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Marvell's Reformed Theory of Architecture: *Upon Appleton House*, I-X

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> Let others vainly strive t'immure
> The *Circle* in the *Quadrature*!
> These *holy Mathematicks* can
> In ev'ry Figure equal Man.[1]

Commentators on stanzas one through nine of Marvell's *Upon Appleton House* have tended to view the theme of architecture in one of three ways. According to the first, these stanzas belong to the genre of the country-house poem and treat such topics of this genre as the modesty and utility of architecture.[2] The second view focuses on allusions to houses in the classical poets, particularly Virgil and Horace.[3] From a third perspective, Marvell is enchanted with and yet critical of the architectural theory of the Italian Renaissance.[4] Without wishing to challenge either of the first two views, this study again considers Marvell's criticism of the Italian theory of architecture in order to show that the primary concern of the poem's opening is to reform that theory. It argues that, while Marvell overtly rejects Pythagorean mathematics as the basis of architecture, he nevertheless centers his own theory on a particular mathematical algorithm. For him, the house of Lord Fairfax, unlike the presumptuous houses built by foreign architects, is a truly holy signifier because it mathematically equals the humility of Fairfax and thereby indicates his state of grace. To establish this thesis, I briefly review the Italian theory that informs the passage, show why the poet rejects it, and then construct the reformed theory that these stanzas present. I conclude with a qualification and an implication.

I

The architectural theory of the Italian Renaissance not only is complicated; it also varies significantly from author to author, from an Alberti to a Palladio to a Serlio.[5] Because no single source seems to lie directly behind Marvell's attack on this architecture, it is impossible to determine his understanding of the theory in detail.[6] Nevertheless, as shall become clear as we proceed, he correctly understands four tenets as being basic to the Italian theory:

1. that architecture is a semiotic system, with the building as the signifier and the cosmos and microcosmic man as the signifieds;
2. that the basis of this signification is formal, that is, that the building signifies the cosmos and man because it possesses the same intellectual form as that which informs both the material world and corporeal man;
3. that this form originated in the Mind of God and was used as the pattern for creation, that therefore the building can reveal the divine Mind; and
4. that only a man who is himself harmonious can design and construct a building with divine significance.

Although full justice to these tenets cannot be done here, the following pages review various authorities in order to clarify the meanings of these principles.

The Renaissance belief that architecture is fundamentally a semiotic system derives from the classical authority on architecture, the Roman Vitruvius. In the first chapter of the first book of *De Architectura*, Vitruvius makes this seminal comment:

> Both in general and especially in architecture are these two things found; that which signifies and that which is signified. That which is signified is the thing proposed about which we speak; that which signifies is the demonstration unfolded in systems of precepts.[7]

In his fine book on Renaissance architectural theory entitled *Pythagorean Palaces*, G. L. Hersey interprets these cryptic remarks:

> [Vitruvius] calls the temples themselves "signifiers" (*quod significat*) and the descriptions of them

> "signifieds" (*quod significatur*, I.I.3). This notion of a description that is a kind of explanatory model or miniature, and also the "meaning" of the thing described, is common in classical thought.[8]

Such a Vitruvian description is mathematical, indeed an algorithm, "a formula using words and numbers that entails other such formulas" (Hersey, p. 24). For example, Hersey invents this algorithm: "'I want a eustyle Ionic pseudodipteral octastyle temple with a module of two feet and a three-step stylobate'" (p. 25).[9] For any builder familiar with the Vitruvian system, this sentence furnishes all the information needed to unfold the design in the desired material building—what Hersey means when he says that the description measures and controls the signifying building. Conversely, to discover the signified of an already standing building, one must perform a series of mathematical calculations, translating the measured dimensions and geometrical figures back into the numbers and words of the underlying algorithm.[10]

For the Renaissance architectural theorists, this algorithmic notion of architecture fits well with their understanding of the creation of the world by the Divine Architect. They believe that the Creator too used an algorithm, and cite as proof the Wisdom of Solomon 11:21, according to which God ordered all things by number, weight, and measure.[11] Moreover, with a true syncretic spirit, at least some of them hold that the divine algorithm has been recorded by Plato in the *Timaeus*.[12] As a result, any building that incorporates this divine algorithm (or the cubic numerology that underlies it) signifies the world because it possesses the same form as the world; it is a formal microcosm. Rudolf Wittkower has reproduced a letter of the Italian architect Francesco Giorgi that exemplifies well this mathematical basis of Renaissance architectural theory. Writing in response to the Doge Andrea Gritti's request that he help settle a dispute concerning the preferable proportions of a church under construction, S. Francesco della Vigna in Venice, Giorgi offers this advice:

> In order to build the fabric of the church with those fitting and very harmonious proportions which one can do without altering anything that has been done, I should proceed in the following manner. I should like the width of the nave to be 9 paces (1 pace=ca. 1.8m.) which is the square of three, the first and divine number. The length of the nave,

