendous Ovidian-style compliment, outdoing compliments to the Sun King, to make the sun the Charles of the sky, he had previously made it clear that Charles, like the sun, had spots to be cast off. He must surely have felt discomfort at producing the kind of thing expected by Le Roi Soleil; he cannot have done it whole-heartedly.

A closer look suggests that indeed Marvell's approach to this competition was anything but single-minded. The first epigram turns on the fact that while the stones of the Louvre's vast pediment were being hoisted into position the palace of the King of Spain suffered a disastrous fire. 'While the inimitable summit of the Louvre was rising up the huge Escurial burnt with envy'. But in the Latin in which Marvell wrote there lurks a sort of letter-bomb.

> Consurgit Luparae Dum non imitabile culmen
> Escuriale ingens uritur invidia.

[1] Temple to Ormonde, January 1664, quoted in H. G. Judge, *Louis XIV*, 1965, p. 183.

[2] Burnet, *History of My own Time*, ed. O. Airy, i. 593, of Louis XIV. 'August. 1. 1672. Speeches, verses, inscriptions . . . were prepared with a profusion and excess of flattery beyond what had been offered to the worst of the Roman emperors bating the ceremony of adoration. . . . But blasphemous impieties were not wanting to raise and feed his vanity.'

[3] See *Complete Poems of John Wilmot Earl of Rochester*, ed. D. M. Vieth, Yale University Press, p. 21. 'Impromptu on Louis XIV'.

'Non imitabile culmen' is evidently modelled on Virgil's 'non imitabile fulmen'. This expression occurs in that passage of the *Aeneid* in which Salmoneus

> 'madly vain
> Seeks godlike worship from a servile train.'
> (Dryden's translation)

Of Salmoneus the annotators say 'his presumption and arrogance were so great that he deemed himself equal to Zeus, and ordered sacrifices to be offered to himself; nay, he even imitated the thunder and lightning of Zeus, but the father of the gods killed him with his thunderbolt'. The context of 'non imitabile fulmen' is clearly relevant and having perceived it one wonders, not at Marvell's servility but at his temerity. Could he seriously have thought of entering for the competition a compliment that a reader with a little acquaintance with Virgil would recognize as an insult if not a threat?

The next couplet 'Louis built this temple for future kings but the camp was a more pleasing home to him' contains, as far as I can discern, no latent disclaimer; but it seems a poor compliment to the Louvre to say that the king would rather not live in it. The third is the most charming: 'Louis built this starry palace for himself Nor did he believe himself on that account to be a god.' But to compliment on his modesty a king who had been taught by Richelieu to comport himself like a god might well seem dangerously insincere. Of the fourth couplet the second line parodies the inscription on the Sancta Sanctorum in Rome, 'the chapel', in Evelyn's words, 'containing the gates our Saviour passed when he went out of Herod's house'. Is Marvell trying his hand at fooling the French to the top of their bent? If so, he is surely doing so too transparently. In his sixth effort instead of complimenting Louis on not thinking himself a God Marvell actually concedes him divinity: 'Nec deerit Numen dum Ludovicus adest.' In order to produce this thumping compliment Marvell has reversed the indignant lines he had written earlier of Clarendon in his new palace. (The fulmen/culmen association is already present.)

> See how he reigns in his new Palace culminant
> And sits in State divine like Jove the fulminant

and, also of Clarendon,

> This Temple of War and of Peace is the shrine
> Where this Idol of State sits ador'd and accurst.

The French would not know that Marvell's Latin compliments to Louis were old insults to Clarendon, turned upside down. But altogether one doubts whether any of the six couplets can have seemed to the judicious mind of their author worth submitting. They mark, I think, the limit of Marvell's flexibility: however welcome the 'thousand pistolls' might have been his contempt for king-worship would not allow him to produce a compliment convincing enough to be worth sending in. Certainly he was not the winner: the prize went, as Miss Margaret Toynbee discovered, to a Scottish nobleman educated in France, and the winning distich was

> Non orbis Gentem non Urbem Gens habet ullam
> Urbsve domum, Dominum nec domus ulla parem.

Or in English 'The world has no such people, the people no such town, the town no such house, the master and the house have no equal.' Not in fact grossly servile. Whatever the English may have thought, much of the flattery of Louis XIV, that of the now-forgotten Benserade[1] and the immortal Boileau, for instance, is often most charmingly devised.

Even so, the notion of inscribing on the king's palace the praises of the palace, the town, the people, and the king was still being made fun of by a famous Englishman ninety-odd years later. Having devoted a whole chapter of *Tristram Shandy* (Book VII, Ch. 18) to a guide-book-style enumeration of the salient features of Paris, Sterne adds,

> Then you have seen—but 'tis what no one needeth to tell you, for you will read it yourself upon the portico of the Louvre, in these words
>
> Earth no such folks!—no Folks e'er such a town
> As Paris is—sing derry derry down.