> which will be 27, will have a triple proportion which makes a diapason and a diapente. And this mysterious harmony is such that when Plato in the *Timaeus* wished to describe the wonderful consonance of the parts and fabric of the world, he took this as the first foundation of his description, multiplying as far as necessary these same proportions and figures according to the fitting rules and consonances until he had included the whole world and each of its members and parts. We, being desirous of building the church, have thought it necessary, and most appropriate to follow that order of which God, the greatest architect, is the master and author. When God wished to instruct Moses concerning the form and proportion of the tabernacle which he had to build, He gave him as model the fabric of the world and said (as is written in Exodus 25) "And look that thou make them after their pattern, which was shewed thee in the mount." By this pattern was meant, according to all the interpreters, the fabric of the world. And rightly so, because it was necessary that the particular place should resemble His universe, not in size, of which He has no need, nor in delight, but in proportion.[13]

To be sure, not all Renaissance architectural theorists so straightforwardly purloin their algorithm from the *Timaeus*; instead, as Hersey's study documents, their Pythagorean numerology is often far more elaborated. But the details of these elaborations need not delay us so long as we understand their belief that in designing their buildings they are repeating the mathematical process according to which God created the world.[14]

The argument that man himself is a mathematical microcosm also need not detain us; it too derives from Plato's *Timaeus*.[15] Far more important is the Italian belief that man is more than a microcosm; he is also a procreator of forms. According to Ficino, the artist cannot deploy the divine ratios in his creations unless he himself is also harmonious:

> "a soul surely cannot judge how to express absolute proportions, either in the air with music or in a

> body by its [material] nature, unless it possesses the causes of these proportions, and unless that harmony subsists in itself over and above the harmony made in these other things. Our soul consists of all proportions, like the *anima mundi*."
> (Hersey, p. 34; brackets are his)

Ficino is arguing that the World-Soul and the soul of man are repositories of all forms that can be unfolded in various material entities. As such, these souls mediate between the Form in the Mind of God and the forms of individual things. It is his role as mediator that confers special status on man, for it indicates that he is not discontinuous with the Mind of God.

Significantly, it is Vitruvius who supplies a crucial bit of evidence for this belief about man's nature:

> In like fashion the members of temples ought to have dimensions of their several parts answering suitably to the general sum of their whole magnitude. Now the navel is naturally the exact centre of the body. For if a man lies on his back with hands and feet outspread, and the centre of a circle is placed on his navel, his fingers and toes will be touched by the circumference. Also a square will be found described within the figure, in the same way as a round figure is produced. For if we measure from the sole of the foot to the top of the head, and apply the measure to the outstretched hands, the breadth will be found equal to the height, just like sites which are squared by rule.[16]

For many in the Renaissance, this passage proves that man himself solves the riddle of squaring the circle, although the meaning of this riddle and its solution varies. According to Hersey (pp. 34-37, 88-127), Ficino and, through him, many Renaissance architectural theorists see the squaring of the circle as the union of a visible and invisible architecture, as a kind of sexual union of form and space. But on the evidence of stanzas six and seven I believe it more likely that Marvell sees in this riddle, in the words of S. K. Heninger, Jr., "a geometrical formulation of the incongruity between the world of concept and the world of matter,"[17] the square representing materiality, the circle spirituality and, ultimately, God. According to this second interpretation, because man squares the circle, he

constitutes a middle term between spirit and matter. We will return to this second view of the riddle and its solution when we consider Marvell's attack on the Italian theory. But whichever interpretation one accepts, man's special status as the solution to the riddle permits him to procreate spiritually significant forms. Indeed, Vincenzo Scamozzi, in his *L'idea della architettura universale* (1615), seeks to show that the human body contained within it, and could therefore generate, not just the circle and the square, but all the proportions and geometrical figures of use to the architect. In one drawing, he derives from a body the circle, square, triangles, spheres, cubes, and the three kinds of angles, obtuse, right, and acute; furthermore, tailored specifically to the needs of the architect, Scamozzi also derives the obelisk, a column shaft, and two pediments (see Figure 1).[18] This drawing is properly seen as a demonstration of Ficino's claim that the true procreator must contain all proportions within himself. Thus, according to this theory, the architect need only reproduce the harmonies already within him to create significant forms.

The logic of the theory to this point is clear: if out of his own harmony man designs a building in accord with the divine mathematics informing both the world and man himself, then the building signifies the cosmos and microcosmic man. But the often only implicit claim of the Italian theory is far stronger. A properly proportioned building not only signifies the world and man; it also mysteriously reveals the Mind of God. In this theory, number has a higher ontological status than matter because it derives from the Unity or Form of God. When number informs matter, therefore, something of this original Form becomes perceptible, visible.[19] This Pythagorean notion lies behind the following comments of Nicolaus Cusanus, the fifteenth-century theologian who influenced Alberti:[20]

> Was not the key to all truth to be found in numbers, according to Pythagoras, who was the first to be called a philosopher and who was the first philosopher in fact? In so far as they have followed him, the Platonists and the chief of our own philosophers, like Augustine and later Boethius, have not hesitated to assert that number was the essential exemplar in the mind of the Creator of all things to be created.[21]

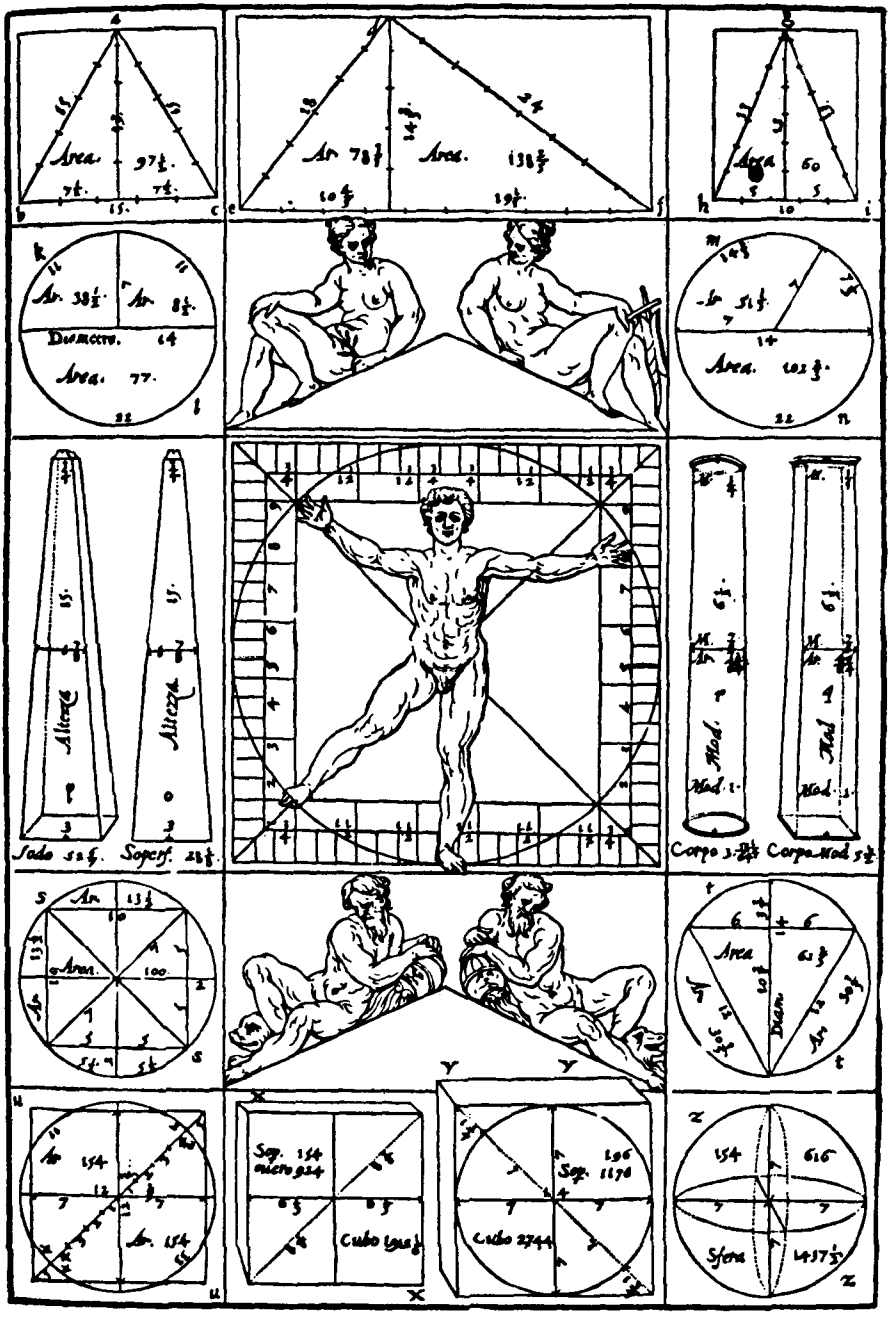

Figure 1. Man the procreator, from Scamozzi

According to Ernst Cassirer, Cusanus does not believe that the information of matter by divine form implies a direct ontological commingling of spirit and matter.[22] For Cusanus, the two remain other, even though matter participates in spirit. Nevertheless, mathematics is the surest way to know what we can of the divine Mind. Wittkower has argued that the Renaissance architectural theorists believe so too:

> The man-created forms in the corporeal world were the visible materializations of the intelligible mathematical symbols, and the relationship between the pure forms of absolute mathematics and the visible forms of applied mathematics was immediately and intuitively perceptible. For the men of the Renaissance this architecture with its strict geometry, the equipoise of its harmonic order, its formal serenity and, above all, with the sphere of the dome, echoed and at the same time revealed the perfection, omnipotence, truth and goodness of God.[23]

As we shall see, Marvell too believes that man's architecture can echo and reveal the truth of God, but not positively, as the Italian architectural theorists think, but rather negatively by indicating what God is not. The positive theory of the Italians he finds to be sinful.

II

There can be no doubt that some passages in the first nine stanzas of *Upon Appleton House* attack foreign architecture not on the basis of its Pythagorean premises, but for its excessive size and ornamentation.[24] Thus, for instance, the first stanza criticizes the "Forrain *Architect*" for his high design:

> Who of his great Design in pain
> Did for a Model vault his Brain,
> Whose Columnes should so high be rais'd
> To arch the Brows that on them gaz'd. (5-8)

Two stanzas later, the poet returns to this theme with an allusion to the Tower of Babel:

> But He, superfluously spread,
> Demands more room alive then dead.