[1] Benserade has been so thoroughly forgotten that to this day editions of Dryden's *Essay of Dramatick Poesy* do not identify the lines of his that Dryden quotes in the dedicatory epistle to Buckhurst. After consulting French experts Montague Summers was reduced to the suggestion that the lines were perhaps *vers de société* that had never been printed. In fact they are to be found in Benserade's *Ballet Royal de la Nuit*, performed 23 February 1653, and printed in that year by R. Ballard. In the copy of *Les Œuvres de Monsieur de Benserade*, Paris, 1697, belonging to the University of Birmingham and formerly in the library of the Estcourt family, the lines occur on p. 56 of the second volume. Benserade is adapting to Buckhurst lines written of the young Louis XIV who danced in the ballet—as did Buckhurst's friend, the second Duke of Buckingham. Charles II and the Duke of York had shown much interest in Benserade's ballets and in the 1670s Dryden's Melantha, in *Marriage à la Mode* is still asking 'who danced best in the last Grand Ballet?' (II. 1).

After this not altogether faithful translation of the Duke of Gordon's Latin, Sterne adds, 'The French have a gay way of treating everything that is Great: and that is all that can be said upon it.'

III

It has been noticed that when in the prose pamphlets of the last decade of his life, the works that alone brought him literary fame in his lifetime, *The Rehearsal Transpros'd*, Marvell makes fun of his opponent, the persecuting Anglican divine, Dr. Samuel Parker, he sometimes seems to be castigating in Parker traits that are his own. The way in which an insult to Clarendon is converted into a compliment to the French king must bring to mind Marvell's saying in *The Rehearsal Transpros'd* 'as smiling and frowning are performed in the face with the same muscles very little altered, so the changing of a line or two in Mr. Bayes [Parker] at any time will make the same thing serve for a Panegyrick or a Phillipic' (*R.T.*, ed. D. I. B. Smith, 1973, p. 24). Repeatedly in Marvell's works one is aware that images used in praise can also be used in dispraise. Mary Fairfax, the heroine of *Upon Appleton House*, is like the modest Halcyon, and like the comet: so is the hated Clarendon in Marvell's lampoons. To be likened to a tree is almost always in Marvell's writing a way of receiving admiration or love: the dead Cromwell is compared to a fallen tree, Mayerne the good doctor to a balsam tree. For Clarendon a likeness is found to a tree, *arbor tristis*, the Night Jasmine, with the sinister habit of growing in darkness which Marvell links with Clarendon's dislike of the scrutiny of Parliament.

> So the sad Tree shrinks from the Mornings Eye;
> But blooms all Night and shoots its branches high.

An image that we are familiar with in a most private-seeming poem will also turn up in a most formal context. In one of the letters (composed in Latin and translated by the author into English) that Marvell wrote as secretary to Carlisle's embassy to the Tzar of Russia in 1664, Marvell compares the long-standing friendship between the Russian and English crowns to a tree. In this stately piece of public writing the reader is startled to come on an image that Marvell had previously used, or was subsequently to use—who is to say—in evoking the

solitary pleasures of *The Garden.*[1] I quote Marvell's English: 'what Tree is there that spreads a deeper root, or sheds a greener shade, or beares a fruit more delicious'.

> Annihilating all that's made
> To a green Thought in a green Shade[2]

I mean now to look at some curious links, perhaps a little short of what Marvell would call 'making the same thing serve' between his earliest satires and some poems of praise.

Fleckno: an English Priest at Rome (1645–6) tells us all that we know of Marvell's travels in Italy, at least in the way of incident. It is likely that while he was in Rome he saw something of the young Duke of Buckingham and his brother, the beautiful Lord Francis Villiers. These young men would have known Flecknoe, who cultivated their family and if Marvell ever showed his satire it might have been to them. Seeking more indications of Marvell's time in Italy I noticed that one John Raymond in a guide book to Italy published in 1648 mentions a party of English travellers that included a northern baronet and also a young man who disconcerted an Italian friar by remarking that he had a particular reverence for the clergy because he himself was the son of a priest. This *sounds* like Marvell's kind of jest. Whether or not there is here a trace of Marvell for the biographer—and it is not unlikely that there were other north country clergymen's sons travelling in Italy at that time—the author of *Fleckno: an English Priest at Rome* is already intensely Protestant. In this early poem the future author of *The Growth of Popery* conjures up a figure whose grotesque lack of substance, dismal sound, and tritely symbolical surroundings

[1] 'The Garden' may well be the Nun Appleton poem it is usually assumed to be but a much later date seems to me likely. Its companion poem 'Hortus' mentions that the poet has sought in vain for quiet in the lofty palaces of kings. If this is to be taken literally it would suggest a date after Marvell had lodgings in Whitehall or frequented the palace of Westminster. It may be significant that in a letter of 1667 (*Letters*, 3rd edition, p. 310) Marvell sends Lord Wharton a poem by Simon Ford in Latin and English 'having nothing of mine own to deserve your acceptance'. Lord Wharton it seems would have been a worthy recipient of 'The Garden' and 'Hortus'; and it may have been at Wharton's country seat of Winchendon, Bucks., where we know Marvell sometimes stayed, rather than at Nun Appleton, that the 'dial new' of flowers was to be seen.

[2] In Marvell's Latin the greenness of the tree's shade is the first thing mentioned: 'nulla est arbor quae aut viridiorum et latiorum umbram porrexerit, aut altiores radices egerit, aut fructus uberiores et suaviores ediderit' (Miège, *A Relation of three Embassies*, 1669, p. 158).