> And in his hollow Palace goes
> Where Winds as he themselves may lose.
> What need of all this Marble Crust
> T'impark the wanton Mote of Dust,
> That thinks by Breadth the World t'unite
> Though the first Builders fail'd in Height? (17-24)

This initial concern with size, not mathematical proportions, has led some critics of the poem quite correctly to read a spiritual condemnation of foreign architects for their excessive pride.[25] But the argument here is far more subtle than is usually recognized. As we shall see in the next section, Marvell's concern with size in architecture is directly related to his reformation of the Italian algorithm specifying proportions. His rival algorithm will insist that both size and proportions be determined by the actual, not ideal, dimensions of man's body. But before we turn to his reformed view, we must first show why he departs from the Pythagorean architecture of the Italians.

The opening lines of the second stanza—"Why should of all things Man unrul'd / Such unproportion'd dwellings build?" (9-10) —suggest Marvell's primary objection to the Italians: their theory does not pay sufficient attention to the Fall of man.[26] Normally, of course, the Fall means a loss of man's original purity as a being made in the image of God. But in a Christian Pythagorean context, the consequence of the Fall must be understood more specifically as a deformation of man's proportionality: if the image of God follows from the information of the divine algorithm in man, the loss of that image is a loss of form. This human deformation implies the loss of harmony and all proportions and so spells the end of the continuity between the human and the divine. Man is now alienated from God. As a result, the architectural theory of the Italian Renaissance is untenable. Because man is no longer a formal microcosm, his building does not signify the world or the man that God created; it signifies instead man's deformity. Even if man were to know the divine algorithm of Creation, his use of that algorithm would be an act of presumption because he could not with his own efforts reform even himself. Man no longer mediates between the circle and the square, and so his building cannot reveal the Mind of God. In short, Marvell denies to architecture the possibility of syncretizing the ideal man of Pythagoreanism and the Christian doctrine of the Fall.

In the third couplet of the dense sixth stanza, the poet makes clear his understanding of the Italian theory and pronounces judgment on it: "Let others vainly strive t'immure / The *Circle* in the *Quadrature*!" (45-46). This couplet thrusts at the heart of Italian architecture by asserting that its attempt to inform a material building with divine mathematics is futile because such powers as the task requires are not available to fallen man. When man disregards his fallen state and continues to try to build microcosmic structures, he sets himself up as a rival to God. The word "vainly" plays between the senses of "in vain" and "proudly." For Marvell, it is sinful pride that keeps man from recognizing the consequences of the Fall and, specifically, from not understanding that reproducing the divine proportions in a building is vain. A house built according to the Italian canons of proportionality may still signify man, of course, but to the extent that it does so, it signifies only his deformity and sinful arrogation of the divine prerogative of creation. To avoid such sinful architecture, the poet turns to Appleton House as the pattern of a truly holy building, based on a new mathematics.

III

Having revealed the sinfulness of foreign architecture, Marvell also has the task of leading his reader to understand the significance of Appleton House. To do so, he must present a reformed architecture to replace the sinful one he has condemned. But surprisingly his theory of architecture is not that different from the continental one. It too wishes the house to signify its human owner, it bases this signification on mathematics, and it attempts to reveal as much as it can of the divine order. But to accomplish these tasks, Marvell faces a more difficult problem than the Italian theorists did. Because they could assume the harmony of man, they could see the architect as capable of reproducing the divine order by an act of procreation out of the forms within him; whereas, because the poet sees man as fallen, for him any such procreation in a house risks indicating only the distance between the divine and the human. And yet Marvell clearly wishes to place man under an imperative to express himself in his house. In stanza two the houses of the animals are held out as models for man, and these houses signify their owners: "The Beasts are by their Denns exprest" (11). The human builder thus appears to be caught in a contradictory situation: on the one hand, he must express himself in his house, while, on the other hand, self-expression appears to

constitute an act of pride and poses the problem of expressing divine order in the act of signifying a fallen nature.

With what would initially appear to be great success, Marvell manages to extricate the architect from this perplexing dilemma, and he does so in the most radical of ways—namely, by capitalizing on the separation between God and man. Like a negative theologian, he argues that man's self-expression in his house is a negative signifier of God, a statement that what man is, God is not.[27] In this way, he permits the architect to make true statements about man and his relation to God without at the same time anthropomorphizing the deity or implying, as do the Italians, the divinity of man. His solution follows from the recognition that man's fallen body in its materiality is radically different from the deity and is therefore unlikely to be understood as a positive signifier of God. Marvell therefore begins his revision of architectural theory by calling for an algorithm derived from the actual fallen human body. By signifying this body, the house can express the humility of its designer and owner, in effect saying that material man is not God and, conversely, that God is not material.