—three staircases, the sign of the Pelican and so on—might have served as an embodiment of the decay of Popery. *Fleckno* is rich in detail, it illustrates that 'strong sense of the actual' that a Victorian critic (S. C. Hall) rightly perceived to be characteristic of Marvell: the large themes that lurk behind the details, however, remain latent, it is a poem of private life, one poet's reaction to the irritable vanity of another poet and of that poet's foolish patron. In one of its aspects the poem might be called 'The triumph of politeness'. Marvell, for as Flecknoe is an actual person I think we may take it that the narrator is the author himself, is paying the call in the first place because he is 'obliged', Flecknoe has so often called on him. After climbing up three flights of stairs to a narrow coffin-like room at the top the visitor is greeted by the priest-poet's immediately reciting his 'hideous' verses. Much as the caller suffers from Flecknoe's poetry, he courts—perhaps mocking at the reminders of saints' lives and sufferings all around him, the poem is very Roman—a sort of comic martyrdom. As St. Laurence on his gridiron—and Marvell no doubt had seen in Rome as Evelyn did, the very instrument on which the saint was 'cruelly broiled'—as St. Laurence asked to be turned over, so Marvell exposes himself to further suffering.

> But I, who now imagin'd my self brought
> To my last Tryal, in a serious thought
> Calm'd the disorders of my youthful Breast,
> And to my Martyrdom prepared Rest.
> Only this frail Ambition did remain,
> The last distemper of the sober Brain,
> That there had been some present to assure
> The future Ages how I did indure:
> And how I, silent, turn'd my burning Ear
> Towards the Verse; and when that could not hear,
> Held him the other; and unchanged yet,
> Ask'd still for more, and pray'd him to repeat.

Throughout the satire the narrator is a private, reserved character. He does the polite, the socially resourceful thing, whether listening to Father Flecknoe's poems, or asking the evidently starving priest-poet to a good Protestant meat meal, or conciliating Flecknoe's sword-happy young patron. But neither the foolish poet nor his aristocratic but illiterate admirer is given the slightest hint of Marvell's real feelings of disgust, boredom, contempt. If Marvell's social demeanour was really like this perhaps it is understandable that ten years later at

Saumur he should have earned for himself from a slanderous and unfriendly but not stupid observer the epithet 'Italo-Machavillian'.

Fleckno is an early poem, a private poem, and a poem in which nothing, nobody, is overtly praised, though the narrator's conduct sets up a standard of flawlessly polite behaviour. It is none the less linked in various ways with the late (1667) panegyric on Captain Douglas which makes part of *Last Instructions*. The Douglas poem is often called 'baroque' and the subject has been identified as a 'state topos'.[1] The death of this young man—Douglas chose in a sea-fight with the Dutch to stay and perish on his burning ship—struck Sir William Temple as a subject that he would have wished the dead Cowley to celebrate. Marvell makes it clear that he is elevating Douglas to mythical stature.

> Fortunate Boy! if either Pencil's fame
> Or if my Verse can propagate thy Name;
> When Oeta and Alcides are forgot
> Our English youth shall sing the Valiant Scot.

If the hero of *Fleckno* was a private, reserved young man the young martyr of *Last Instructions* is much more so. His self-sufficiency, his intactness are stressed from the outset:

> His yellow locks curl back themselves to seek
> Nor other Courtship knew but to his Cheek.

Intactness is perhaps appropriate to the sacrificial victim, 'round in itself' enclosed, like the Drop of Dew. There is a later version of the panegyric, called *The Loyall Scot*. In this the self-enclosedness of the young hero is even more stressed: as he dies he 'on the flaming Plank, so rests his Head As one that huggs himself in a warm bed.' The youthfulness of the victim is stressed, rather uncomfortably, at the beginning, with a reference to his 'lovely chin', easier to take if one recalls the Amazonian chin of the sixteen-year-old Coriolanus. Later there is a note of banter, as Douglas 'birds' at the Dutch and waves his sword about, his 'dear Sword' it is called later. Perhaps Marvell implies that this heroic suicide was impossible except to a boyish character. The real Captain Douglas was grown up and a married man. Marvell has invented a figure to suit his conception of the subject. One notes that in the first version he

[1] See Michael Gearin Tosh, 'The Structure of *Marvell's Last Instructions to a Painter*', *Essays in Criticism*, xxii (1972).

has the yellow locks of the typical Scot, amended in the second to 'shady'.

Like the comic martyr of *Fleckno* the heroic victim wants someone to witness his endurance. Marvell had wished

> That there had been some present to assure
> The future Ages how I did indure:

Douglas rejoices in the presence of Albemarle

> And secret Joy in his calm soul does rise
> That Monk looks on to see how Douglas dies.

There is no need to labour the point: both figures are young men, both suffer by fire ('my burning Ear') both are markedly keeping themselves to themselves, both none the less want fame and approval. The *Fleckno* poem, very symmetrically and forcibly composed, always knows where it is going. The account of Douglas's death is curiously frigid and even stagy: it is hardly more moving than the suttee of Melesinda in *Aurengzebe*.

Is the author hinting not unintentionally at the self-love and self-congratulation, not to say narcissicism, that might be part of a heroic suicide, however sanctioned by naval tradition? The ironies of *Fleckno* do not leave us in such doubt.