In stating an algorithm that can express as accurately as possible man's fallen body, Marvell must be extremely careful because, as we have seen, the continental theorists were also quite concerned with the human body, and Marvell cannot afford to have his view confused with theirs. At all costs his algorithm must not imply that the body has cosmic proportions. We have already seen how the couplet in stanza six on the vanity of striving to immure circles in quadratures opposes the microcosmic theory of the Italians. But Marvell's more positive effort to guarantee that his theory not be confused with theirs comes in the second stanza :

> Why should of all things Man unrul'd
> Such unproportion'd dwellings build?
> The Beasts are by their Denns exprest:
> 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 Place. (9-16)

Marvell deliberately, I think, uses the word "Creature." Far from being a co-creator, man is to remember his actual status as another member of God's creation and take his architectural cues from the

humblest of animals, the birds, and even the tortoise. From the houses of these other creatures man can learn the algorithm for building that befits a creature. The line "Their Bodies measure out their Place" suggests that the properly designed house is to have the same size as well as the same proportions as the body which is to live within it. This stanza thus establishes what might be called the algorithm of equality, which fuses into one the dual Italian rules for size and proportionality. This algorithm is reducible to one sentence: "I want my house to equal my body." As absurd as this perfect fit between body and house may appear to be in practice (and we shall return to this absurdity later), by merging a canon of size with a canon governing proportions Marvell is able simultaneously to provide a corrective for overly large buildings and to ensure that the building signifies what man is in fallen fact, not what he had been. Marvell's commitment to this algorithm may be measured by his insistence on it throughout the early stanzas. In the third stanza, the allusion to a coffin suggests an adequate model for a house: "But He, superfluously spread, / Demands more room alive then dead" (17-18). In stanza four, Marvell recalls that the "larger sized Men" (29) of "that more sober Age and Mind" (28) possessed houses so small that they had to stoop to enter. The fifth stanza refers to "*Romulus* his Bee-like Cell" (40) as still another available model. Clearly, Marvell sought to recall as many structures conforming to his algorithm as he could.

If this algorithm of equality is crucial to the formulation of the poet's theory of architecture, it is because an equal house serves as a signifier of the spiritual condition of the man who designs it and lives within it. The logic seems to be that only one who is aware of his fallen condition and therefore is also aware of his separation from God can build according to this straitening algorithm. The clearest indication of this logic is to be found in the sixth stanza :

> *Humility* alone designs
> Those short but admirable Lines,
> By which, ungirt and unconstrain'd,
> Things greater are in less contain'd.
> Let others vainly strive t'immure
> The *Circle* in the *Quadrature*!
> These *holy Mathematicks* can
> In ev'ry Figure equal Man. (41-48)

The "Man" of the stanza's last line is not the "Man unrul'd" of stanza two; rather, he is the modern representative of the "larger

sized Men" of a more sober age. Just as the latter were characterized by the humility revealed in their stooping to enter through the narrow doors of their homes—"As practising, in doors so strait, / To strain themselves through *Heavens Gate*" (31-32)—so this modern man is characterized by the humility he displays in modest building. In both cases, awareness of their materiality marks their awareness of their separation from God and leads to the humility which is the proper response to that separation. Because, according to this logic, knowledge of one's materiality and humility are inextricably intertwined, "*Humility* alone" can build a house equal to man.

There is, however, a remaining difficulty in the argument of this stanza. I have already suggested that for Marvell the problem of squaring the circle is a formulation of the problem of finding the commensurability between spirit and matter and that the poet's assertion of the vanity of man's attempts to solve this problem in a house is central to his attack on continental architectural theory. But the context in which this scornful assault is located itself argues for the commensurability of a spiritual quality, humility, and the material house. Marvell thus seems to be laying himself open to the same charge he levels against the foreign architects. But the stanza insists on a difference. The greater thing that can be contained in less is not God's Mind, or the mathematics that express it directly, but rather humility itself. And the expression of humility is always reducible to the statement: "I am not God." Humility may inform the house according to the algorithm of equality, but humility is not to be seen as derived from the original Form in the Mind of God. On the contrary, it is the awareness of one's difference from that Form. It is the form that does not derive from a continuous descent from the Form of all forms, but exists as a mark of distinction and of the gap in that descent.

This understanding of humility does not, however, redeem the stanza from paradox. In fact, it thoroughly complicates matters. For if humility is the recognition of the truth of the proposition "I am not God," then it would seem that the significance of humility is not grounded in God. For the Pythagoreans, meaning derives from the one Form in the Mind of God, and if the anti-form of humility does not derive from that Form by definition, then it follows that according to the Italian view humility must mean nothing. This apparent meaninglessness threatens to destroy the theory of architecture that the poet is trying to establish, for as long as the gap between the deity and fallen man remains

unbridged, whatever meaning man tries to express is unfounded. But the poet of the opening stanzas of *Upon Appleton House* clearly believes that God Himself has bridged that gap in the Incarnation of the Word. If man can do nothing to ground his meaning, God can and has. By taking the radical step of re-uniting His image and a material body, He contradicted the major assumption of Marvell's negative architecture—namely, that God is immaterial. He at least must be commensurable with the material, or else the Word could not have become flesh. For Marvell, then, Christ himself is the ontological ground of the semiotic of architecture, consubstantial with God, and yet distinguishable from Him. As a result of the Incarnation, man can speak significantly to the extent that he receives the grace of God and is re-made in His image. The paradox of this theory is that, although the humble man's house still asserts that he is not God, the humility of building a house in conformity with the algorithm of equality indicates that the image of God has been restored to him, in part as a result of the Word's own act of humility, the Incarnation. Thus, in the theory of architecture that Marvell proposes, the enabler of signification is not man *per se*, but man supplemented by Christ within him. Man's expressions mean only to the extent that they simultaneously mark his need for Christ and the in-dwelling that supplies that need.