If the satire on Flecknoe and the panegyric on Douglas are linked, so also are the Douglas poem and the *Horatian Ode*, and by the *Ode*'s most famous lines. In the *Ode* Charles does nothing common or mean partly by performing in the most uncommon circumstances the most common and, in the old sense, mean action, by laying his head

> Down as upon a bed.

The paradox goes unnoted, the art is so natural seeming. Marvell was perhaps dissatisfied with his attempt to repeat the effect. In the first version of the Douglas poem the boy

> On the flaming Plank, so rests his Head
> As one that's warmed himself and gone to Bed.

The homeliness of this might be thought dangerously near to burlesque. Did Marvell fear that the reader might remember Milton's jocular treatment of the death of Hobson the carrier?

> Hobson has supt, and's newly gone to bed.

Certainly he changed the line, so as to remove the colloquial 'gone to bed', and also so as to introduce a new notion, that of self-enclosedness, as I have said, and self-congratulation.

> As one that Huggs himself in a warm bed.

Is the boy locked in his own embraces a figure of pathos or a figure flawed?

Marvell takes Parker's willingness to 'make the same thing serve' for opposite purposes an indication of his 'poorness of expression'. No one will accuse Marvell of that: perhaps I have been demonstrating no more than that like most poets he has his favourite images. It is a commonplace of Marvell criticism that there is a doubleness—not to use the word duplicity, with its moral shade—in Marvell's mind, evident in his fondness for the dialogue form and in very much else. He might have said like the young Ruskin, 'I almost always see two sides of a thing at once—in matters poetical and I never get strongly excited without perceiving drawbacks and imperfections' (*Ruskin in Italy*, p. 57).

It was no doubt a piece of what Marvell elsewhere calls 'Chance's better wit' that the same ludicrous but not uninteresting figure, the Revd. Richard Flecknoe, should appear both in Marvell's first satire and, many years later, in Dryden's greatest: appropriate too that the first satire of the author of that diplomatic triumph *The Rehearsal Transpros'd* in which the cause of liberty for Dissenters was asserted with all the arts that Dissenters were expected to be most deficient in should celebrate politeness and social resourcefulness. Marvell is always aware of the social arts, however much in his later lampoons it may suit him to flout them. The triumph of *The Rehearsal Transpros'd* was a triumph in the manipulation of sympathy, in the art of getting the reader on his side by showing with what reluctance, under what provocation, for what excellent reasons he had to hold his adversary up to ridicule. Marvell was not insensitive to the insults his adversary fired at him. In a private letter he wrote of Parker's answer to the first part of his own book 'it is the rudest book . . . that ever was publisht (I may say) since the invention of printing'. Marvell demolishes Parker by subtler means. One of the pamphlets supporting Parker complains 'that which is admirable and a greater Marvel is the skill and cunning of the man . . . though you stare about you you shall not see the Execution nor know whence the shot comes' (Edmund Hickeringill, *Gregory Greybeard*, 1673, p. 13). What is even more strikingly appropriate is that Marvell who liked to keep his thoughts private, Marvell who never took the trouble to publish the poems that posterity cares for most, should make the subject of his first satire a poet so eager for an audience that his way of greeting a visitor who has just mounted three flights of stairs is immediately to start reciting his own poetry.

The passage of rueful laughter at his own sufferings is what saves Marvell's *Fleckno* poem from being an act of retrospective self-approval. He cannot 'for being faultless be accused'. If Marvell appears in a poem—and in his next satire, *Tom May's Death*, he disappears behind the figure of Ben Jonson—there is usually some such touch of rueful self-mockery. So in the poem commending the *Lucasta* of his noble friend Lovelace, Marvell causes himself to be mistaken by the loveliest of Lovelace's many female admirers for one of the censuring word-peckers whose word-pecking he has been parodying. So in the poem on little T.C. he professes that he will not be able to stand the glories of Theophila in her maiden prime

> Let me be laid
> Where I may see thy Glories from some shade.

He is smiling at her, but also at himself. In *Upon Appleton House* he is a 'trifling youth' ashamed to be found by his serious-minded young pupil with the paraphernalia of the fisherman. He is gently bantering her when, before praising her as the lady of the landscape, likened to the halcyon and to the comet, he describes how Nature too pulls itself together as Mary approaches

> . . . Every thing so whisht and fine
> Starts forthwith to its *Bonne Mine.*
> The Sun itself of her aware,
> Seems to descend with greater Care;
> And lest She see him go to Bed
> In blushing Clouds conceales his Head

But he has previously laughed at himself. In *To his Coy Mistress* he is obviously persuading from a position of strength, she is unrealistically resisting her own wishes, like Chloe in *Daphnis and Chloe.* But his song is doomed to silence as her beauty to extinction. He may jest at her 'quaint honour' but his own wishes are unsparingly called 'lust'. The whole movement of *The Coronet* is a revulsion against his own presumption in designing, however skilful and delicate the design, to crown the King of Glory as he had never been crowned before. And, to return to the territory of satire, even in the *Last Instructions to a Painter* there is a social skill which prevents the reader from feeling that a faultless person is denouncing the faults of others. The device, not of course invented by Marvell, but most memorably adopted by him, of instructing a painter to produce these ugly portraits of sensual, greedy, and incompetent people allows the writer a friendly tone at least in instructing his collaborator. The very framework of the poem is bantered for a moment in the most

dramatic scene of the satire, where the king, after realizing that the naked lady at his bedside is 'England or the Peace', hears the menacing sound of Louis XIV's army.

> Express him startling next with list'ning ear
> As one that some unusual noise does hear.
> With Canon, Trumpets, Drums, his door surround,
> But let some other Painter draw the sound.

With similar self-disparagement the joint undertaking of the poet and painter is compared to the roughly enacted folk-satire of the Skimmington Ride

> So thou and I, dear Painter, represent
> In quick Effigy, others Faults . . .

The whole enterprise of Marvell's controversy with Parker ends with a Latin anecdote of a marvel which comically at once exults in, and disparages, his own triumph. This relates how the magician of the Emperor Wenceslaus swallowed up a visiting conjuror whole, all except his dirty boots, and spat him out again, intact but wet, and effectually discouraged from any further competition with the victorious wizard.

Tom May's Death, Marvell's second satire, written presumably some four years later than *Fleckno*, like *Fleckno* is concerned with the behaviour of a poet, though in a public context. The core of the case against May, put into the mouth of the dead Ben Jonson, is that he has deliberately fomented civil war out of pique at King Charles's having made Davenant Laureate.

> But the[e] nor Ignorance nor seeming good
> Misled, but malice fixt and understood.
> Because some one than thee more worthy weares
> The sacred Laurel, hence are all these teares?
> Must therefore all the World be set on flame,
> Because a Gazet writer mist his aim?
> And for a Tankard-bearing Muse must we
> As for the Basket Guelphs and Ghib'llines be?

Against the figure of the ignoble poet who has renounced his art to become the historian of the winning faction is set the figure who is courageous, faithful, disinterested, and 'single', maintaining tradition at the time of revolution.

> When the Sword glitters ore the Judges head
> And fear has Coward Churchmen silenced,
> Then is the Poets time, 'tis then he drawes
> And single fights forsaken Vertues cause.
> He, when the wheel of Empire, whirleth back,

> And though the World's disjointed Axel crack,
> Sings still of ancient Rights and better Times,
> Seeks wretched good, arraigns successful Crimes.

The figure who 'single fights', the Abdiel figure, has a strong attraction for Marvell. 'Earth does not shew so brave a sight As when a single soul does fence . . .'. In one of his private letters we see him warming to a certain Mr. Jinks[1] who in a hopeless cause was 'molesting all judicatures'. 'Noe matter,' says Marvell, 'he is a single brave fellow.'

In *Tom May's Death* the figure who 'single draws' is not named. I think it likely that he is based on Davenant, the poet of whom May had been so jealous. 'Surviving Davenant' he is called in the poem, but in November 1650, when May was being awarded a monument in Westminster Abbey, Davenant appeared to be only just surviving. He was in the Tower awaiting trial on a charge of treason: and meanwhile his epic *Gondibert* was on sale in London—the only considerable English poem to have appeared while the author was in prison and in danger of death. It seems to me that the passage from *Tom May's Death* about the heroic poet has phrases reminiscent of expressions both in *Gondibert's Post-Script to the Reader* and in Cowley's *Commendatory poem to Gondibert.* Marvell would not have been alone in being moved by the spectacle of the poet in the middle of his most ambitious work awaiting trial on a capital charge. In fact Davenant was set free the following spring, it appears not without the intervention of Milton. It is true that Marvell's allusions to *Gondibert* in the 1670s have a tinge of mockery: but a case can be made out for his having admired the poem on its first appearance: it has certainly left traces on his work. I think that Davenant is much more important in *Tom May's Death* than is usually recognized. The coincidence of his being in danger from the State while the same State is honouring May has perhaps done much to upset the balance that Marvell seems to have achieved a few months earlier in the *Horatian Ode.*

It is noticeable that the poet attacked is characterized in detail—his stammer, his stumbling, his drunkenness, his lodging—while the poet exalted is not even unambiguously identified: the particularity of satire, the noble generality of the

[1] 'M^{r} Jinks will not petition y^{e} king might soe come out but keeps his prison as his fort & molests all judicatures wth requireing habeas corpus & offring baile, yet in vaine & perhaps may be prisoner till michaelmas terme, noe matter he is a single brave fellow' (*Letters*, p. 348). The same postscript that praises Jinks rejoices in the death of 'D^{r} Stubbs physician atheist'.

ideal. Was it that Marvell meant to show the poem to Davenant and would not embarrass him with personalities?

Tom May's Death is not exactly a savage satire. The device of putting the denunciation of May into Ben Jonson's voice enables it to be, in Marvell's favourite expression, 'both merry and angry'. May, who had been a considerable poet and playwright in his youth and one of Falkland's famous gatherings at Great Tew, though he dies drunk is allowed to wake up in the Elysian fields. And for a few lines his bewilderment is entered into sympathetically. May was

> amaz'd on th'Elysian side,
> And with an Eye uncertain, gazing wide,
> Could not determine in what place he was,
> For whence in Stevens ally Trees or grass?