This logocentrism of the poem's opening stanzas is submerged, but not so deeply as to be irrecoverable. The key word is "Grace," a word used twice in the first nine stanzas. The more revealing of the two occurrences is that in the ninth stanza, because it appears there in the same phrase as the word "mark":

> The House was built upon the Place
> Only as for *a Mark of Grace*;
> And for an *Inn* to entertain
> Its *Lord* a while, but not remain. (69-72)

The lines are packed with puns, with "*Grace*" itself being perhaps the most obvious. In context, it can mean either a social quality or the state of one's soul. But like the pun on "entertain"—"delight" and "hold among"—this pun seems to display a peculiar logic. Just as delight in the house follows from its ability to hold its master within it, so too the social grace that the house marks depends upon the master's being in a state of grace. But whatever logic Marvell is using in his wordplay here, the phrase "*a Mark of*

Grace" implies that God's image has been restored to Fairfax and that the house signifies this fact. Thus, if humility is the signified of the house, it is in turn also the signifier of grace, the expression of the in-dwelling of Christ that makes imitation of his humility possible.

The reformed theory of architecture that Marvell teaches his reader in the course of the first nine stanzas, then, may be summarized as follows. A properly constructed house signifies the humility of its designer-owner by conforming to the algorithm of equality between the body of the owner and the house itself. It thereby emphasizes the feature of man least like the deity—namely, his materiality. In effect, the house makes a negative statement by expressing the separation between God and man. But paradoxically, this statement can only be made if the owner has already received the grace of God requisite to the knowledge of this separation, and consequently the house can also be seen as a mark of the owner's grace. The significance of the house is guaranteed by the in-dwelling of Christ in the owner, because Christ himself unites the spiritual and the material, a union necessary for the meaningfulness of Marvell's architecture.

IV

The self-criticism that marks this poem begins in these opening stanzas. However seriously I have taken the theory of architecture he presents here, Marvell himself is aware of its inherent ridiculousness:

> Yet thus the laden House does sweat,
> And scarce indures the *Master* great:
> But where he comes the swelling Hall
> Stirs, and the *Square* grows *Spherical*. (49-52)

T. S. Eliot calls this passage "more absurd than it was intended to be."[28] But since the time of Eliot's essay, we have learned to defer judgment on how absurd Marvell is willing to be. In these lines, in any case, the absurdity has point. After all, the algorithm of equality, however superb as a counter to the presumption of Italian architecture, is in practice indefensible. Tortoise-shells spare little room for dinner parties, and coffin-houses make "Now I lay me" a poignant prayer. Marvell makes clear his qualification of his reformed theory in the phrase "the *Square* grows *Spherical*"; he is challenging his semiotic of humility by forcing us to attend to the physical problem of getting into the house, a problem not

unlike a child trying to pull on a t-shirt. But even this laugh at his own expense serves its more serious purposes—first, to praise Fairfax's greatness in a new way and, second, to suggest that fallen man's theories have inescapable limitations that surface, in second looks, in ridiculous ways. But this second and more practical look at his architecture does not completely overthrow the theory he is developing: Marvell may reverse his revision in a minute, but the thought both against the Italians and for a reformed architecture of humility remains captured in and by the text.

Being so inscribed, it also influences our reading of the rest of the poem. According to the interpretation of the work's beginning offered here, we should expect a poem that treats the problematics of reformation. And this theme does, in fact, appear in every section of *Upon Appleton House*. In the historical narrative, the English Reformation is elided with the reformation of the convent on the grounds of the estate. The garden episode reflects upon the need for reformation of England as a result of the recent fall into war. The meadows need to be restored by the flood. In the woods, the hewel must purify the rotten oak. And in the last section, Maria comes to recollect both the poet and "loose Nature" (657), and holds the promise of a "universal good" (741), a final reformation of fallen society. In each case, as the entity to be reformed varies, so too does the process of reformation. But the direction of the poem's movement is set by the opening: both contemporary "Man unrul'd" (9) and even nature are to be reduced to the "more decent Order tame" (766) that finds its pattern on the estate and in the hearts and minds of Lord Fairfax, Lady Vere, and their daughter Maria. That this attempt at reduction begins with a criticism of the Italian theory of architecture and its notions of form makes good sense; Marvell must free his reader, and himself, from the excessive optimism of that powerful view. That he himself tries to find a more realistic formalism is also understandable, given the contemporary views of art as form. But that the poet also takes a second look at his architecture to reveal its ridiculousness in practice indicates a concern with history that haunts him and drives him both around the estate and into his longest lyrical poem. Whether Marvell ever really believes that in a world of civil wars and regicides man and nature can be reduced to a formal order constitutes the lingering question of the poem.