A characteristic Marvell touch, to make 'Trees and grass' the first signs of Paradise. They are superimposed on May's Westminster alley almost as the country landscape overlaid the London one in Wordsworth's *Poor Susan:*

> Bright volumes of vapour through Lothbury glide,
> And a river runs on through the vale of Cheapside.

Satire returns with May's looking for the tavern signs by which still he found and lost his way and his taking it that a corpulent figure that he perceives is one Ares[1]

> But 'twas a man of much another sort
> 'Twas Ben that in the dusky laurel shade
> Amongst the Chorus of old Poets laid,
> Sounding of ancient Heroes . . .[2]

'Dusky Laurel' reminds one that Marvell cannot easily leave laurel as a dead metaphor.

Before denouncing and banishing May, Jonson alludes jocularly (he is throughout both authoritative and comic) to the famous opening lines of May's Lucan and to the manner of May's death

> Where the Historian of the Commonwealth
> In his own Bowels sheath'd the conquering health.

[1] It has been argued both that *Tom May's Death* was written after the Restoration and, lately, that it is not Marvell's at all. The reference to 'Ares' is one of the touches that seem to show that the poem was written close to the time of May's death. Later who would have remembered 'Ares'? Who does? The poem seems to me to have many characteristic Marvell touches.

[2] Cf.

> He lay'd
> And slept in Peace under the Lawrel shade.
>
> *A Poem upon the Death of O.C.*

Another characteristic Marvell touch, to make the liquid sharp-edged, so in *Upon Appleton House* the sea is a 'watery . . . sword', so the blood from the heart of her fawn wounds the Nymph, so her tears will engrave themselves on marble.

The vanishing of May in a cloud of pitch at the end is also characteristic. Sometimes, as in *Fleckno*, Marvell will end a poem by transposition into another art; the events of *Fleckno* are to be made into an *ex-voto* painting, that primitive form of art, to be hung as a thank-offering in St. Peter's; a culmination both of the urbanities of the poem, to do in Rome as Rome does and of the undercurrent of mockery of the papistical (and, indeed, of the theological and scriptural) that runs through much of the poem. At the end of *Tom May's Death* the playwright May performs a sort of dramatic disappearing act, and an air of illusion is cast over all that went before.

The connection between *Tom May's Death* and the *Horatian Ode* I can only touch on. It is easy to describe the two poems in such a way that they constitute the most striking example of 'making the same thing serve' for opposite purposes. The *Ode* is Horatian and treats of English affairs in Roman terms: Tom May is blamed for obtruding Roman similitudes on English characters and happenings. In the *Ode* Cromwell, however ambivalently, is praised: in *Tom May's Death* the leaders of the Parliamentary cause are likened to Spartacus, leader of a revolt of slaves, and to 'Brutus and Cassius the people's cheats'. The *Ode* begins by saying that the ambitious young man who would make a figure in the world must give up the Muses and take to the sword. In *Tom May's Death* we are told that the time of revolution is the poet's time. Of course, since the poet of the *Horatian Ode* is himself writing a poem, his saying that the present time is not one for the Muses takes on a particular colour: we deduce that he is not himself a 'forward youth that would appear'. His own response to the state of affairs has been to make it the matter of his art. And if he cannot be said in the *Horatian Ode* to be seeking wretched good and arraigning successful crimes, as Ben Jonson in *Tom May's Death* desired the poet to do, he is at least holding a balance between the opposed sides, allowing Justice and the ancient rights to one, victory and the likelihood of victories abroad to the other.

The poet of the *Ode* looks forward to continuance of power of the sword, warding off the spirits of the shady night, the aggrieved dead, as the swords of Ulysses and Aeneas kept off the ghosts in the underworld. It is not an exultant ending,

although it would be a mistake to read into it a modern abhorrence of all 'violence'. There was exulting in the verses that looked forward to Cromwell's successes over Italy and Gaul and to the effects of his expedition to Scotland. Since this was in effect an expedition against Charles II the *Ode*, whatever else it is, is not a Royalist's poem: and *Tom May's Death*, at least during the tirade of Ben Jonson is at least an anti-Parliament one. But the worst offence of Tom May in Marvell's version of his life has been to foment faction, to make us without our knowledge, 'as for the basket',[1] into Guelphs and Ghibellines sharply and irremediably opposed. Looked at in this way the opposition between the poems themselves becomes less sharp; one allows what candour must concede to both sides, the other attacks a writer for promoting a spirit of faction.

One, though it treats of present happenings, treats of them in a historical spirit: the other is sharply topical and personal. The *Ode* is detached enough for debate about its precise stance to continue after how many years, books, articles. *Tom May's Death* is a poem of angry if jocular contempt for a particular person who had perhaps crossed Marvell's path: May had connections with Hull and it seems with Fairfax. Yet when all is said a revulsion from the great poem he had written a few months earlier does seem to have taken place in the mind of the author of *Tom May's Death.*

IV

Marvell often demonstrates that praise makes itself most felt in a context of satire or mockery or contempt. So the description of Douglas's fiery death was preceded by a burlesque sketch of Sir Thomas Daniel and two of his officers running away from the Dutch fireships, unsinged, 'like Shadrach, Mesheck and Abednego'. Immediately on this follows 'Not so brave Douglas'. In the later version, where the panegyric is spoken by Cleveland, the suddenness and surprisingness of the transition is underlined:

> Abruptly he began, disguising art,
> As of his Satyr this had been a part.
> Not so brave Douglass . . .