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Notes

1 *The Poems and Letters of Andrew Marvell*, ed. H. M. Margoliouth, 3rd ed., rev. Pierre Legouis (Oxford: Clarendon, 1971), I, 64. All subsequent citations of the poem, given by line numbers in parentheses, follow this edition.

2 The two most important of these studies are those of G. R. Hibbard, "The Country House Poem of the Seventeenth Century," *JWCI*, 19 (1956), 159-74, and William A. McClung, *The Country House in English Renaissance Poetry* (Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 1977). McClung tries to merge the generic view with the view that stresses Italian architectural theory, pp. 159-62. He speaks well of the spiritual, not social, emphasis of Marvell's architecture, but does not, I believe, correctly describe the poet's use of the problem of squaring the circle. See also McClung's more recent study, *The Architecture of Paradise: Survivals of Eden and Jerusalem* (Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 1983), especially the discussion of nature and the primitive hut, pp. 114-16.

3 See Don Cameron Allen, "Upon Appleton House," in *Image and Meaning: Metaphoric Traditions in Renaissance Poetry*, 2nd ed. (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Univ. Press, 1968), pp. 189-96; Kitty W. (Scoular) Datta, *Natural Magic: Studies in the Presentation of Nature in English Poetry from Spenser to Marvell* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1965), pp. 178-81; and M. J. K. O'Loughlin, "This Sober Frame: A Reading of 'Upon Appleton House,'" in George deF. Lord, ed., *Andrew Marvell: A Collection of Critical Essays* (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1968), pp. 125-26.

4 The most important of these studies are those of Rosalie L. Colie, *"My Ecchoing Song": Andrew Marvell's Poetry of Criticism* (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1970), pp. 197, 228-31, 301; Don Parry Norford, "Marvell's *'Holy Mathematicks,'*" *MLQ*, 38 (1977), 242-60; Leonard Barkan, *Nature's Work of Art: The Human Body as Image of the World* (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1975), pp. 143-51; Ian Christopher Butler, *Number Symbolism* (New York: Barnes & Noble, 1970), pp. 111-13; and Frederic H. Roth, Jr., "Marvell's 'Upon Appleton House': A Study in Perspective," *TSLL*, 14 (1972), 269-81. See also John M. Wallace, *Destiny His Choice: The Loyalism of Andrew Marvell* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1968), pp. 237-41.

5 Leone Battista Alberti, *Ten Books on Architecture*, tr. James Leoni, ed. Joseph Rykwert (London: Alec Tiranti, 1955); Andrea Palladio, *The Four Books of Architecture*, tr. Isaac Ware (1738; rpt. New York: Dover, 1965); Sebastiano Serlio, *The Book of Architecture by Sebastiano Serlio, 1611*, tr. Robert Peake (New York: Benjamin Blom, 1970).

6 It is interesting to note that Sir Henry Wotton's *Elements of Architecture* (1624), which comprehends much of the Italian theory, was reprinted in 1651. See Marcia E. Allentuck, "Marvell's 'Pool of Air,'" *MLN*, 74 (1959), 587-89, and M. R. Pitman, "Andrew Marvell and Sir Henry Wotton," *RES*, 13 (1962), 157-58, but also Datta, "Marvell and Wotton: A Reconsideration," *RES*, 19 (1968), 403-05.

7 Pollio Vitruvius, *On Architecture*, tr. Frank Granger (Cambridge: Harvard Univ. Press, 1955), I.i.3.

8 *Pythagorean Palaces: Magic and Architecture in the Italian Renaissance* (Ithaca: Cornell Univ. Press, 1976), p. 21. Hereafter cited parenthetically in the text.

9 Most of the terms in this algorithm are explained by Vitruvius in III.ii-iv. The Dover edition of Vitruvius, tr. Morris Hicky Morgan (1914; rpt. New York: Dover, 1960), p. 76, shows a plan of a pseudodipteral temple.

10 The process of interpreting the signified of a building by performing mathematical calculations is exemplified in Francesco Colonna's strange dream-vision *Hypnerotomachia: The Strife of Love in a Dream* (London, 1592), tr. R. D[allington?] (New York: Garland, 1976), pp. 18ff.

11 Nicolaus Cusanus, *Of Learned Ignorance*, tr. Fr. Germain Heron (1954; rpt. Westport, CT: Hyperion, 1979), p. 119, uses the text in a typical way: "God has set up the elements in an admirable order, for He created all things in number, weight and measure." Allusions to the text are omnipresent. See Rudolf Wittkower, *Architectural Principles in the Age of Humanism* (1962; rpt. New York: Norton, 1971), pp. 119, 132, for a few instances in architectural treatises, and S. K. Heninger, Jr., *Touches of Sweet*

Harmony: Pythagorean Cosmology and Renaissance Poetics (San Marino: Huntington Library, 1974), pp. 384-85, for instances in poetic theory. For evidence that Marvell knew the phrase, see Heninger, "Marvell's 'Geometrick Yeer': A Topos for Occasional Poetry," in C. A. Patrides, ed., *Approaches to Marvell: The York Tercentenary Lectures* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1978), pp. 95-96. For the inherent problem of the metaphor of God as divine architect, see Milton C. Nahm, *The Artist as Creator: An Essay in Human Freedom* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Univ. Press, 1956), pp. 67-74, 110-11.

12 On Plato's cosmic formalism, see Francis MacDonald Cornford, *Plato's Cosmology: The Timaeus of Plato* (1937; rpt. Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1957), pp. 43-97.

13 Wittkower, p. 155. The terms "diapason" and "diapente" are musical, and are explained by Heninger, *Touches*, pp. 95-100.

14 See Hersey, p. 34: "By imposing mathematical form on matter, whose natural state is formlessness, man imitates God and struggles against what might be called the entropy of material creation."

15 See Rudolf Allers, "Microcosmus: From Anaximandros to Paracelsus," *Traditio*, 2 (44), 319-407, on structural and symbolic notions of the relationship between microcosm and macrocosm.

16 Vitruvius, III.i.3.

17 Heninger, *Touches*, p. 111. See his discussion, pp. 111-15.

18 Figure 1 is reproduced with the author's permission from Hersey, p. 119. See his comments, p. 118. Scamozzi was not the only Italian theorist to pursue the possibilities of the Vitruvian passage. See Hersey, pp. 88-127, and Wittkower, plates 2a-4.

19 Compare John Dee's preface to Henry Billingsley's translation of Euclid's *Elements*, as quoted in Heninger, *Touches*, p. 134, n. 13:

> All thinges which are, & have beyng, are found under a triple diversitie generall. For, either, they are demed Supernaturall, Naturall, or, of a third being. Thinges Supernaturall, are immateriall, simple, indivisible, incorruptible, & unchangeable. Things Naturall, are materiall, compounded, divisible, corruptible, and chaungeable. Things Supernaturall, are, of the minde onely, comprehended: Things Naturall, of the sense exterior, ar hable to be perceived. In thinges Naturall, probabilitie and conjecture hath place: But in things Supernaturall, chief demonstration, & most sure Science [i.e., knowledge] is to be had. By which properties & comparasons of these two, more easily may be described, the state, condition, nature and property of those things, which, we before termed of a third being: which, by a peculiar name also, are called *Thynges Mathematicall*. For, these, beyng (in a maner) middle, betwene thinges supernaturall and naturall: are not so absolute and excellent, as thinges supernatural: Nor yet so base and grosse, as thinges naturall: But are thinges immateriall: and nevertheless, by materiall things hable somewhat to be signified. And though their particular Images, by Art, are aggregable and divisible: yet the generall *Formes*, notwithstandyng, are constant, unchaungeable, untransformable, and incorruptible. (Heninger's brackets.)

20 See Ernst Cassirer, *The Individual and the Cosmos in Renaissance Philosophy*, tr. Mario Domandi (Philadelphia: Univ. of Pennsylvania Press, 1963), pp. 50-51.

21 Cusanus, p. 26. On pp. 15-16, he writes:

> God, in consequence, is infinite unity. . . . number, therefore, could not exist if it were not taken for granted that it necessarily proceeds from unity. Clearly, too, the multiplicity of beings that proceed from this infinite unity, are so really dependent upon it that without it they could not exist. How could they exist without being? Absolute Unity is infinite being.

22 Cassirer, p. 21. On the complexities of Cusanus's ontology, follow Cassirer's discussion of separation and participation, pp. 7-24.

23 Wittkower, p. 29.

24 In the Italian architectural theory, size and ornamentation are determined by the canon of decorum, which remained relatively stable from Vitruvius through the Renaissance. In Alberti's second formulation (p. 187), it reads simply: "the Magnificence of the Building should be adapted to the Dignity of the Owner." In practice, of course, one's wealth frequently determined both the size and amount of ornamentation of one's house. The modest Alberti tries to head off immoral competition in building by adding:

> I should rather, in private Edifices, that the greatest Men fell rather a little short in Ornament, than they should be condemned for Luxury and Profusion.

And yet with a tell-tale "but," even Alberti feels compelled to go on:

> But since all agree, that we should endeavour to leave a Reputation behind us, not only for our Wisdom but our Power too; for this Reason, as *Thucydides* observes, we erect great Structures, that our Posterity may suppose us to have been great Persons.

In effect, in the opening stanzas, Marvell condemns the Italian canon of decorum. See Wallace, pp. 238-39.

25 See, for example, McClung, p. 159:

> The extravagance of such [foreign] architecture is described in terms like those of Jonson, Herrick, and Carew—a "hollow Palace" and a "marble crust" are in the vein of "polished Pillars"—and just as imprecisely connotative of wicked ostentation. . . . [The foreign architect's] offenses are several, as, implicitly, are the offenses of the building. One is Pride.

26 Cassirer, pp. 73-98, explains why the Italians were relatively unconcerned with the Fall.

27 That Marvell later in life knew *Of Learned Ignorance* is clear from comments he made in the second part of *The Rehearsal Transpros'd*, ed. D. I. B. Smith (Oxford: Clarendon, 1971), p. 199. See Ann E. Berthoff, *The Resolved Soul: A Study of Marvell's Major Poems* (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1970), pp. 226-28.

28 Eliot, "Andrew Marvell," in Lord, p. 22.