Marvell is always aware of the insipidity of unvaried praise. Usually he balances praise with some contrary motion: something or someone is laughed at or attacked. In the *Epitaph* on

[1] The only instance I have found elsewhere of this mysterious expression is in *The Correspondence of Sarah, Lady Lyttleton*, 1912, p. 68, where 'in y^e^ basket' is glossed as 'in total ignorance'.

the lady who was 'Modest as Morn, as evening bright', a faultless lady, it is Praise itself that is attacked.[1]

> Where never any could speak ill,
> Who would officious Praises spill?

In his Latin prose epitaph on the fourth and last remaining son of his friend, Sir John Trott, Marvell makes praise disguise itself as indignant denunciation. It is, he says, 'to lessen the envy caused by true praise with a feigned reproof' that he calls the dead boy 'a parricide', 'the sponge (or obliterator) of his family—a deserter of this world who has defected to God.' The father liked this paradox well enough to have it put up in Laverstoke church. If at first it seems 'key-cold', on reflection it may be seen as a bold expression of the anger towards the dead that is sometimes a part of grief. 'What is he doing under the ground, that idiot?' said his daughter Lucia of the dead James Joyce.

Praise that disguises itself as insult can be particularly satisfying. In the next century the supreme example is Pope's poem on Mrs. Howard, in which her one physical defect is made a moral beauty:

> When all the world conspires to praise her
> The woman's deaf and does not hear.

One of Marvell's most delicate fleeting touches of apparent insult disguising praise is in *Upon Appleton House*. The flowers are to send out a volley of fragrance for each of her parents, none for Mary:

> These, as their Governour goes by
> In fragrant Vollyes they let fly;
> And to salute their Governess
> Again as great a charge they press:
> None for the Virgin Nymph . . .

The reason:

> for She
> Seems with the Flow'rs a Flow'r to be.

In Marvell's commendatory poems we see how any hint of routine praise is avoided: his praise of *Lucasta* is delivered not,

[1] Cf. *Troilus and Cressida*

> a blush
> Modest as morning when she coldly eyes
> The youthful Phoebus.
>
> (I. iii. 228–30).

so to speak, to his friend's face, but to the mob of Lovelace's ill-judging lady-loves who have mistakenly come out to attack Lovelace's friend. Lovelace was Marvell's 'noble friend': Dr. Witty, the Hull physician, as an old family friend can be more openly teased; an ideal female-figure is introduced into the English poem so that Marvell can suddenly remember that Witty's book holds that women should not teach, and apologize: the Latin poem on Witty's book starts with the proposition that an alarming number of books pour out from the presses and it is a good thing that people smoke, as that means burning paper.

When in 1674 Marvell wrote a commendatory poem in praise of the greatest work of the great poet who had been his friend certainly since 1653, more than possibly since 1649,[1] it seems that he took particular pains to make the praise rise out of initial distrust, out of an appearance of something like hostility. The poem is not addressed to Milton as Marvell's friend: the title is formal, *On Mr. Milton's Paradise lost* and it is signed with initials only. Marvell writes at first as if he were a stranger, a pious Dissenter, perhaps, one who can 'misdoubt' Milton's intent and then ask pardon for his 'causeless but not impious surmise'. 'Not impious' is almost Pecksniffian. The apprehension that the 'bold' poet might ruin the sacred truths 'to fable and old song' is surely not one that Marvell in his own person could have entertained for a moment. It is worth noticing that Marvell is writing for the second edition of *Paradise Lost* in all copies of which appeared *The Argument* which Milton had furnished at the publisher's request. Marvell certainly refers to the other piece of prefatory matter that the publisher had asked for and there is some reason to believe that when Marvell says 'The Argument' he means, or partly means, the prose summary. He writes in the first two paragraphs of his poem as if he is looking at a 'project', something other than the poem itself. His apprehensions of Milton's doing damage to Scripture would

[1] Marvell's recent biographer, W. R. Parker, is not prepared to dismiss the possibility that Marvell helped Milton with the composition of *Eikonoklastes* (1649). See W. R. Parker, *Milton* (1968), p. 964.

It seems not to have been noticed that Captain Thompson prints amongst the *Addenda* to Volume III of his edition of Marvell's works, 1776, the whole of the Latin version of the *Declaration of the Parliament of England* of March 1648/9, as 'by Andrew Marvell who drew up the State Papers under Milton's Inspection'. Thompson elsewhere makes some bad mistakes but there is surely something behind this attribution. Marvell perhaps helped Milton with one of the first tasks of his Latin Secretaryship, turning this declaration into Latin.

be rather more plausible if we were not intended to imagine him beginning the poem at the beginning, with the invocation of the Spirit. Possibly Marvell wished the Argument away. In our own day some part of this prose summary has been found more 'shocking and brutal' than the corresponding lines of the poem. Marvell may have disliked the expression 'God to render man inexcusable' which occurs in the Argument of Book V as much as does the author of *Milton's God*. One remembers that in Marvell's last prose work he writes indignantly of 'that absurdity that God ruines men for what he hath induc'd them to . . . If a well-natur'd man would not do so', says Marvell, 'it is much more disagreeable to God's Nature' (*Remarks Upon a late Disingenuous Discourse*, 1678, p. 105).

There certainly were at that time pious readers who feared some offence to religion from the use of human invention on Scripture.[1] I do not think that Marvell himself was particularly tender in that respect, but it was diplomatic to personate one such, and then demonstrate the mistakenness of such fears. Praise of Milton's poem when it does come is such praise as Scripture gives to the act of creation performed by the Almighty himself.

In *Tom May's Death* the praise of the brave poet rose out of denunciation of the cowardly conforming one. Here praise of Milton alternates with attacks on Dryden, the Town-Bayes Marvell calls him, the poet who belongs to the world of London and fashion, who is capable of turning Milton's poem and the Scriptural account of Creation into a play. 'Might hence presume the whole Creations day / To change in Scenes and show it in a play.' After attacking Dryden's reliance on the stimulus of rhyme Marvell with his usual self-disparagement turns sharply on his own practice. Marvell who, as Masson says, never as far as we know in all his life wrote unrhymed verse offers himself up to prove Milton's point that rhyme makes a poet express himself less well.

> I too transported by the Mode offend,
> And while I meant to Praise thee must Commend.

Rhyme makes Marvell use the word 'commend' when he would have wished to use the word 'praise'—not, of course, a difficult

[1] Sir Samuel Morland who as Cromwell's agent in the Swiss cantons was probably known to Marvell and to Milton wrote with mockery and disapproval of the episode of The War in Heaven as jesting with God's word. See *The Urim of Conscience*, 1695, pp. 13–14, quoted in R. H. West, *Milton and the Angels*, University of Georgia Press, 1955, p. 118.

word to rhyme with, nor one that he fails to use elsewhere. (The practical rhetoric reminds one of the way in which he had demonstrated that words failed him before the Queen of Sweden.) Boileau in his satire *A Monsieur de Moliere* (1666) had complained that rhyme made him say the opposite of what he wished.

> Quand je veux dire blanc la quinteuse dit noir.

Marvell's instance of the wrong done to sense by rhyme is subtler. To praise may be much the same thing as to commend but praise is a nobler word: and it is not for the inferior to commend his superior.

Altogether in this poem Marvell is content to be topical, circumstantial, useful: he writes what will most serve Milton's fame in the London of 1674 with likely readers. It was left for Dryden to provide what strikes one as consciously immortal verse on Milton's immortal poem, in the epigram affixed to the fourth edition from which Marvell's poem was omitted.

> Three Poets, in three distant Ages born . . .

If praise given with reluctance is valuable the most precious praise is that extorted from an enemy. Seventeenth-century critics of Horace, Dacier for instance, thought it a particularly fine stroke of Horace's that makes the praise of Rome at the end of the fourth ode of his fourth book come from the lips of Rome's great enemy, the perfidious Hannibal. This effect Marvell uses repeatedly. In the *Ode* it is the Irish who can affirm Cromwell's praises best. At the end of *The First Anniversary* a long tribute to Cromwell's vigilance and enterprise is put into the reluctant mouth of one of those actually threatened by his naval preparations.

> Pardon great Prince, if thus their Fear or Spight
> More then our Love and Duty do thee Right.

says the poet.

Marvell in our own day has been praised so much, and often so eloquently and so subtly that it is not easy now to do more than 'officious Praises spill'. But a compliment to his art from an old enemy, he might have valued. Sir Roger L'Estrange as Licensor of the Press had had many a brush with Marvell. In a pamphlet of 1679 L'Estrange, though mocking at the endeavour 'to canonize Mr. Marvell (now in his grave) if not for

a Saint, yet for a Prophet in showing how pat the Popish Plot falls out to his conjecture' still pays him an unwilling tribute. 'The Man I confess is a great Master of words.'[1]

[1] Roger L'Estrange, *The Parallel, or An Account of the Growth of Knavery*, 1679, p. 1. L'Estrange is writing of Marvell's prose. But it is no longer necessary to suppose that none of Marvell's 'private' poetry was being read in London in the 1670s. Thanks to Miss Crum and Mr. Kelliher we know now that the antiquarian Sir William Haward of Tandridge had copied a version of *To his Coy Mistress* into his commonplace book, *c.* 1675: and in September 1678 a disreputable character passing under the name of Colonel John Scott left behind him in a cupboard in his lodgings in Cannon Street an evidently much carried-about manuscript of *A Dialogue between the Resolved Soul and Created Pleasure*, but called *A Combat between Soul and Sense* (Rawl. MS. A 176 fol. 80). It lacks lines 15–16. The direction 'Charge' before the first line, echoed in 'Still new Charges sound', rather supports Leishman's suggestion that the dialogue had a musical setting. As Scott later became the chief promoter of the accusation of Popery brought falsely against Pepys a great deal is known of him. Pepys collected every scrap of information that he could against his enemy. One of the minute details known of this early possessor of Marvell's *Dialogue between the Resolved Soul and Created Pleasure* is that his favourite oath was 'God damn the Creation'.